The Role of Christian Faith
in the Lives of a Cohort of
Catholic Primary School Principals
in the Republic of Ireland

Máire Campbell

B.Ed., M.A.

Dissertation submitted for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick

Supervisors: Prof. Eamonn Conway and Dr. Denis Robinson

Submitted to the University of Limerick

May 2020

ABSTRACT

The Role of Christian Faith in the Lives of a Cohort of Catholic Primary School Principals in the Republic of Ireland

Máire Campbell

Principals, as 'gatekeepers' in Catholic primary schools (CPSs), are at the nexus of change in relation to faith and culture. These changes include a political impetus for a more diverse patronage system for primary schools, new admission policies and changes to Religious Education. The Church also acknowledges the more diverse, plural and secular nature of Irish society and the need for change. Within this context, this study aims to discover the role of Christian faith in the lives of a cohort of CPS principals.

This hermeneutic phenomenological research study involved interviewing eighteen principals in order to gather descriptions and interpretations of their lived experiences. It found that faith is an integral part of most of the principals' lives; sixteen are believers and two are agnostic. The believers embody their faith in their heads as beliefs and theological understanding, in their hearts as spiritual and religious practices and in their hands as moral outlooks and behaviour. Their experiences of nature, birth, death and suffering are intertwined with their faith. The Catholic school subculture and their Catholic upbringing were found to have influenced their faith but the Church scandals have affected them and most do not talk about their faith today. Most perceive principalship as a vocation even though there is ambiguity around the word. For most, faith influences their principalship, how they cope with challenges and conflict and their leadership styles. While they all uphold the Catholic school ethos, the believers actively promote the Catholic ethos. Ten principals prefer to work for Catholic school patrons and eight are willing to change patron. Moreover, the principals all seem to be immersed in the mystery of God as they wonder about Him and want to have faith. The study contributes to the conversation about the way forward for the CPS sector and the recommendations are of interest to policy makers, patrons, professional developers and practitioners within the sector.

.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this is entirely my own work and no material contained in the thesis has been used or published before. I hereby declare that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, it does not breach any law of copyright, and the work of others has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Máire Campbell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my supervisors who guided me

To the Bonaventure Trust that sponsored me

To the principals who told their stories to me

To my family who listened to me

To my friends, colleagues and neighbours who encouraged me

To the children in school who motivated me

To my parents who were faith witnesses for me

To God our Father who wills me

To the Holy Spirit who inspires me

To Jesus Christ who accompanies me

Thank you

Máire

TABLE OF CONTENTS

x

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP   Assistant Principal

BoM   Board(s) of Management

BT   *Being and Time*

CCC   *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CCE   Congregation for Catholic Education

CPD   Continuous Professional Development

CPS   Catholic Primary School

CPSMA   Catholic Primary School Management Association

CSL   Centre for School Leadership

CSO   Central Statistics Office

CSP   Catholic Schools Partnership

DCU   Dublin City University

DEIS   Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

DES   Department of Education and Skills

DP   Deputy Principal

ETB   Education and Training Board

GoI   Government of Ireland

ICBC   Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

IEC   Irish Episcopal Conference

IHRC   Irish Human Rights Commission

INTO   Irish National Teachers' Organisation

IPPN   Irish Primary Principals' Network

ISM   In-School Management

MIC   Mary Immaculate College

NCCA   National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NEPS   National Educational Psychological Service

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
RE	Religious Education
RoI	Republic of Ireland
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UL	University of Limerick

INTRODUCTION

Fifth Class December 2015

I look up at the clock and it's ten past twelve. I wait for a group of children to return to class to start the lesson. I want to tell them the story of Our Lady before we go to Mass on December 8th. When the whole class is settled, I start the story in my own words and they look at me to assess the story and me. Then I open the Bible to read about the Angel Gabriel announcing the birth of Jesus, "…He went in and said to her, "Rejoice! You who enjoy God's favour, the Lord is with you". …". I try to stay with the questions on the curriculum but the children's questions are more pressing. Emily raises her hand, "So does that mean Jesus has no father?" I hesitate for a second: I know what is on their minds and what they have been looking at on TV. I explain about the power of the Holy Spirit and that Joseph was Jesus' foster father. That answer doesn't satisfy some of them but I read to the end of the story. Afterwards, we learn some of the responses for Mass so that we are ready for Tuesday.

The next day I collect the permission notes. Only one child from another Christian Church remains in school. Even though it's cold and misty the class is excited to leave their books behind to walk to the church. I enjoy these walks as it's a time to chat and to get to know the children more. We wind along the path like a centipede flapping and chatting, I'm at the head and Ann, our Special Needs Assistant, is at the rear. A child behind me says, "I forget how to take Communion. I haven't been to the church since my First Holy Communion." Panic! On the last corner, I gather them around me and I show them how to receive Holy Communion. When we get inside the church, the eyes of all the white-haired parishioners dart over and we sit on the side just in case. The priest hears our rummaging and probably senses the youthful giddiness. He shuffles over to welcome us and to give us some song sheets. We're all set to sing Silent Night. The children are delighted to be welcomed by the priest at Mass. We see Jack's mum during Communion time. Afterwards, the children wave at some of their grandparents and elderly relations and neighbours. I meet my aunt Jean and Zoe remarks in surprise, "So, you have an aunty too!" Ann and I smile at each other.

Researcher's Position

This story is an example of my experience as a teacher and an assistant principal (AP) in a Catholic Primary School (CPS). By positioning myself, I am following Max van Manen's recommendation: "various assumptions and interests may need to be explicated so as to exorcise them in an attempt to let speak that which wishes to speak" (2016a, 224). He recommends the researcher firstly records his or her own experience of the phenomenon and then gathers descriptions of and reflections on other people's experiences.

I was born in the 1960s and grew up in the west of Ireland in a Catholic family embedded in a small community. Later I attended Catholic schools and a Catholic college of education and I have spent most of my career working as a teacher in CPSs. Throughout my life, I have come to see God in all things and in all of my experiences. I believe Catholic schools are places where children can learn about God, themselves and the world. In particular Catholic schools are places where children hear the story of Jesus Christ and are offered an opportunity to interpret their lives in relation to His. I find as a teacher I tell many stories. The Christian story is very important to me and I share it with the children in school and tell them about God's love for everyone. I believe love is the essence of who we are as persons, that God loves us all and is waiting for us to turn to Him and that He sent His son Jesus into the world to tell us His message of eternal love. As a member of generation X, I prize equality and justice for all. Thus, I believe that Catholic schools should be truly catholic or universal by welcoming children, families and staff of all backgrounds; that Catholic schools should be inclusive of children of other faiths and none; and interreligious education is an important aspect of faith development in Catholic schools.

According to van Manen, hermeneutic phenomenology is about "wonder, words and world" (ibid., 13). 'Wonder' is the antecedent to my inquiry and sustains the whole phenomenological research process. My interest in this research comes from my curiosity about the interior 'world' of principals and teachers, my desire for children to experience the friendship of Jesus Christ, and my quest for wisdom and truth. While teachers tell the Christian story, principals create the culture and hold a pivotal role for telling the story. However, in my experience, very few adults talk about their faith in CPSs. This study captures the voices of principals as they discuss the role of faith in their lives.

Aim and Objectives

This hermeneutic phenomenological study straddles two disciplines, education and theology. **The main aim is to discover the role of Christian faith in the lives of a cohort of CPS principals in the Republic of Ireland (RoI).**

The following three objectives guide the research process in relation to a cohort of CPS principals:

1. To discover their experiences of CPS principalship
2. To reveal their experiences of Christian faith
3. To investigate how their faith and life experiences influence each other.

Rationale

Van Manen discusses the need for human science researchers to investigate the experiences of professionals: "phenomenology of practice is *for* practice and *of* practice" (2016a, 15). Instead of being instrumental or an action-orientated methodology, phenomenological research is caring in nature and aims to "nurture a measure of thoughtfulness and tact in the practice of our professions and in everyday life" (ibid., 31). A hermeneutic phenomenological researcher is interested in the quotidian, in everyday experiences that might otherwise go unnoticed. The value of research into the professional practice of educationalists is inherent in the rich, deep, evocative and insightful texts that "may stir our pedagogical, psychological, or professional sensibilities" (ibid., 200).

Principals, as educational leaders and managers, hold pivotal roles as they shape school culture. CPS principals are expected to promote the Catholic ethos and act as faith witnesses. In light of these roles and responsibilities, it is important to discover principals' faith perspectives. This research provides an opportunity to hear the "cover stories" and "sacred stories" of a cohort of principals (Connolly and Clandinin 1999, 2-3).

There is a dearth of research on CPS principals in the RoI and their voices have not been heard in regard to their faith. This study seeks to redress the lacuna of knowledge in relation to principals' faith journeys, their personal worldviews, their experiences of principalship, their interpretations of their role, and the role of Christian faith in their lives.

The study is rooted in Martin Heidegger's philosophy of ontology and its related research methodology, hermeneutical phenomenology. In his book *Being and Time* (BT) (2010) Heidegger considers our existence in relation to time and points out that our past experiences influence our present lives and future decisions. With this in mind, this study hopes to discover the relationship between the principals' early faith experiences, their family and cultural backgrounds and their present faith lives.

Furthermore, the influence of culture on the faith lives of this cohort of CPS principals will be examined. From an exploration of culture and faith in Ireland, it seems that we are at a crossroads in our faith journey as a nation. Ireland has undergone a condensed secularisation process and principals are immersed in a very different culture and faith context than in early childhood. I hope to elucidate their inner faith dispositions and discover if their faith has changed over time. Additionally, this study gathers insights into their faith dispositions by uncovering their beliefs, theological understandings, spirituality, moral codes, and religiosity.

Both male and female principals have an opportunity to voice their experiences of educational leadership in CPSs and the Church today. Generational and gender differences among principals are explored in relation to their experiences of principalship and faith. The research examines if this cohort of principals is part of the spiritual awakening occurring in Ireland today with a flourishing of meditation, yoga, and pilgrim walks (Flanagan 2015) or whether they are engaging in a new form of "un-Catholic Catholicism" through inward journeys of self-discovery and spiritual tourism (Murphy 2018, 258).

The principals' descriptions and interpretations of their experiences allow the researcher to categorise them according to their faith lives, be they orthodox, cultural, creative, or disenchanted (Inglis 2014); some may be co-dependent on the Church or "adult faith seekers" in search of a deeper understanding of their faith (O'Murchu 2014, 17); they may be religious "faith dwellers" within the Church or "spiritual seekers" searching for God in other ways (Taylor 2007, 533); they may be people of faith who display fundamentalism, relativism or embrace a middle way (Boeve 2003); while others may be agnostics or atheists.

At the heart of Christian faith is the person of Jesus Christ. The goal is to discover the principals' experiences of Jesus Christ and how they interpret these experiences in

relation to their personal and professional lives. By analysing the data and developing themes and patterns, this study explores how the principals' faith perspectives affect their leadership and the Catholic school culture.

The recommendations may be of interest to CPS patrons and the Catholic Primary School Managerial Association (CPSMA) and may contribute to the debate about whether CPSs should continue into the future. It may prompt primary school Boards of Management (BoM) to discuss the purpose of CPSs, if the school's sacred mission is being followed or whether they should consider divesting the school to a different patron body. Third level providers of Catholic school leadership programmes may use the new knowledge to inform their programmes and coursework. Indeed, the study may shed light on the whole enterprise of CPSs in the RoI.

Organisational Research Structure

The study's overall organisational structure follows Max van Manen's guidelines for a hermeneutical phenomenological study. He recommends that the introduction contains an autobiographical statement about the researcher's own experiences of the research topic and incidents that have motivated the research. It should also include the research question and the rationale for undertaking the research. This qualitative research study uses a four-framework approach: conceptual, theoretical, methodological and analytical (Quinlan 2011). The key words and phrases in the research question form the conceptual framework. Therefore, the four key concepts were taken as: the Catholic school; CPS principals; Christian faith; and the Irish context of CPS principalship. The key concepts underlie the theoretical framework and form the basis of the literature review: the Irish context (Chapter 1); the Catholic school (Chapter 2); Catholic school principalship (Chapter 3); and Catholic Christian faith and culture in contemporary Ireland (Chapter 4). At the end of the literature review chapters, the most significant theories and relevant research studies are highlighted. The third framework, the methodology, "contains all of the information and detail relating to the research methodology and methods used in the research project" (Quinlan 2011, 6). Chapter Five outlines hermeneutic phenomenology as the research methodology and Max van Manen's six steps for educational research. Chapter Six and Chapter Seven form the analytical framework. Chapter Six provides a descriptive analysis of the main themes that emerged from the interview data. These findings are then analysed in Chapter Seven by comparing and contrasting them with the findings from other research studies and theories from the first four chapters. Finally,

Chapter Eight comprises a conclusion and recommendations that flow from the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 1

CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND PRINCIPALSHIP IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Introduction

This chapter outlines the context in which CPS principals work in the RoI. Firstly, it gives an overview of the primary school system followed by a review of the CPS sector. There is then a review of the roles and responsibilities of primary school principals and the distinctive roles and responsibilities of CPS principals.

1.1.   *The Primary School System*

CPS principals in the RoI work within a specific political, economic and cultural context. This section explores government plans for education, legislation pertaining to education and the primary school patronage structure. This research study reveals some of the effects of government decisions on the everyday experiences of a cohort of CPS principals.

1.1.1. *The political and economic background to education*

For more than fifty years, economic indicators have been used to compare educational investment and outcomes in countries affiliated to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The report Education at a Glance 2019 (OECD 2019a) analyses educational expenditure and outcomes in each of the thirty five OECD countries. It presents country comparison tables on a whole range of economic factors as well as data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). The link between politics, economics and education is explicit:

> Governments are increasingly looking at international comparisons of education opportunities and outcomes as they develop policies to enhance individuals' social and economic prospects, provide incentives for greater efficiency in schooling, and help to mobilise resources to meet rising demands.
>
> (OECD 2019a, 3)

However, it shows that investment in the Irish primary education system is lower than the OECD average. In addition, it shows average class sizes in Irish primary schools are higher than the European Union (EU) average and Irish primary school pupils spend 10%

more time on learning religion, ethics and moral education than the OECD average (OECD 2019b).

Some commentators examine the business-like approach of the DES towards education. Mac Ruairc (2010) points out the following strategies as evidence of new-managerialism within the primary school system.

> …the language of the marketplace that delimits discussions and documentation emanating from the DES; the significant increase in forms and frequency of inspections and school/programme evaluations; the publication of evaluation reports on the department website; the recent practice among the inspectorate of rating schools on a scale of one to four thereby identifying underperforming schools; the setting up of a school improvement group to deal with schools identified as underperforming; the introduction of unannounced inspection visits and the collation of reports from these visits; and the introduction of mandatory standardised testing in primary schools.   (Mac Ruairc 2010, 230)

In *New Managerialism in Education,* Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) also give an insightful review of how the political paradigm affects education. Principals are perceived as instrumental to new-managerialism within the education system.

> The project of reconstructing educational leaders to enact new-managerial reforms became a core part of public sector reforms in many European countries, including Ireland from the early 1990s.
> (Lynch, Grummell, and Devine 2012, 5)

The writers point out that the government facilitated the establishment of the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) in 2000 as a representative body for primary principals. At its inception, principals debated the concept of principal as chief executive officer (CEO) and consequently, "…principals felt under pressure to conform to new-managerial principles even if they did not endorse them" (ibid., 12). According to the writers, new-managerialism has crept into the school system despite opposition from teacher trade unions, teachers as members of political parties, and teachers in key decision-making educational organisations. Nevertheless, the aforementioned groups and religious bodies were successful in halting the introduction of school league tables and instead whole school evaluation (WSE) inspectorate reports are published online. Another factor that stymied new-managerialism is that most primary schools are small schools, embedded in local communities, and are led by principals who are also class teachers (ibid., 17). Statistics from the DES website show that there are 716 small primary schools with 60 or less pupils and this represents 23% of all primary schools and 11.9% of all enrolments for September 2019 (DES 2019c). Furthermore, personal correspondence in April 2020 with the DES revealed that 56% of primary principals are

teaching principals and 44% are administrative principals. The principals in this study are all members of the IPPN and reveal some of the challenges they face as a result of the DES's approach to education. It will also be seen from Chapter Six how three teaching principals deal with the challenges of administration and teaching a class.

Some writers involved in Catholic education warn against the negative consequences of marketisation on education.

> In Ireland, it has led to greater emphasis on the social dimension of education, and the need to address areas of disadvantage. The downside is that the indicators used have become the only drivers for education policy, and often, the elements of the system not measured have been downgraded.   (Tuohy 2006, 169)

Conway (2015) believes all schools and colleges, including Catholic schools, are vulnerable to an instrumental approach and new-managerialism in education. Key performance indicators do not signify whether "the very soul of that institution has survived and that it is still a vibrant part of the mission of the Church" (ibid., 269). To counteract the prevailing culture, he advocates Catholic schools and colleges return to their missionary option and they become courageous in promoting their distinctive culture. This requires more than just a display of Christian symbols in schools.

> Attending only to crosses, mission statements and other external manifestations of ethos is the equivalent of washing only the outside of the vessel (Mt 23:26). Attention must be paid to the inherent operative culture in Catholic institutions.
>   (Conway 2015, 265)

Catholic schools that are not willing to engage in mission should rethink their position:

> Our Catholic schools and colleges are the products of evangelisation in the past, but they have no reason to continue in existence unless… they become agents of evangelisation in to the future.   (ibid., 270)

The principals in this study discuss many challenges CPSs face in relation to promoting the Catholic mission.

1.1.2. *Action plans for education*

More recently, the Government of Ireland's (GoI) new-managerial approach to education is apparent in DES action plans that are designed to improve and reform the education system. The language of competition, choice, autonomy and accountability is imbedded in these plans that have a direct influence on the everyday experiences of principals. For example, the educational reforms outlined in the Programme for a Partnership Government (GoI 2016) comprise the following: prioritising early years education,

tackling disadvantage, providing for diversity and choice for parents, promoting excellence and innovation in schools, and providing resources for children with special education needs (SEN). Principals and other school leaders are seen as pivotal agents of change. In order to achieve these reforms, continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities and local school clusters have been put in place to enhance principals' capabilities.

> In order to improve student's [*sic*] outcomes and school performance, we will examine the potential for measures to assist teaching principals. We will also incentivise voluntary school participation in new "Local Education Clusters" that encourage schools to improve student outcomes by sharing best practice and school improvement experiences, foster collaborative in and out-of-hours initiatives, staff peer mentoring and leadership, and [*sic*] that allow for cost reductions through economies of scale.   (GoI 2016, 90-91)

The vision and strategy for improving the school system is further expanded in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 (DES 2016a) and the Action Plan for Education 2019 (DES 2019a) and progress is measured by quantitative indicators (DES 2019b). Some of the goals for the primary school system in these action plans include: improvements in information and communications technology (ICT); more supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with SEN; the development of a continuum for teacher education; improvements in school leadership; and greater school choice. The competitive, economic and instrumental vision of children's education is obvious: "The central vision...is that the Irish Education and Training System should become the best in Europe over the next decade" (DES 2016a, 1). For the principals in this study, one of the main challenges they face is the integration of children with SEN into mainstream schools.

Regarding socio-economically disadvantaged children, the DES provides extra supports and resources to designated schools in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Education (DEIS) programme. Two principals in this study work in DEIS schools and talked about the context in which they work during the course of the interviews. Since 2006, principals in DEIS primary schools are expected to improve the educational outcomes of children from these areas by managing: extra funding; more favourable staffing schedules; supports for literacy and numeracy; and school meals. The DEIS Plan 2017 (DES 2017b) details improvements such as the introduction of behaviour interventionist programmes, 'Incredible Years' and 'Friends,' to support classroom management and children's wellbeing respectively. Primary schools can access the

National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS) to assist in the inclusion of children with behaviour difficulties. Principals are expected to instigate many other new initiatives such as: in-school speech and language resources; additional support from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS); and leadership development. Research has found that the DEIS programme has been successful in improving outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Smyth, McCoy, and Kingston 2015). However, Dr. Paul Downes' reflection on the DEIS Plan 2017 (DES 2017b) in the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) April 2017 InTouch magazine is noteworthy:

> Another concern of a number of schools is that the action plan's drive towards metrics seeks to make schools data laboratories and interventions rather than living systems. In living systems, relationships in school matter and relationships take time, whether with parents, pupils or fellow staff members.

In *Towards a Better Future*, Coolahan et al. (2017) advocate that the envisaged changes to the education system need sustained resources and support, not just from the DES but from other government departments as well. They acknowledge that the 2008-2009 economic recession has had negative consequences on education.

> Changes such as reductions in salaries and allowances, the removal of middle management posts, reductions in support staff, disimprovements in pupil-teacher ratios, embargos on appointments… and reduced capitation fees have had deleterious effects on the system and on staff morale.
>
> (Coolahan et al. 2017, xi)

The underinvestment in primary education is also noted by Sheila Nunan, General Secretary of the INTO, who stated, "primary education is the Cinderella of the education system when it comes to funding" in the October 2017 Intouch magazine.

1.1.3. Legislation and education

As well as DES action plans, the education system is also guided by legislation such as the Education Act 1998 (GoI 1998a), the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (GoI 2000a), and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 (GoI 2004). The Education Act 1998 lays out the objectives, parameters and structures of schools and protects their characteristic spirit. The BoM shall:

> …uphold and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.
>
> (GoI 1998a, 15(2)(b))

The characteristic spirit is also protected by the Employment Equality Act 1998 (GoI

1998b, 37(1)) that allows denominational schools to favour the employment of co-religionist teachers. Previously, the Equal Status Act 2000 (GoI 2000b, 7(3)(c)) allowed denominational schools to favour co-religionist children in their admission policies. However, the government has made legislative changes with the introduction of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 (GoI 2018) that ensures CPSs no longer use religion as a selection criterion in their student admissions policies.

1.1.4. *Primary school patrons*

Figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show that the RoI has a population of over 4.7 million people and there are more than half a million children attending primary schools (CSO 2017). Key statistics from the DES website show that 3,250 State-aided primary schools cater for 558,314 students who are taught by 35,669 teachers (DES 2017c). While there are no State-run schools in the RoI, all schools are State-aided. The school system is a 'hybrid' of public and private enterprise: a public government system that funds private patrons who manage the schools (Rougier and Honohan 2015, 73). However, Community National Schools are managed by government-funded Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The DES pays all teachers' salaries, sets the curriculum and monitors the work of schools through the inspectorate. Patron bodies with different educational philosophies establish different types of primary schools. The BoM that governs each school is responsible to its respective patron and the principal usually acts as secretary to the BoM and is responsible for leading and managing the school.

The DES categorises primary schools into four groups; denominational, multidenominational, gaelscoileanna (Irish language immersion schools) and special schools (DES 2017c). As well as CPSs, other denominational schools include: Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Muslim, Jewish and Quaker primary schools. Multidenominational primary schools include: Educate Together National Schools, Community National Schools, Steiner National Schools and John Scottus National Schools. The percentage of pupils enrolled in primary schools by ethos are as follows: 90% Catholic primary schools: 6.8% multidenominational schools; 2.9% Church of Ireland; and 0.3% other (DES 2019c). The eighteen principals in this study discuss the Catholic patronage support structure, their preferences for school patron and their willingness to change patron.

1.2.   The Catholic Primary School Sector

This section looks at the religious context of the CPS, its historical background and how it caters for diversity and religious pluralism. The Church recognises that Catholic primary and secondary schools provide a significant service to the Catholic faith community in Ireland (IEC 2010). What distinguishes the CPS from other primary schools is an "open secret"; it is a place where students are introduced to the story of Jesus Christ (Prendergast 2012, 27). Therefore, the vision and nature of CPSs are distinctive from other school types.

1.2.1. The religious context of Catholic primary schools

Contemporary Ireland has experienced many cultural changes in a short period of time that has resulted in the postmodern *milieu* that now exists. Lane (2012) outlines some of the cultural, religious, and educational changes that affect Catholic schools. Just like Europe, "there is a wide spectrum of religious sensibilities present in Ireland…Ireland has become almost overnight a pluralist, multicultural, and secular society" (ibid., 36). There has also been a major shift in educational thinking with a new emphasis on lifelong learning, information technology, and the recognition of multiple intelligences. Lane believes the material excesses of the Celtic Tiger have left people with a spiritual hunger with many people experiencing a crisis of faith.

According to Tuohy (2006), those who attend Catholic schools are not a homogenous religious group but instead are divided into three levels of participation: a core set of believers being supported in their faith through catechesis; those who seek to be introduced to the story of Jesus Christ through evangelisation; and those who, as yet, do not know the Christian story are pre-evangelised (ibid., 28-29). All three levels exist simultaneously within CPSs. Tuohy points out that as the core set of believers is shrinking, Catholic schools now place more emphasis on pre-evangelisation and evangelisation than they did in previous eras.

The Catholic school falls into one of three categories depending on how it approaches its mission and how it balances the tensions that arise from the demands of government, parents, community and the Church (Tuohy 2012). Firstly, schools can provide "education for Catholics," with much emphasis on RE and Catholic rituals (ibid., 174). Secondly, they provide "secular education with Catholic trimmings," when the emphasis is on academic achievement and pastoral care and the school turns to Catholic rituals

when required. Lastly, they provide "Catholic education for all," when students are invited, rather than required, to respond in faith (ibid., 175). When schools provide "Catholic education for all," the dynamic is thus:

> Leaders, teachers, students and parents are engaged in reflecting on the inter-connectedness of school life, where individuals develop as human beings, open to the fullness of cultural experiences, in which they find a living God to whom they relate. (Tuohy 2012, 175)

The Catholic Schools Partnership (CSP) was established to foster "coherence" and to communicate a "unified voice" for Catholic schools in Ireland (CSP 2019, 7). It also creates networks and provides supports to educators within the sector. Its resource manual *Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School* provides a process for evaluating and developing the Catholic ethos led by the BoM and principal. Research by Mahon (2017) investigated CPS communities' perceptions of their Catholic identity. The eight schools had undergone a process of internal evaluation of their Catholic ethos and there was evidence of 'detraditionalisation' in seven of the schools. The term 'detraditionalisation' is used by Boeve (2003) to describe a religious tradition that has undergone an interruption because of secularisation and pluralisation and it is no longer automatically transmitted from one generation to the next. Mahon found the schools were nominally Catholic and the emphasis was on Christian values rather than a distinctive Catholic identity. She found that the participating schools would have welcomed support such as visits from the diocesan advisors and bishop but they had received none. In relation to parish involvement in sacramental preparation, the eight schools ranged from mixed support to generally poor. Only one school had regular visits from the parish priest and a parish sister. Most parents were perceived to have engaged with First Holy Communion and Confirmation preparation and ceremonies but most were not involved in the parish between those celebrations. Some participants felt that some teachers did not like to teach RE because of the Church's handling of child sexual abuse scandals and the Church's teaching on sexual morality. Significantly, Mahon found only one principal to be "the driving force behind the Catholic ethos" (ibid., 136) and in general there was a "*laissez faire* approach to ethos" (ibid., 144).

Mahon (2017) recommended that principals have a postgraduate qualification in Catholic education prior to appointment. In order to close the gap between the espoused and operant Catholic ethos, other recommendations included: diocesan advisors to support ethos development as well as the RE programme; teachers and principals should be

offered CPD on the Catholic ethos; parishes need to be more proactive and involve trained lay people in school visits; parents must be informed of and invited to foster a Catholic ethos; and schools need to engage in a self-evaluation process regarding the Catholic ethos.

> Without intervention, it is arguable that these schools are on a single trajectory towards a further dilution of their religious identity. Given that they are, in many cases, the sole provider of RE and sacramental preparation for children, this has grave implications for patrons of Catholic schools. The process offered by the CSP affords primary schools an opportunity to assess their religious identity. Without concrete action to support schools in implementing their own recommendations, however, the process will not have any lasting impact.
>
> (Mahon 2017, 148)

Mahon's case study is relevant to this study as she interviewed principals as well as chairpersons of BoM, teachers and parents about the Catholic ethos. In Chapter Seven, the findings from her study will be compared with the findings of this study.

Similar research by Byrne and Devine (2018) found a continuum of religiosity exists within the Catholic secondary school sector. Significantly, they also examined the principals' role in relation to the schools' religiosity. From a sample of thirty-seven schools, the researchers developed a typology of Catholic schools: faith visible, faith transition and faith residual. In faith visible schools (13), fee-paying schools were over-represented and the majority of students were white, Catholic and Irish. The principals of these schools allocated time and resources to promoting the ethos through Catholic rituals, liturgy and prayer and they were concerned about their own lack of training as faith leaders. Most of the faith transition schools (21) were in working class areas and the emphasis was on academic achievement and on Christian values rather than Catholic identity. Principals in these schools were not sure about their distinctive religious role and gave sporadic attention to the Catholic ethos. Faith residual schools (3) were in middle class areas and were mostly secularised. Principals in these schools were indifferent to the Catholic ethos and did not consider themselves any different from principals of other school types. In an era of detraditionalisation and changing religious sensibilities, the researchers believe Catholic schools will move very quickly towards the last two types. The Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 has paved the way for a "recontextualised Catholic school model that embeds plurality and recognition of diversity within a redefined mission by Catholic schools themselves" (ibid., 475). However, the present situation has not always been the case and it is important to review the history of CPSs over the last two hundred years in order to understand the changes

that have occurred in the Catholic school tradition.

1.2.2. Historical background

Many writers explore the nexus of culture, faith, and education, the long tradition of Christian education in Ireland and the history of the CPS sector (Coolahan 1981, 2006, Fleming and Harford 2014, Lyons 2012, Murphy 2008, O'Sullivan 2005, Tuohy 2013). Tuohy (2013) outlines the history of Christian education that dates back to the early monastic era and continued even during the period of the Penal Laws when schools for Catholics were not allowed and children continued to be educated by hedge-school masters. After Catholic Emancipation in 1829, Lord E.G. Stanley, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, formally established the national school system in 1831. In a letter to the Duke of Leinster he announced British government funding for primary schools in Ireland. The present patronage system dates back to then whereby the government provided public funding for education and controlled the curriculum while private patrons, mainly the Churches, established and managed primary schools and hired the teachers. It was initially set up as a non-denominational system. Secular education was provided to all children who were to be separated for religious instruction that was to be taught at a set time. Factors that led to the system becoming denominational by 1850 include: the British political policy of cultural assimilation; the distrust between the Catholic and Protestant Churches; and the growth in confidence of the Catholic Church and its demand for separate schools. "The result was that by the middle of the nineteenth century the system had become increasingly denominational though the theory of its being a mixed system continued to apply" (Coolahan 1981, 14).

From Irish Independence in 1922 until the 1960s, successive Irish governments and the DES had a *laissez-faire* attitude to education: "In many ways, the transition from British rule to independence was a seamless transition for the education system" (Tuohy 2013, 217). The patronage system remained in place and in the hands of the Churches that paid a local financial contribution towards the running of the schools, thereby giving them *de facto* ownership of the schools. The local contribution also ensured the autonomy of the patron and manager in matters of employment and religious instruction. In addition, socialising children in an Irish cultural identity became the State's new vision for primary education and the introduction of the Irish language and history into the curriculum facilitated this endeavour.

During this period, the Irish Constitution (GoI 1937) set the tone of the State's

subordinate role in education whereby the State is not obliged to provide free education but instead "provide(s) for free primary education*"* (S.42.4). Although the Constitution predates many human rights declarations and conventions, it establishes parents as the primary educators of their children (S.42.1) and safeguards their right not to send their child to a school to which they have a conscientious objection (S.42.3.1). Freedom for religion and freedom from religion is fully recognised in relation to education: children are given the right to attend a State-aided school without attending religious instruction (S.44.2.4); and denominational schools are assured of State aid (S.44.2.4).

In the 1960s there was a dramatic shift in State policy on education that resulted in, "a move away from a theocentric to a mercantile paradigm" (Fleming and Harford 2014, 635). The publication of the 1965 OECD report heralded a significant change in government policy.

> *Investment in Education*, then, was a wake-up call for the government and thereafter it was decided to substantially increase investment in education and that the state would take a more active role in the actual running of the system.
> (Murphy 2008, 32)

Since the 1960s, OECD reports on education attempt to inspire governments to use education as a lever to improve a country's economic and social situation whereby, "persons are valued in terms of their ability to contribute to economic development" (Tuohy 2012, 167).

1.2.3. *The characteristic spirit of the Catholic primary school*

The characteristic spirit or ethos of the school is defined in the Education Act 1998 (GoI 1998a, 15(2)(b)) and the moral, spiritual and religious aspect of the school forms part of the overall school ethos. In an address to the IPPN conference in 2005, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin stated, "the primary ethos of any school should be an educational one." However, the Catholic ethos is difficult to define: Tuohy (2006) associates it with the action of the Holy Spirit within school culture; Spring (2012) believes it flows from Catholic values; while Woulfe (2012) thinks the ethos cannot be imposed but can be promoted. The subsection reviews Irish Catholic Church documents and literature on developing the Catholic school ethos. However, Mahon's (2017) case study shows the disparity between the aspirant and operant Catholic school ethos.

The CPSMA, organised on a diocesan level, assists BoM in governing CPSs. The *Board of Management Handbook* (CPSMA 2016) provides guidance to schools on how they can

actively foster the Catholic ethos. Included in the handbook is the Agreed Schedule for a CPS in the RoI:

> A Roman Catholic school (which is established in connection with the Minister) aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school provides Religious Education for the pupils in accordance with doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.
>
> (CPSMA 2016, 15)

Many of the schools in this study had the Schedule displayed at the school entrance and two principals specifically talked about it. According to the CPSMA Handbook, it is used as a reference point for the formulation of school policies and all prospective staff and parents who apply to enrol their children in the school should be given a copy. "It is an important document for those involved in any way in the life of the Catholic school…Not only must it be displayed, it must play an active role in the daily life of the school" (Spring 2012, 140). Spring also points out that parents should be made aware of what the Catholic ethos entails before sending their child to school. Furthermore, she points out that parents whose children are enrolled in the school and who want to withdraw their children from RE should be facilitated in this regard as it is their constitutional right.

The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (ICBC) interprets the mission and ethos of the Catholic school in *Vision 08* (ICBC 2008). It points out that although Catholic schools have much in common with other primary schools, they are distinguished by their foundation in Christian faith. Children receive a holistic education that is concerned with the whole of a person's life: "What is entailed here is not only the fullest possible human flourishing in this world but a hope for the world to come" (ibid., 2). The RE curriculum provides an opportunity for children: to hear the message of Jesus Christ; to pray; to learn about morality; and to learn about the importance of putting their gifts and talents at the service of others. The Catholic school pursues academic excellence in all subject areas because it sees faith and reason as "vibrant partners" (ibid., 3). In addition, Catholic schools are inclusive, they welcome students of all abilities and backgrounds and they cater for their pastoral needs. Parents, as the children's primary educators, are encouraged to actively participate in the school community. Thus, the school develops strong links with the parish and wider community. The Catholic school is a community of relationships as it, "aspire(s) to create an open, happy, stimulating, and mutually

respectful community environment" (ibid., 2).

All staff are expected to uphold the Catholic ethos: "The contribution of the Board of Management, Principal, teachers and other staff in witnessing to the Catholic ethos of a school cannot be overestimated" (CPSMA 2016, 15). Official supports available to CPSs to uphold the ethos include: advisers from diocesan education offices, the CPSMA, BoM, parish priests, parish personnel, and parents (IEC 2010, CPSMA 2016). However, despite these supports, CPSs do not always foster a rich Catholic culture and can experience "a displacement in their mission integrity" (Spring 2012, 143).

Catholic schools welcome and include children from all backgrounds. In its document Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland (CSP 2015a), the Church makes recommendations on how Catholic schools can cater for diversity. "One of the strengths of the Catholic primary school sector is its social inclusion so that in most parts of the country children from various social strata attend the same school together" (ibid., 8). Research has shown that CPSs are inclusive and on a par with multidenominational schools in catering for diversity and are more likely to include members of the travelling community than other school types (Darmody, Smyth, and McCoy 2012, v).

CPSs develop strong links with the parish and help prepare children for the sacraments of initiation (CPSMA 2016, IEC 2010). However, anecdotal evidence and research has found that both the parish and parents have been remiss in their responsibilities and over rely on Catholic schools to foster children's faith (Kennedy 1999, Lane 1991, Tuohy 2007). On many occasions, teachers have been left to prepare children for the sacraments on their own: "The real work for the preparation for these sacraments is left more often than not to the school" (Coll 2005, 328). The situation has improved somewhat in relation to First Holy Communion with the introduction of the parish-based programme Do This in Memory (Gilligan 2008). Significantly, in December 2019, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin suggested that the responsibility for the co-ordination of children's sacramental celebrations be moved from CPSs to parishes in the near future.

The Catholic ethos very much depends on the teachers. They must be suitably qualified to teach in Catholic schools and are required to have a Certificate in RE and Religious Studies (CPSMA 2016). The Church acknowledges that continuous faith development is important: "In partnership with the parish and other bodies, opportunities are provided to staff and board members for adult spiritual support and growth" (CSP 2015b, 18).

However, the reality is somewhat different in primary schools and there is a growing concern about the lack of opportunities to develop teachers' faith and spirituality (Clegg 2012, Lane 2012, O'Connell and Meehan 2012, Dineen 2015). Although children's spiritual development is a stated aim in the Education Act 1998 (GoI 1998a, S.9(d)), O'Connell and Meehan highlight the paradox: "In a trawl through state approved courses recently offered to primary school teachers…. only one viable course offered an opportunity for teachers to explore this spiritual aspect" (2012, 201-202). They believe that, although colleges of education provide academic modules on Christian faith, not enough is being done to foster primary teachers' spirituality. They recommend that teachers' spirituality must be intentionally and purposefully fostered at all stages of teachers' careers so they can then foster children's spirituality. Teachers who work in voluntary Catholic secondary schools under the Catholic Education and Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST) can avail of 'Joining the Dots' programme that has been found to successfully develop teachers' spirituality. No such programme exists for primary teachers.

Similarly, Tuohy considers faith development for teachers a necessity if the Catholic school is to fulfill its mission. As the situation has moved from "educating Catholics" to "Catholic education for all," the school must rediscover its mission and identity in this changed context and discover a balance between building Catholic identity and embracing the predominantly secular culture (2007, 281). Developing teachers' faith is part of the solution for mission and leadership:

> The challenge is to introduce the key concepts of Catholic education to teachers early in their careers, so that the personal, professional, and spiritual dimensions of their lives grow in an integrated way. With an increased fluency in theological reflection, they will then be more confident leaders of the Catholic school. This is not just a concern for schools. It will be impossible to ask lay people to lead the future of Catholic education when they have no role in the wider Church. What is required is a deeper renewal of the Church to give voice to the priestly, prophetic, and royal charism each person receives at baptism.
>
> (Tuohy 2007, 279)

1.2.4. *Teaching Religious Education in Irish Catholic primary schools*

All schools are obliged to contribute to children's moral and spiritual development. According to the Education Act 1998, one of the functions of a school is:

> To promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school. (GoI 1998a, 9(d))

In denominational schools, morality and spirituality are part of the RE curriculum. Hession (2015) distinguishes between RE in multidenominational schools and RE in denominational schools. Firstly, students in multidenominational schools are taught RE from the "outside" as they are taught about different religious traditions and no preference is given to one religion over another (ibid., 111). Secondly, students in denominational schools learn RE from the "inside" as they learn to live out the religious tradition of the school (ibid.,115). Therefore, teachers and principals in denominational schools "are often expected to be believers in the religion themselves and tend to be personally committed to the religious perspective being taught" (ibid., 118). The type of RE taught is defined by the characteristic spirit of the school.

> The religious education of young children [in CPSs] primarily involves formation, in which Christian beliefs, attitudes and practices are learned from an insider's theological point of view. It also includes elements of critical education in which children learn to understand and make discerning judgements in relation to their own religion and to critically reflect on Christian faith in relation to other religious and non-religious stances for living. (Hession 2015, 162)

There has been much discussion and debate about RE in CPSs (Byrne and Kieran 2013, Hession 2013, 2015, INTO 2004, 2013, Kieran and Hession 2005, 2008, Lane 2013). For example, it was found in an INTO (2004) survey that the vast majority of teachers were willing to teach RE. However, a decade later just over half of the 363 respondents were willing to teach RE (INTO 2013). Over half of those surveyed in 2013 thought that the class teacher should teach RE and very few teachers had opted out of teaching the subject. Teachers felt that too much was expected of them in preparing children for the sacraments and that it took up additional time. According to the survey, non-Catholic children were accommodated in different ways that may not coincide with parents' wishes: some participated in part of the RE curriculum; some did other work in the class; and very few withdrawal facilities were in place due to lack of alternative accommodation and staffing. Seventy-two percent of the teachers surveyed thought that Education about Religions and Beliefs and Ethics (ERBE) should be part of the RE curriculum.

One of the recommendations of the Forum on Pluralism and Patronage (Coolahan, Hussey and Kilfeather 2012) was the introduction of ERBE into all primary schools in an effort to cater for children of other religious backgrounds (DES 2014). ERBE is not meant to replace RE in denominational schools but is to be an element of learning within RE. Lane (2013) welcomes its introduction as he sees it as an opportunity for Catholic children to learn about other religious faiths. However, many proponents of Catholic

education are opposed to ERBE. In a submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Conway et al. (2016) expressed concern about a secularist approach to RE and the incompatibility of ERBE with the characteristic spirit of Catholic schools.

> For the implementation of the component [ERBE] will have the negative side-effect of encouraging both students and teachers to assimilate, consciously or subconsciously, a strongly secularist perspective on religion *unless it is made sufficiently clear that the component in no way whatsoever denies the truths foundational for the school's ethos*. In practice, this will be extremely difficult to ensure.   (Conway et al. 2016, 668)

Since the Forum in 2012, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (IEC 2015) has been introduced. The new Catholic primary RE curriculum includes units on inter-religious education from a Christian perspective. Hession (2015), one of the curriculum developers, points out that while primary children need to be grounded in their own faith, they also need to be open, respectful of, and knowledgeable about other faiths.

The document Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland: Sharing Good Practice on Inclusion of All Pupils (CSP 2015a) is helpful to the those involved in developing RE policies. When parents want their children to opt out of RE, consideration should be given to the constitutional right of parents to withdraw their children from any subject to which they have a conscientious objection and school resources should be available to facilitate the withdrawal of children from class. It is important to note the advice of the Church in *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*:

> …no pupil need receive, or be present at, any religious education of which her or his parents disapprove. Timetabling should be arranged to allow easy withdrawal.   (IEC 2010, 144)

In relation to this study, a few principals revealed that non-Catholic parents often send their children to CPSs and that schools have become more inclusive and sensitive to the needs of non-Catholic children.

1.2.5. *Church and State work together*

The Church works with the State to provide primary education for children whose parents want them to attend Catholic schools. However, tensions often arise between the Church and the State, as the Church strives to protect the characteristic spirit of Catholic schools and the State strives to protect the rights of individuals and to serve the common good

(Tuohy 2013). Recent developments and publications that pertain to CPSs are listed below.

State

1998 Education Act

1998 Employment Equality Act

1999 The Primary School Curriculum

2000 Education (Welfare) Act

2000 Equal Status Act

2001 Teaching Council Act

2004 Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act

2011 Revised Criteria and Procedures for Establishing New Primary Schools: Report of the Commission on School Accommodation

2012 The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary School Sector Report

2014 Forum on Patronage and Pluralism: Progress to Date and Future Directions

2015 Education (Admission to Schools) Bill

2015 Consultation process on Education about Religions and Beliefs and Ethics

2016 Abolition of Rule 68 of the *Rules for National Schools*

2016 Action Plan for Education 2016-2019

2017 Proposed Amendment of Section 7(3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000

2017 Introduction of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity Process

2018 Education (Admission to Schools) Act

2019 Cumasú: Empowering through Learning: Action Plan for Education 2019

The Catholic Church

2007 Catholic Primary Schools: A Policy for Provision into the Future (ICBC)

2008 Vision 08: A Vision for Catholic Schools in Ireland (ICBC)

2010 *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (IEC)

2010 The establishment of the Catholic Schools Partnership (CSP)

2012 Catholic Primary Schools – Looking to the Future (CSP)

2015 *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (IEC)

2015 Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland: Sharing Good Practice on Inclusion of All Pupils (CSP)

2019 *Understanding and Living the Ethos of a Catholic Primary School* (CSP)

By simply changing legislation, the government can forge deep changes and secularise the primary school system. Ronan Mullen, a government senator, believes it is "better divest rather than dilute" so that Catholic schools become distinctive and true to their mission (2012, 103). His warnings from almost a decade ago seem prescient regarding the government's political decisions and legislative changes:

> Gradual, piecemeal reforms may be proposed, including legislation…to weaken the autonomy of school managers in employment decisions. Proposals for change will be backed up by reference to situations where non-Catholic children feel excluded by the preparation of children for sacraments during school-time. We will hear from teachers who resent having to teach the precepts of a faith to which they do not subscribe. And we will hear the economic argument for less religion and more science. (Mullen 2012, 109)

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 is an example of such change as it removed the Catholic school's right to give preference to Catholic children for enrolment. It remains to be seen in the future if this change has an impact on the percentage of Catholic children in CPSs. Significantly, two principals in this study made a comment on the 'baptism barrier', the criterion that allowed CPSs to favour co-religionist students in their admissions policy and a few principals talked about the need to have more multidenominational schools.

1.2.6. Diversity and pluralism

Statistics show that Irish society has become more diverse and religiously plural in recent decades (CSO 2017). Schools are no longer "Catholic, White and Gaelic" and diversity and plurality have implications for policy and practice (Parker-Jenkins and Masterson 2013). The new postmodern culture, its associated socio-economic paradigm and the values of equality, diversity, tolerance, acceptance and social cohesion now prevail (Tuohy 2013). Individual religious freedom has replaced collective religious freedom and this has resulted in incremental changes to the education system such as an increase in multidenominational schools (Rougier and Honohan 2015). Interested parties debate the place of religion in Irish primary schools and discuss measures that denominational schools should take to cater for children of minority faiths (Faas, Darmody, and Sokolowska 2016, Hogan 2011, IHRC 2011, McGorman 2011, Nugent and Donnelly

2013, Smyth 2010, Smyth et al. 2009). Suggestions vary on how to reform the primary school system such as replacing all primary schools with non-denominational State-run schools (Nugent and Donnelly 2013, O'Toole 2015). On this point, Tuohy remarks, "there is a lack of willingness on the part of the State itself to set up and run schools as part of its responsibility to the common good. In this regard, Ireland is very different from other countries" (2013, 325). Another suggestion is to use international human rights law to influence changes in national law regarding school admissions and teacher employment (Mawhinney 2015). To date, no change has been made to the Employment Equality Act 1998 (S.37(1)) that allows denominational schools to favour co-religionist teachers who support and promote the school's religious ethos. Although international and European human rights conventions cannot be legally enforced, it has been government policy and practice to incorporate them into Irish law (Iona 2012). The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in 2011 was one of the State's initiatives aimed at reforming the system.

1.2.7. *The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism*

More than a decade ago, the Church recognised the need for other patrons to provide other school types (CSP 2012, ICBC 2007) and many CPS commentators welcome a more diverse primary school patronage system (Drumm 2012, Mullen 2012, Murray 2012, O'Reilly 2012, Tuohy 2013).

> It is sometimes the case that people choose the Catholic school simply because it is the only school available, and not because they wish their children to have a Catholic education. This can cause difficulties for parents who do not share the ethos of a Catholic school. It can also put an unfair financial and administrative burden on the parish. We feel that in such circumstances the Church should not be left with the task of providing for the educational needs of the whole community. As the Catholic Church accepts that there should be choice and diversity within a national education system, it believes that parents who desire schools under different patronage should, where possible, be facilitated in accessing them. In new centres of population it is incumbent upon the state to plan for the provision of school sites and to ensure, in consultation with the various patron bodies, that there is a plurality of school provision reflecting the wishes of the parents in the area. (ICBC 2007, 5.1)

The government established the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in 2011 as a response to religious pluralism in Irish society, the hegemony of the primary school patronage system and its concern about its commitment to international agreements (Coolahan, Hussey, and Kilfeather 2012). Many of the recommendations made by the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) also make up part of the Forum's recommendations (IHRC 2011, 104-106) such as: increasing the diversity of school types; making changes to the

1965 *Rules for National Schools*; and making changes to school routines in order to accommodate children who wish to be exempt from RE classes. In addition, the Forum made other separate recommendations: the divestment of some existing schools to different patrons; measures to ensure stand-alone schools are inclusive; more open admissions policies; RE to be taught as a discreet subject; the introduction of ERBE; and the need for schools to display religious symbols from many religious traditions (Coolahan, Hussey, and Kilfeather 2012, 105-114).

However, many of the Forum's recommendations were seen by proponents of Catholic schools as controversial as they seem to favour a religious syncretic approach rather than allowing the school to promote its religious ethos and express its religious identity as is permitted in the Education Act 1998. Subsequent to the Forum, the DES carried out surveys of 306 CPSs to investigate parental preferences for patronage. While the surveys showed a positive endorsement for Catholic patrons in the schools surveyed, there was a demand for a change of patron in 9% of the schools. However, the ICBC website points out that only a very small minority of parents (2.2% - 8%) expressed an opinion in favour of change and the majority of parents did not fill in the surveys. Therefore, the ICBC believed the surveys did not reflect the wishes of all parents in these schools.

In 2014 the Forum committee reiterated its concern about exclusive admission policies: "All schools…are obligated to respect the constitutional rights of pupils and their parents and should welcome and include all pupils enrolled in the school" (DES 2014, 15) It recommended that denominational schools make substantive adjustments to cater for children of other faiths and none. In addition, the Forum committee recommended that schools formulate religious policies regarding: children opting-out from RE and other religious activities; religious celebrations; the display of religious and cultural "artefacts" in the school; and pre-enrolment information for parents (ibid., 26). The government has progressed steadily with many of the recommendations to date such as the launch of the New Schools Establishment Group, deletion of Rule 68, enactment of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and consultation on ERBE. The suggestion that schools develop RE policies is positive especially in regard to how to accommodate children who opt of RE classes and sacramental preparation. As Lane rightly points out, "their wishes should not only be respected, but also accommodated sensitively in ways that offer a credible and valuable educational alternative" (2013, 34).

The Forum also expressed disappointment that its main objective had not been reached:

"divesting has not proceeded at the pace originally envisaged" (ibid., 14). Two schools were divested by 2015 (Faas, Darmody, and Sokolowska 2016). On January 30th 2017, the Minister of Education announced an accelerated process for the provision of non and multidenominational schools by means of live-transfers from one patron to another, depending on the identification of parental demand and the agreement of patrons. The Action Plan for Education 2019 has set targets for the identification and implementation phases of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity Process. However, personal correspondence with the DES revealed that six CPSs have been divested to multidenominational patrons from 2015 to 2020. One of the reasons for the slow pace of change may have been the false expectation by the State that existing patrons would initiate the change (Tuohy 2013). Furthermore, local sensibilities and loyalties perpetuate:

> All politics is said to be local: it is one thing to believe in divesting schools and promoting diversity in all schools; it is another to divest a particular school in a particular parish with particular parishioners. (Tuohy 2013, 263)

Rougier and Honohan (2015) also suggest that divesting of schools may require a change to the Constitution.

The government's initiative to increase school choice is a welcome move. The New Schools Establishment Group advises the Minister on the patronage of new schools where there is demographic need for a new school (DES 2017c). Patrons are invited to apply to the group with evidence of parental demand for a school type. The group then assesses the applications and gives consideration to widening the diversity of provision. In its Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 (DES 2016a), the DES aims to have 400 multidenominational primary schools by 2030. The multidenominational sector is now the fastest growing sector with 119 multidenominational primary schools (DES 2019b). In the last five years, 38 new multidenominational primary schools have been established (DES 2019c). Significantly, it seems the government has directly intervened as ETB Ireland established 23 Community National Schools between 2008 and 2020 and ETB patrons are directly funded by the government.

1.2.8. *The future of Catholic primary schools*

The focus of this study is on the role of Christian faith in the lives of CPS principals and it is beyond the scope of the study to give an in-depth analysis of the future possibilities for CPSs. However, a brief outline of some of the possible changes that may occur is

pertinent as any change of patronage or ethos will involve the principal teacher as a key negotiator and communicator. The possible changes under review here are the reconfessionalisation of CPSs, their recontextualisation, and the divestment of CPSs to ETB patrons.

In relation to reconfessionalisation, there have been calls from within the CPS sector for schools to clearly articulate their Catholic vision (Duffy 2012) and to return to their Catholic mission (Conway 2015). The process of reconfessionalisation is an expansive task that would involve all the faith development partners: parents, parishes and schools. Mahon's (2017) study could be taken as an example of reconfessionalisation as eight schools engaged in a process to strengthen the schools' Catholic ethos and identity. However, in the second year of the study the schools had made little or no progress in relation to the Catholic ethos. Mahon concluded the schools were content with their "*laissez faire* approach to the Catholic ethos" and for the Catholic identity to remain *status quo* (ibid.,144). She believes the gap between the operant and aspirant Catholic ethos will grow without intervention and concrete diocesan support.

Lane (2012) suggests that faith development programmes are made available to teachers, principals and members of BoM in order to build commitment to the Catholic ethos.

> At present there is insufficient educational support or spiritual nourishment of those in Catholic schools who are expected to lead in culturally difficult times and carry the burden in the heat of the day. In the past there were cultural supports and religious communities in the background supporting the leaders in Catholic schools. This has changed and there is need for ongoing structural support of professionals working in primary Catholic schools.
>
> (Lane 2012, 41-42)

In relation to accredited postgraduate courses for aspiring and incumbent principals, Mary Immaculate College of Education (MIC), University of Limerick (UL) provides a Master's degree in Christian Leadership in Education (MACLE). In Cork, the Christian Leadership in Education Office also provides postgraduate courses accredited by the University of Hull. Teachers and principals can also undertake a diploma in Catholic education in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and other universities provide opportunities for postgraduate research. While the Church has provided in-service for the introduction of the new RE curriculum, it has not provided in-service faith development courses for teachers and principals. Notably, in Ireland there is now a new focus on developing adult faith as outlined in *Share the Good News* (IEC 2010). The

Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education at DCU is undertaking a three-year Adult RE and Faith Development study (2018-2021) to investigate new opportunities for adults who want to explore and deepen their faith. It is hoped this initiative will set up models for adult faith development in Ireland. In my opinion, it is difficult to envisage the reconfessionalisation of CPSs in an era of increasing secularisation and pluralisation without dedication to mission and motivation by all of the school partners.

Regarding the recontextualisation of Catholic schools, Flannery (2019) suggests that Catholic schools renew their Catholic identity while formally acknowledging the new context of detraditionalisation, multiculturalism and religious pluralism. Indeed, the introduction of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 may pave the way for further pluralisation within the CPS sector as Catholic and non-Catholic children now have equal access to Catholic schools. In order to address religious plurality within Catholic schools, Flannery (2019) suggests the Church considers the catholic dialogue school model that was established in Belgium and welcomes students of all faiths and none. These schools have a dialogical and invitational approach to presenting the Gospel (Boeve 2019). In a catholic dialogical school:

> …students from a young age are introduced to people from other convictional standpoints and learn to engage in respectful dialogue. It should be noted that in this model, the Catholic school does not shrink from its identity and compromise its own beliefs. The Christian perspective enjoys a preferred status but is never promoted in an exclusive or doctrinaire way. (Flannery 2019, 52-53)

Flannery acknowledges that this model presumes a lot on the part of teachers who would be central to the dialogical approach. Notably, the catholic dialogue school requires a "critical mass" (Rymarz 2010, 303) of Catholic teachers and principals who are sufficiently developed in their own Christian faith and interreligious education. In the case of both reconfessionalisation and recontextualisation of CPSs, teachers and principals would have to avail of faith development programmes and be able to 'dialogue' with students of other faiths and none.

The third scenario under review is the divestment of CPSs to ETB patrons. It is noteworthy that the IPPN (2011) survey found that the majority of principals believe the patronage model needs to be overhauled. It recommended that primary schools in the future should be either joint-patronage or multidenominational primary schools. From within the CPS sector, Bishop Leo O'Reilly (2012) and Tuohy (2013) suggested some

CPSs could consider transferring to ETB patrons. At that time, faith formation was part of the multi-belief and values curriculum *Goodness Me Goodness You* (GMGY) and Catholic children were prepared for the sacraments during the school day. However, this situation has changed since 2018. On the Community National School website, the ethos statement highlights the school as a place at the centre of community, high standards of education and the spirit of inclusion and equality for all pupils. It aims to celebrate diversity and respect the plurality of faiths within the school community. One of the four strands of the GMGY curriculum is a strand on beliefs and religions that is taught from a secular standpoint and does not seek to promote one religion over another.

> GMGY employs a dialogical approach to teaching 'about' and 'from' beliefs and religions which aims to promote inter-belief harmony and respect for all, combat prejudice and discrimination, contribute positively to community cohesion and promote awareness of how inter-belief cooperation can support the pursuit of the common good. (Community National Schools 2018, 14)

Eighty percent of the GMGY curriculum is dedicated to the multi-belief section and twenty percent is given to teaching belief-specific modules that teach about individual religions. However, research by Mullally (2018) found problems with this relatively new curriculum. At the time of the research, Catholic children were getting more favourable treatment in belief-specific modules and she noted that Catholic bishops considered that the modules were not enough for the purposes of faith formation for Catholic children. In addition, some parents of minority faiths and none were unhappy for their children to engage in any inter-belief education. There were also challenges regarding the celebration of festivals and the display of religious symbols. Since 2018, children are taught the multi-belief and belief-specific modules by the class teacher and sacramental education for Catholic children has been changed from class time to outside of school hours. It is apparent from Mullally's research that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to RE can also be problematic and that it is difficult to accommodate the wishes of all parents even in multidenominational schools.

1.3. *The Principal as Leader of the Primary School*

While teaching directly affects children's learning, principalship is considered an indirect activity pivotal to creating the school culture and setting the context for successful outcomes (Flood 2011). Similar to other jurisdictions, the Irish government is aware of the influence of effective school leadership on teaching and learning and has started to invest in CPD for principals.

1.3.1. Legislation pertaining to principals

The legal obligations of school principals are prescribed in the Education Act 1998 (GoI 1998a), the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 (GoI 2004), and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (GoI 2000a). The role and responsibilities of the principal are defined in Sections 22 and 23 of the Education Act 1998. The principal's main role is to lead and manage the school:

> The principal shall:
>
> (a) be responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school, and be accountable to the board for that management,
>
> (b) provide leadership to the teachers and other staff and the students of the school.   (GoI 1998a, S.23(2)(a)(b))

According to the Education Act 1998, the principal is also responsible for: creating a supportive learning environment (S.23(2)(c)); setting learning objectives and monitoring achievement (S.23(2)(d)); involving parents in their children's education (S.23(2)(e)); and consulting with staff (S.23(6)). As a member of the BoM, the principal has many other responsibilities that include: the formulation of a policy on students with SEN (S.15(2)(b)); the proper use of grants (S.15(2)(f)); the development of a school plan (S.21); the appointment, suspension and dismissal of teachers (S.24); assisting parents to establish a Parents' Association (S.26); following grievance procedures (S.28); and following procedures for the suspension or expulsion of students (S.29).

Although not fully enacted, the EPSEN Act 2004 (GoI 2004) details the principal's legal obligations in relation to students with SEN. Section 3 refers to the principal's duty to instigate an assessment for students with SEN in consultation with parents and thereafter to ensure an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is formulated (S.3(5)). The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (GoI 2000a) outlines the principal's legal responsibilities with regard to students' attendance. The principal is responsible for: keeping a register of students (S.20); keeping a record of school attendance (S.21); and reporting absences to the Education Welfare Office (EWO). Under the same act, the BoM is also responsible for: developing a school attendance strategy (S.22); developing a code of behaviour for students (S.23); and liaising with the EWO on the expulsion of a student (S.24). As a member of the BoM, the principal is also guided by other legislation such as: the Employment Equality Act 1998 (GoI 1998b); the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 (GoI 2018); and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (GoI 2005). The

DES issues circulars to schools on the legal obligations that pertain to principals and the BoM and these in turn have led to the formulation and adoption of several school policies to ensure compliance. Kelleher (2012) believes that legislation, such as the Education Act 1998, has a positive impact on all schools as it requires principals to be more accountable and equitable.

> In many instances, it may well be that the legislation compels school leaders to face up to their obligation as leaders of the Catholic school and in a sense compels them to act in a more Christian manner.   (Kelleher 2012, 79)

Significantly, the principals in this study find the development and implementation of school policies very challenging, particularly in relation to children with SEN, because of the under-resourcing of the primary school sector.

1.3.2. *The changing role of primary principal*

The role of the principal has changed significantly over the last five decades. According to Flood (2011), the national co-ordinator of the former Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) unit, the Church and State rather than school principals acted as leaders in education in the past.

> The role of principal teacher before 1970 was an administrative one, coupled with an expectation of moral leadership for the school and the community. Decisions and directives came from the state or the church, depending on the nature of the issue at hand, and were ameliorated through the trade union interpretation. Teachers taught the curriculum laid down by the state, were loyal to the ethos as shaped by the church and were inspected by departmental inspectors. There was little scope for leadership influence in this environment.
>
> (Flood 2011, 49)

The 1970s was a period of change in primary schools with the introduction of a new primary curriculum in 1971, circular 16/73 (DES 1973) on the duties and responsibilities of principals, and the introduction of BoM in 1975. The emphasis from the 1960s to the 1990s was on management rather than leading teaching and learning. Flood remarks that, "the influence of the principal teacher on the content and methodologies of classroom teaching and learning throughout the school remained a relative 'no-fly zone'" (2011`, 50). In the late 1990s, primary principals and deputy principals (DPs) began to meet at national conferences and events, followed in 2000 by the establishment of the IPPN. In 2005, the Principals' and Deputy Principals' Committee (PDC) was formed by the INTO. It also provides networking opportunities for primary school leaders through its biennial conferences.

The IPPN has been proactive in highlighting and clarifying the role of primary principals in Ireland (IPPN 2002, 2004, 2008). In 2002, the HayGroup Management Consultants found that primary principalship consisted of seven key elements: leadership, teaching and learning, resource management, human resource management, policy formulation, administration, and external relationships (IPPN 2002, 2). However, it also found that there was an emphasis on administration in the legislation that did not take account of the fact that most principals were teaching principals who "have insufficient time and energy to devote to the managerial aspects of the role while carrying responsibility for a full class teaching load" (ibid., 4). It also advised that any proposed model for school leadership would be based on an educational model rather than a business model:

> The role of Principal is a leadership role. As such, it requires many of the core competencies associated with leadership roles in any sector or organisation. However, Primary Education is a unique environment which is clearly different from a commercial organisation. Any model of leadership must, therefore, recognise the importance of the values of learning and personal development which lie at the heart of the role. (IPPN 2002, 3)

The IPPN submitted the document Value of Leadership to the INTO as part of a government pay bench-marking process and it lists almost two hundred tasks undertaken by principals (IPPN 2004, 33-44). It argued that principals should be appropriately remunerated for their job and that enhanced pay would also help alleviate problems with the recruitment and retention of principals. Subsequently, the emphasis in the document Priorities for Principal Teachers - In Clear Focus (IPPN 2008) was on the distribution of tasks. It divides the principal's interactions into five different groups: children, staff, parents, BoM, and external agencies.

> Schools need to build distributed models of leadership and develop and make effective use of the administrative, technical and practical skills available within the school community. Critically, if the leadership potential of principals is to be utilised to the optimum, they need to be able to concentrate on leading learning. The balance between leadership and management needs to be re-aligned as a critical priority and this document attempts to put initial steps in place to enable that process to occur in a wide variety of school contexts.
> (IPPN 2008, 14)

The document lists '*key priorities*' that the principal must undertake, '*other priorities*' that can be delegated and '*other tasks*' that can be done collectively by staff. Some of the '*key priorities*' for principals included: acting as the designated liaison person (DLP); ensuring that staff carry out their duties; meeting with parents; interviewing for staff appointments; and cooperating with the inspectorate. According to Flood, the in-school-management (ISM) structure, made up of teachers with posts of responsibility, led to a

distribution of tasks rather than a distribution of leadership.

> While having formal middle leadership structures in place recognises the importance of a dispersal of the leadership function and gives clarity to the organization, the distribution of leadership in the Irish educational context remains a largely invitational process.   (Flood 2011, 54)

As part of the drive to improve the primary school system and school leadership, the government invited Professor Michael Fullan to contribute to the discussion in *Quality Leadership Quality Learning* (IPPN 2006). Fullan summarises his research findings stating that, "there is no example of school-wide success without school leadership; all examples of school failures include weak or ineffective leadership" (ibid., 5). At the time of writing the document he believed the greatest barrier to effective school leadership was the primary school system itself rather than principals' own self-imposed limitations.

> The state needs to make new improvements in the infrastructure at the system and local levels in order to meet the requirements of expertise for improving schools; and schools for their part must engage in collaborative action (inside and across schools) that focuses on capacity building with emphasis on accountable outcomes.   (IPPN 2006, 11)

He recommended that the development of leadership frameworks and standards and professional development programmes be accompanied by coaching and mentoring supports. In addition, he suggested that government plans should include: a review of the role of primary principal; a review of principals' contracts; a focus on recruitment and retention of principals; and the clustering of schools.

1.3.3. OECD and school leadership

The DES has attempted to adopt many of the OECD recommendations promulgated in *Improving School Leadership, Volume 1* (Pont, Nusche, and Moorman 2008). The OECD recommended four main policy levers for effective school leadership:

- (Re)define school leadership responsibilities.

- Distribute school leadership.

- Develop skills for effective school leadership.

- Make school leadership an attractive profession.
                              (Pont, Nusche, and Moorman 2008, 32)

In this publication educational policy makers are encouraged to embrace concepts such as the provision of school choice, competition between schools, continuous school improvement, high performance, and embracing diversity. Decentralisation, school

autonomy, and accountability are presented as the most effective way forward. These are the very concepts that make up the market-led model referred to by Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) in *New Managerialism in Education*. There is also a strong emphasis on instructional leadership that involves monitoring and evaluating teacher performance.

> School leaders must master the new forms of pedagogy themselves and they must learn how to monitor and improve their teachers' new practice. Moreover, instead of serving as head teacher *primus inter pares*, they have to become leaders of learning responsible for building communities of professional practice. Methods of evaluation and professional development take more sophisticated application and principals must embed them into the fabric of the work day.
>
> (Pont, Nusche, and Moorman 2008, 26)

Mac Ruairc (2010) critiques the OECD report and has an issue with the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to school leadership that does not take account of each country's unique context. He pointed out that the suggested OECD managerial approach to principalship is not workable in Ireland as the majority of primary principals are also classroom teachers in small schools. Neo-liberal governments often embrace increased autonomy, accountability, and instructional leadership in order to minimise their responsibilities and principals often suffer negative consequences as a result.

> It has been argued that the ideology underpinning many of these large-scale reform recommendations is a dispersal of blame designed to depoliticise the state's role in education which, in turn, could lead to a situation where school leaders will face the negative consequences of poor student outcomes for reasons largely outside their control. (Mac Ruairc 2010, 235)

Mac Ruairc believes the report's recommendation that principals adopt instructional leadership, in the form of teacher monitoring has the potential to have a serious negative impact on school climate and teacher professionalism in Irish schools. Primary teachers in Ireland come from the top one-fifth of school leavers and there is no tradition of teachers' performance being appraised by principals. Flood (2011), on the other hand, argued that principals' hands-off approach to teacher monitoring is outdated and that Irish principals must adopt an instructional approach in order to have a positive impact on teaching and learning in schools: "…they are challenged to embrace new practices, however uncomfortable, if these changes can be seen to be of ultimate benefit for student learning" (ibid., 46). Significantly, primary principals objected to the evaluative element of the *Droichead* induction programme for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and the programme was subsequently changed. On the other hand, the Education Act 1998 (S. 24) gives the BoM the right to suspend and dismiss teachers after due process.

The Irish government is forging ahead with changes in school leadership and has adopted many of the OECD recommendations in its Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 (DES 2016a).

> Success in education is built on the quality of leadership, the ingenuity in teaching, the support in the community for learning and this Action Plan aims to harness those human resources. To be the best we need to ensure that leadership, management, quality frameworks, teaching methods, and initial and continuing training are all open to the highest standards.   (DES 2016a, 2)

The Action Plan's key targets to improve school leadership include: the provision of coaching for 400 principals each year; 200 teachers to complete the postgraduate programme for aspiring leaders; and leadership and middle-management in school to be re-structured. Furthermore, the DES has introduced new measures to improve school inspections with a revised dual model for school inspection: external evaluations are carried out by the inspectorate using the new quality framework Looking at Our Schools 2016 (DES 2016b); and an internal school self-evaluation (SSE) process is led by the principal (DES 2016c).

1.3.4. A new leadership model

Subsequent to the Action Plan 2016-2019, the DES disseminated Circular 63/2017 *Leadership and Management in Primary Schools* (DES 2017a). It signaled a clear shift by the DES to make school leadership a priority and to give formal recognition to the value of distributive leadership:

> Leadership in a school context, creates a vision for development leading to improvements in outcomes for learners, and is based on shared values and robust evaluation of evidence of current practice and outcomes. In this way leadership is distributed throughout the school as a key support for pupil learning.
> (DES 2017a, 4)

In relation to the ISM team, the circular outlines the revised criteria for the appointment of Assistant Principals (APs) and the phasing in of open competition for DPs in primary schools. It reiterates the principal's role and defines the DP's role for the first time.

> The Deputy Principal occupies a position of vital importance within the school leadership team in a school. Shared leadership requires openness and willingness on the part of the Principal and Deputy Principal to share and to distribute leadership and management responsibilities in a manner that encourages and supports partnership. The Deputy Principal co-operates with the Principal in the fulfillment of the Principal's role and acts or deputises as the Principal in the Principal's absence.   (ibid., 6-7)

The accompanying document to the circular, Looking at Our Schools 2016 (DES 2016b)

details a newly devised leadership framework (Appendix A). The framework is intended: as a model for best practice; to underpin school inspections and the SSE process; and as a guide for reflection, recruitment, professional development, improvement and accountability. According to the quality framework, work in schools is divided into two dimensions: (1) teaching and learning; and (2) leadership and management. Under the leadership and management dimension, there are four domains:

1. leading teaching and learning;

2. managing the organisation;

3. leading school development;

4. developing leadership capacity.   (DES 2016b, 12)

Each of the above domains is further broken down into standards of behaviours and practice. In order to aid school improvement, examples are given of standards of effective and highly effective practices. With regard to leadership, there is an acknowledgement that school context matters:

> For example, in the leadership and management dimension, it is not useful for school leaders in small schools to evaluate their practice using statements that refer to extensive leadership teams. Therefore, schools will use each of the domains and standards to reflect on key areas, but will have considerable flexibility in deciding which statements to focus on in evaluating and describing their level of effectiveness.   (ibid., 10)

1.3.5. *Fostering a positive school climate and positive relationships*

As well as the technical or 'hard' dimensions, there is now a new emphasis on human relations or the 'soft' dimensions of what happens in schools. In Looking at Our Schools 2016 (DES 2016b), many of the standards include statements that recognise relationships, collaboration, partnership and communication as essential elements of highly effective practice. All of the domains of leadership and management in the new model rely on the ability of the principal and other school leaders to develop a positive school culture.

> The principal and other leaders in the school **model and develop** a strong culture of mutual trust, respect and **shared accountability**. They foster **a very positive** school climate and encourage respectful interactions at all levels within the school.   (ibid., 23)

Adopting this model means principals demonstrate effective communication skills, foster commitment to a shared vision, practice self-awareness and self-reflection, build teamwork, and develop positive relationships with parents.

> The principal and other leaders in the school build and maintain constructive relationships through effective and regular communication with all school partners using a range of media. They seek and listen to the opinions of others and formally engage in very effective dialogue with partners.   (ibid., 27)

The importance of creating a positive school climate is the theme of *Positive Behaviours, Relationships and Emotions* by Kitt (2017). She explores the importance of emotional and social intelligence for school leaders and how they can manage conflict with positive outcomes. School leaders have a responsibility to set a positive tone and work collaboratively with staff so that all children reach their potential. "…I define a positive/effective school environment as one that provides the highest of educational service to every student, in an atmosphere of respect, openness, collegiality and equality" (ibid., 25). It is a matter of balancing the task of education with people skills. Being emotionally intelligent requires leaders to be aware of and manage their own emotions and behaviours; secondly, they need to be socially aware and manage relationships with others. On maximising positive emotions, Kitt states:

> …it is hardly surprising that the provision of praise and recognition is among the most powerful instigators of positive emotions…Support and solidarity are also shown to be among the most common sources of positive emotions.
> (Kitt 2017, 61)

However, good leadership also entails giving feedback to staff when things are going wrong and discussing issues in an honest, open manner without personal comment.

Similar to other organisations, conflict is inevitable in schools because of the diverse nature of people working together. Internal conflict among staff can arise due to: unmet expectations, cliques, or "change blockers," those who are resistant to change (ibid., 66). Conflict that is not addressed early can lead to negative effects: "Toxic and unresolved conflict is one of the biggest causes of trouble and strife in a school" (ibid., 65). Principals should deal with conflict as it arises in a collaborative manner to come up with problem-solving strategies. This involves listening for understanding, trying to take the perspective of the other party, and adapting in order to come to an agreement.

Workplace bullying is prevalent in schools and its consequences can be devastating.

> Even in the schools where anti-bullying slogans adorn the walls, if bullying is taking place among the adults there, the message that is really being communicated to students is that, 'it's ok to bully here'.   (ibid., 105)

Some of the tactics used include isolation, criticism, and the withholding of information

and support. Kitt has found that, in her experience, informal and formal procedures to deal with bullying do not get to the root of the problem and often people resolve to either, "keep their heads down" or "they can leave" (ibid., 127). The best antidote to workplace bullying is building strong relationships and a community spirit that lead to a positive school climate.

The relationship between the principal and DP is very important. The IPPN publication *Giorraíonn Beirt Bóthar* (IPPN 2007) discusses how the relationship should be one of co-leadership rather than one of power and position. However, this relationship is delicate: "The role of Deputy Principal assumes a relationship with the Principal. This does not always happen" (ibid., 31). More recently the INTO researched the relationship dynamic between the principal and the DP by holding discussion focus groups at a PDC meeting (INTO 2017). It found that a partnership dynamic does not always exist and that some deputies felt their role was subordinate to and supportive of the principal's role rather than the roles being complementary. Communication and trust were seen as the hallmarks of effective working relations. It concluded that the relationship works best when the principal and DP distribute leadership, share the same vision and communicate regularly and openly.

Another significant relationship is the rapport between the principal and the BoM chairperson. Brennan writes about the importance of school governance and advises the following:

> Key elements to ensuring that this relationship works are accessibility, in order to facilitate formal and informal exchanges of information, mutual respect, honesty and transparency. The job of principal can be a lonely one, and the chairperson can support the principal and be a mentor and a confidant.
> (Brennan 2011, 33)

This study explores principals' experiences of staff relationships and conflict in school and the role of faith in relation to these experiences.

1.3.6. Research studies on primary principals

The findings from large and small-scale studies give an insight into principals' professional lives. The studies show that principals usually derive much satisfaction from the job even though the job is stressful. Some of the stress is caused by work-overload, interpersonal conflict, and the lack of administrative, managerial and leadership support.

In 2002 the HayGroup identified the main challenges faced by primary principals were:

a lack of clarity about the role; interpersonal and organisational skills; issues arising from teaching standards and underperforming teachers; the integration of children with SEN; and the formulation and implementation of policies (IPPN 2002). On interpersonal relations it states:

> The role of Principal requires the management of a broad range of relationships within the school and outside of it and the competencies required to manage these relationships are complex and demanding and require careful identification and development. (IPPN 2002, 5)

In particular, it highlighted the difficulties faced by teaching principals to fulfill their leadership, managerial or administrative roles. The lack of clarity about the role of principal has also led to ambiguity in relation to governance issues. It found that, when the BoM lacks managerial expertise then the bulk of those responsibilities fell on the principal. Principals also felt that the DES regularly increases their workload without providing sufficient resources or supports. The main conclusion of the HayGroup report was:

> There is a strong perception throughout the ranks of the principal generally that the role has become extremely difficult if not impossible to deliver effectively. This perception appears to derive from the lack of clarity around the role and a lack of time and resources. (ibid., 35)

Another study by Morgan and Sugrue (2008) explored the rewards and challenges of administrative principalship in primary and post-primary schools. The survey involved a sample of 600 principals and found that principals derived most satisfaction from receiving and giving support, followed by leadership opportunities, intrinsic rewards, and getting recognition and affirmation from others. While policy development and implementation were the greatest challenges, other areas that principals found challenging were problem solving, conflict resolution and self-management. Interpersonal relationships within schools were found to be at the core of some principals' discontentment. On the latter, the researchers surmised:

> What is not evident from these data is the extent to which the balance of school ecology is damaged by internal strife, or by turbulence in the personal lives of principals, or elements of both. (Morgan and Sugrue 2008, 18).

During the Celtic Tiger era, the Regional Training Unit (RTU) in Northern Ireland and the LDS unit in the RoI, undertook an extensive study involving approximately 400 primary and post-primary principals (RTU and LDS 2009). It sought to discover the

factors that make principalship attractive and the reasons why some teachers apply for the post while others do not. In general, most principals were satisfied with their jobs and were intrinsically motivated by "the vocational nature of the role" and "the chance to make a difference" (ibid., vii). The survey included almost one hundred newly appointed primary principals and found the key factors that gave most job satisfaction were: creating school ethos; improving standards; pupil contact; involvement in new initiatives; and people management. Factors that gave least job satisfaction were bureaucracy, dealing with complaints, financial management, administration and conflict resolution. About two-thirds of the principals in the RoI had not received any formal leadership training prior to appointment. Principals cited lack of awareness of training opportunities and lack of time to undertake CPD as reasons for not preparing formally for the role. Other personal factors contributed to teachers not applying for principalship:

> Our research also revealed that personal attitudes and attributes impact on the likelihood of applying for principalship. In the main, experienced female teachers were more likely to state that a lack of experience and/or confidence in their abilities were factors that would discourage them from applying for principalship.   (RTU and LDS 2009, xi)

Other disincentives were the terms and conditions of the job, lack of remuneration and poor career mobility. It found that more needed to be done to attract teachers to become principals, to develop new principals and to sustain incumbent principals.

A later study by Darmody and Smyth found that most primary principals were satisfied in their role but that "a significant proportion of them experienced occupational stress" (2016, 124). The study used data from almost 900 primary principals in the Growing Up in Ireland 2007/8 longitudinal study. There was less satisfaction among principals who were teaching classes, where school facilities were considered poor, and when there were a lot of emotional and behavioural issues among students. Role overload and interpersonal relationships were also key factors in job dissatisfaction:

> Principals were also less satisfied with their jobs where teachers were seen as less open to new developments and where teachers provided less help and support to their colleagues.   (Darmody and Smyth 2016, 124)

It recommended that principals should avail of CPD and that the BoM should take on more responsibility for school management.

> In this context establishment of an intermediate management tier between the Department of Education and Skills and schools could be considered to help to support school principals by taking responsibility for employment matters,

finance and school maintenance and provide a range of support services to all
schools.   (ibid., 125)

Stynes and McNamara's (2019) case study of thirty-one primary principals illuminates the rewards and challenges principals experience on a day-to-day basis. The principals all perceived their role positively, were intrinsically motivated, and demonstrated an enormous work ethic. Although administration is seen as necessary for good management, some elements such as managing pay rolls, tax compliance and managing school building projects were considered onerous. It found that one of the main difficulties is that the BoM consists of volunteer members who are not usually skilled in school management. Therefore, the principal often takes the lead and undertakes most of the workload of the BoM. Unexpected events, such as dealing with discipline and issues pertaining to SEN units, take up a considerable amount of time especially in disadvantaged areas. Principals spend time advising, supporting and affirming staff and often balance staff care needs with leadership responsibilities. Even after school hours, they are mentally and emotionally pre-occupied with school issues such as staff relations and child protection concerns. Principals' willingness to fulfill their multiple duties has an effect on their wellbeing and health. Hence, the researchers recommended that further studies should focus on "principals as individual human beings first and only then, as leaders." (2019, 39).

Significantly, Coolahan et al. (2017) also suggest the establishment of an administration tier so that principals can concentrate on leading teaching and learning, enhance the learning experience of students and develop schools as professional learning communities. Otherwise, there is a danger that principals become distracted from their core task of educational leadership:

> Educational leadership needs to take its bearings from the most promising and most defensible conceptions of education itself as a distinct human good. It needs to remain focused on the challenge of finding the best ways of promoting high quality *in the experience of learning itself*, including what this might mean for the full diversity of students…If educational leadership neglects this specifically educational challenge, or largely acquiesces in marching to another's drum (eg. political, ecclesiastical, commercial), it becomes from the start burdened by ambiguities of purpose and by expectations it should not have to meet.
> (Coolahan et al. 2017, 104)

The authors also recommend the provision of a "statutory governance tier" similar to ETBs that allow principals to lead more effectively (ibid., 108). In addition, the clustering of small schools would enhance the sharing of expertise and allow leadership capacity to

grow.

1.3.7. Professional development for primary school principals

School leadership development has the potential to improve teaching and learning, and leadership and management.

> Leadership development, if seen as a high-leverage activity that offers the potential for empowering schools to build capacity, lead improvement and transform student growth, becomes a powerful strategic weapon in the wise use of resources. (Flood 2011, 55)

Studies in the recent past have shown that principals have not availed of educational leadership courses and were largely unprepared for the role (McHugh 2015, Ummanel 2012). None of the five principals in Ummanel's Irish study had previously been DPs and the only formal training offered at the time was a week long summer course run by the INTO for principals already appointed to the position. The principals were mainly influenced by family members and colleagues to apply for principalship, had no clear predetermined career path and were motivated to act as agents of change within their schools. All of them found the initial years of principalship difficult and the main challenges centred on interpersonal relations and administration.

> While it is mentioned that holding an academic qualification in management to Master's level is advantageous for some, the principals reported that facing the many initial contexualised challenges is a daunting prospect.
> (Ummanel, McNamara, and Stynes 2016, 64-65)

Similarly, a study by McHugh (2015) found that twelve primary principals had little or no preparation for the role and some initially experienced shock, isolation and loneliness. The principals were sustained through CPD, networking and mentoring. Although high levels of moral, transformational and visionary leadership were apparent, McHugh advocated formal preparation for principalship and mandatory CPD for incumbent principals. He also recommended that the outgoing principal and the principal designate spend a period of a month working together to ensure continuity of leadership and management.

Professional leadership courses are now the remit of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The following educational leadership programmes are available but not mandatory: *Misneach,* for newly appointed principals; *Forbairt,* for experienced school principals and DPs; *Comhar,* for middle school leaders; *Tanáiste,* for DPs; and *Meitheal*, a collective group of experienced

principals who use reflective practice to enhance leadership skills. The CSL and PDST also provide: one-day seminars for all primary principals; and mentoring and coaching support for newly appointed principals. The former *Toraíocht* postgraduate programme for aspiring leaders was replaced by the Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL). All of the courses for principals and school leaders are informed by the domains and dimensions in the quality framework Looking at our Schools 2016 (DES 2016b).

A consultation paper by the CSL *A Professional Learning Continuum for School Leadership* (CSL 2017) acknowledges that all teachers have the potential to act as leaders in schools. It outlines proposed leadership development programmes for the following cohorts: teacher leaders; middle leaders; aspiring leaders; induction of newly appointed principals; established leadership support; and system leadership development. The emphasis is on leading learning and it endorses instructional leadership. While the government rhetoric is positive in relation to school leadership programmes, Coolahan et al. (2017) point out the negative consequences of removing allowances for teachers who undertake postgraduate studies.

> The allowance, while not large, did provide an incentive to teachers undertaking certified CPD - important when one considers the lower proportion of Irish teachers taking advanced qualifications in comparison to their international colleagues – and indeed, the substantially lower numbers of days of all kinds of CPD taken by Irish teachers (OECD, 2009). (Coolahan et al. 2017, 180-181)

Notably, the professionalism of the principals in this study will be reviewed in relation to the CPD courses they have undertaken and their postgraduate qualifications.

1.4. The Catholic Primary School Principal in Ireland

The following section examines the role of CPS principal, associated leadership styles, and relevant research studies on CPS principals. It also reviews faith development courses for CPS principals.

1.4.1. The role of Catholic primary school principal

Tuohy (2006) relates the leadership archetype of 'king, priest and prophet' to the work of Catholic school principals. Their royal role involves "managing the school against external forces and dispensing justice within the school"; their priestly role involves "helping people to get in touch with the vision of education and the truth of their relationship with God"; and their prophetic role entails principals engaging in "critical reflection on the direction of education, and particularly the direction of our own schools"

(ibid., 45). Tuohy also reminds Catholic school leaders of the archetype of Jesus as servant leader; "…the service we offer is not that of slaves, but of healing and reconciliation" (ibid.).

The tasks associated with Catholic school leadership are threefold: finding meaning, building community, and ensuring excellence. Finding meaning involves developing a shared vision; building community involves forming relationships, partnerships and fostering teamwork; ensuring excellence requires principals to set standards and measure efficiency. However, Tuohy also acknowledges that not everyone shares the Christian view of the human person. Some teachers may not be committed to the value of Catholic education as many entered teaching at a time when the only option was to teach in Catholic schools.

> There are powerful forces at work in seeking to control education. Many of these do not share either the view of the human person so central to Catholic education or a philosophy of how schools enter into dialogue with culture and help students to a critical appreciation of that culture. (Tuohy 2006, 38)

When creating a vision, Tuohy identifies four main countercultural challenges that face Catholic schools today:

1. Christian anthropology, the belief that the human person derives his/her dignity and destiny from the very fact that he/she is a child of God;

2. Christian community, the belief that solidarity with others comes from knowing that we are all children of the one God;

3. Service, the belief that the Holy Spirit is at work in each person as we continue to build the Kingdom of God;

4. Focus on the Person of Jesus Christ, "developing a vision of how young people can get to know Jesus." (Tuohy 2012, 176-177)

In order to fulfill their faith mission, Catholic schools can employ the Church's threefold strategy of: witness, evangelisation and discipleship. When there are faith witnesses in school, people will say, "See how they love one another"; when teachers act as evangelists, students learn the Christian story and their place in the story; and with discipleship, students learn to become disciples of Jesus (2012, 178-179). Tuohy also reminds us that Catholic schools are not the only places for faith development and that the wider Church and local parishes should also play their part.

In 2010, the Church published the national directory for catechesis *Share the Good News* (IEC 2010). In relation to the Catholic school, it presents objectives and indicators of

achievement for how the Church, the BoM, the principal and staff can work together to create a Catholic ethos and promote RE. The BoM has the responsibility to support and facilitate faith development for staff. In relation to the principal, the position should be "carefully considered" (ibid., 204) and the principal should have specialised training:

> In Catholic primary schools, it is the role of the school **Principal** on behalf of the Board of Management to facilitate a consistent and coordinated approach to religious education, appropriate to the school's ethos, and to oversee the school's contribution to the Christian initiation of its Catholic pupils. Those training for principalship in a Catholic school today and those already in position need to be offered in-depth and continuing formation on what is meant by Catholic leadership in the complex world in which we live.   (IEC 2010, 146)

The following objectives and indicators pertain to the principal:

> Schools Objective 5: The Principal will ensure that the decisions of the Board of Management, and particularly the ethos statement set out by the Board, are lived out in the day-to day running of the school.
>
> Some indicators of achievement:
>
> The Principal of a Catholic school will be employed on the understanding that he or she is delegated by the Board of Management and has responsibility to encourage, develop and promote the ethos associated with that particular Catholic school.
>
> Arrangements will be made for the provision of courses/modules in the management of Catholic schools. In-career support for those who are already in position will also be provided.
>
> The School Principal in the Catholic School, at the behest of the Board of Management, will take responsibility for providing suitable occasions for reflection on the spiritual and religious well-being of the school community. Retreat days for students, with appropriately trained retreat teams, will take place at frequent intervals.   (ibid., 207-208)

Kelleher, a former principal of a Catholic secondary school, believes Catholic school leadership should be modelled on Jesus: "The leadership of Jesus is about integrity, justice, love, forgiveness and service to others"(2012, 72). Like Jesus, principals adhere, not just to the letter, but to the spirit of the law when it comes to the characteristic spirit of the school. She recommends principals adjust their leadership styles depending on the situation: "…the essence of good leadership is the ability to judge what style of leadership will be appropriate and effective in a given situation and context and the ability to operate out of that style" (ibid.). Clegg (2012), another former Catholic secondary school principal, discusses the spirituality of the leader that is not confined to the Catholic theological tradition but involves every aspect of life:

> The world of the leader in a Catholic school is also the world of good and difficult students, of Facebook and Twitter, of hassled parents, of over-burdened professional colleagues, of regulation and accountability, of a genuine sense of community, of employment law, of competing rights and expectations, of confusion and uncertainty, of wonder and excitement, of the political processes necessary to achieve one's educational goals. (Clegg 2012, 137)

She recommends that principals and those involved in Catholic schools learn from the wisdom of Ignatian spirituality, develop self-awareness and reflect on experience. In this way their own spirits can be rejuvenated. Spring, a former CPS principal and former chairperson of the CPSMA, acknowledges that "not all who are members of Catholic schools…are Catholic or active members of the Catholic Church" (2012, 143). Within the contemporary postmodern culture, the principal has a central role in developing the Catholic ethos.

> Effective leadership is vital to Catholic schools; it shapes and influences the entire experience and learning within the school community. Leadership is successful when driven by core values and shared vision and these, in turn, should determine the everyday decision making and ethos of the schools. All policies, practices and attitudes of the school should be inspired by Gospel values. (Spring 2012, 143)

She recommends that: principals have a leadership qualification in Catholic Education prior to appointment; schools have a chaplaincy service available to them; and RE is a post of responsibility.

1.4.2. Research studies on Catholic primary school principals

Sugrue and Furlong's (2002) study investigated the identities of lay CPS principals and found that religious identity played a significant part of the principals' makeup. All twelve principals were practising Catholics who had attended Catholic primary and post-primary schools as well as Catholic colleges of education. The element of risk in which the researchers were interested focused on the Catholic ethos. The participants were considered adherents to the Catholic tradition when they fostered the ethos and were considered risk takers when they included children of different faiths into the school. Even as principals welcomed children of other faiths, the researchers comment, "A rhetoric of inclusion appears to hide a reality of conformity where the cocoon of routine brokers marginally increased tolerance" (ibid., 202). The researchers convey their displeasure about the patronage structures and the Education Act 1998 that allows schools to promote their characteristic spirit. The implication seems to be that principals should change their identities to accommodate religious pluralism within schools.

> Nineteenth-century structures that contrived to create a denominationally funded state system of education continue to shape principals' identities in the daily aspects of their duties; the weight of tradition circumscribes their identities as they labour to create schools of the future.
>
> (Sugrue and Furlong 2002, 205)

In recent years, the State has sought to provide a more diverse primary school patronage system. The IPPN's research in 2011 found that the majority of principals (51%) desire major changes or a complete overhaul to the patronage system (2011, 4). Of the 820 respondents from different school types, 44% of principals stated they would prefer to work under a non or multidenominational patron. However, when it came to changing the patron of their own schools, they believed the majority of parents, teachers, principals and patrons would oppose change. Some principals also expressed a need for change in relation to sacramental preparation:

> A significant minority of Principals (in Catholic schools in particular) were anxious to retain the current models, and expressed their concerns about the need to preserve the ethos of their schools, and to continue sacramental preparation in schools. (IPPN 2011, 7)

The principals in this study discussed how faith influences their preference to remain as CPS principals and others talked about their willingness to work for other patrons.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the context of CPS principalship in the RoI. Firstly, the chapter reviewed the primary school system. Government action plans reveal that the DES views education as a social and economic catalyst and the DES adopts a new-managerialist approach in order to make schools accountable and improve the system.

Secondly, the chapter reviewed the CPS sector. It was shown that the State and Church have long been co-partners in supporting the CPS sector that makes up approximately 90% of primary schools. There was then a brief outline of the historical background of CPSs, an examination of the religious context of CPSs and a review of how schools are expected to foster the Catholic ethos. Mahon's study (2017) investigated the perceptions of primary school communities regarding Catholic identity. It discovered evidence of detraditionalisation and a *laissez-faire* approach to the Catholic ethos. In response to a diverse population, the government organised the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in 2011 that made recommendations to divest some CPSs to other patrons. The government also plans to provide more choice within the primary education system by expanding the multidenominational sector. In relation to RE, the DES plans to introduce ERBE in order

to promote social cohesion and cater for children from different religious backgrounds. As the future of the CPS sector seems uncertain, three possibilities were reviewed: the reconfessionalisation and recontextualisation of CPSs that would require, among other initiatives, in-service faith development for teachers and principals. Thirdly, the Community National School model of teaching RE was also examined (Mullally 2018). It was discovered that a one-size-fits-all approach to RE can also be problematic. Since 2018, sacramental preparation for Catholic children in Community National Schools has been moved to after school hours.

This chapter also reviewed the role of principalship. All principals are required by legislation to lead and manage schools and they are expected to foster a positive school climate. The new quality framework Looking at our Schools 2016 (DES 2016b) underpins school evaluations and professional development courses for school leaders. Research found that although principals find the job rewarding, they face many challenges because of a lack of resources and support. The rewards included receiving and giving support (Morgan and Sugrue 2008), a chance to make a difference (RTU and LDS 2009), and being agents of change (Ummanel 2012). Some of the challenges include: role overload (Darmody and Smyth 2018, IPPN 2002); policy development (Morgan and Sugrue 2008); the integration of children with SEN (IPPN 2002); and responsibilities that should be undertaken by the BoM (Stynes and McNamara 2019). Furthermore, studies have shown that the job of teaching principal has become too onerous (Darmody and Smyth 2018, IPPN 2002). Interpersonal conflict in school seems to be at the root of some principals' discontent (Darmody and Smyth 2018, IPPN 2002, Morgan and Sugrue 2008, RTU and LDS 2009). In the past, very few principals had undertaken courses to prepare for the role (McHugh 2015, Ummanel 2012) and in the early years of principalship, they experienced shock and isolation (McHugh 2015). Since the time of these studies, the DES now offers an extensive range of CPD courses for school leaders at all levels.

In relation to CPS principals, they have the additional responsibilities of promoting the Catholic ethos, facilitating the teaching of Religious Education (RE) and overseeing the preparation of children for the sacraments. A study by Sugrue and Furlong (2002) found that Catholic identity was very important to twelve principals. Research conducted on behalf of the IPPN showed that most primary principals desired major changes to the current patronage system and 44% favoured working in non or multidenominational schools (IPPN 2011). While this chapter reviewed the context of Irish CPSs, the next

chapter will look at the Catholic school in relation to its mission, its nature and issues Catholic schools face in some Western cultures.

CHAPTER 2

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Introduction

The Catholic Church's mission is to evangelise the whole world, to invite people to get to know Jesus Christ and to spread the good news of God's love and salvation. Its mission is promulgated in magisterial documents such as Ad gentes (Vatican II 1966) and in successive papal encyclicals such as Evangelii nuntiandi (Pope Paul VI 1975), Redemptoris mission (Pope John Paul II 1990), Evangelii gaudium (Pope Francis 2013a) and Lumen fidei (Pope Francis 2013b). The Vatican II Council declared its interest in education in Gravissimum educationis (GE) (Vatican II 1965b) in which education is affirmed as a universal human right and Christian education is affirmed as a right for all Christians. Moreover, the Catholic school is situated within the whole enterprise of Christian education that aims to bring the good news of salvation to the young.

> The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illuminated by faith. (Vatican II 1965b, §8)

This chapter examines: the mission of the Catholic school; the distinctive nature or identity of the Catholic school; and some of the issues facing Catholic schools today.

2.1.   The Mission of the Catholic School

The Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) considers the Catholic school to be at the heart of the Church (CCE 1997, §9). Consequently, Catholic schools have a dual mission, that is to educate and to evangelise students.

> On the one hand, a Catholic school is a 'civic institution'; its aim, methods and characteristics are the same as those of every other school. On the other hand, it is a 'Christian community', whose educational goals are rooted in Christ and his Gospel. (CCE 1988, §67)

In this section, the Catholic school's mission is reviewed under four subsections: the mission to evangelise; the Catholic school as a service to parents; the Catholic school as

a service to the Church; and the Catholic school as a service to society.

2.1.1. The Catholic school's mission to evangelise

The Catholic school's mission is communicated in CCE documents such as The Catholic School (CCE 1977), The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (CCE 1997), and more recently in Education Today and Tomorrow (CCE 2014). Despite changes in education, culture and society over time, each document places Jesus Christ at the centre of its mission.

> Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school … He is the One Who ennobles man, gives meaning to human life, and is the Model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils.   (CCE 1977, §34-35)
>
> …the Catholic school, in committing itself to the development of the whole man, does so in obedience to the solicitude of the Church, in the awareness that all human values find their fulfillment and unity in Christ.   (CCE 1997, §9).
>
> At the heart of Catholic education there is always Jesus Christ: everything that happens in Catholic schools and universities should lead to an encounter with the living Christ.   (CCE 2014, Chapter 3)

The philosophy of the Catholic school is to integrate faith, culture and life so that Christians learn to be disciples of Jesus Christ (CCE 1977, §37-48). The curriculum is the means by which culture is transmitted and students acquire knowledge and pursue truth through various subjects. At the same time, RE helps students to live a life of faith and Jesus is presented as the model for living a good life: "Christ, therefore, is the teaching-centre, the Model on Whom the Christian shapes his life" (ibid., §47). It is hoped that the synthesis of culture, faith and life will lead students to an encounter with Jesus Christ: "Discovery and awareness of truth leads man to the discovery of Truth itself" (ibid., §41).

2.1.2. The Catholic school as a service to parents

The Church recognises parents as children's primary educators and their role is, "so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking"(Vatican II 1965b, §3). The *Code of Canon Law* also explains that the Church establishes schools to support parents: "schools are the principal assistance to parents in fulfilling the function of education" (Pope John Paul II 1983, Can. 796 §1). The importance of forging relationships with families is a key theme of many CCE documents (CCE 1982, 1997, 2007, 2014).

> In schools, understood as educational communities, families have a most

important place and role. Catholic schools appreciate their value, and promote their participation in the school, where they can assume various forms of co-responsibility.   (CCE 2013, §60)

Furthermore, when governments support Catholic schools, they cater for the wishes of parents who want to send their children to Catholic schools and they also ensure diversity in the provision of education (CCE 1997, §16).

In *Why Send your Child to a Catholic School?* (Hyland 2013) various reasons for sending children to Catholic schools are explored. The Catholic school is a place where children encounter witnesses to the Catholic faith and where they learn to develop loving relationships (O'Loan 2013). It provides an education that is holistic rather than instrumental; here meanings and the ultimate meaning of life are addressed and students are taught about the sacredness of every aspect of life (Meehan 2013). Teachers in Catholic schools echo the faith perspective of Catholic parents and complement them in their role of fostering children's faith (Walsh 2013). Furthermore, Catholic schools provide RE from within the Catholic tradition as a curriculum subject during the school day (Hession 2013).

2.1.3. *The Catholic school as a service to the Church*

The Catholic Church is the largest provider of independently run schools internationally with more than 217,000 Catholic schools worldwide (Wodon 2019). They cater for approximately 62.5 million students made up of 35.1 million primary students, 20 million secondary students, and 7.3 million pre-primary students. The Church communicates its right to establish Catholic schools in the *Code of Canon Law* (Pope John Paul II 1983) that also explicates the role of bishops in guiding and overseeing schools, and the responsibility of Catholic parents to ensure that their children receive a Catholic education. It involves itself in schools because they are places where human development takes place and where children's worldviews are developed.

> She [the Church] establishes her own schools because she considers them as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed.   (CCE 1977, §8)

However, there has been an overreliance on Catholic schools as a means to develop Christian faith and they are considered the most important, "evangelising and catechising arm of the Church" (Engebretson 2008, 151). According to the General Directory for Catechesis (Pope John Paul II 1997), Catholic schools should not be the only form of

faith development and each episcopal council worldwide is charged with developing its own national directory that lays out its vision and strategy for spreading the Gospel. *Share the Good News* (IEC 2010), the Irish directory, emphasizes the need for continuous adult faith development. It endorses the primary role of the home and the secondary roles of the parish and Catholic schools in fostering children's faith: "The [Catholic] school and its teachers support parents/guardians and their parish in the Christian initiation of children, not the other way round" (ibid., 146).

2.1.4. The Catholic school as a service to society

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the common good as: respect for human dignity; social wellbeing and development; and justice and peace (Apostolic Constitution 1994, §1905-1912). In general, education endeavours to contribute to the common good as it assists in intellectual, moral, physical and social human development, it enables students to take responsibility for their own lives and in turn students contribute to the whole of society (Vatican II 1965b, §1). Like all other schools, the Catholic school contributes to the common good by providing education for students that benefits students, parents, the community and society at large. In addition, the Catholic school as a faith school demonstrates to society the importance of faith as a way of life.

> In the pluralistic society of today the Catholic school, moreover, by maintaining an institutional Christian presence in the academic world, proclaims by its very existence the enriching power of the faith as the answer to the enormous problems which afflict mankind. (CCE 1977, §62)

The Catholic school also contributes to the common good by: providing pastoral care for students and their families; operating a preferential option for students from poor families; and educating Catholic and non-Catholic students. The Catholic school embraces pluralism and multiculturalism and caters not just for Catholic students but also caters for students of other faiths and none. In the document Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools (CCE 2013), the CCE addresses the requirement of the Catholic school to be a place of intercultural relationships and dialogue while still remaining true to its mission to evangelise.

> Catholic schools have in Jesus Christ the basis of their anthropological and pedagogical paradigm; they must practise the "grammar of dialogue", not as a technical expedient, but as a profound way of relating to others. (CCE 2013, §57)

While the Catholic school enables cohesion between people who share the same core values, it also respects the dignity and rights of everyone and cherishes all of its students

(Stock 2013). In England, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) has found that Catholic schools are more successful than any other school types at promoting religious, ethnic and cultural cohesion (Morris 2014). In the United States, research has found that Catholic schools have contributed to society in the past by educating the poor in urban areas and cities (Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993).

> Catholic high schools achieve relatively high levels of student learning, have this learning more equitably distributed with regard to race and class than in the public sector; and sustain high levels of teacher commitment and student engagement. (Bryk 1996, 25)

The research found that the distinctive features that contributed to their effectiveness were: the delivery of rigorous academic programmes; the formation of community bonds; the personalised approach to students; and the application by school management of the principle of subsidiarity. In Europe, Catholic schools provide quality education according to national standards and are open to students of other faiths and none (Meany 2019). Their contribution to the common good is reflected in the significant government funding provided to the Catholic school sector that educates approximately 30% of primary and secondary students in the EU.

2.2. *The Nature of the Catholic School*

Catholic schools hold much in common with other school types as their aim is to educate the young. The CCE document the Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (RDECS) discusses what makes the Catholic school distinctive from other types of schools: it is a faith school within the Catholic tradition; it has a mission to educate and to evangelise; its philosophy is to integrate faith, culture and life; and it provides RE from within the Catholic tradition (CCE 1988) . It begins by recapitulating what is written in Gravissimum Educationis.

> …what makes the Catholic school distinctive is its 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 faith. (CCE 1988, §1)

The document is divided into three main sections that describe the school climate, the religious dimension of all subjects, and the delivery of RE. The school climate is one in which everyone has an awareness of "the living presence of Jesus the 'Master'" (ibid., §25). Jesus Christ's presence manifests outwardly in symbols such as crucifixes, in the attractive physical environment, in ecclesial authority and in the school's links with the

parish. Each subject is a discreet discipline that fosters a love of truth in students. In addition, interdisciplinary work is desirable to enable students to make links between subjects and to enable students to discover the religious dimension of all subjects. The RDECS outlines how RE assists in the integration of life and faith by introducing students to Christology, Christian anthropology, ecclesiology, ethics and morality. However, above all else, loving relationships between members of the school community is the most important feature of the Catholic school ethos. Jesus Christ's presence manifests most fully in loving relationships and in the endeavour to form community.

> Thus, a relationship is built up which is both human and divine; there is a flow of love, and also of grace. And this will make the Catholic school truly authentic.
>> (ibid., §112)

Many writers discuss the Catholic school's distinctive nature or identity (Groome 2014, Hession 2015, McLaughlin 1996, Sullivan 2001, Sultmann and Brown 2011). The next section reviews literature about what makes the Catholic school distinctive.

2.2.1. Religious education

RE in Catholic schools is distinctive from RE in other denominational and multidenominational schools. In Ireland, the national directory for catechesis *Share the Good News* (IEC 2010) provides a blueprint for ongoing faith development for children and adults. Faith development is considered a life-long process from childhood through to adulthood that usually begins in the home and is supported by the parish faith community. For many, attending Catholic schools and participating in RE is part of that faith journey. All stages of faith development are "Christocentric and Trinitarian" as Christians learn to be "united with God in Jesus Christ" (ibid., 68). Therefore, faith development is a relational journey of getting to know and follow Jesus in community with others as the Body of Christ. "It is a synthesis of believing, acting, giving, trusting, empathising, knowing and loving" (ibid..). While there are many forms of RE, there is always a formational aspect to RE in Catholic schools.

> Religious education [in a Catholic school] holds open the possibility of helping all people to grapple, within their own reality, with crucial questions central to life and to living, playing its part in personal faith formation if the young person is open and interested and supported in following this through in their lives.
>> (IEC 2010, 58)

RE in Catholic schools follows the six fundamental tasks identified in the General Directory for Catechesis (Pope John Paul II 1997): promoting knowledge of the faith; liturgical education; moral formation; teaching students to pray; education for community

life; and missionary initiation (IEC 2010, 142). Flowing from these tasks, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (IEC 2015) offers children an opportunity to experience faith through its four strands: Christian faith; the Word of God; liturgy and prayer; and morality. The aim of the curriculum is:

> …to help children mature in relation to their spiritual, moral and religious lives, through their encounter with, exploration and celebration of the Catholic faith.
>
> (IEC 2015, 31)

There is an integrated approach to teaching and learning in the four strands: the Christian faith strand involves teaching key truths, doctrines and practices of the Catholic religious tradition; the Word of God strand introduces children to the story of the people of God throughout history and the story of Jesus; children are invited through the liturgy and prayer strand to link their ongoing story to Jesus, especially through the sacraments; and in the Christian morality strand Jesus is presented as the model for living (ibid., 34-35). Each unit of learning has clearly laid out RE and faith formation goals. RE in Catholic schools is considered the foundational subject as it informs the whole educational process and is integrated into other subjects (ibid., 12). In addition, it is assumed that what is learned in RE class is lived out in the life of the Catholic school community and is reflected in the lives of Catholic students at home and in the parish (ibid., 13).

2.2.2. *Catholic anthropology*

Christian anthropology centres on the Christian understanding of what it means to be human. It is based on the following convictions: firstly we are made in the image of God and grow in His likeness; we are innately good but are capable of sin; we are saved by God's grace through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the person is made of body and soul; and we have a conscience and are free to make choices (Groome 2011, Sachs 1991). Groome explains that this understanding of the person has profound implications for the Catholic school. It implies that the school respects the dignity of every human being. Students are perceived as inherently good but, when transgressions occur, there is an ever readiness to forgive and people are given ample opportunity to change. Catholic education is holistic, whereby it engages the whole person; the head, the heart and the hands. Students are taught to develop their intellect, memory and imagination (head); they are taught to live in right relationship with others and God (heart); and they are taught Christian ethics and morality so that they learn how to make good decisions and how to lead a virtuous life (hands).

Jones and Barrie (2015) explain that it is the incarnation that makes the difference between the Christian understanding of human flourishing and all other perspectives. In the Christian anthropological perspective, people's lives are inextricably linked to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The way Jesus lived is the way Christians are expected to live out their lives; his death has freed the human race from sin and death forever; and through his resurrection people are given the possibility of new and eternal life with God. In the Catholic school, teachers and students explore how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ relates to their lives today. Meehan (2013) describes this process as exploring meanings and the ultimate meaning of life in relation to Jesus Christ.

However, according to Lane (2015) many people are experiencing an anthropological crisis in the postmodern era: "Evidence of this crisis can be found in a variety of places: in gender studies; in ecology; in ethics; in biomedical sciences; in faith development; and in the God question" (ibid., 33). He thinks that students are often not open to the Transcendent, have a fragile concept of self, are unsure of their identities, live disembodied lives through technology and are prone to deconstruction. Any renewed vision of Christian education should include a broader anthropology, one that includes, "the human as relational, dialogical, embodied, linguistic, and creation-centred" (ibid., 75). The CCE also recognises the need for an anthropology that addresses the needs of the twenty-first century person (CCE 2014, Chapter 3).

2.2.3. Catholic morality

There are different approaches to teaching morality in schools. Hession (2015) points out that in the human rights approach, each human has inherent dignity and rights, we strive for the common good of humanity, and work for justice and peace in the world. On the other hand, the Christian approach to morality does not just present a set of rules or commandments but is directly linked to how we as Christians perceive ourselves, the world, others and God as explicated in Christian anthropology. As Christians, we believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and we are all called to live as His disciples.

> We are not being called to follow rules, as necessary as they may be, but to follow a person, Jesus Christ. To follow Christ as a disciple does not mean that we merely imitate him but that we *participate* in his very life and mission…. We are called to love God whole-heartedly and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mt 22: 37-40) …Above all, we must care for the least of our brothers and sisters; they are the ones with whom the Lord mostly closely identifies himself.
>
> (Sachs 1991, 104)

Therefore, it follows that Catholic moral education is always taught as part of the Catholic

RE curriculum within the Catholic school ethos that lives out its faith every day. In *Catholic Primary Religious Education in a Pluralist Environment* Hession (2015) expounds the distinctiveness of Catholic moral education that is about character formation, moral decisions and conduct. As the basis of Christian moral education is God, children are firstly invited to reflect on and experience the love of God before introducing them to moral rules. Prayer and the sacraments are integral parts of Catholic moral education. It is hoped that through the sacraments children will encounter Jesus Christ and their moral action will flow from their relationship with Him. Story-telling is an important way of transmitting moral beliefs and moral reasoning to children. They are taught to develop their identities in relation to God and Jesus Christ.

> Christian narratives draw their [children's] attention to the holy dimension of all reality, to see the world in its depth as permeated with the presence of God, to see everything and everyone as held in being by love. (Hession 2015, 207)

Jesus is presented as the model for human life and students learn about the lives of saints. They study the lives of contemporary Christians who are inspired by their faith to work for organisations that promote social justice. Furthermore, children implicitly learn morality when they witness teachers and others modelling Christian virtues and values. Due to children's cognitive development, the emphasis in CPSs is on character development, attending to emotions, habits and motivation, more than on moral reasoning. Children learn moral principles such as the love commandments, the ten commandments and the beatitudes (ibid., 202). They also learn that they need grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to lead good moral lives.

In CPSs, the Christian morality strand of RE contains concepts that are integrated into the State curriculum for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) (IEC 2015, 129-130). In relation to RSE, the Church presents four guidelines for CPSs: the school communicates the Christian vision of human life and relationships; the school's role is subsidiary to that of the parents; the school's RSE policy should reflect the Church's moral teaching on sexual matters; and the dignity of each individual child must always be respected (ICBC 2016). In 2018, the Minister for Education requested the NCCA to conduct a review of the primary and post-primary RSE curriculum and to consider "the importance of consent, developments in contraception, safe use of the internet, the effects of social media and LGBTQ+ matters" (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2019, 5). All of the stakeholders that were consulted during the review believe RSE is an important part of children's education. However, primary principals expressed their

concerns about the need to align the school ethos and the RSE curriculum and the need for clarity about what should be taught.

> In primary schools, principals were more likely to talk about school ethos being a possible barrier to teachers adopting a comprehensive approach to RSE. For example, school ethos was seen to pose challenges in opening up discussion about different kinds of families and same-sex relationships, or in responding to questions that arise about contraception in the context of learning about conception. Principals expressed this as a disconnect between what they felt was expected of them based on their school ethos and addressing the reality of the classroom and the needs of their pupils.   (NCCA 2019, 38)

Therefore, it can be seen that the RSE curriculum in CPSs is challenging as teachers and principals attempt to balance the State curriculum and the Church's moral teachings while at the same time being sensitive to children's needs and family circumstances. There is further discussion in Chapter Three about Catholic morality in relation to educational leadership styles.

2.2.4. Catholic cosmology

The Catholic worldview is that God creates all things and what He creates is essentially good and has a purpose (Groome 2011). Therefore, in the Catholic school students learn about the sacred origin of all creation. They are taught to have a curiosity about nature and all living things. In doing this, the school nurtures the students' sacramental imagination and students learn to become co-creators with God (Meehan 2013).

In his encyclical letter Laudato si, Pope Francis (2015) expresses hope that Christians today will convert from contemporary anthropocentrism to a deeper understanding of the interrelatedness between humanity, creation, and God:

> The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us.
> Soil, water, mountains, everything is, as it were, a caress of God.
> (Pope Francis 2015, §84)

Contemporary anthropocentricity has led to materialism and excessive consumerism. In turn, it has led to the present ecological crisis that is destroying the environment and causing devastation to humanity and the earth. Chapter Six of Laudato si outlines the role Christian education can play in developing our ecological awareness and conversion whereby we learn to lead simpler and more modest lifestyles. Ecological conversion is possible when we see the world as a gift from God. Lane (2015) believes Laudato si represents a paradigmatic shift in the Church's understanding of human existence in the world and its cosmology should be reflected in a renewed vision of Catholic education:

> It is this intimate relationship between the natural world and the human, between creation and incarnation, between nature and grace that should become the basis of a new anthropology informing Catholic education and theology.
>
> (Lane 2015, 74-75)

Significantly, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (IEC 2015) includes modules about creation, caring for the earth, and the importance of environmental sustainability.

2.2.5. *Catholic sociology*

Catholic sociology is based on the belief that God makes the human person to be with others and to live in community (Groome 2011). In the Catholic school, students learn to foster relationships, to be good citizens and to forge solidarity with others. Its pedagogy promotes collaborative learning, dialogue, and partnership with parents. The Church has long recognised the importance of the community dimension of its schools and the importance of fostering relationships between teachers, students, parents and communities (CCE 1977, 1982, 1988, 1997). The main theme of the CCE document Educating Together in Catholic Schools (CCE 2007) is building community. It explains that when people are in communion with each other they reflect the triune nature of God and the mystical body that is the Church:

> When Christians say *communion*, they refer to the eternal mystery, revealed in Christ, of the communion of love that is the very life of God-Trinity.
>
> (CCE 2007, §10)

2.2.6. *Catholic epistemology*

Catholic epistemology is grounded on the premise that all truth comes from and is of God as taught by St. Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas. Groome (2011) explains that the person's mind, reason, senses, body, imagination, memory, and experiences are all involved in the learning process. Through questioning and reflecting, people increase their understanding and wisdom so that they make right judgements. Teachers instil in students a love of learning that lasts a lifetime. The ideal setting for learning is in "community" and in "conversation" with others (ibid., 246). In the Catholic school students are encouraged to strive for academic excellence and through inquiry they are led to mystery and truth. However, Watkins (2013) points out the challenge that most people in the postmodern era are suspicious of any objective truth claims and have a tendency to think of truth as personally subjective:

> …this epistemological crisis is characterized both by an increasing scepticism

about 'traditional' or authority-borne notions of truth, and the increasing reliance on the self and the 'subjective' as the source of authenticity or truthfulness.

(Watkins 2013, 65)

She believes it is difficult for people today to recognise the absolute Truth as the person, Jesus Christ. Teachers in the Catholic school have a responsibility to hand on the fundamental truth about the triune God. As truth is always orientated towards God and bound up with love, all teaching and learning takes place in loving relationships: "the truth that is to be discovered is precisely the truth of love, which is God…In a profound sense, teaching and learning are activities of the Triune God, who is truth and love" (ibid., 76).

Some writers discuss the integration of faith and culture in Catholic schools. If teachers do not consciously integrate faith and culture, "the pressure to default to the public curriculum is always high" (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2012, 249). The D'Orsas present a Catholic curriculum with "meaning making" at its core in a search for truth (ibid., 243). Jamison presents a Catholic curriculum with the "theory of knowledge" at its core whereby students examine what knowledge actually is and what each subject entails (2013, 14). Whittle developed a revised theory for Catholic education based on Karl Rahner's theory of the 'supernatural existential' whereby the "primary goal of Catholic education is to draw attention to unsolvable mystery rather than to nurture commitment to the Catholic faith" (2015, 156). In this new model the Catholic school is no longer confessional but through philosophical questioning students are brought to the "threshold of mystery" in all subjects and students are then invited to step into the world of faith and theology (ibid.).

2.2.7. Catholic historicity

The Church places value on the legacy of tradition and believes we can learn from the wisdom of past generations. Catholic education is the product of history dating back to early Christian times that developed through the ages as monastic schools, Cathedral schools, Catholic universities, and Catholic schools established by religious congregations (Sullivan 2012). Education in the Catholic tradition adopts theories on Christian education by thinkers such as St. Augustine, St. Tomas Aquinas and St. John Henry Newman, as well as more recent philosophers and theologians such as Bernard Lonergan, Maurice Blondel and Jacques Maritain. According to Sullivan, Catholic educators engage in 'ongoing translation,' as they interpret Catholic Christianity for the young and make the Gospel message relevant for contemporary living; they have the dual

tasks of "faithful representation" of texts and producing "creative interpretations" for students today (ibid., 200). In the Catholic school, students learn from traditions in other curricular areas such as the arts, humanities and science (Groome 2011). They also learn universal values such as justice and peace and about the constant love of God. In particular, Catholic schools transmit Gospel values taught by Jesus in the Beatitudes: faithfulness, integrity, dignity, compassion, humility, gentleness, truth, justice, forgiveness, mercy, purity, holiness, tolerance and peace (Stock 2013, 16). However, Gleeson (2015) contends that Catholic schools in the West have become an amalgam of values: government values that focus on social and economic outputs; and Gospel values that promote holistic education and education of the poor.

2.2.8. *Catholic politics*

Catholic politics seeks to promote justice and peace in the world. One of the key documents of Vatican II, Gaudium et spes (Vatican II 1965a) clearly communicates the Church's fundamental duty in this regard. Likewise, the Catholic school also promotes justice and peace: it prepares students to act for justice in the world; and it acts as an instrument for justice in society by having a preferential option for the poor (Vatican II 1965b, CCE 1977, 1997, 2014). In relation to social injustice, students discern how they and others can make the world a better place and they learn not to be "sexist, racist, elitist, ageist, homophobic" (Groome 2011, 251). In the past, Catholic schools were established to educate economically impoverished students but today the Church also recognises the "new poor," students from families deprived of spiritual guidance and moral values (CCE 1997, §15). Some writers debate whether Catholic schools in the West cater for the poor in an effective manner (Grace 2002, Morris 2005, McKinney and Hill 2010).

2.2.9. *Catholic spirituality*

Pope John Paul II defined Catholic spirituality as, "life in Christ" and "in the Spirit" (1999, §29). The Catholic school nurtures students' spirituality by teaching them about Jesus Christ and how He lived out his spirituality in relation to others and God (Groome 2011). The whole process of Catholic education and the curriculum is a spiritual process that engages students' inner lives or souls and encourages students to bring their faith to their lives and their lives to their faith: it is about "caring of the soul" and "turning the soul" (ibid., 253). Teaching and learning are spiritual processes that are not just confined to RE and liturgical events (D'Souza 2012). Moreover, the teacher holds the key to the spiritual process as it depends on the teacher's love of truth, the teacher's knowledge of

the subject, and the teacher's Christian worldview and the way he or she teaches. In short, spirituality is "the *what, why, how, where*, and *who*" of Catholic education (Groome 2011, 252).

Catholic spirituality is also expressed in the charisms of various congregational schools such as the Sisters of Mercy schools and the Christian Brothers schools (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2015). Each spiritual congregation has its own story, language, values, ways of praying, and ways of experiencing God in the world. Congregational schools have a wide community network and tradition from which to draw inspiration for the renewal of faith and spirituality for teachers and students alike. In order to connect to the wider Church, schools can reignite their spirituality by rekindling their original charism and making connections with other schools that belong to the same ecclesial community.

Catholic schools promote liturgy and prayer as ways of developing children's spirituality. Daily life experiences are seen as sacramental and graced moments and liturgical experiences seek to deepen children's faith. Gallet (2000) writes about the importance of integrating liturgical experiences into the catechetical process in Catholic schools.

> Singing strong hymns, walking in procession, lighting a candle from the paschal candle, observing the flame "divided but undimmed," are all ways of knowing for children. They are kinesthetic, bodily-based experiences that engage the imagination and teach about participation in the liturgy the way no class or explanation could ever do. They touch the heart and the emotions deeply and profoundly. Although children may not be able to articulate exactly what they have experienced, they take from these moments much more than they are able to say. The seeds have been planted firmly in the fertile ground of their imaginations and memories. We must provide an enriched model of liturgy.
> (Gallet 2000, 124)

In CPSs, one of the four strands of the RE curriculum is liturgy and prayer. Teaching children how to pray, participating in liturgy and celebrating the sacraments are seen as part of developing children's relationship with God. "The ultimate goal is to teach children how to develop their relationship with God through prayer, so that they are drawn into the very life of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Trinity)" (IEC 2015, 19). Children are taught formal prayers, are encouraged to pray in their own words, are introduced to different types of prayers such as meditation and also participate in prayer services during the liturgical year (ibid., 26). "Liturgy invites children to link their own ongoing story, their struggles and triumphs, successes and failures, sorrow and joys to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ" (ibid., 34). Children also learn about the sacraments and are prepared for the sacraments of First Penance, First Holy Communion and

Confirmation that are seen as sources of God's grace (ibid., 188). Children are taught short liturgical responses to the Mass and are taught that in the Eucharist, "Christ himself becomes present in a true, real and substantial manner" (ibid., 124). The curriculum "presupposes" that home, parish and school act together as the "primary agents" in children's sacramental education (ibid., 19) and is structured to involve home and parish in children's sacramental education.

2.2.10. Catholic catholicity

In the document Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools (CCE 2013), the CCE points out that schools are both Catholic in their religious orientation and catholic in their universality and all-embracing in nature.

> They are schools that are open to the universality of knowledge and, at the same time, have their own specific nature, which comes from their being rooted in their believing in Christ the Teacher and their belonging to the Church.
>
> (CCE 2013, Conclusion)

The Catholic school continues to fulfill its evangelical mission even with a diverse and multicultural population. Intercultural dialogue takes place, not just as a mark of respect for other people, but so students learn to relate to each other, to be global citizens, and to live in harmony together: "the human race is a single family" bound by the love of God (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, §53). On a practical note, Sullivan (2001) believes Catholic schools need to be inclusive and warns that schools that are too distinctive run the danger of becoming exclusive.

> All schools, and especially those that receive public financial support, have an obligation to contribute to the common good by providing education for all of its pupils and that in reality the Catholic school may not always be able to promote "the fullest expression" of the Catholic worldview.
>
> (Sullivan 2001, 199).

2.3.   Contemporary Issues Facing Catholic Schools

Many of the issues faced by Catholic schools in Western countries are of concern to CPS patrons and leaders in the RoI. How these countries deal with challenges to Catholic schools is pertinent to this study as they should help to inform recommendations for the CPS sector in the RoI. More than twenty years ago, in the document The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (CCE 1997, §1-7), the CCE identified challenges to Catholic schools such as globalisation, secularisation, pluralism, multiculturalism, relativism, migration and poverty. More recently, the CCE identified a

whole range of challenges in its document Educating Today and Tomorrow (CCE 2014) that include: the need to nurture the identity of Catholic schools; the importance of fostering inter-personal relationships and building community to stave off individualism; the diversity of students that requires teachers to be dialectic rather than authoritative; the need to help students interpret the power of virtual learning networks; the challenge of providing holistic education rather than instrumental education; a lack of finance and resources that limit the operation of Catholic schools; the lack of engagement with the institutional Church; the danger of taking RE off the curriculum; the need to develop teachers' faith; and secularisation that leads to the marginalisation of Catholic schools. Furthermore, Groome's (2014) theory that teaching for faith has been made difficult, even among students who are from devout Catholic families, because of secularism and the scandals within the Church is very relevant to Ireland. In Chapter Four, there is a review of the secularisation process in Ireland and how it has been affected by recent Church scandals. Groome agrees with Karl Rahner that those who have faith today are people who have personally encountered God in their lives and because of "personal conviction rather than enculturation or passive inheritance" (2014, 120). Groome recommends that faith development focuses on the historical Jesus of Christology and that faith needs to be made relevant to people's lives. Many other writers discuss specific challenges to Catholic schools in the *International Handbook of Catholic Education* (Grace and O'Keefe 2007). While secularisation, pluralism and relativism prevail in the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK, each country's context seems to lead to different sets of challenges.

2.3.1. USA and Canada

While Catholic schools in Ireland receive full financial support from the government, the Catholic school sector in the USA is facing a financial crisis as a result of a lack of financial support from the government and an inability of parents to pay for private tuition (Hunt 2005, Baxter 2019). Over the last thirty years, many inner-city Catholic schools have closed although they have been found to be effective in teaching poor and marginalised students (O'Keefe 1996). Even then, O'Keefe identified the danger that a privately-funded Catholic school sector would lead to elitism and no longer serve the poor. As a response to the financial challenges faced by the sector, the Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education (2008) developed a strategic plan to help Catholic schools market, manage and form supportive networks. In addition, governance models have been reviewed in order to reduce economic constraints (Goldschmidt and Walsh 2013).

The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), an organisation that supports Catholic schools, has explored innovative practices to promote the sector in a competitive school market (Baxter 2019). In addition, many Catholics in the USA have drifted away from their faith and the Church is experiencing detraditionalisation (Manning 2018). Catholic schools also experience difficulty in relation to teacher recruitment, retention, and faith development (Schuttloffel 2007). Catholic universities have responded to this challenge by developing a strategic plan to provide professional and faith development for teachers and aspirant leaders of Catholic schools (Smith and Nuzzi 2007). The financial issues faced by Catholic schools in the USA is relevant to Ireland. While article 42 (4) of the Irish Constitution (GoI 1937) allows government support for private patrons, any change in the legislation would have serious implications for Catholic schools as seen from the situation in the USA.

Legislative changes brought about by public referenda in some Canadian provinces resulted in the withdrawal of funding for Catholic schools. According to Mulligan (2006), the voting was affected by secularisation and scandals within the Canadian Church. In 1998, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador voted in favour of a non-denominational State-funded school system despite the provinces being predominately Catholic. A year later in Quebec, public funds were also withdrawn from the Catholic school sector. Mulligan (2007) believes Catholic schools in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario are in danger of the same fate unless they make changes such as: communicating their mission and distinctive character; providing faith development for teachers and leaders; involving parents; and demonstrating accountability to Canadian taxpayers. In addition, Rymarz points out the necessity to have a "critical mass" of teachers, students and parents committed to the Catholic school mission in order for schools to survive and thrive (2010, 303). Therefore, it can be seen from the Canadian situation that it is important that Catholic schools in Ireland communicate their mission to the school community, have a 'critical mass' of Catholic teachers and students, provide high quality education and demonstrate accountability to Irish taxpayers.

2.3.2. Australia

School admissions policies and the secular culture are two major issues that pose challenges to the Catholic school sector in Australia. Catholic schools receive generous government funding and parents also contribute substantial tuition fees. However, many Catholic parents who would like to send their children to Catholic schools cannot do so

as the fees are prohibitive (Benjamin 2010, McLaughlin 2005, Pascoe 2007). Benjamin (2010) suggests that Catholic schools include students from poor families, indigenous students, students with disabilities and students of other faiths. Similarly, Engebretson (2008) suggests Catholic schools have more inclusive admission policies and should become places of ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue. Despite the calls for more inclusive admission policies, most parents are non-practising Catholics and seem to send their children to Catholic schools mostly for academic standards and for "the human values experienced, but are not committing themselves to formal Catholicism as their religion of practice" (McLaughlin 2005, 219). According to the D'Orsas, Catholic schools have become the 'new Church' as they are "the major point of contact between the [Catholic] institution and many of the faithful" (2013b, 11). The sexual abuse scandals in Australia have meant that most parents have lost confidence in the Church and are uncertain about what it means to be Catholic. In addition, the secular culture has also resulted in teachers under fifty years of age having little experience of the Church: "Church is another country. They don't always feel at home there, or understand its language" (ibid.,178). In order to provide support to Catholic schools, Catholic diocesan education offices undertake the following: help schools develop strategic plans to improve mission intentionality; provide generous fiscal, material and human resources to schools; systematically update RE curricula; and provide opportunities to develop teachers' faith (McGrath 2012). Staff faith development is a priority: "Staff formation has become more intentional, organised and occupies a significant proportion of system and school budgets" (ibid., 295).

2.3.3. *United Kingdom*

In England and Wales, choice and competition between schools has led to Catholic schools having to balance the demands of academic performance with their obligation to serve the poor and marginalised (Grace 2002, Gallagher 2007). However, Grace (2002) and Morris (2005) found that Catholic schools in England have successfully served the needs of the poor in deprived areas. In Scotland, McKinney and Hill (2010) discuss how students who are poor or marginalised are sometimes excluded from Catholic schools because of absenteeism, disciplinary actions, or lack of finance for basic school resources. The writers appeal to Catholic schools to be aware of these types of exclusion. They remind Catholic schools that they have a "double mandate" (ibid., 172) because of the Gospel imperative to serve the poor and because of the government's commitment to alleviate poverty. In Northern Ireland, Catholic schools have been accused of

contributing to sectarianism and there have been calls for a more integrated approach to schooling (Donaldson 2007).

Several recommendations have been made in an attempt to alleviate the challenges facing Catholic schools internationally: to refocus on the mission of Catholic schools (Conway 2015, D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013a, b); to renew the vision of Catholic education (CCE 2014, Groome 2011, 2014, Lane 2015); to understand and embrace postmodernity (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013a, b, McGrath 2012); to reorganise governance structures (Goldschmidt and Walsh 2013, Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education 2008, Tuohy 2007); to systematically develop teachers' and principals' faith (CCE 2013, 2014, McGrath 2012, Mulligan 2007, Schuttloffel 2007, Smith and Nuzzi 2007, Tuohy 2007); to engage parents in the mission of the Catholic school (Mulligan 2007); and to engage in interfaith dialogue (CCE 2013, CSP 2015b). Although Catholic schools are an important part of the Church, Tuohy (2013) reminds us that: Catholic schools should point the way to Jesus Christ and discipleship; and there are other ways to evangelise besides the Catholic school. Similarly, Sullivan recommends that if Catholic schools do not achieve their goals, then alternatives need to be sought.

> There may come a time when this is not seen as necessarily the right way forward, or at least not as the *only* possible strategy for upbringing and formation in the faith. (Sullivan 2000, 16)

Conclusion

This chapter examined the four-fold mission of Catholic schools. Firstly, as part of the Church, Catholic schools have a mission to evangelise the young as they invite students to listen and respond to the Gospel (CCE 1977, 1997, 2014). Secondly, Catholic schools assist parents in developing children's faith (CCE 1982, 1997, 2007, 2014). Catholic schools also provide a service to the Church as they assist in evangelisation and provide catechesis for young people (CCE 1997, Pope John Paul 1997, IEC 2010). Lastly, Catholic schools contribute to the common good by: educating students; attending to their pastoral care; educating the poor; and promoting intercultural dialogue and social cohesion (CCE 1977, Vatican II 1965).

The nature or identity of the Catholic school emanates from its mission. Its philosophy is to integrate faith, culture and life so that students learn to become disciples of Jesus Christ (CCE 1988). The school has a distinctive religious dimension whereby students are taught RE; faith is integrated into all curricular subjects; and students learn how to

live out their faith (ibid.). The Catholic school has a unique RE curriculum (IEC 2010, 2015) and other characteristics make it distinctive: anthropology (Groome 2011, Jones and Barrie 2015); morality (Hession 2015); cosmology (Pope Francis 2015); sociology (CCE 2007); epistemology (Watkins 2013); historicity (Sullivan 2012); politics (CCE 1997); spirituality (D'Souza 2012, Groome 2011, IEC 2015); and catholicity (CCE 2013).

Finally, there was a review of various challenges that Catholic schools in the West face such as secularisation and religious pluralism. Each country has unique challenges depending on the context. In the USA, many Catholic schools have closed in poorer areas due to a lack of financial support from government (Baxter 2019, Hunt 2005). A culture of secularism and Church scandals have led to the closure of Catholic schools in some Canadian provinces (Mulligan 2006). In Australia, many parents cannot afford to send their children to fee-paying Catholic schools and this has led to elitist and exclusive school admission practices (Benjamin 2010, Engebretson 2008, McLaughlin 2005, Pascoe 2007). The secular culture and Church scandals in Australia has also resulted in many families and teachers not engaging with the institutional Church (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013b) and most students do not engage in formal religious worship (McLaughlin 2005). In England and Wales competition between schools and the publication of school league tables means Catholic schools are tempted to focus on academic attainment rather than their faith mission (Gallagher 2007, Grace 2002). In these countries, Catholic schools have attempted to address many of these issues. At the same time the Church is looking for alternative means to spread the Gospel. International research studies give an insight into how other jurisdictions deal with challenges to Catholic schools and they could help the Church to address issues as they arise here in Ireland. The next chapter examines the role of the Catholic school principal, theoretical models for Catholic school leadership, some issues that Catholic school leaders face internationally and it also looks at the vocational aspect of the role.

CHAPTER 3

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Introduction

The principal holds a pivotal role in school and has a direct impact on school culture (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins 2008). In recent decades, governments have recognised the key position school principals hold and are keen to develop school leaders in order to maximise teaching practices and learning outcomes (ibid.). The principal has also been identified as the 'gatekeeper' between the education system and the school (Kelchtermans, Piot, and Ballet 2011). The Church also recognises the strategic role of the principal in creating a Catholic school culture and as 'gatekeeper' between the Church and its schools. It is important to understand the nature of Catholic school principalship and this is done by examining various aspects of the role. Another way is to explore some theoretical models for Catholic school leadership that helps to shed light on the influence of faith on principals' leadership and practice. International research studies on Catholic school principals provide a broad understanding of Catholic school systems in the West and how they compare with principals' experiences in Ireland. The vocational nature of teaching and principalship in the Catholic school is a predominant theme in CCE documents and it is important to examine the provision of professional and faith development courses in some Western countries.

3.1. *Catholic School Principalship*

This section reviews the nature of Catholic school principalship by examining different aspects of the role as presented in Church documents, the mission of the Catholic school, the distinctiveness of Catholic school principalship, various dimensions to the role and how the principal influences the culture of the school. It is noteworthy that the emphasis in the literature on Catholic school leadership tilts more towards the principal's faith role rather than his or her educational role with the exception of Sullivan (2000, 2006). He emphasizes the importance of managing and leading a Catholic school primarily as an academy of learning.

3.1.1. *Church documents and the Catholic school principal*

While CCE documents all explore the role of teachers in Catholic schools, only two documents refer specifically to the role of principal. Educating Today and Tomorrow

(CCE 2014) mentions the need for principals to be people of faith and the need to provide professional and faith development for principals so they can lead the school as a faith community.

> Catholic schools must be run by individuals and teams who are inspired by the Gospel, who have been formed in Christian pedagogy, in tune with Catholic schools' educational project. (CCE 2014, 10)

> …particular attention must be devoted to the formation and selection of school heads. They are not only in charge of their respective schools, but are also Bishops' reference persons inside schools in matters of pastoral care. School heads must be leaders who make sure that education is a shared and living mission, who support and organize teachers, who promote mutual encouragement and assistance. (ibid., 11)

In Education to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools (CCE 2013), the CCE encourages school leaders to remain true to the mission of the Catholic school within a multicultural and pluralist context. It also acknowledges the distinctive educational and evangelical responsibilities of the Catholic school leader.

> Teachers and school administrators require new professional skills, aimed at reconciling differences, allowing them to dialogue with each other. Teachers and school administrators need to offer shared perspectives, while respecting the individual nature of different people's development and world visions. (CCE 2013, §84)

> For those who occupy positions of leadership, there can be a strong temptation to consider the school like a company or business. However, schools that aim to be educating communities need those who govern them to be able to invoke the school's reference values; they must then direct all the school's professional and human resources in this direction. School leaders are more than just managers of an organization. They are true educational leaders when they are the first to take on this responsibility, which is also an ecclesial and pastoral mission rooted in a relationship with the Church's pastors. (ibid., §85)

Separately, Sultmann and Brown (2016) analysed CCE documents and transcripts from Catholic school principals. There are five tenets that describe the work of Catholic school leaders: service, community, mission, witness, and shared vision. The researchers then translated their findings into two images: (i) the Kingdom of God, that represents the Catholic school vision; and (ii) the Paschal Mystery, that represents the action necessary for the Kingdom to come about.

> The Kingdom vision is intimately linked to the Paschal Mystery for it makes explicit the mind and action of Christ as life is encountered in community. It offers to the baptized a vision of how life and community might look if God were in charge. (Sultmann and Brown 2016, 87)

Other writers consider the role of Catholic school principal as a specific ministry within

the Church (Hansen 2001, Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt 2013, Sullivan 2000).

3.1.2. The mission of the Catholic school and the principal

As the Church's mission is to spread the Gospel and build the Kingdom of God, a key part of the Catholic school's mission is evangelisation and inculturation (CCE 1977). The D'Orsas, two Australian writers, perceive Catholic schools in the West as mission territory and principals as "explorers, guides and meaning-makers" as they lead the community towards the Kingdom of God (2013a). They advocate that principals engage in 'grassroots theology' to deal with practical issues that arise sporadically in Catholic schools:

> Cumulatively, taking the opportunities which present themselves in dealing with policies, curricula, school reviews and many others, educators build meaning for and with staff and, through the staff, for and with all in the school community.
> (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013a, 192-193)

On the Catholic school 'frontier', leaders need to understand the prevailing postmodern culture that students and teachers inhabit and also need to understand how people's experiences are affected by the worldviews they hold. According to the writers, educators need to be familiar with three different 'poles' that should be embedded in the Catholic school curriculum: the Catholic faith tradition (principle of purpose); the "appeal to reason" (principle of contingency); and the postmodern approach to "deconstruct" knowledge (the principle of critique) (ibid., 179).

> In the creation of a school learning environment, an ecology of knowledge requires that all three principles - those of purpose, contingency and critique - be held in tension. The learning environment is compromised if one dominates at the expense of the others…All three principles must find a place in a sound Catholic education.   (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013a, 179)

In addition, the writers advocate that school leaders develop an "ecology of human growth" that consists of three essential sub-systems: "an ecology of knowledge, an ecology of relationships, and an ecology of community" (ibid., 177). This involves embedding the principle of purpose (faith) in the whole curriculum, developing positive relational learning environments, and building a community with families, the parish and beyond. The D'Orsas' approach seems inspired by the Catholic school philosophy to integrate faith, culture and life (CCE1977) and to give priority to fostering relationships and building community spirit (CCE1988).

Similarly, Sullivan and McKinney (2013) discuss how educators in Catholic schools

often put their faith into practice through operant theology. They do this in the formulation and application of mission statements, policy formulation, behaviour management, appointing staff, attending to the nature of teaching and learning, and building a community of faith. They describe espoused theology as:

> … as Christian parents, nurses, teachers… describe what they do and try to do so in terms linked in some way with their faith.
>
> (Sullivan and McKinney 2013, 214)

However, the school usually operates at a different level than what it espouses:

> …given weakness of will and adverse circumstances more often there is quite a gap between what is espoused and what actually happens on the ground.
>
> (ibid., 215)

3.1.3. *The distinctiveness of Catholic school principalship*

The faith mission and purpose of the Catholic school determines the distinctiveness of its leadership (Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt 2013, Sullivan 2006). Catholic school principals have much in common with other principals as they all prioritise student learning:

> Many aspects relating to the legal framework, to the local context, to support services, to curriculum, assessment, inspection, governance and management and personnel matters, should be learned in common by school leaders, regardless of the kind of school in which they intend to work.   (Sullivan 2006, 78)

However, faith school leadership is different because it demands different "priorities and capabilities" (ibid., 75). Christian education has a distinctive worldview of humanity and creation, and promotes a holistic education that understands Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. RE classes give students an opportunity to develop their faith and the Catholic worldview is integral to all curriculum subjects. Contrastingly, Nuzzi, Holter and Frabutt (2013), who are based in the USA, identify the principal as the chief executive officer and the chief operating officer who has ultimate responsibility for the Catholic school and the creation and management of the school's Catholic culture.

> Parents and other school stakeholders understand at an intuitive level that the leadership of the principal is crucial for the smooth and successful operation of the school. While having an effective classroom teacher is certainly highly desirable, an effective classroom situated in a poorly managed building is not likely to remain effective for long.   (Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt 2013, 1).

The writers contend that the threefold structure of leadership (educational, managerial and spiritual) proffered previously by Ciriello (1993, 1994a, b), can be integrated by the principal. However, the religious dimension of the school seems to take precedence in

the minds of writers:

> Thus, for the Catholic school principal, the school is first and foremost a community of faith and a gathering of disciples, and the principal's role is ministry, a ministry of spiritual leadership exercised in a learning community.
>
> (ibid., 3)

In contrast, Church documents specifically state the Catholic school's main function is as a place of learning (Vatican II 1965b, CCE 1977).

> To understand fully the specific mission of the Catholic school it is essential to keep in mind the basic concept of what a school is; that which does not reproduce the characteristic features of a school cannot be a Catholic school… A school is, therefore, a privileged place in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs.　　　　(CCE 1977, §25-26)

Sullivan emphasizes that a Catholic school is run first and foremost as an "academy" of learning (2000, 205) and the principal's primary role is as an educational leader. He discusses different dimensions of Catholic school leadership and looks at the Catholic school managed like a family, business, church, political community, and academy. Firstly, Catholic schools have a family-like atmosphere; they welcome and care for students and staff, promote a sense of belonging, and foster relationships with home and parish. Secondly a business-like approach is helpful for strategic planning, customer service and resource management. However, there is a danger, with an impetus to raise standards, that managerialism takes hold:

> Too great a readiness to map out performance indicators, programmes of study, attainment targets, development plans, and the scaffolding of teaching and management competencies, can lead to specifications that are too elaborate.
>
> (Sullivan 2000, 78)

Thirdly, Catholic school leadership reflects some of the attributes of Church. In relation to power and authority, the Catholic school ethos requires the Catholic school leader to: demonstrate humility; promote a strong sense of collaboration; use democratic decision-making; and to be open to feedback. Sullivan's fourth dimension explores the Catholic school as a political community and the principal as political leader. In this role the principal protects the school's ethos, empowers others by sharing leadership, oversees school discipline, distributes resources, imparts information and ensures the school is inclusive and catholic. It is also important that Catholic schools are seen by the public and government to give value for money, promote social cohesion, educate for citizenship and foster critical thinking. Although there are merits to adopting characteristics from the first four dimensions, the ultimate goal is student learning. First and foremost,

principals are educational leaders; the Catholic school is an academy in which teachers and leaders have a "double commitment, to learning and to learners" (ibid., 205). The primary responsibility of the principal is to lead and manage the Catholic school as a school. At the same time, principals need to be aware of the different rationale for Catholic schools, they need to be aware of objections to separate Catholic schooling and they need to be able to respond to criticisms.

3.1.4. *Catholic school culture and the principal*

Principals are key figures in shaping school culture. According to Schein,

> …the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture.
> (Schein 1985, 2)

Deal and Peterson (2009) posit that the school culture consists of myths, visions, values, mission, assumptions, norms, rituals, ceremonies, traditions and symbols. School culture affects all aspects of school life and is understood as "the way things are done around here" (ibid., 7). The principal can move a school culture from a negative to a positive charge by attending to the following: understanding the school's history; attending to traditions, rituals and symbols; reinforcing core values and beliefs; participating with others to create a school vision; and building relationships and trust.

Bolman and Deal (2010) recommend principals approach school culture through different frames: within the political frame, they attend to power and resources; in the human resource frame, they attend to people's needs; in the structural frame, they pay attention to standards and accountability; and in the symbolic frame, they attend to beliefs and faith. Bolman and Deal's approach to school culture is similar to Sullivan's (2000) dimensional approach to Catholic school leadership and Tuohy's (2006) leadership archetype of priest, prophet and king. In addition, Flintham employed a gardening metaphor to categorise the principals in his study according to how they cultivated the school culture: "planters, rooters, growers, pruners, and garden designers" (2011, 70).

In relation to Catholic schools, Belmonte and Cranston (2009), Cook (2001), and Earl (2012) suggest ways in which the principal can foster a Catholic school culture. According to Cook there are seven core building blocks involved:

1. Identify and integrate core religious beliefs and values using the mission statement resources.

2. Honor heroes and heroines who exemplify Gospel values and religious mission.

3. Create and display a symbol system reflecting Gospel values and religious mission.

4. Nurture prayer and worship through routine rituals.

5. Tell stories that communicate Gospel values and religious mission.

6. Rediscover the school's religious and historical heritage.

7. Socialize faculty and staff to Gospel values and religious mission.
(Cook 2001, 98)

Earl (2012) identified similar strategies: hire teachers who support the school's mission; celebrate events on the liturgical calendar; prepare children for the sacraments; and make time and space for prayer, faith development and social justice projects. Research by Belmonte and Cranston (2009) found that the Catholic school culture is affected by the student population. Australian principals believed it was easier to promote a Catholic ethos in schools with high proportions of Catholic students. Conversely, Coll's (2009) longitudinal study found that principals' witness to their faith influenced both the Catholic culture of their schools and the faith of newly qualified teachers:

> The witness of the head teacher of which many of the probationers spoke, was a powerful symbol of the Catholic nature of the school and was certainly appearing to have a developmental effect on new staff, resulting in many of them contributing directly to the school's culture and commenting that their faith was being strengthened by this participation.　　　　(Coll 2009, 156)

3.2. *Theoretical Models for Catholic School Leadership*

The following section reviews eight theoretical models for Catholic school leadership and research studies based on these models. Later in this study, the leadership styles of a cohort of CPS principals will be examined in relation to these theoretical models. By analysing the data from the interviews and highlighting significant statements, the principals' styles will be categorised according to the models in order to get an insight into how faith influences their leadership. Significantly, values seem to be at the core of each of the models: "Leaders are expected to ground their actions in clear personal and professional values" (Bush and Glover 2014, 555). However, educational leadership theories are open to change and fashion. Leaders often adopt a contingency approach that allows them to choose the most appropriate model depending on the context.

> This reflexive approach is particularly important in periods of turbulence when leaders need to be able to assess the situation carefully and react as appropriate rather than relying on a standard leadership model.
>
> (Bush and Glover 2014, 564)

While the models are distinctive, many of them share common attributes. It will be seen that the leadership styles adopted by the CPS principals in this study are fluid and reflect aspects of the proposed theoretical models.

3.2.1. *Distributed and shared leadership*

Duignan (2008) points out that Catholic school leaders need to distribute leadership for the following reasons: leadership is a collective responsibility; leadership is too much for one person; diversity matters in leadership and decision making; and involvement leads to greater commitment and ownership. However, the school may fail to build leadership capacity among teachers if tasks and responsibilities are distributed and leadership roles are not shared. As the principal shares and distributes leadership, potential school leaders are nurtured and are more likely to become principals themselves.

> You need to create an *allowed-to-be-a-leader* culture, especially with new and younger staff. Seek out and nurture *aptissimi* and generate a *dare-to-lead* ethos. Have the vision, courage and commitment to see each person's talent and potential through love-inspired leadership. (Duignan 2008, 246)

Harris and Spillane (2008) also advocate that principals adopt distributed and shared leadership in order to cope with increased external and internal demands on schools and also as a way of building leadership capacity within schools. Distributing and sharing leadership means everyone in the school community is a leader. Staff in formal and informal roles act as leaders and collaborative teams work together to achieve desired outcomes. West-Burnham (2009) explains that shared leadership means acting as a democratic leader. The principal foregoes a position of power and authority and embraces the principle of subsidiarity that results in shared authority, trust, team-work and interdependency. When leadership is shared, the school is still accountable for the students' education but internal relations are enhanced.

> It is an act of significant personal courage for a leader to deliberately seek to create the situation where personal power is replaced by shared authority and organizational roles; structures, policies and processes are changed to reinforce the change. (West-Burnham 2009, 46)

Significantly, distributive leadership is at the core of the new model for leadership and management for primary schools in the RoI (DES 2016b).

3.2.2. *Transformational leadership*

Transformational leadership is about having a shared vision and making changes to bring the vision to reality:

> Real transformation involves active people, engaging in influence relationships based on persuasion, intending real changes to happen, and insisting that those changes reflect their mutual purposes. (Rost 1991, 123)

According to West-Burnham (2009), school transformation happens at three levels: improving school performance (shallow); improving school effectiveness (deep); and questioning the fundamental purpose and nature of the school (profound). Thus, "Schools…have to be radically and profoundly transformed so that they are engaged with the reality of the society they serve" (ibid., 20). Transformation starts by clarifying the purpose or shared mission of the school. Its primary purpose must be "to develop the learning capacity of every individual" (ibid., 22). Storytelling is an important strategy to support transformation in order to remind people of the past and to imagine an alternative future. Transformation is possible when the leader thinks and acts creatively, manages the school as a democracy, uses emotional intelligence to manage relationships, builds a culture of trust and collaboration, and is active in his or her own learning.

However, Fullan (2014) believes transformational leadership lacks detail on how to make a real impact:

> The shared mission was meant to become a rallying point for teachers *somehow* to accomplish things never before achieved. It was all very broad indeed. Specificity and clarity never ensued. (Fullan 2014, 38)

As a more effective alternative, Fullan recommends the principal adopts the following strategies: give equal importance to school management and leadership; distribute tasks to management teams; attend to his or her own learning; and learn how to improve teaching and learning with teachers. It is noteworthy that Bush and Glover (2014) question the ethical motivation of transformational leadership:

> Critics of this approach argue that the decisive values are often those of government or of the school principal, who may be acting on behalf of government. Educational values, as held and practised by teachers, are likely to be subjugated to externally imposed values.
> (Bush and Glover 2014, 558).

3.2.3. *Authentic leadership*

Avolio and Gardner (2005) consider authenticity in terms of its Greek translation, 'to

thine own self be true.'

> We believe the key distinction is that authentic leaders are anchored by their own deep sense of self; they know where they stand on important issues, values and beliefs. With that base they stay their course and convey to others, oftentimes through actions, not just words, what they represent in terms of principles, values and ethics.   (Avolio and Gardner 2005, 329-330)

The first antecedent to authenticity is a person's life history such as family, positive role models, as well as educational and work experiences. The second antecedent is often a trigger event such as the loss of a loved one, a health issue, promotion, advanced education, experiencing a different culture or meeting a person with a different worldview.

Authentic leadership is considered a "root construct" for other types of leadership such as ethical and transformational leadership (Gardner et al. 2005, 350). Four components of authentic leadership are: balanced processing, internalised moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness (Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber 2009).

> Balanced processing refers to objectively analyzing relevant data before making a decision. Internalized moral perspective refers to being guided by internal moral standards, which are used to self-regulate one's behavior. Relational transparency refers to presenting one's authentic self through openly sharing information and feelings as appropriate for situations (i.e., avoiding inappropriate displays of emotions). Self- awareness refers to the demonstrated understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, and the way one makes sense of the world.
> (Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber 2009, 424)

As for authentic school leaders, they "bring their deepest principles, beliefs, values and convictions to work" (Duignan 2006, 131). They have high levels of purpose and meaning, they reflect on the quality of teaching and learning and allocate time for teachers to do the same, and they are willing to distribute and share leadership. Authentic school leaders value personal and professional relationships, they are present to their followers in schools, they reach out to them and express their concern for them.

Authentic leadership development is an ongoing process and includes developing the leader's personal, relational, professional and organisational capabilities (Avolio and Gardner 2005). As the leader is the embodiment of the organisation's principles, leadership development starts with personal effectiveness (West-Burnham 2009). "Developing personal authenticity is axiomatic to developing leadership authenticity and so becoming personally and professionally effective" (ibid., 113). Personal authenticity is when a person's values (moral and spiritual), literacy (cognitive and affective) and

actions (personal and interpersonal) cohere. As principals develop as authentic leaders, they learn to align their values, their literacy and their actions, on a personal level and on a professional level.

Authentic leadership is particularly suitable for faith school leaders:

> Leaders are expected to behave with integrity, and to develop and support goals underpinned by explicit values. Such leadership may be found in faith schools, where the values are essentially spiritual, or may be a product of the leader's own background and effectiveness. (Bush and Glover 2014, 566)

The Dominican programme at Edgewood College, USA (Otte 2015) and the Australian Catholic University (Duignan 2006) provide modules on authentic leadership. Branson's study (2007) into authentic leadership found that the seven Catholic school principals benefitted from a structured process of self-reflection. He recommends that leaders should be committed to a process of self-knowledge so that they can change any behaviour that negates against the quality of their leadership.

> Arguably, truly authentic leadership might only be possible for those leaders who have the commitment and courage to come to know and understand the full extent of the influential power of their inner Self. Indeed, the enhancement of authentic leadership practice may well depend on the willingness of the leader to engage in some professional development experiences incorporating a process of deeply structured self-reflection. (Branson 2007, 239)

3.2.4. *Ethical leadership*

Robert Starratt, a proponent of ethical leadership, defines the leader's ethical roots as his or her "principles, beliefs, assumptions, and values" (2004, 5). Ethical leadership gives rise to moral behaviour and decisions that have a major impact on people's lives. Ethical leadership development involves cultivating three foundational virtues: responsibility, authenticity and presence. Firstly, the school leader's primary responsibility is to the students and then to other stakeholders. The school leader is also responsible for creating a culture of good working relations, a healthy and safe environment, and ensuring quality teaching and learning. "Feeling responsible as a human being enables leaders to put themselves in another's shoes, to feel what they feel, to look at situations from their perspective" (ibid., 49-50). Secondly, in relation to authenticity, school leaders, "bring themselves, including their deepest convictions, beliefs, and values, to their work" (ibid., 65). In relation to the third virtue of presence, school leaders are fully present to themselves as they affirm staff, provide critical feedback, and enable others.

3.2.5. Moral leadership

Education can be considered a moral activity (Sergiovanni 1992) and educational leadership has a moral dimension (Fullan 2003, West-Burnham 2009). According to Sergiovanni (1992), moral leadership has to do with the heart, the head and the hands: it originates in the heart, (values and beliefs), is shaped by the "mindscapes" of the head (theories of practice developed over time), and drives the hand (decisions and actions) (ibid., 8-9). As moral leaders, teachers and principals are motivated in three ways: extrinsically, as "What gets rewarded gets done,"; intrinsically as "What is rewarding gets done,"; and morally as "What is good gets done" (ibid., 57). The moral dimension of school leadership is a higher-level dimension compared to the 'bureaucratic', 'psychological', 'technical-rational', and 'professional' dimensions. In the school's hierarchical pyramid of power, the school's values, ideals and commitments are at the apex and those of the principal, teachers and students are subordinated. Therefore, the leader becomes a servant and steward to the mission of the school. The purpose of leadership is:

> ….not to enhance the leader but to enhance the school. Leaders minister to the school by being of service and by providing help… In schools that means teaching and learning are enhanced and the development needs of students are honored. (Sergiovanni 1992, 19)

The source of moral authority within the school comes from the shared values, beliefs and commitments of the school community. When the leader taps into these, teachers respond in their practice by working collaboratively and collectively as a community to attain a shared vision.

In his book *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership*, Fullan (2003) presents the school system as a moral ecology; educational leaders at all levels have a moral imperative to improve schools, to raise the bar and to close the gap between high and low achievers.

> Everyone, ultimately, has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone's business. The quality of the public education system relates directly to the quality of life that people enjoy (whether as parents, employers, or citizens), with a strong public education system as the cornerstone of a civil, prosperous, and democratic society. (Fullan 2003, 3)

Educational leaders need to "build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" (ibid., 10). In a later publication, *The Six Secrets of Change*, Fullan (2008) describes how the principal's moral impetus drives him or her forward in order to improve teaching and learning in schools. The principal can do this

in the following ways: acting as an agent for change; building loving relationships with staff; encouraging collaboration; ensuring there are opportunities for CPD; promoting consistency and innovation; safeguarding transparency of results and practices; and developing leadership capacity. Furthermore, principals make their own learning a priority; they engage with networks to build leadership capacity and access new ideas (Fullan 2014).

West-Burnham defines moral leadership as, "Leadership behaviour which is consistent with personal and organizational values which are in turn derived from a coherent ethical system" (2009, 64). The development of moral leadership is part of a personal development process. People's moral confidence can be enhanced by exploring religious texts, reflecting on actions, having critical friends or mentors, and by getting advice and support from networks. Moral leadership has a significant part to play in the transformation of schools: leaders have a moral purpose, exemplify moral behaviour and encourage people to do the right thing. Moral leadership development is about developing the leader's worldview:

> I would suggest that it is our mindscapes [Sergiovanni 2005, 25] that determine how we construct reality and so inform the nature of our personal and professional journeys. Each leadership mindscape is unique, the product of all that makes us who we are. Effective leaders understand their mindscapes, work to systematically enrich and deepen them and use them to navigate their world.
> (West-Burnham 2009, 8)

3.2.6. Servant leadership

Greenleaf (2003) is one of the first proponents of servant leadership, a model of leadership that represented a paradigmatic shift away from a hierarchical model of leadership. It requires a new attitude as the leader considers himself or herself as servant first, modeling the way for followers to become servant leaders. The servant leader moves from being chief executive to "*primus inter pares* - first among equals," one who puts the needs of his or her followers first (ibid., 75). In order to improve society, Greenleaf recommends that churches, universities, and business leaders adopt servant leadership. Its effectiveness can be measured by asking:

> Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society?   (Greenleaf 2003, 27)

Later, Spears (2009) identified ten characteristics of servant leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship,

commitment to growth of people and building community.

In relation to education, Sergiovanni (2005) acknowledges the potential of servant leadership theory and correlates the vocational dimension of servant leadership with love: "Servant leadership requires that one loves those who are being served" (ibid., 100). As for Catholic school leaders, Nuzzi presents Jesus as the exemplary model for servant leadership: "Those who aspire in Catholic education and who desire to teach as Jesus did are called in a similar fashion to lead as Jesus led" (Nuzzi 2000, 265). Nuzzi gives many examples of how Jesus served others during his ministry and how He rejected any display of power for His own sake. "In fact, Jesus refuses to act in his own legitimate self-defense, so complete is his aversion to the unbridled use of power" (ibid., 265). Nuzzi also gives examples of how the early Christian Church operated as a community: its leaders were open to debate; the community made democratic choices on important matters; and it was concerned with the welfare of all its members, especially the poor. Hence, servant leadership in Catholic education has a two-fold approach:

> Leading as Jesus led not only entails leaders using their power as he did, it also means establishing communities that clearly reflect this common life in and under Christ.   (Nuzzi 2000, 269)

Studies have found that Catholic school principals in many countries have adopted a servant-leadership approach. In the USA, Zamora (2013) found that servant leadership was the most prevalent leadership style in a sample of thirty-five principals. In Western Australia, Striepe and O'Donoghue's study (2014) of three elementary schools found that the principals adopted servant leadership with Jesus as their model and their values were shaped by their personal faith and the ethos of the school. The eight professed religious sister principals in Punnachet's study (2009) exemplified servant leadership characterised by "humility, authority and a sacred heart (love)" (ibid., 123). A large-scale study by Black (2010) in Ontario, Canada, found that servant leadership had a positive effect on school climate. Nsiah and Walker (2013) found that six Canadian Catholic high school principals adopted servant leadership styles. They were inspired by their family upbringing and their concept of servant leadership was developed by work-based faith development opportunities at retreats, workshops and conferences. Jesus Christ is at the centre of Nsiah and Walker's (2013, 144) and Punnachet's (2009, 124) theoretical models of servant leadership for Catholic school principals.

However, Branson, Marra, and Buchanan (2019) believe servant leadership is an ideal

rather than achievable leadership model for Catholic school principals. The difficulty lies in the expectation that leaders follow Jesus' commandment to love your enemies. Instead, the writers propose a "transrelational" leadership style based on Jesus' leadership (ibid., 225). This style entails four steps: establishing oneself and building relationships within the group; appraising the group's worth and work; expanding the group's identity; and engaging the group with its mission to work for the Kingdom of God. By adopting this model, principals can fulfill their roles as faith and educational leaders.

3.2.7. *Spiritual leadership*

Some writers consider spirituality an individual and collective phenomenon that can lead to improved organisational performance and increased productivity (Benefiel 2005a, Benefiel and Lips-Wiersma 2005, Fry 2003, Fry and Kriger 2009, Kriger and Seng 2005, Reave 2005). However, spiritual leadership is not necessarily tied to any faith tradition. For example, Fry's (2003) theory of spiritual leadership is based on a secular concept of faith, hope and love that leads to calling and membership:

1. creating a vision wherein organization members experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference;

2. establishing a social/organizational culture based on altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others, thereby producing a sense of membership and feel understood and appreciated.
(Fry 2003, 695).

Later, Fry and Kriger defined spiritual leadership that is "based on love, service and presence in the now" (2009, 1670). Meditation, contemplation and prayer are spiritual practices that allow the leader to become aware of the Transcendent and the needs of others. While transformational, ethical, authentic or contingency leadership models represent 'doing' leadership practices and 'having' leadership skills, the emphasis in spiritual leadership is on 'being' a leader.

In her book *Soul at Work* Benefiel defines spirituality as "the human spirit fully engaged" (2005b). A spiritual leader has been transformed by a spiritual journey, adopts spiritual values and practices, identifies the mission of the organisation and inspires others to find meaning and purpose in their work.

> Because their leadership grows out of a wellspring of deep spiritual groundedness, their leadership is characterized by compassion, service, respect, and wisdom. Paradoxically, keeping their eyes on the spiritual goal often results in material reward. (Benefiel 2005b, 39)

The spiritual leader's strength comes from within; he or she makes decisions and discerns the best way forward with the help of others.

> Discernment is hearing God's call in the midst of where one serves, whatever the context, knowing God is active in the midst of the messiest situation.
>
> (ibid., 53)

The "contemplative pause" is part of the discernment process for spiritual leaders (ibid., 58). Furthermore, Benefiel suggests spiritual leaders sustain themselves with spiritual practices, outside and inside work, and are part of a spiritual community. She recommends that leaders sustain the organisation's spirituality in five ways:

1. They attend to soul in their official documents.

2. They hire for congruence with their mission.

3. They devote time and attention to nurturing organizational soul.

4. They dedicate personnel to the task.

5. They create specific structures and processes that nurture the soul of the organization. (Benefiel 2005b, 149-150)

According to Dantley, spiritual leadership for education is threefold: it is "*principled, pragmatic, and purposeful*" (2008, 455). Principled leadership manifests in a strong sense of justice and fairness; pragmatic leadership deals with the demands of State education and societal needs; and purposeful leadership is spiritually motivated as leaders see their work as a calling. Moreover, "Theirs is a work of the spirit. They keep going through the morass of almost endless responsibilities because they are called to do so" (ibid., 459). Similar to Benefiel, Thompson suggests school leaders sustain their leadership through religious or non-religious spiritual practices to renew their energy and sense of purpose.

> For many, it will involve some form of communion with God. For others, it might involve ritualistic practices, prayer, or meditating…For still others, it might involve walking in the woods, jogging, writing in a journal, or finding ways of reconnecting to the passionate core of their values and beliefs.
>
> (Thompson 2008, 164)

Flintham (2011) undertook extensive research on 150 principals in England and Australia. He used hermeneutic phenomenology as his research methodology and categorised the principals into three groups: spiritual leaders who were inspired by 'reservoirs of hope'; vocational principals who had 'foundations in faith'; and principals who undertook 'labours of love' in deprived areas. The principal's 'reservoir of hope' is

the "the calm centre at the heart of the individual leaders" (ibid., 3). Spiritual principals engaged in: belief networks; support networks of family, friends, and colleagues; and hobbies and other interests outside of school. "Such networks provided opportunities for reflective space and professional renewal, as well as personal refreshment" (ibid., 169). In addition, he categorised the principals according to their ability to sustain their leadership: "striders" left after a successful experience and planned an exit strategy; "strollers" had issues with work-life balance; "stumblers" experienced breakdown or burnout; "sprinters" had a "post-modernist portfolio" and were principals for a limited time as part of a career path to other jobs (ibid., 171). Some of the spiritual and moral leaders were inspired by a secular spirituality while others had a faith-based spirituality, but all were able to name the values at the root of their leadership actions.

The sixty principals in the 'foundations in faith' group, had a strong vocational call, used faith-based language and were spiritually renewed by parish-based networks and activities. Twenty-five of these worked in Catholic schools:

> Headteachers operating from a personal faith perspective identify bases of belief which are couched in a specific language of faith yet show commonality of fundamental adherence to the Golden Rule of 'love your neighbour as yourself', encompassed within Gospel imperatives of inclusion and justice. Leaders of schools of a specifically religious character display similar professional attributes to their secular colleagues and find them tested by facing a similar range of critical incidents. The essential difference is in the capacity to articulate, fluently and without embarrassment, such deeply personal attributes and values in the language of faith, and to seek out and draw succour from sustaining refreshment opportunities from the faith community where such language is a natural part of the zeitgeist.   (Flintham 2011, 171-172)

In the third category of 'labours of love', forty principals worked in secular schools in socially deprived areas in the UK. They had a strong moral purpose, were self-confident, and were highly motivated to make a difference to students' lives. In Flintham's conceptual framework for spiritual and moral leadership, the leader's identity and authenticity are at the centre and are founded on the why (faith), how (hope) and what (love) of leadership.

Significantly, from a Catholic perspective, spiritual leadership is founded on a belief in the Triune God and on the power of the Holy Spirit as the source of inspiration and personal and communal transformation (Schneiders 2003). According to Ranson (2004), spiritual leaders are not interested in power or ambition but model their leadership on Jesus Christ, the shepherd who identified with his followers and listened to them deeply.

Christian spiritual leaders have three essential qualities: grief, hope and mercy.

> The spiritual leader is one who can grieve with others, with the world, who can enter into the pain or the need of a situation and in the midst of that situation offer a word of hope, a word of promise, a way of meaning. In so doing, spiritual leaders facilitate the birth of something to be – and this is what mercy is most about.   (Ranson 2004, 556)

According to Bollan (2007), all teachers in Catholic schools are called to be spiritual leaders. As they exercise their leadership: they have a vision that is not always their own as they discern God's will and listen well to their communities; they are compassionate and patient with difficult and challenging students; Our Lady has a central place in their lives; and they engage in character building and soul-searching.

Jacobs (2005) writes about the Catholic school principal as a spiritual leader who discerns the presence of the Holy Spirit. The principal's role is to build spiritual density and to guide staff to discover the vocational nature of their work.

> … faith makes it possible for Catholic educational leaders to make the strategic decision to look toward the future and to risk journeying into it based solely on a promise, namely, God's promise to be present along the way.
>   (Jacobs 2005, 95)

Lavery combines spiritual and servant leadership into transcendental leadership.

> The notion of service demands that one gives of one's best to others…As spiritual leaders, Catholic school principals reflect on their actions in light of the Gospel, particularly on how their actions impact on those they serve.
>   (Lavery 2012, 41)

To become transcendent leaders, principals should: study leadership and theology to postgraduate level; take an interest in everything in their schools; take responsibility for the overall vision of the school; encourage decision-making at the lowest level possible; and exercise a preferential option for the poor.

3.2.8. *Contemplative Leadership*

Contemplative leadership has prayer at its core (Cowley 2015). From a Christian perspective, contemplative prayer is about having a relationship with Jesus Christ and it requires quietness and stillness in order to become aware of God's presence and to experience His love in our hearts. It is 'a journey from the head to heart' that draws us into the mystery of God. Prayer is part of the contemplative's daily routine and requires the following:

> …discipline, silence and stillness, simplicity, cultivating an awareness of God, daily repentance and forgiveness, scripture, perseverance, and regularly receiving Holy Communion.　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Cowley 2015, 9)

Allowing ourselves to be led by the Spirit and rooted in Jesus transforms our lives so that we come to lead our lives from a still centre, a place where we can hear God's call to serve others.

> Servant ministry and contemplative ministry are two sides of the same coin. Both are about being formed more deeply into the self-emptying nature of Christ. Both take us down the road of learning to let go and let God be God.
> 　　　　　　　　　　　　　(ibid., 134)

Those who lead contemplative lives allow themselves to be led by God, they feel called to make a difference in other people's lives, especially in the lives of the weak and poor.

In relation to Catholic schools, Schuttloffel (1999) developed a theoretical contemplative leadership model for principals as a tool to help them deal with moral dilemmas. It is more than just reflective practice as every step of the decision-making process is infused with Gospel values. The model combines Sergiovanni's schema of educational leadership (the heart, the head, and the hand) with van Manen's levels of reflection (technical, interpretive and critical). In the principal's heart, he or she critically reflects on beliefs and makes decisions informed by Gospel values that include the theological virtues (faith, hope and love), the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) and values from scripture and Church tradition. A combination of character and contemplative practice produces authenticity.

> For Catholic educational leaders, the intersection of the heart, head, and hand evidences itself in one's character, the lifestyle each has chosen to give witness to the moral and intellectual virtues which Catholic educational leaders value.
> 　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Schuttloffel 1999, 3)

Contemplative practice is an effective part of transformational leadership and can help with continuous school improvement (Schuttloffel 2008). Principals can use it to critically reflect on decisions in relation to communication, credibility, curriculum and community.

> Specifically, the contemplative principle presents a distinctive meta-cognitive process that includes an understanding of Catholic theology, Church documents, and a powerful tradition of social justice based in Gospel values.
> 　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Schuttloffel 2008, 4)

Schuttloffel's (2013) study, that investigated the influence of character on Catholic school principals in England, Australia and the Netherlands, is an example of hermeneutic

phenomenological research. Four factors influenced the principals' decision-making: their life stories; their concept of vocation; national culture; and generational differences. Relationships were a priority for all of the principals which Schuttloffel interpreted as the theological virtue of love. In addition, regional culture had an influence on the principals and some felt contemplative leadership conflicted with their values of tolerance and inclusion.

> These southern Dutch directors' characters were also based in life stories, communities, and virtue. But my data imply that they viewed the Catholic Church as an institution that was an inconsequential community to their identity formation. I was convinced that their leadership practice was holistic, humanitarian, and caring - but it was not evidence of contemplative practice. Contemplative practice assumes a connection between a Catholic school and the theological teachings and institutional structure of the Catholic Church. This connection supports the liturgical and sacramental life of students and their families. Contemplative principals intentionally create a faith-learning community that leads to being a Catholic within the Roman Catholic tradition.
> (Schuttloffel 2013, 95)

While promoting contemplative leadership as a way of building Catholic identity and culture, Schuttloffel met with some negative reactions. One Southern-Dutch RE professor commented: "This is not possible…it is too much!" (ibid., 85). A lack of faith development and the pressure to comply with government-driven standardisation processes and accountability procedures reduced the potential for the Dutch principals to foster a Catholic culture in their schools. Notably, Schuttloffel's leadership model seems to deliberately focus on Catholic identity, doctrine and teaching rather than on the person of Jesus Christ as the model for contemplative practice.

O'Keefe (1999) believes the Ignation tradition of contemplation in action has also much to offer Catholic school leaders. "It is only through reflection on experience that one can come to see 'God in all things'" (ibid., 25). In a study of Jesuit leadership practices, Lowney (2003) found that when school leaders employed the Ignation contemplative tradition they were guided by self-awareness, ingenuity, love, and heroism. Jesuit recruits were encouraged to develop self-awareness and then became more open to the other three principles. The *examen* provided a daily opportunity to discover reasons to be grateful, realign personal goals, and reflect on behaviour and decisions that could be improved. A Jesuit needs to be ready to take up any opportunity to serve others, to demonstrate love through action, and strive for excellence and heroism by dedicating himself to creating a better future. In the Jesuit community, all Jesuits are considered leaders and contemplative practice gives them an opportunity to tap into their leadership potential and

that of others. Lowney describes the Jesuit school leadership style as love-driven leadership, and summarises it thus:

- the *vision* to see each person's talent, potential, and dignity;

- the courage, passion, and commitment to unlock that potential;

- the resulting *loyalty and mutual support* that energizes and unites teams.
(Lowney 2003, 170)

Moreover, Lowney points out that the primary motivation of Jesuit leaders is their faith in Jesus Christ. In Ireland, one secondary school principal discusses how Jesuit schools promote contemplative practice as a way of inviting postmodern students into the Christian story.

> In our school, we follow Ignatius' injunction in the Spiritual Exercises and think of the teacher as like a retreat director, gently guiding students, asking questions, philosophising so that they come to their own logical deductions, based on a Christian worldview - these stick and give them, ironically, a deductive methodology and an idea that sits very well with the Zeitgeist and is accepted by students. In so doing, the school is drawing from the deep wells of spirituality which run to the core of all human persons. (McCaul 2019, 68)

Self-awareness and reflection are part of many of the theoretical models for educational leadership explored later in this chapter. Significantly, this study explores the above theoretical leadership models in relation to the complex realities and experiences of a cohort of eighteen CPS principals.

3.3. *International Research on Catholic School Principals*

This section outlines international research studies in order to get a broad understanding of Catholic school principals' experiences in some Western countries. While many of the studies have similar findings, differences seem to depend on variations in culture, socio-economic and political circumstances, and levels of State and Church support for Catholic schools. Many of the findings of these studies will be compared to the findings of this study.

3.3.1. *USA*

Catholic schools in the USA are dependent on private fees and much of the research focuses on the financial challenges faced by principals. A large-scale quantitative survey of Catholic elementary school principals found that the most challenging aspect of their job was enrollment and financial management (Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt 2013). Other

studies focus on the principal as a faith leader. Spesia (2016) found that 600 principals were confident in their role of new evangelisation. Rieckhoff's study found two distinct groups within a cohort of ten novice principals:

> One group consisted of five principals who clearly saw themselves as faith leaders who were principals…. Five of the participants saw themselves as school leaders, with the role of faith leader as one of the many other duties and responsibilities they held. This distinction serves as an important one; those who saw themselves as first and foremost, a faith leader, used it as a lens through which all other responsibilities were framed.   (Rieckhoff 2014, 45-46)

Similarly, Beale found that thirty-three elementary school principals from Generation X (1961-1981) were willing to fulfill their faith leadership role.

> …all the leaders in the study have a personally strong commitment to spirituality and the faith and believe that their role as the spiritual leader of the school is paramount to the success of the school.   (Beale 2013, 198)

Regarding preparation for the role of faith leader, more than two decades ago a large-scale survey found that Catholic high school principals were not adequately prepared for the role (Wallace, Ridenour, and Biddle 1999). More recently, Beale (2013) and Spesia (2016) recommended that elementary school principals should avail of faith development opportunities. In addition, Nuzzi points out the difficulties of recruiting and retaining principals and recommends the sector engages in leadership succession planning to avoid the pitfalls of "backslide" due to leadership transitions (2015, 21).

3.3.2. *Australia*

Catholic school principals in Australia are challenged by the ever-increasing educational and religious leadership expectations especially in a predominately secular culture. Despite the secular context: Belmonte and Cranston (2009) discovered that principals lead their schools in accordance with the Catholic school mission and build a community of faith; Davison (2006) found that principals considered their work a ministry of the Church; and Neidhart and Lamb (2010) found that principals are more active as faith leaders in their parishes than in their schools. Similarly, Belmonte and Rymarz's study (2017) of nine small rural Catholic schools found that principals took on a faith leadership role in the community because of a lack of parish priests and they had little support from the Church or other lay parishioners. Notably, while CPS principals in Ireland are not expected to take on faith leadership roles in their parishes, a few of the principals in this study do so voluntarily as ministers of the Word, ministers of the Eucharist and leaders of liturgical celebrations. In Australia, the expectation to fulfill a faith leadership role

within the school and the parish is proving a disincentive for potential applicants to apply for principalship (Sinclair and Spry 2005). In a large-scale survey of one thousand teachers, only 30% of potential applicants who had senior leadership roles in Catholic schools were willing to apply for the job (d'Arbon 2006). Some of the disincentives to apply for principalship are: lack of support, inadequate pay, isolation, growing responsibilities, and conflict with parents and pastors (Fraser and Brock 2006). Furthermore, the wellbeing of principals is an issue:

> The high rate of staff attrition, especially during the first five years of teaching as well as leadership succession problems are warning signs to current Catholic school administrators that the issue of self-care is an urgent question that must be honestly acknowledged. (Treston 2007, 14)

In an attempt to address the issue of recruitment and retention, alternative models of principalship have been investigated (Queensland Catholic Education Commission 2006) including principalship as shared leadership (Cannon 2004). Similar to the situation in the USA, D'Arbon (2006) recommends that the Catholic school sector in Australia also engages in leadership succession planning to deal with the shortage of principals.

3.3.3. *United Kingdom*

The main theme of research on Catholic school principalship in the UK is the challenges imposed by the predominant market culture (Fincham 2010, 2019, Grace 2002). Grace (2002) undertook extensive research on Catholic secondary school headteachers in England. The pressure of academic achievement due to publicised league tables meant that headteachers held 'mission, markets, and morality' in creative tension. While academic commitment was mostly linked to the school's mission, in a minority of cases "academic outcomes appeared to have a dominant place in their consciousness" (ibid., 141). The market culture manifested in areas such as: pressure on Catholic schools to accept more government funding that resulted in less autonomy for schools; vigorous competition between schools; and admissions and exclusion policies and practices. The headteachers believed the Catholicity of their schools was strong and most schools had mission statements and visible Catholic signs and symbols. Grace's main recommendation is that principals and teachers need to renew their "spiritual capital" in order to sustain the mission of Catholic schools (ibid., 238).

Almost a decade later, Fincham (2010) found some of the same leadership challenges still prevailed: demands for accountability and performance; the appointment and retention of Catholic teachers; and socio-economic issues such as family breakdown, the drug culture,

social deprivation and crime. In a follow-up study, Fincham (2019) found that headteachers faced similar challenges: the recruitment, retention and faith development of teachers; funding for voluntary Catholic schools; the controversial policy of changing school governance to academy status; secularisation; and the lack of leadership from the Church regarding Catholic schools.

Richardson's (2014) study is very similar to this study as it examined the religious disposition of fifteen headteachers in primary and secondary Catholic schools. He found their religious worldviews were formed early in their lives. The most important aspect of their faith was their relationship with God and others. However, they did not mention Jesus Christ until prompted and then they talked openly about the centrality of Jesus Christ in their lives. There was lack of theological understanding about key issues such as the Eucharist and only a few references to the Holy Spirit. The principals were motivated to foster students' faith and they considered students' moral development more important than teaching doctrine and devotions. While the findings were positive, he recommended principals attend faith development courses.

Another study 'Visions for Education Leadership' entailed interviewing seventy headteachers from 2012-2014. The majority perceived their work as vocation. However, a "sizeable and interesting minority voiced their real misgivings around the term" as they also perceived principalship as a job (Watkins 2018, 160). Watkins concludes that their lay vocation is dedicated to the 'Church-in-ordinary,' to families who are mostly disengaged from the institutional Church but who want to remain attached.

In CPSs in England and Wales there is a decline in the percentage of Catholic teachers: 4% of headships are vacant; 62% of staff are Catholic; and only 24% hold a Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (Glackin and Lydon 2018). These figures show that the pool from which principals can be drawn is shrinking. In addition, there are other reasons for the lack of interest in Catholic school principalship: the demands on time and family life; rapid changes in the education agenda; increased accountability; lack of confidence and expertise in fulfilling the faith dimension of the role; and the requirement that applicants are practising Catholics (Gallagher 2007). In some dioceses Catholic multi-academy trusts have been established to make the sector more sustainable. They manage clusters of primary and secondary schools so that school leaders can focus on school improvements and developing the Catholic culture (Glackin and Lydon 2018).

3.4. *Vocation and Faith Development for Catholic School Leaders*

Many CCE documents and Catholic school commentators contend that teaching and principalship in a Catholic school is both a vocation and a profession. In addition, both Sullivan (2006) and Grace (2010) believe that principals need to be spiritually mature and theologically literate in order to address faith related issues in Catholic schools. Therefore, this section also reviews the provision of Catholic school leadership programmes in the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK.

3.4.1. *Vocation and principalship*

Gravissimum Educationis outlines the important role of teachers in children's education and faith development.

> Beautiful indeed and of great importance is the vocation of all those who aid parents in fulfilling their duties and who, as representatives of the human community, undertake the task of education in schools. This vocation demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt. (Vatican II 1965b, §5)

> But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs…their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher." (ibid., §8)

In later publications, the CCE explains further the professional and vocational nature of teaching in the Catholic school (CCE 1982, 1988, 1997, 2007, 2014).

> The life of the Catholic teacher must be marked by the exercise of a personal vocation in the Church, and not simply by the exercise of a profession…They should fully respond to all of its demands, secure in the knowledge that their response is vital for the construction and ongoing renewal of the earthly city, and for the evangelization of the world. (CCE 1982, §37)

The CCE document Lay Catholics in Schools (CCE 1982) provides normative standards for teachers: they have Christ as their "supreme model"; they actively participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school; they assist in forming a faith community within the school; and they teach RE (ibid., §38). However, the CCE was concerned at that time that lay teachers were often not adequately prepared to fulfill their religious responsibilities: "all too frequently, lay Catholics have not had a religious formation that is equal to their general, cultural, and, most especially, professional formation" (ibid., §60). Many other Church documents refer to the necessity for teachers to avail of professional and faith development (Vatican II 1965b, CCE 1982, 2007, 2014). Significantly, the CCE considers faith development for teachers a twofold process:

> Apart from their theological formation, educators need also to cultivate their spiritual formation in order to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ and become a Master like Him. (CCE 2007, §26)

Other Catholic commentators write about teaching as a vocation (Fowler 2000, Jacobs 1996, Palmer 2000, 2007). Fowler (2000) describes vocation as surrendering ourselves to God and working in partnership with Him. He believes a vocational crisis exists today. In order to hear God's call, Palmer (2000) suggests we first make an inward spiritual journey and listen to the voice of God from deep within our souls. Teachers can make a spiritual journey "inwards and downwards" into their hearts rather than "outwards and upwards" (Palmer 2007, 80). Leaders make this spiritual journey for the sake of their followers:

> Good leadership comes from people who have penetrated their own inner darkness and arrived at the place where we are at one with one another, people who can lead the rest of us to a place of "hidden wholeness" because they have been there and know the way. (Palmer 2007, 80-81)

According to Jacobs (1996), the vocational work of teachers in Catholic schools manifests in their relationships, in how they care for the school community, and in their honesty, openness, collegiality and commitment to work. Faith sustains teachers' efforts and they act as disciples who were sent on a mission to tell the world the good news.

> What must not be forgotten is that the theological virtue of faith is what provides the courage and confidence that excellent Catholic educators need to remain committed to and to fulfill the demands of their ministry. Only disciples who are full of faith are able to proclaim in very practical ways the Good News to young men and women. (Jacobs 1996, 57)

Some Catholic universities have been proactive in Catholic school leadership succession planning and provide programmes to prepare principals for leadership. Most of the programmes are informed by Catholic school leadership frameworks. The following section outlines professional and faith development courses for principals in the USA, Canada, Australia, and the UK.

3.4.2. *Professional and faith development courses in the USA and Canada*

Research studies have found that Catholic school principals in the USA need opportunities to develop their faith so that they are adequately prepared for their faith leadership role (Ozar 2010, Rieckhoff 2014, Wallace 2000). Almost thirty years ago, the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) produced a three-volume series to assist aspirant and practising principals in their managerial, educational and spiritual roles

(Ciriello 1993, 1994a, b). Later the NCEA published *The NCEA Catholic Educational Leadership Monograph Series* to support Catholic school leaders in their faith leadership role. In addition, Arlington Diocese and Loyola Marymount University (LMU) organised 'Spirituality and Virtue' seminars. This programme was found to successfully contribute to teachers personal and professional development (Earl 2008).

The NCEA holds regular conferences to support the work of Catholic school principals with representative delegates from Catholic universities, diocesan education offices, and principal groups. Loyola University Chicago (LUC) and Boston College (BC) collaborated to develop the National Standards and Benchmarks of Effective Catholic Schools (NSBECS) (Center for Catholic School Effectiveness 2012). The standards were developed to assist schools strengthen their Catholic identity and as criteria for excellence. Later LUC developed a Catholic School Principal Competencies framework based on the NSBECS with four areas of emphases: governance and leadership; mission and identity; academic excellence; and operational vitality (Boyle, Morten, and Guerin 2013). Postgraduate programmes for Catholic school leaders aim to develop participants in their professional leadership capabilities and in their faith. At the Greely Centre for Catholic Education in LUC, the Catholic Principal Preparation Program is based on the NSBECS and meets the requirements for State licensure. The programme includes elements such as field experiences, reflective practice, electronic portfolios, coaching and faith development (Sullivan and Peña 2019) as well as internship and mentorship opportunities for participants (Morten and Lawler 2016). The Notre Dame University's Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) offers the Mary Ann Remick Leadership Program that incorporates action research to enhance problem-based learning (Holter, Frabutt, and Nuzzi 2014). The Roche Centre for Catholic Education at BC facilitates the Emmaus Series, a twenty-month course that is based on the NSBECS and incorporates school improvement planning in the coursework (Melley 2019). Loyola Marymount University (LMU) offers the Catholic School Administration Programme on campus and online. It is also based on the NBSECS and has four major themes: mission-focused leadership; faith and spiritual development; operational management; and instructional leadership (Sabatino 2016). It incorporates project team-work and guided online spiritual direction. In Canada, the Ontario Institute for Education Leadership offers specific modules for Catholic school leaders (Ontario Catholic Principals' Council 2020).

3.4.3. *Professional and faith development courses in Australia*

In Australia, studies have recommended Catholic school principals avail of professional and faith development courses (Belmonte and Cranston 2009, Dorman and d'Arbon 2003, McEvoy 2006, Neidhart and Lamb 2010, 2011). In response to this need, The University of Notre Dame Australia in Freemantle and the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne deliver postgraduate courses for Catholic school leaders. The courses are aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Principals that were adopted nationally in 2012 and have modules on Catholic school mission and identity. In addition, the Queensland Educational Leadership Institute (QELi) delivers a range of courses for Catholic school leaders in association with the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. However, Neidhart and Lamb (2016) are concerned about courses adopting a generic approach to faith development and to principal role statements. They believe course providers should be aware that principals perform their role through a process of symbolic interactionism rather than adopting a prescribed script. Therefore, faith development for teachers and principals should involve formal study, social interaction, reflective practice, and self-reflection so that participants acquire the required leadership knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The D'Orsas believe Catholic school leaders need to familiarise themselves with three 'poles': faith, culture, and life. In relation to culture, school leaders need to develop an understanding of postmodern culture and the processes of secularisation, globalisation and pluralisation. In relation to life, they need to know how people form their worldviews. Moreover, in relation to faith, school leaders need to be inspired by the Gospel and have Jesus as their model for leadership. The Gospel story holds a central place in Catholic schools and leaders need to realise that "*the story of the community has a sacred quality and that they hold it in trust for others*…Our stories tell us who we are and we neglect them at our peril" (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013a, 92).

3.4.4. *Professional and faith development courses in the United Kingdom*

Studies have found that Catholic school principals in the UK need to develop their faith and leadership capabilities (Coll 2012, Fincham 2010, Richardson 2014, Wilkin 2018). In the past, principals possessed 'spiritual capital' that sustained them in their leadership practice despite adverse school contexts (Grace 2002). Grace later defined 'spiritual capital' as "resources of faith and values derived from a vocational commitment to a religious tradition" (2010, 125). Factors that contributed to its acquisition were: Catholic

upbringing; Catholic schooling; involvement in the parish; and working with and witnessing other teachers who exemplified Christian discipleship and vocation. However, Grace (2009) believes that the ability and resources of faith communities to provide professional and faith development courses for principals are often over-estimated. Government funded courses in educational leadership are secular in nature and do not offer any opportunity for principals to discuss religious, spiritual, or moral matters. Thus, Grace believes a mixed provision of principal courses would cater for diversity and build unity among principals.

Similarly, Wilkin (2018) believes there must be a systematic approach to the theological and spiritual development of Catholic school principals and points out that while professional development courses are free, faith development courses are mostly at the school leaders' own expense. Catholic dioceses and universities acknowledge the changed cultural context in the UK and co-ordinate efforts to renew teachers' and principals' 'spiritual capital'. For example, the National School of Formation organises an annual National Retreat for Catholic Headteachers in England (Friel 2018). Principals who availed of spiritual guidance at the retreat gave positive feedback about their experiences. They described themselves as "ministers of the Gospel" and "agents of change" in schools that served poor and maginalised pupils (ibid., 92). Friel recommends that theology, Church doctrine and spirituality are part of faith development courses. St. Mary's University College, Twickenham offers a Master's degree in Catholic School Leadership (Sullivan, Murphy, and Fincham 2015). It provides professional and faith development in four key modules: Catholic education; leadership and management; spiritual and theological foundations; and leadership for learning. It incorporates blended learning with on-campus lectures and it also has a full distance e-learning option with support from a supervisor. In Scotland, the Scottish Catholic Education Service offers continuous professional and faith development courses for Catholic school teachers and principals through the 'Companions on the Journey' programme.

Conclusion

In this chapter, CCE documents were reviewed in relation to Catholic school principalship. The distinctive role of the Catholic school principal was discussed in relation to the school's mission (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013a, Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt 2013, Sullivan 2006, Sullivan and McKinney 2013) and some of its dimensions were also reviewed (Sullivan 2000). The main responsibility of the Catholic school principal is

children's education and the role entails building a Catholic school culture (Cook 2001, Earl 2012).

Various theoretical models of educational leadership, that have values at their core, were reviewed in the second section. In the distributive model, the principal shares tasks, responsibilities and leadership with staff (Duignan 2008, Harris and Spillane 2008). The transformational leadership model focuses on the articulation of a shared mission thereby transforming school outcomes and organisational systems (West-Burnham 2009). Authentic leaders have a well-developed sense of themselves, their principles, beliefs, and values (Duignan 2006). Ethical leadership requires the principal to have a deep sense of responsibility, authenticity and presence that are reflected in moral behaviour (Starratt 2004). Moral leadership involves the 'head, heart and hands' (Sergiovanni 1992) and principals are impelled to do 'the right thing' (Fullan 2003). The Catholic tradition informs servant, spiritual and contemplative theoretical leadership models: servant leaders have Jesus as their model as they serve their followers (Nuzzi 2000); spiritual leaders 'bring their souls to work' (Benefiel 2005b, Flintham 2011); and contemplative leaders spend time in prayer and they align their decisions with Gospel values in a metacognitive process (Schuttloffel 2013). However, principals often use a contingency approach when they choose different leadership models depending on the situational context (Bush and Glover 2014). Notably, two of the international studies on Catholic school principals (Flintham 2011, Schuttloffel 2013) used hermeneutic phenomenology as their research methodology.

International studies on Catholic school principals were explored in the third section. Studies revealed that principals face various challenges such as: a lack of finance and support for private Catholic schools (USA); a lack of principal applicants (Australia); and demands for accountability and academic success (UK). Other studies discovered that principals were willing to fulfill their faith leadership role, despite the prevailing secular culture. However, it was found that school leaders needed to "renew their spiritual capital" (Grace 2002, 238) by engaging in professional and faith development for Catholic school leadership. The recruitment and retention of principals is also a challenge in many countries.

Lastly, the chapter examined the vocational nature of teaching and principalship in Catholic schools (CCE 2007, Fowler 2000, Jacobs 1996, Palmer 2000, 2007). The final subsections reviewed professional and faith development programmes for aspirant and

incumbent school leaders. Many Catholic universities deliver courses that combine national education leadership frameworks with the Catholic school's mission. These courses are part of the Church's plans for Catholic school leadership succession. The next chapter examines; some aspects of Christian faith; the effects of postmodernity on faith; and faith in contemporary Ireland.

CHAPTER 4

CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN FAITH AND CULTURE

Introduction

Faith is defined as having complete trust or confidence in someone or something. For example, we may have faith in an object and we trust that it works. In religious terms, faith means trusting in God. It is more than just believing in God, as one can believe in God's existence but may not completely put one's faith or trust in Him (Moser 2014). According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Apostolic Constitution 1994), faith, hope and love are theological virtues bestowed by God, and love is the most important of these. Faith involves a call-and-response movement: "Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man" (CCC §26). God reveals Himself to us through His work in creation and through His son Jesus Christ. By becoming incarnate, we hear the good news of God's love and salvation. Our faithful response to God's revelation is not just a 'leap in the dark' but a conscious decision to place our trust in Jesus Christ, both God and man. Christian faith can therefore be expressed as "faith in God as represented in Christ" or "faith in God in Christ" or simply "faith in Christ" (Moser 2014, 259). As the focus of this study is on Christian faith, the word 'faith' is used to denote 'Christian faith'. As well as distinguishing between the concepts of faith, religious faith, and Christian faith, it is also relevant at this initial stage to distinguish between faith and religion. The word 'religion' is derived from the Latin word *religare*, that means to bind, and is defined as a particular system of religious worship. This study concentrates on Catholic Christian faith rather than religious worship.

4.1. *Christian Faith in the Catholic Tradition*

The first section of this chapter explores four aspects of faith: the mystery of the Holy Trinity; the centrality of Jesus Christ; theology as faith seeking understanding; and the various stages of faith development. However, the theology here represents an ideal position of faith and there are many more aspects of faith. The aim of this study is to reveal the role of faith in the lives of a cohort of principals, their 'espoused' and 'operant theology' (Sullivan and McKenney 2013).

4.1.1. *The mystery of the Holy Trinity*

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the central mystery and the fundamental truth of

Christian faith (CCC §234). While people of monotheistic faiths believe that God is the source of all life, what makes Christianity distinctive is the belief that there are three persons in the one God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Apostolic Constitution 1994) (CCC §238-267) explains that through Jesus' incarnation, we hear of God's love for all; by Jesus' death and resurrection we are redeemed and saved from sin; and through Him we become God's adopted sons and daughters. Jesus Christ is at the centre of Christian faith: "At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father" (CCC § 426). The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, in turn proceeds from the Father and the Son as our helper and guide and invites us to participate in the inner life of God. As Christians, we are bound by the Holy Spirit as the mystical Body of Christ. When Catholics profess, "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church," we proclaim the work of the Holy Spirit in binding us together as one; we belong to the holiness of God; we are open to universality and people of all cultures; and we proclaim the same good news of salvation as the apostles (Wright 1978).

Christians are invited to participate in the life of the Holy Trinity and to be "partakers in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). As the essence of God is love (1 John 4:16), the nature of the Holy Trinity is one of loving relationships between three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are invited by Jesus to participate in the dynamic loving relationship of the Holy Trinity by following the greatest commandment, to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:35-40, Mark 12: 28-34, Luke 10: 27). Both Rohr (2016) and Gaillardetz (2007) write about the need for Christians to regain our understanding of the Holy Trinity. Rohr (2016) urges us to enter the flow, dance and energy of love that exists between the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

> The foundational good news is that creation and humanity have been drawn into this flow! We are not outsiders or spectators but inherently part of the divine dance. Some mystics who were on real journeys of prayer took this message to its consistent conclusion: creation is thus "the fourth person of the Blessed Trinity"! Once more, the divine dance isn't a closed circle - we're all invited!
> (Rohr 2016, 67)

Similarly, Gaillardetz (2007) explains the Holy Trinity as relational love and each person is called to be in communion with God and others. Both writers dismiss the concept of God at a distance, the "man upstairs" (Rohr 2016, 171) or "the divine individual residing in heaven far away from us" (Gaillardetz 2007, 35). They believe the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is generally neglected by most Christians who do not fully comprehend the

relational Trinitarian concept of God. Gaillardetz thinks that most Christians, even if they profess belief in the Holy Trinity, act from "solitary" theism as they imagine a relatively undifferentiated God (ibid., 29). As a consequence of this unitarian view, God is seen as outside of ordinary everyday experiences and God is limited to sacred occasions such as in prayer or in the sacraments. Rohr also dismisses the concept of grace as "occasional" or "additive" (2016, 158) and believes grace is intrinsic to all creatures. Religion and grace can be seen as commodities: "a kind of spiritual fuel, and the church and its ministers as sacramental grace dispensers" (Gaillardetz 2007, 30). Moreover, the Holy Trinity is the source of life and love, and grace is the presence of God in our midst.

> This vision of God suggests that we do not invite God into our lives, but rather come to recognize that God is always present as the deepest ground and foundation of our world, bearing our world up in love. (Gaillardetz, 2007, 39)

Both writers refer to the theologian Karl Rahner, an influential theologian of Vatican Council II, who wrote about God as Mystery and the need for Christians today to be mystics who see God at work within all of our experiences. Rahner also taught about the "supernatural existential" (1961, 302) whereby all humans are graced by God, orientated towards Him, open to the offer of communication with Him and can never be separated from His communication.

4.1.2. The centrality of Jesus Christ

The Catholic Church declares Jesus Christ at the centre of Christian faith in Lumen gentium: "Christ is the light of nations" (Vatican II 1964, §1). The story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection is described in the Gospels by the four evangelists who conferred with eye-witnesses to give an account of the historical Jesus. Dulles (2000) explains that what is important in the Gospels is not the accuracy of the details of his life but Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God and his redeeming actions. The prologue to John's Gospel announces Jesus as the Word of God made flesh (John 1:1); God united Himself with humanity through Jesus, both God and man. The purpose of the incarnation is to save us from sin and therefore Jesus Christ has a universal role as redeemer of the world. Even after his ascension, Jesus did not leave the apostles and disciples on their own. He sent the Holy Spirit and by the power of the Holy Spirit the Church continues as the mystical Body of Christ.

> He [Jesus Christ] is the unifying principle of the cosmos, the source and norm of truth and morality, the consummation of all history, the goal and crown of all creation. As eternal Logos, he is truth itself, and as man he is the way that all

must follow. Even the world of inanimate nature finds in him the source of its power, order, and beauty and the principle of its own renewal. (Dulles 2000, 52)

For Christians, reading and studying the Gospels are important ways to pass on faith from one generation to the next and to get to know Jesus Christ (Graham 2015, McGrath 2015). McGrath believes reading scripture can lead to conversion and deep levels of faith. He describes a moment of epiphany: "I was like someone who had read books about France but had not visited. Or someone who had read about falling in love but had never experienced it" and by reading the Bible, he allowed Jesus Christ to enter his heart, to lead him "onward and upward through life" (2015, 58). Graham (2015) expresses regret that most Catholics confine the Gospels to listening to the readings at Sunday Mass. They often treat Jesus Christ as a "Facebook friend" who is "an acquaintance rather than a close friend" (ibid., 12). She points out that since Vatican II, some Catholics have begun to embrace reading the Bible, they join Bible study groups, or practise *lectio divina*. Like others, Graham believes people often turn to Jesus Christ and His cross at significant times during their lives, especially when they experience suffering or a crisis.

While the four Gospels relate the story of Jesus Christ, St. Paul interprets the significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. He writes about faith in letters to the early Christian communities and encourages them to have faith in Jesus Christ. For St. Paul, Christian faith is about knowing, loving and trusting in Jesus Christ. Faith is more than religious observance and keeping the commandments (Galatians 3), but knowing and trusting Jesus Christ helps us keep the commandments (Ephesians 6). If we have the gift of faith, we orientate our lives towards God: "If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Either in life or in death, we belong to the Lord" (Romans 14: 7-8). Through baptism Christians receive the spirit of Jesus Christ (Romans 8) and are open to his love (Galatians 3: 26-29). The faithful put on a "new self" (Ephesians 4:24) and imitate Jesus who is "the way of love" (Ephesians 5:1). In his sermon at Areopagus, when he noticed the Athenians' altar to "the unknown God," St. Paul explained that through Jesus Christ, God is within our being: "God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being'" (Acts 17: 27-28).

Our hearts, our minds and our souls are transformed by faith in Jesus Christ. In the *New Dictionary of Theology*, O'Donnell (2016) refers to this transformation process as the "Christification of our lives" or the assimilation of Jesus Christ into our lives that involves

a surrender of the whole person to God's will by the power of the Holy Spirit (2016, 385). Therefore, Christian discipleship is considered a holistic endeavour often symbolised by the head, the heart and the hands.

> *A Way of the Hands* demands a discipleship of love, justice, peace-making, simplicity, integrity, healing and repentance.
>
> *A Way of the Heart* demands a discipleship of right relationships and right desires, community building, hospitality and inclusion, trust in God's love and prayer and worship.
>
> *A Way of the Head* demands a discipleship of faith seeking understanding and belief with personal conviction, sustained by study and investigation, by probing and reflecting, by discerning, all toward spiritual wisdom for life.
>
> (Groome 2011, 111-112)

Groome points out that discipleship is more about Christian praxis, how we live out our faith, rather than Christian orthodoxy, what we believe.

> What discipleship demands of people's lives - its orthopraxis, or right practice- should be a primary focus and intent of our education in faith. This would be in contrast to the present nigh exclusive emphasis - at least in Roman Catholic circles - on orthodoxy (right belief). Although our beliefs are integral to our faith… how we live our faith is really the nub of Christian discipleship.
>
> (Groome 2011, 114)

Those who have shown exemplary discipleship during their lives are bestowed the name 'saints' by the Church and they serve as models for Christian life (Dulles 2000, 69). The whole Church, those on earth, in heaven, and in purgatory, form a communion of saints striving to follow Jesus Christ's way. In Lumen gentium, the Church declared the Blessed Virgin Mary as the model of what we hope to become; Our Lady is "exalted as she is above all the angels and saints" (Vatican II Council 1964, §69). Catholics have a tradition of great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and pray to her to intercede to her son Jesus on our behalf.

4.1.3. *Theology: faith seeking understanding*

Throughout history, humans have revealed themselves as questioning and dialogical beings in search of meaning. Our impulse to make sense of our lives is often linked with our search for happiness. Philosophical questioning can lead people to a deeper understanding of ourselves and our world and theology can also lead to a deeper understanding of God and faith. In the *New Dictionary of Theology,* O'Donnell (2016) points out that people have searched for meaning by looking back on history and biblical texts. The Old Testament tells stories of people like Abraham who were rewarded by

placing their trust in God and his covenant. Similarly, Kasper (1980) posits that the question of meaning is also the question of God. Moreover, knowing our limitations and our finiteness forces us to question the existence of God, our lives and our hopes for the future.

> Everyone has a specific idea of what he means by a happy and fulfilled life, and everyone suffers when he no longer finds any meaning in what he does.
> (Kasper 1980, 24).

He states that theology does not provide evidence of God's existence or all of the answers to life's questions such as experiences of suffering and the power of evil. Both O'Donnell and Kasper point us in the direction of the historical Jesus in the New Testament to find answers to our questions of meaning. In the New Testament, Jesus is the centre of faith: "Jesus is not only the embodiment of faith but is also faith's catalyst" (O'Donnell 2016, 377). Jesus' faith leads Him to complete surrender and obedience to the Father's will. We, as his followers, look to his life, death and resurrection to make sense of our lives. In Gaudium et spes, the second Vatican Council confirms that Jesus Christ reveals the mystery of human experiences to us.

> Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by His death; He has lavished life upon us so that, as sons in the Son, we can cry out in the Spirit; Abba, Father. (Vatican II 1965a, 22)

Various papal encyclicals provide different interpretations of faith. In *Fides et ratio* Pope John Paul II (1998) describes the complimentary roles of faith and reason that help people discover the truth about themselves and Jesus Christ.

> Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart the desire to know the truth - in a word, to know himself - so that by knowing and loving God, men and women can come to the fullness of the truth about themselves.
> (Pope John Paul II 1998, 1)

He explains that while faith begins by entrusting ourselves to others who believe and know the Truth, our faith can be obscured by a culture of relativism and scepticism. In Deus caritas est Pope Benedict XVI (2005) explains that faith development awakens our spirits to God and to loving others. In Lumen fidei Pope Francis (2013b) teaches that faith gives foundation and meaning to our lives and ensures our relationships are filled with love. Faith is a gift that illuminates our lives so that we can see Jesus who is the light. It involves all of our senses: "Joined to hearing, seeing then becomes a form of following Christ, and faith appears as a process of gazing in which our eyes grow

accustomed to peering into the depths" (ibid., §29).

Many theologians offer various interpretations of Christian faith. Migliore (2014) explores some of the mysteries of faith such as revelation, the Holy Trinity, creation, sin, and the sacraments. Dulles (1997) traces the history of Christian faith since the early Church, its properties and how people develop or lose their faith. Various models of faith have emerged over time and people experience faith in different ways. The propositional model emphasizes the acceptance of statements of faith; the transcendental model promotes God the Enlightener; the fiducial model encourages us to trust in God who keeps His promises; the affective or experiential model presents God as lover who touches our hearts; the obediential model has God as ruler; in the praxis model people work for justice and peace; and in the personalist model, we see God as the source of all life. However, all aspects of faith cohere into faith as one reality. Furthermore, according to Dulles, faith has the following attributes: free, supernatural, experiential, cognitive, sapiential, reasonable, critical, firm, obscure, vulnerable and doctrinal. Faith can be obscure as people often grapple with its many mysteries such as the Holy Trinity, the incarnation, the sacraments and grace or sometimes they may not understand the language in Church formulations. Faith is a gift from God that is grounded by grace, reason and experience: God's grace impels people on their journey of faith to discover the truth; reason leads to knowledge, understanding and wisdom; and people experience deep moments of faith in creation, in moments of reverence and reconciliation, in their interpersonal relationships and in mystical encounters. In general, Dulles (1997) concludes, most Christians lead quiet lives of faith.

While intellectual reasoning and theology help us to find answers to some of our questions about faith, Muldoon (2005) believes faith is much more than an intellectual exercise or adherence to doctrines of faith. He thinks the seeds of faith often appear in questions about threshold experiences such as birth, death and suffering, in a curiosity about religious phenomena, or how religion gives order to people's lives. Our faith journey is a like an adventure in which God holds out His hand as we follow Him and fall in love with Him. Colwell (1991) explains that faith is like friendship, it is dynamic, it has many different dimensions and it is found in varying degrees of depth among believers. In its perfect form, faith:

… consists of believing that Jesus is the Christ, confessing that He is, trusting in Him for sustenance and salvation, knowing His spiritual presence in one's life, and acting in

accordance with His teachings. Faith requires our thinking, our speaking, our deciding or committing, our feeling and our acting. It exercises our complete humanity.
(Colwell 1991, 64)

4.1.4. The stages of faith development

Dulles (1997) describes the development of faith throughout people's lives. While the sacrament of baptism is considered the sacrament of faith, growth in faith depends on the gift of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Jesus Christ. A person's faith increases as he or she listens to the Word of God, participates in the sacraments, spends time in prayer, and is supported by a community of faith. Ideally, the more we love God, the greater our faith and the more we show love to others. We are free to respond to God's grace and may choose to accept or reject Him. Hence, our faith may decrease or be lost altogether. Sometimes people may lose their faith because they live in a secular culture that sometimes inhibits a Christian way of life. Faith is dynamic; believers may become unbelievers and unbelievers may become believers. However, a person at any stage of life may be searching consciously or unconsciously for God as "grace works in a hidden way in the hearts of all" (ibid., 260).

In *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, Fowler (2000) explores faith as a universal human phenomenon that flows from grace and the Holy Spirit. His theory of faith development is linked to the stages of human development. There are seven stages of faith through which we may pass: primal, intuitive-projective, mythic-literal, synthetic-conventional, individuative-reflective, conjunctive and universalising. People move through the first four stages from childhood to adolescence. Adults may then go through one or more of the last three stages. In the individuative-reflective stage, people achieve a sense of self and choose their beliefs, values and commitments. The conjunctive stage is usually the last stage when people become aware of the paradoxes in life and they are able to combine their commitment to one faith tradition with an openness to other traditions. Very few people move to the final stage of universalizing faith in which they feel at oneness with God. It is marked by "*decentration from self,*" "*perspective taking*" (ibid., 55) and "a powerful kind of *kenosis*, or emptying of self" (ibid., 56).

Dulles (1997) accepts the feasibility of the first four stages of Fowler's faith development theory but has reservations about the adult stages. During late adolescence, young people can either become agnostics or can embrace their faith. Groome believes faith does not follow a straight trajectory but often takes a route of its own: "the journey of faith may take byways rather than highways or hit roadblocks that bring it to a halt" (2011, 79).

Most people reach a mid-point of conventional faith and then either embrace or reject faith. People lose their faith for many reasons: they have not reached a mature level for dealing with the demands of life in the postmodern world; they may not have engaged in adult faith development; or they are unable to cope with paradoxes such as the existence of a loving God and human suffering.

Rohr (2012) believes our spiritual life is divided in two halves. In the first half, people are often preoccupied with their "identity, security, and sexuality and gender" (ibid., 4). In the second half, it is often suffering that brings people to spiritual maturity and wisdom: "Normally a job, fortune, or reputation has to be lost, a death has to be suffered, a house has to be flooded, or a disease has to be endured" (ibid., xix).

According to O'Murchu (2014), postmodern culture and occupational commitments also influence people's journey of faith. In the past, faith development was concentrated on the young:

> If one had been baptized and had received the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation, it was assumed that one had been blessed with the grace of being a religious believer. (O'Murchu 2014, 3)

Nowadays, young European adults (aged 20-35) often postpone religious questioning until their work and social lives become more stable. In mid-life (aged 35-55) many adults adopt faith more coherently and a life crisis often acts as a catalyst for change. Mid-life is often marked by a reliance on "internal wisdom" (ibid., 9). Many people in their fifties and sixties are still at work and thereby tend to neglect their spiritual growth or give it cursory attention. However, when people retire in their seventies, they often have more time to attend to matters of faith. These "wise elders" have much to contribute to the spiritual challenges facing people and the Church (ibid.,13). Finally, Gallagher (2016) believes the prospect of death brings one's faith to the fore in the end.

> Not everyone meets a Damascus revolution. The Spirit usually works in a gradual and gentle way - in the erosion of the ego in ordinary life, family, work, service, patience in difficulty. And death arrives as a slow self-losing. You discover that you have been a pupil at a long school of letting go, that has lasted a lifetime, secretly learning from Christ himself. (Gallagher 2016, 82)

Regarding the transmission of faith, all Christians share in the responsibility to foster each other's faith (Groome 2011). The three key partners in faith development are home, school and parish. Faith development has a threefold effect: it informs people about faith; it forms people's identities in Christian faith; and it transforms people's lives so that they

become disciples of Jesus Christ, thus transforming the world. Parents, teachers and priests use the same teaching dynamic as Jesus, *'life to Faith to life'* (ibid., 263). Jesus always began teaching with the lives of his listeners; He engaged them in their faith; and then He presented them with a new way of living. He did this with gentleness and reverence. Christian pedagogy is modelled on the way Jesus taught: "Welcoming and inclusive, respectful of learners, compassionate and committed to justice and encouraging of partnership and servant leaders" (ibid., 29). The whole enterprise of faith development is so that we create God's Kingdom of love, justice and peace on earth. The principals in this study discuss their personal journeys of faith and how they contribute to the transmission of faith to the young in their professional lives.

4.2. *Christian Faith and Culture*

Faith does not exist in a vacuum but instead exists as a personal response within the individual and as a collective response within a culture. Faith is an integral part of culture and as culture changes, so should faith.

> To be Church is to be Church in a culture; to proclaim the good news is to proclaim the good news in a culture. And when culture changes, so too must Church (if it is to be faithful to itself).   (Conway 2018, 91)

As we live out our daily lives, we live within a culture; some parts are visible, such as religious practices and behaviours, while other parts, such as beliefs, assumptions, norms and values, are below the conscious surface. How we develop our faith largely depends on the culture in which we are immersed. In particular, this study reveals the influence of culture on the faith lives of principals working in CPSs.

4.2.1. *Cultural changes from premodernity to postmodernity*

Charles Taylor believes formal religion has been replaced by "exclusive humanism" (2007, 27) whereby humans exclude God from their lives. The subtraction theory is a commonly held assumption: as reason and science increase, faith decreases. However, Taylor analysed a vast array of cultural changes that have occurred throughout premodern, modern and postmodern eras (1500-2000) in Western Europe. Our secular age is due to the culmination of a complex series of cultural and sociological events. Christianity itself was one of the instigators of secularisation that has resulted in a collapse of Christian beliefs and religious practice. Taylor examines the changes in culture and faith during the following epochs: the premodern age; modernity and the age of mobilisation; postmodernity, the age of authenticity and new age spirituality.

In premodern times people lived in an "enchanted world" and were "porous" to transcendence (ibid., 27). They believed in saints, angels, the 'magic' of Church sacraments as well as witches, demons, and fairies; they perceived God as master of the cosmos; and they expressed their beliefs though religious rituals and festivals. By 1500 modern European states realised that, if they were to thrive economically, they needed more civilised societies. Governments and churches worked together to reform society into a new "Modern Moral Order" (ibid., 159). The Reformation, as part of this reform process, replaced the superstitious elements of Catholicism, such as the sacraments and grace, with a new emphasis on scripture and personal responsibility. People gradually became "buffered" (ibid., 27), as they closed themselves to transcendence and became focused on their own existence or immanence. This change in people's worldview resulted in Deism, whereby God is perceived as a distant designer rather than God who is concerned with people's personal lives. Deism is a half-way house to "exclusive humanism" as people rely on themselves rather than relying on God (ibid..).

By the 18th century, a minority of "growing educated laity" (ibid., 62) suggested that there was an alternative to the theocentric worldview. Gradually by the 19th century, with advances in science and education, more people began to renounce their faith. Christianity suffered several blows in the 20th century with the devastation caused by the First World War and the rise of Fascism and Nazism. The churches retaliated from 1800 to 1960 with an "Age of Mobilization" whereby they became involved in every aspect of life, in education, politics, recreation, health and welfare. In Ireland, the Catholic Church became involved in the temperance movement, credit unions and different aspects of society.

The cultural revolution of the 1960s caused another shift in faith as people revolted against the authority of the Church and State. With the explosion of the media and consumerism, faith and culture started to move apart. People had entered the "Age of Authenticity" whereby "the pursuit of happiness" (ibid., 474) and "doing your own thing" (ibid., 475) took precedence. People started to make choices about their lifestyles, morality and sexuality without reference to their faith. However, living within an immanent existence resulted in people feeling a yearning that is encapsulated in the words of Peggy Lee's song, "Is that all there is?" (ibid., 507).

New age spirituality often fills a gap that is expressed in the term, "I'm spiritual but not religious" (ibid. 535). A small core of orthodox believers, who practise their religion and

attend church, have their spiritual needs met through recognised spiritual practices such as the sacraments, Bible study groups, meditation, pilgrimages and retreats. Another group of Christians have adopted a new form of spirituality with its emphasis on unity, subjectivity and wholeness. The latter is often blended with other aspects of people's lives such as personal development, health and wellbeing. New age spirituality has led to openness among people of various faiths. Some Christians form their own 'bricolage' of beliefs and practices while others are able to separate their religious identity from their national-cultural identity. Nominal Christians, whose beliefs are partial and fragmented, often stay tied to the Church but do not practise their religion regularly. Others have left the Church altogether, but their Christian memory often remains strong and surfaces at times of collective joy or grief. Some people hold this memory in the hope of activating it later in life. Taylor believes Christianity can flourish if there is an openness between the inner core of faithful "dwellers" and the outer core of spiritual "seekers" (ibid., 533).

4.2.2. *Characteristics of faith in postmodernity*

The postmodern era is marked by its "suspicion of modernity and its ideals" (Danaher 2006, xiii). While modernity placed an emphasis on science, reason and objective truth, people with a postmodern mindset are open to conceptual change and subjective truth. A postmodernist understanding is that objective reality is unattainable and truth is always "perspectival" (ibid., 4). We can never get to the 'thing' itself as our culture and language filter our experiences of the world.

> Therefore, unlike modernity, which attempted to eliminate all prejudice, faith requires a prejudice. It requires the prejudice of seeing a blessing in circumstances that appear to others to be evil. For the Christian, our ultimate reality - our heaven or hell - ultimately rest in the prejudicial perspective we bring to the givenness of our experience and not the givenness itself.
> (Danaher 2006, 27)

Faith is more than beliefs and precepts, it is a "relational journey" (ibid., 31). Therefore, according to Danaher, postmodernists are better equipped to know and follow Jesus Christ and God the Father who are presented in the Gospels as subjects rather than objects. Postmodernists have a better ability than modernists to understand key Christian concepts such as faith, love, sin, good and evil, as taught by Jesus. It is through our relational journey that we come to see God in all things. We come to see Him at work throughout our lives, even in the midst of our suffering and death experiences.

The prevailing scepticism is captured by Gallagher (2003) in his ten commandments of

radical postmodernity.

1. Thou shalt not worship reason.

2. Thou shalt not believe in history.

3. Thou shalt not hope in progress.

4. Thou shalt not tell meta-stories.

5. Thou shalt not focus on self.

6. Thou shalt not agonise about values.

7. Thou shalt not trust institutions.

8. Thou shalt not bother about God.

9. Thou shalt not live for productivity alone.

10. Thou shalt not seek uniformity.   (Gallagher 2003, 100-103)

Gallagher examines some of the negative and positive features of postmodern life. The individualistic behaviour of postmodern people can be perceived as "narcissism, hedonism, nihilism and post-materialism" (ibid., 109). These 'isms' however may cover over a sense of loss, the feeling that God is missing. Unbelief takes many forms: "religious anaemia" occurs when the formal language of the Church is not well communicated or understood by the listeners; people of faith experience "secularist marginalisation" when the secular culture pushes questions about faith out of the public square and into the private domain; some people adopt "anchorless spirituality" that is not rooted in Christian faith; and other people experience "cultural desolation" as they are distracted by life's struggles and are not disposed to revelation (ibid., 131). However, the positive features of postmodernity, such as feminism, ecology and spirituality, may well outweigh the negative features.

> Its tone is one of shy searching, of a healthy suspicion of systems and of easy certitudes. It is impressed more by praxis than by grand theorising.
> (ibid., 112)

Christians respond in different ways to the postmodern culture: they can be hostile to the culture; they can embrace and adopt its values; or become disciples who discern the work of the Holy Spirit within culture. In the same way Ignatian spirituality acknowledges that people either lead a life of consolation (when the flow of a person's life can be at one with Jesus Christ) or lead a life of desolation (when a person's life is at a distance from Him). Those who evangelise practise discernment and respond openly to the prevailing

culture.

Boeve (2003) wrote about recent changes in beliefs, faith and religious practices amongst Western Europeans. He concluded that what is happening is an interruption in the Catholic tradition or 'detraditionalisation.' As a result of "increasing prosperity, mobility and educational possibilities" (ibid., 53), postmodern people are no longer bound to traditions and feel free to create their own personal identities that are unconnected with traditions. In this pluralist and individualistic context, there is a multiplicity of life choices available. A person builds his or her subjective identity, asking reflective questions such as, "Who am I?" and "What do I really want?" (ibid., 55). One of the many options available to Christians is to consciously opt to embrace a traditional lifestyle or adopt spiritual practices from other traditions. However, there is a danger that the Catholic tradition will collapse if it is not passed on to the next generation.

Boeve (2003) identifies three modes of religiosity practised today: fundamentalism, relativism and a middle way. The Christian fundamentalist group adopt a closed rigid Christian narrative that is not open to the truth of other religions or ideologies. The relativist group form new age religious groups; they build individual religious identities by uprooting the Christian tradition from its original context and mixing fragments from the Christian tradition with fragments from other religious traditions. Ordinary believers follow a middle way and make a conscious option to remain and enter the Christian narrative despite the draw from the prevailing master narrative of marketisation. Theirs is a faith religion rather than a cultural religion and they feel called to pass on the Christian faith and its tradition to others.

> Christians are Christian today because they consider themselves summoned to be so by God made manifest in Jesus Christ. They do not honour their traditions because it facilitates the construction of a stable identity or because it provides meaning. They do so instead because their tradition speaks of a God who fascinates them and summons them to conversion and to discipleship.
>
> (Boeve 2003, 181)

If the Christian tradition is to survive it must become an open master narrative by being open to people living other religious narratives. In addition, the Christian tradition must have faith witnesses who practise the tradition as an integral part of their lives. Postmodern Christians do not lay claim to objective truth but instead are open to other religious truths: "It is more a question of living in the truth, of relating to the truth that no particular narrative can exhaust" (ibid., 99). An open Christian narrative acknowledges

the plurality of other religions as sincere ways of responding to God. It must also acknowledge the plurality within the Catholic tradition so that Catholics can express their opinions on matters such as the hierarchy, women in the Church and issues related to the beginning and end of life.

In Britain, Davie (2015) provides an in-depth analysis of the socio-religious landscape mostly in relation to the Church of England. Although the culture is mainly secular, Britain remains coloured by its Christian heritage and religious practice remains strong among the immigrant population. Between one-half and two-thirds of Britons believe in God. Similar to Boeve, Davie identified three categories within the population: religious, spiritual and secular. The religious minority is more knowledgeable about their faith than previous generations and many are able to debate religious matters in the public sphere. Davie revised her earlier concept of 'believing without belonging' (1994) to describe secularists as those who prevaricate on many religious issues. Today the secular majority practise 'vicarious religion' whereby the majority does not practise religion regularly but approves of the minority doing so on its behalf. As a consequence, the Church has become like a public utility as people use it to mark significant times in their lives such as births, marriages and deaths. There are significant generational and geographical differences among Britons: people born in the 1960s, generation X, still have links to the Church but their children, generation Y, have tenuous links; and more people practise their religion in Wales and Scotland compared to England. Some of aspects of faith revealed by Davie will be explored in this study in relation to the principals' professional experiences of the faith in Ireland and faith in their schools.

4.2.3. Cultural change and the institutional Church

The institutional Church is most often understood as the hierarchical structure made up of the Pope, cardinals, bishops and clergy. Michael Conway (2017a, b, 2018) writes about the growing gap that has emerged between the institutional Church and contemporary culture. After the world wars, European culture developed a more egalitarian worldview and nowadays the ambient culture prizes freedom, equality, diversity, and pluralism. However, many institutions such as the army, hospitals, and political parties, tend to retain a patriarchal, hierarchical worldview.

> The one institution that has resisted most tenaciously the deconstruction of the patriarchal worldview in European culture is the *institutional* Church, with its structures, its procedures, its power dynamics, its modes of leadership, and its understanding of authority.   (Conway 2017a, 467)

116

The Church's *modus operandi* is a cause of concern to many Catholics who see it as irrelevant and out-dated. Instead of being a vehicle of evangelisation that concentrates its energy on the faith life of its people, it is seen by many Europeans as a powerful, patriarchal institution that has not kept abreast of culture. Faulty structures have contributed to its gradual demise. However, the demise of the institution is not a reflection of the demise of beliefs, faith, religion or spirituality: "Nothing in what is happening heralds the end of religion, interest in spirituality, and commitment to a faith-led life; quite the contrary" (Conway 2018, 96). Conway hopes that the Church will experience a rebirth so that the new Church will be person-centred, appropriating dignity and respect to each person, with no one feeling excluded or left on the margins. This would be in keeping with the recent cultural phenomenon that has emerged:

> The voice-less are gradually finding and claiming their voices; and this is now a very distinctive mark of our European culture. Persons are increasingly stepping from spaces of invisibility and darkness into the visibility and light of public space. (Conway 2017b, 275)

In its new form, lay people will have to become more active and take on roles of responsibility. The Church must listen to people and welcome and include everyone. An inclusive Church focuses on people rather than preserving the system. Furthermore, O'Hanlon (2019) points to Pope Francis' leadership that promotes 'synodality' (listening to the voices of the lay faithful and theologians as well as the clergy) and 'collegiality,' even in the face of opposition from some conservative quarters within the hierarchy. His leadership gives a sense of hope for a more tolerant and inclusive Church.

4.3.   *Catholic Faith in Contemporary Ireland*

According to sociologists, Ireland has a secular, consumer-capitalist culture (Inglis 2014). Before the 1960s, Ireland consisted of a homogenised orthodox Catholic country made up of white Irish Catholics; Catholic faith and culture were inextricably intertwined; and being Irish and being Catholic were the pillars on which most people built their identities. The religious *milieu* has changed dramatically since then and this section reviews the secularisation process.

4.3.1. *Secularisation in Ireland*

Irish culture has undergone a short secularisation process as it went from a premodern era, through a very short modern era, followed sharply by a postmodern era. Unlike our European counterparts that came to this position after a gradual process of secularisation,

Ireland reached this position in a short number of years. The dramatic breakdown in religious practice has been described as "a cliff rather than a slope" (Rogers 2015, 37) as a result of a "compressed secularization" period over the last thirty years (Dillon 2015, 15). Commentators and researchers are at odds on what term best suits the contemporary context in relation to belief, faith and religion. According to Littleton (2015), Ireland is 'post-Catholic'; the Church has little influence today and is in danger of death, *periculo mortis*.

> This means that it is no longer a Catholic country as was traditionally understood, where the Catholic Church and its controlling influence had been dominant in Irish society for centuries. Therefore, being Irish and being Catholic cannot be assumed to be synonymous, as in previous generations. (Littleton 2015, 19)

On the other hand, Dillon (2015) describes the religious context as 'post-secular.' Just like other Western cultures, there are still embers of faith in a post-secular culture where religion still matters.

> Today, there is no going back to the previously unquestioned place of the Church in Irish society. Rather, a new era of Catholicism and of the Church's role in Irish society is dawning. (Dillon 2015, 46-47)

Flanagan's phrase, "this current in-between state of Catholicism in Ireland" (2015, 151) probably best describes the situation. We may be entering the "Second Axial Period" (ibid., 147) as Irish society balances on the cusp of a new spiritual dawn and a "contemplative turn" (ibid., 150). Regardless of the most appropriate terminology, whether it is secular, post-Catholic, post-secular, an in-between state or a Second Axial Period with a contemplative turn, Ireland has experienced a complex secularisation process and the Catholic Church is in a new era of change.

In order to understand the process of secularisation that has occurred in Ireland it is important to reflect on three theories of secularisation presented by Gallagher (2008): differentiation, decline and disposition. Differentiation can be understood as a division of roles between Church and State, decline as a reduction in religious practice such as Mass attendance, and disposition can be interpreted as inner beliefs, faith and moral perspectives. There has been an obvious differentiation between Church and State with the exception of some areas of health, education and some social services.

> The social, cultural, political, educational, and medical competencies increasingly function without any religious substructure…and function well, as independent spheres of activity. (Conway 2018, 93)

The next section explores the decline in religious practice in Ireland, it reviews Church history over the last two centuries and there is an analysis of recent statistics pertaining to beliefs, prayer and Mass attendance. Some of the possible reasons for the decline, the recent Church scandals and what Irish women have to say about the Church are also explored. However, what is more difficult to quantify is the change in people's religious dispositions, to measure the extent of "inner secularisation"(Gallagher 2008, 5) or faith perspectives. Finally, this section discovers new spiritual awakenings and how people find meaning in their lives today.

4.3.2. *The history of the Catholic Church in Ireland*

The Catholic Church in Ireland has taken a unique historical journey that is different from any other European country. Fuller (2011, 2012) develops our understanding of the Church's position today by tracing the history of the Church over the 19th and 20th centuries. After centuries of suppression and exploitation by British empirical forces, Catholic Emancipation in 1829 heralded an era of freedom and growth for the Church and it immediately began a great building project. The national school system began in this era and its history is outlined in Chapter One. Being Irish and Catholic became the hallmarks of people's identity and this was copper-fastened in national primary schools that were managed by the local parish priests.

> Mass, confession, reception of Holy Communion, devotions, confraternities, retreats, and processions all became a way of life and these established patterns of practice lasted essentially to the 1960s and beyond. (Fuller 2012, 485)

During the 19th century, Catholic bishops became politically powerful and by the time of Independence in 1922, politics and the institutional Church were tightly intertwined in what has been described as Hiberno-Christendom. In the new State, elected *Taoisigh* (Irish Prime Ministers) preserved Catholic moral values and these were enshrined in the Constitution (GoI 1937). Articles (41- 44) dealt with religious matters that included a prohibition on divorce and granted a 'special position' to the Catholic Church. Due to its geographical location and neutrality during the war years, Ireland was relatively unaffected by the cultural revolution that was happening in Europe. From the twenties to the fifties, the hierarchy and the State adopted a fortress mentality through censorship and prohibition laws to preserve people's faith and culture from outside influences. With almost universal Sunday Mass attendance, fear and sin were the methods used to preserve morality. "The approach was dogmatic, consisting of constant warnings, peremptory statements and, in some cases, prohibitions under pain of mortal sin" (Fuller 2011, 478).

However, in the forties and fifties the culture was changing underneath the surface with increased migration from rural areas to urban towns and cities and a surge of emigration to England and beyond. This movement of people was a cause of concern to the clergy that perceived it as a danger to the Irish flock 'steeped in faith' (Fuller 2012). Successive governments were deferential to the hierarchy. However, the 'Mother and Child' controversy in 1951 was seen as the first public spat between Church and State. Although the Church won the battle, the public became aware through the newspapers of the hierarchy's influence on political decisions. Other foreign influences began to seep into the culture during the 1950s through the cinema, BBC television on the east coast, Radio Luxemburg, travel abroad, and tourism. Some theologians and outside observers believed that Irish religiosity would not continue as people had not sufficiently interiorised their faith, they were dependent on the clergy for guidance on moral issues, and faith had little relevance to their daily lives.

The economic, political, educational, religious, and social changes in the 1960s contributed to the "undoing of a culture" (Fuller 2012, 510). Taoiseach Sean Lemass embarked on an economic programme that allowed free trade and industrial expansion that required a workforce with technical skills rather than a classical liberal education promoted by Catholic secondary schools. The government began to intervene in education that heretofore was considered the domain of the Catholic Church. Free secondary education was made available to all and the vocational sector was expanded. In the meantime, the Vatican Council II sought to update the Church's structures and teaching in line with modern culture. It promoted a person's dignity rather than his or her sinfulness and encouraged Catholics to be informed by their consciences. There followed a sharp decline in religious vocations and a significant withdrawal from ministry that impacted on Catholic schools. Some conservative Irish Catholics resisted the changes made by the Council while more liberal Catholics began to choose what parts of Catholic faith to adopt and what parts to discard, a phenomenon described as '*à la carte*' Catholicism (Fuller 2011, 481).

New ways of being Catholic became more apparent in the late sixties and seventies, a time when the women's liberation movement encouraged women to take control of their own lives, especially in relation to family planning and artificial contraception. In 1968, at a time when people expected the Church to have a more liberal approach, the Church's encyclical letter Humanae vitae (Pope Paul VI 1968) reiterated the Church's teaching on

birth regulation which led to a "real crisis of authority in the worldwide Church" (Fuller 2011, 482). Regardless of the Church's ban on artificial contraception, there followed in the seventies and eighties a concerted effort to legalise contraception, divorce and abortion. Furthermore, the media was no longer censored by the Church and contributed to a more liberal, secular society and RTÉ sought to have public debates on topics that were heretofore considered taboo.

Pope John Paul II's visit in 1979 marked "the beginning and the end of an era" as the Irish were set to embrace a more affluent, material and liberal lifestyle (ibid., 483). Beneath the surface of high Mass attendance during the sixties, seventies and eighties, there was little evidence that people accepted the moral or doctrinal teaching of the Church. Catholics were now picking and choosing what aspects of their religion suited them and this led to the phenomenon of "cultural" or "nominal" Catholicism. This term describes those who do not attend church regularly but attend baptisms, marriages and funerals, in order to mark significant moments in their lives (Fuller 2012, 498).

Féich and O'Connell (2015) reviewed Irish religious beliefs and practices over the eighties, nineties and noughties by analysing the European Values Study (EVS) over four waves (1981,1990, 1999, 2008). During the eighties the Irish economy underwent a recession with high unemployment, followed by an economic boom known as the Celtic Tiger in the nineties, and then a global economic downturn that resulted in a crash in the Irish housing market in the noughties. Social changes during this time included a change in the moral norms that was reflected in an increase in the number of children born outside marriage, the legalisation of divorce and the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1995. During this period there was a decline in trust and in the authority of the Church. Nevertheless, personal religiosity, defined as importance placed on religion and God, remained relatively stable and levels of religious beliefs were relatively high. However, there was a sharp decline in attendance at religious services, taken as a public expression of faith. Levels of prayer, taken as a private expression of faith, remained the same as before. Regarding social issues, more Catholics were found to have changed attitudes towards homosexuality, euthanasia, divorce, taking soft drugs, abortion and prostitution. The researchers conclude that about one in seven Catholics could be considered liberal or very liberal. "Overall, the findings indicate not only a privatisation of religion but also a privatisation of morality" (ibid., 244).

4.3.3. Recent crises

The nineties and the first decade of the new millennium were decades of purging for the Church as sinful practices carried out over decades were exposed. The early nineties began with revelations in the media of a high-profile bishop and then a priest who had long-term sexual affairs and had fathered children. This was followed with deeply disturbing revelations about paedophile priests and members of religious orders who had sexually abused children in industrial schools, orphanages and across parishes. In addition, other systematic abusive practices in mother and baby homes were exposed. The findings of investigations into clerical child sexual abuse (CCSA) in different dioceses and subsequent reports (Ferns, Ryan, Dublin, Cloyne and Raphoe) appalled the Irish public (Donnelly and Inglis 2010; Fuller 2011; Garrett 2012; Regan 2013). The reports found Church leaders to be inept at dealing with accusations as they were found to be more concerned with protecting the institutional Church than children. Instead of reporting the accusations to civil authorities, the usual response was to move a suspected paedophile priest or brother to another parish or institution, showing total disregard for the safety and welfare of children. Victims of abuse felt doubly betrayed, firstly that the abuse had been carried out by members of the Church, and secondly, that the hierarchy proactively denied and covered up the abuse.

Although no causal link can be made between CCSA and secularisation in Ireland, Donnelly and Inglis (2010) found in their investigation of Irish religiosity, before, during and after the height of the scandals, that Irish people had lost trust in the institution. There was also a change in the balance of power from the Church to the media as the moral conscience of the people. In some instances, the media moved from reporting the wrongdoing of the Church to depicting the Irish Church as evil.

> The Church and many of its priests and religious order brothers quickly went
> from being represented as paragons of virtue, as self-sacrificing national heroes,
> to being depicted as self-serving masters of evil.   (Donnelly and Inglis 2010, 2)

This was the second time in Irish history that the media acted as "an agent of change" in the secularisation process (ibid., 14). In his analysis of three reports on CCSA, Garrett suggested that paedophile priests were used as 'scapegoats,' "exonerating the state from any responsibility" (2013, 61). However, this notion must take into account the power of the Church in the social, cultural and political spheres of Irish life at the time of the abuse. The nineties and the first decade of the new millennium mark a dark period for the Irish Church. The Church, the State and Irish society were found to have failed in their co-

responsibility for children's safety and welfare. CCSA has resulted in extensive human suffering, the loss of the Church's moral authority, and the implications of the scandals for the Church will reach far into the future.

Many people have discussed how this appalling abuse was allowed to happen (Martin 2013, Molloy 2013, Regan 2013). Structural weaknesses have been present in the Irish Church for a long time. Centuries of collusion between the State and the Church in modern Ireland contributed to the crisis as bishops reverted to this position in their mishandling of allegations (Regan 2013). Liberal and conservative Catholics saw the Church's response to CCSA as part of "a failed leadership-culture" that resulted in "shared ethical indignation and shaken faith" (ibid., 174). While Catholics "*inhabit* the crisis," some look for a renewal of faith and seek to reform the Church (ibid., 164).

According to Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, the Church had been "trapped in an illusory self-image" (2013, 325) and had become "auto-referential" (ibid., 326). He believes *Share the Good News* (IEC 2010) presents many pathways for personal and communal renewal of faith. As for Church structures, clericalism needs to be eliminated and a cultural change needs to happen so that laypeople become collaborators and share responsibility. Notably, he predicts that cultural Catholicism will not continue and changes in the patronage structure of primary schools and the teaching of religion will affect children's beliefs, faith and religious practice. Furthermore, Ganiel found from her extensive research that "extra-institutional spaces" (2017, 34), such as parish pastoral councils and Catholic organisations, act as seedbeds for personal and Church renewal.

> These are spaces where people use various methods and strategies to keep their faith alive outside or in addition to the institutional Catholic Church.
>
> (Ganiel 2017, 34-35)

People who engage with outside Church agencies as well as the institution have a more "solid" foundation in their religion rather than a "free-floating" religion (ibid., 35).

4.3.4. Recent statistics

This section reviews statistics in relation to religious affiliation, Mass attendance, beliefs, and also the results of various public referenda on social and moral issues. CSO statistics on religious affiliation and high attendance at funerals, weddings, First Holy Communions, and Confirmations (Ryan 2008) suggest that Ireland is still a religious country and that religious practice is quite healthy compared to other Western countries. The 2016 census (CSO 2017) shows the population has increased to over 4.7 million

people and the country is more multicultural than before with 17.3% of Irish residents born outside the RoI. Regarding religion, Ireland still remains a predominately Catholic country with 3,729,100 Catholics. However, the percentage of people who self-identify as Catholic has declined from 84.2% in 2011 to 78.3% in 2016. Conversely, the percentage of people who stated they have no religion is now 9.8%; and those who did not indicate any religion was 2.6%. Percentages of other religions were as follows: Church of Ireland and Protestant 2.8%, Muslims 1.3%, Orthodox Christians 1.3%, Presbyterian 0.5%, other stated religions 3.2%.

In relation to Mass, studies have found that there is a decline in attendance and there are significant generational differences among Irish Catholics that may mask the true extent of secularisation. O'Mahony (2013) analysed data from the European Social Survey (ESS) 2010 to investigate Mass attendance among a sample of 1843 Catholics. People over fifty-five years were more likely to define themselves as religious; 41% of participants attended Mass once a week; and 7% attended more than once a week. However, there are significant generational differences in weekly Mass attendance: 22.7% of 26-34-year olds; 31.2% of 35-44-year olds; 48.8% of 45-54-year olds; and 54.1% of 55-64-year olds. In relation to prayer, almost 70% stated that they prayed at least once a week which suggests that religion has become privatised. Similarly, Dillon (2015) concludes that the older generation is more likely to attend Mass than the younger generation and the downward trend is likely to continue.

> The pattern of decline in weekly Mass attendance in Ireland is likely to continue its downward trajectory because its momentum is driven, in part, by the engine of generational succession. (Dillon 2015)

Regarding religious beliefs, O'Mahony (2010) analysed data from the fourth wave of the European Values Survey (EVS). The results suggest that Christian beliefs are still strong in Ireland. Among the sample of 827 Irish Catholics, the following positive beliefs were found: 89.9% believed in God; 71.6% believed in life after death; 76.6% believed in heaven; 75.3% believed in sin; 50% believed in hell; and 29.9% believed in reincarnation. For most, God was important to them and they believed in a personal God.

The results of various democratic public referenda on social and moral issues seem to have propelled the process of secularisation in Ireland by differentiating the roles of Church and State. In recent decades, the following were legalised: contraception (1978), divorce (1996), same-sex marriage (2015) and abortion (2018). These results indicate

that people are less likely than previous generations to take cognizance of Church teaching. Murphy remarks:

> The overwhelming vote in the 2015 referendum to legalize gay marriage might be taken as the latest and last word on the bitter divorce between Irish and Catholic identity.   (Murphy 2018, 255)

The changes in legislation are also lived out on a daily basis as seen from the 2016 census statistics into households and families. In relation to marriage, there are 103 895 divorced people; 152 302 registered co-habiting couples; and 75 587 cohabiting couples with children. The number of families headed by one parent was 218 817 or 18% of families. In relation to same sex-partnerships, there were: 6034 same-sex cohabiting couples; 1539 same-sex civil partnerships; and a further 706 same-sex married couples.

4.3.5. *Women's voices in the Irish Catholic Church*

In recent years Irish Catholic women are finding their voices and expressing their anger at injustices they perceive within the Church (Molloy 2013; Tighe-Mooney 2018). Molloy (2013) discusses issues that make it difficult for people to reconcile their religion with postmodern life.   Some of the injustices include an unequal gender balance, clericalism, sexism, classism, the perception of people who are gay as disordered, and the exclusion from the Eucharist of people who have remarried.   In these circumstances Molloy asks: "What would Jesus say or do? And I am constantly appalled at how far our Church has removed itself from him in too many areas" (ibid., 202).   Nevertheless, she remains in the Church "*because of*" rather than "*in spite of*" the current context and is committed like others to reform and renewal.   More recently, the former president of Ireland, Mary McAlesse spoke vociferously at the 'Why Women Matter Conference' on International Women's Day 2018 about the role of women in the Church. She referred to the Church as "an empire of misogyny" with its exclusion of women from Church governance, decision-making and the ban on women priests. She asks Pope Francis to develop ways for women to be included as equals in the Church. In relation to ministry, Tighe-Mooney (2018) explores scripture, tradition, and magisterial documents and finds no justification for the exclusion of women from priesthood. She does not accept the hierarchy's reasoning and is unhappy about the present gender imbalance.

> As the years went by, I found myself continuously irritated at having to deal with everything from a male point of view. I also had difficulty with the diametrically opposed edict of, on the one hand, placing responsibility for the perpetuation of the faith on Catholic women, and, on the other, the complete exclusion of women's voices in decision making in the Church.   (Tighe-Mooney 2018, 16)

125

4.3.6. New spiritual awakening

At the start of the new millennium, a spiritual awakening seems to be dawning across Europe (Boeve 2003, Gallagher 2003, Taylor 2007). In Ireland, we are experiencing a surge in various manifestations of spirituality and some are related to Christian faith and culture (Flanagan 2015; Murphy 2018; O'Murchu 2014).

> Some people are reluctant to speak about their internal spiritual awakening. Others fear being dragged back to a formal religion they have long outgrown. Others still consider spirituality (and religion) a largely private affair, not to be exposed, where it might prove offensive to colleagues or loved ones.
>
> (O'Murchu 2014, 14)

O'Murchu thinks most people are "conventional Christians" who are locked in a state of "co-dependency" on the Church (2014, 27). Even when they reject the beliefs of their childhood, they perpetuate their co-dependency by passing on beliefs to their children by sending them to Catholic schools. Contrastingly, a minority are Christian "adult faith seekers" who question their faith, develop renewed interest in their religion, and seek to deepen their faith (ibid., 17). Jesus Christ is their model and inspiration for working to build the Kingdom of God and they are more concerned with orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy.

Regarding contemplative movements, Flanagan (2015) outlines the new interest in the following: The John Main/Laurence Freeman Christian meditation movement; the *Mediatio* initiative in schools spearheaded by Noel Keating; and the Contemplative Outreach Ireland gatherings. Some popular devotions are well attended and large crowds came to see the relics of St. Anthony of Padua. Many more people are finding spiritual fulfilment on pilgrim walks with thousands climbing Croagh Patrick and visiting Skellig Michael every year.

According to Murphy (2018), the growth in spiritual tourism is a manifestation of new age spiritual awakenings among the Irish. The industry is marked by a combination of finding oneself and relaxation. The collapse of Catholic rituals has left a spiritual gap that is being filled with a conglomerate of: ancient Irish spiritual practices; rituals from other traditions; inward journeys of self-discovery; restful holiday breaks; and a quest for the great outdoors. "Repacked and rebranded, un-Catholic Catholicism becomes the medicine for a wounded, bewildered Ireland" (ibid., 269).

Moreover, Jesus Christ, the central figure of Christian faith, is often missing from the new

wave of spirituality. In order to have a genuine Church renewal, O'Hanlon (2017) believes we need to experience a real conversion to Jesus Christ. Pope Francis advocates that the new Church should have a missionary approach to humanity and creation, respect for individual and collective consciousness, and a democratic and dialectical approach to issues facing the Church.

> The Church does not exist for its own sake. It is for the Kingdom and is rooted in an encounter with Jesus Christ, continuing his mission (given by the Father) through the power of the Holy Spirit. (O'Hanlon 2017, 13)

4.3.7. *Meanings of life in contemporary Ireland*

Some writers and researchers are interested in what gives meaning to people's lives and the relevance of Christian faith today. It is difficult to discern from quantitative studies whether people's dispositions have been secularised or "inner secularisation" has occurred (Gallagher 2008, 5). Conway (2018) explains that what gave meaning to people's lives in past generations has dramatically changed for this generation. Previously people were concerned about the next life (heaven, hell, purgatory) whereas people nowadays are concerned about life here and now. Instead of leading lives of conformity, people today are concerned about their identity, integrity, authenticity and leading a meaningful life. They find meaning through activities such as travel, sport, fundraising, community work, family life, and different forms of religion. As we journey through life, how we find meaning changes. Faith, religion and spirituality can help us find answers to life's questions. However, sometimes we are blocked or distracted from making an inward journey to find the connection between the meaning of our lives and faith.

> Interiority is in serious crisis in our culture, and with it the quality of human presence…The full impact of this situation has not yet hit us fully in Ireland, as there is a sizable remnant of the older world order that buffers individuals in this challenging task. (Conway 2018, 100)

Many people manage to make this important spiritual journey; some find their way through traditional religious routes while others delve into the Christian "storehouse of ideas and practices" and choose what meets their religious and spiritual needs (ibid., 102).

Inglis (2007), a sociologist, posited that the Catholic culture continues to perpetuate in Ireland for two main reasons: our collective inherited religious culture and the Catholic school sector that facilitates the socialisation of Irish children into a Catholic worldview.

> Between home and school, most children develop a Catholic habitus (Bourdieu

82), a deeply embodied, almost automatic way of being spiritual and moral that becomes second nature and creates a Catholic sense of self and interpreting the world. Being Catholic becomes a fundamental part of their social and personal identity, the way they are seen and understood by others and the way they see and understand themselves. This may explain why, even though many Catholics may no longer practise as regularly as their parents, or adhere to fundamental teachings of the Church, they still regard themselves as belonging to an Irish Catholic heritage. (Inglis 2007, 205-206)

Inglis describes the sharp decline in people's engagement with the Church as "institutional detachment" (2007, 208). Between 2008-2009, Inglis interviewed one hundred people living in Ireland about their religious practices and dispositions from a sociological perspective. The findings of the study are presented in the book *Meanings of Life in Contemporary Ireland* (Inglis 2014) . He discovered that there is a complex array of being Catholic and grouped the participants into four religious categories: orthodox (43), cultural (19), creative (7), and disenchanted (21). The orthodox Catholics attended Mass regularly, held beliefs similar to Church doctrine, and believed in miracles. The personal identities of those in the cultural group were bound up with being Catholic, they did not adhere rigidly to Church rules and regulations, they attended Mass irregularly, and they were happy to pass their faith to their children by sending them to Catholic schools. Catholics in the creative group had a *smorgasbord* approach to Catholicism and were happy to mix and match Catholic beliefs, faith, and practices with those from other religions. Many of the Catholics in the disenchanted group were angry with the Church, they did not believe in God, they felt they did not belong to the Church, and some in this group were in search of new ways of being religious. Inglis wondered about the gap between Church teaching and the beliefs and practices of Catholics. At the end of the interviews, when asked about the meaning of a good life, only a few talked about God or religion. Two participants, a Pentecostal and a Muslim, were the only ones who showed religious enthusiasm and their religion was an integral part of their lives. Inglis concludes that family, friends, sport, money and politics give meaning to people's lives and that love wins out in the end:

There was, however, plenty of evidence to suggest that the strong webs of meaning in their lives were built around love and care for others.
(Inglis 2014, 179)

However, it is important to note that Inglis' study was undertaken shortly after the CCSA scandals were exposed when morale and enthusiasm for the Church was at a low ebb. Furthermore, Inglis used a sociological lens to investigate religion and his analysis did not take into account the difference between deeply held beliefs and the practice of

religious worship. Further investigation into people's inner dispositions using a theological lens would reveal more about how people think, feel and act in relation to their faith.

In a later publication, Inglis (2017) concludes that Irish people form a strong social identification with the Catholic cultural heritage, they are embedded in a secular and materialistic culture, and religion no longer gives meaning to people's lives as it did in the past. However, a paradox exists in relation to declining Mass attendance and the desire of most Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools.

> Religion is not in the hearts, in the minds or on the lips of Catholics. Yet, more than four in five people see themselves as Catholics, nine in ten children go to Catholic primary schools and the majority of people are baptised, married and buried with Catholic ceremonies. (Inglis 2017, 21)

Each generation of Irish Catholics embodies and expresses its religious cultural heritage in different ways. However, Inglis perceives the role of the Catholic Church in education as control rather than contribution, as socialisation rather than evangelisation. It is noteworthy that Catholic schools are seen as the last bastion of faith.

> The main site of struggle over the future of the Church has been in education. Once it loses control of the management of primary schools and the denominational form of religious instruction, the greater the danger that faith will not be passed on to the next generation. And yet, despite the result of the marriage equality referendum and the development of opposition to the Constitution on abortion, there appears to be little public interest or opposition to, the Church's control of primary education. This may be because many parents are happy for their children to have a Catholic cultural formation.
> (Inglis 2017, 22-23)

Conclusion

This chapter firstly explored different aspects of Christian faith. Firstly, the mystery of the Holy Trinity shows that we are invited into loving relationship with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Gaillardetz 2007, Rohr 2016). Jesus' greatest commandment requires us to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Throughout our lives, God is always present, He has graced us all; and we are always orientated to Him (Rahner 1961). Jesus Christ holds a central place in Christianity as He reveals the Word of God, He is our saviour and He is redeemer of the world (Apostolic Constitution 1994, Vatican II 1964). Christian faith initially entails entrusting ourselves to others who have faith (Pope John Paul II 1998); and ideally, we gradually surrender ourselves to God's love (O'Donnell 2016). It means following Jesus Christ (St. Paul) as his disciples did, with our 'heads, hearts and hands' (Groome 2011). Studying scripture helps us to get to know

and love Jesus (Graham 2015, McGrath 2015); and studying theology engages the intellect, deepens our understanding of faith and helps us to find meaning (Kasper 1980). Dulles (1997) presents many models and attributes of faith. Moreover, faith is more than an intellectual process, it is a friendship with God (Colwell 1991, Muldoon 2005) and as we get to know Jesus Christ, we get to know ourselves (Vatican II 1965a). Faith has many stages of development, it can grow or it can be lost (Dulles 1997, Fowler 2000, O'Murchu 2014; Rohr 2012). Furthermore, the home, parish and school are the key places to foster children's faith (Groome 2011).

In the second section, there was an exploration of the changes in culture and faith over the centuries that has led to "exclusive humanism" and the phenomenon of being spiritual rather than religious (Taylor 2007, 27). Contrastingly, Danaher (2006) believes postmodernists are better equipped than previous generations to undertake a relational faith journey with Jesus Christ. Gallagher (2003) also points out signs of hope with today's new interest in feminism, ecology and spirituality. However, in postmodern Europe, Boeve (2007) explains that the Christian faith tradition is in danger of being broken or lost: some pick and choose doctrines, beliefs and practices from their own religion and mix and match them with other religions; others have become more fundamental, closed or even hostile to other religions; and some follow a middle way as they develop their faith and try to reform the Church from within. In England, Davie's study (2015) found that many in the Church of England practise 'vicarious religion' whereby the majority is happy for the minority to attend religious worship on its behalf. Notably, Conway (2017a) suggests major changes are needed in the institutional Catholic Church to keep in touch with postmodern society.

The third section reviewed Catholic Christian faith in Ireland that is now at a crossroads. There is evidence that secularisation has occurred at all three levels: differentiation, decline and disposition (Gallagher 2008). While the percentage of Catholics in the RoI remains high at 78%, there has been an increase in religious diversity and a significant increase in the number of people who have no religion (CSO 2017). The data suggest that elements of the phenomena 'believing without belonging' (Davie 1994) and 'vicarious religion' (Davie 2015) are present among Irish Catholics. While Irish Catholics still hold many Christian beliefs (O'Mahony 2010), there has been a decline in Mass attendance and older generations attend Mass more frequently than younger generations (Dillon 2015, O'Mahony 2013). There has been an increase in the

privatisation of faith and morality, people continue to pray (O'Mahony 2013) but most live according to their moral conscience rather than in conformity with Church teaching (Ó Féich and O'Connell 2015). Many people are finding new ways of being Catholic as they explore different spiritual paths (Flanagan 2015, Murphy 2018, O'Murchu 2014). Despite the process of secularisation, Inglis (2017) believes most Irish Catholics continue to have a Catholic worldview because of our collective Irish Catholic heritage and children's socialisation in Catholic schools. Significantly, Archbishop Martin (2013) predicts that cultural Catholicism will not continue forever and any genuine renewal of the Church will require us, as Christians, to follow Jesus Christ more closely.

4.4. *Summary of Literature and Research Studies*

Chapter One explored the context in which CPS principals work by examining the primary school system, the CPS sector, primary principalship and CPS principalship in the RoI. Many of the research studies that were reviewed are relevant to this study. For example, Mahon (2017) found a *laissez-faire* approach to the Catholic ethos when investigating the perceptions of eight CPS communities regarding their Catholic identity. In relation to teaching RE, an INTO (2013) survey found that over half of the participant teachers were willing to teach RE and very few opted out of teaching the subject. Some studies on primary principals reveal aspects of the job. Principals feel rewarded when receiving and giving support (Morgan and Sugrue 2008). A large-scale survey about the attractiveness of the role found that one hundred newly qualified principals were motivated by the vocational nature of the job and a chance to make a difference (RTU and LDS 2009). However, primary principals experience challenges such as: policy development (IPPN 2002, Morgan and Sugrue 2008); the integration of children with SEN (IPPN 2002); administration duties that pertain to the BoM (Stynes and McNamara 2019); and conflict management (RTU and LDS 2009). Most primary principals experience role overload and believe the job of teaching principalship has become too onerous (IPPN 2002, Darmody and Smyth 2016). Other studies have shown that principals in the past have had no formal training prior to appointment (McHugh 2015, Ummanel 2012) and they experienced shock and isolation when they started the job (McHugh 2015). Studies of CPS principals are very pertinent to this study. A study that investigated the "cosmologies" of twelve CPS principals discovered that their Catholic identity was very important to them and it influenced their principalship (Sugrue and Furlong 2002). An IPPN (2011) survey found that: 44% of participants would prefer to

work in multidenominational schools; 51% wanted to see major changes in the patronage structures; and a significant minority wanted to preserve the ethos and continue sacramental preparation in school. As part of the analytical framework, the findings of the above studies are compared to and contrasted with the findings of this study.

Chapter Two reviewed the mission and nature of the Catholic school and contemporary issues facing Catholic schools internationally. The fourfold religious mission of the Catholic school was outlined: to evangelise students; to assist parents in fostering children's faith; to assist the Church in its mission to evangelise; and to contribute to the common good. The nature of the Catholic school was revealed by exploring each of the following distinctive characteristics: Catholic RE, anthropology, morality, cosmology, sociology, epistemology, historicity, politics, spirituality, and catholicity. In order to inform how to address challenges faced by CPSs in Ireland, the chapter also reviewed Catholic schools in other Western countries and the challenges they encounter.

Chapter Three explored the distinctive role of the Catholic school principal who is expected to ensure children have a quality education and to create a distinctive Catholic school culture. Many theoretical models of educational leadership were explored: distributed and shared, transformational, authentic, ethical, moral, servant, spiritual, and contemplative. Notably, Flintham's (2011) hermeneutic phenomenological study on spiritual leadership included a distinctive group who had 'foundations of faith.' The group included twenty-five principals in Catholic schools in the UK and Australia who were able to use a language of faith to relate deeply held beliefs and values. Also relevant to this study is Schuttloffel's (2013) hermeneutic phenomenological study that investigated the influence of character on Catholic school leaders and contemplative leadership. International research studies on Catholic school principalship revealed challenges such as: financial constraints within the education systems; issues regarding principal recruitment and retention; and demands of achieving academic excellence. As the UK has a culture most like Ireland, these studies are particularly significant. For example, Grace (2002) found that although the secondary headteachers attended to the school's Catholic mission, they were under pressure for their schools to perform well academically. Grace's main concern is that teachers and principals need to formally renew their "spiritual capital" (2010, 125) in order to lead Catholic schools in a changed cultural context. Richardson's study (2014), that investigated the religious dispositions of fifteen primary and secondary headteachers, is very similar to this study. Watkins (2018) found that a significant minority of the principals in the 'Visions for Education

Leadership' study had reservations about the term 'vocation' and considered their work a job. Glackin and Lydon (2018) also discovered a lack of interest in Catholic school principalship in England. Both Sullivan (2006) and Grace (2009) recommend principals avail of a dual model of courses: professional leadership courses provided by the government; and faith development courses provided by the Church. Finally, the chapter reviewed teaching and principalship as a vocation and it explored some professional and faith development courses offered by Catholic universities internationally.

Chapter Four reviewed some of the key aspects of Christian faith, faith as part of culture, and faith in contemporary Ireland. As Christians, we are invited to participate in the mystery of the Holy Trinity by developing our relationship with God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In particular, Christian faith is Christocentric and is about believing, knowing and trusting Jesus Christ. Studying theology is an intellectual process that involves finding meaning in relation to God. Moreover, faith is a relational journey, as we seek God and reach out for Him (Acts 17:27-28). The many stages of faith were also discussed (Dulles 1997, Fowler 2000, O'Murchu 2014, Rohr 2012). Secondly, the chapter reviewed faith as part of culture and explored the secularisation process that Western cultures have undergone. Studies reveal that many Christians today have become detached from the institutional Church but some are part of a new spiritual wave. The theme of faith seekers and dwellers is found throughout the literature. O'Murchu describes people in search of a deeper meaning of faith as "adult faith seekers" (2014, 17). Taylor recommends that, if Christianity is to survive, the inner core of "faith dwellers" should be open to the outer core of "spiritual seekers" (2007, 533). The last section reviewed the accelerated secularisation process in Ireland over the last fifty years and it outlined some studies that are very relevant to this study. For example, O'Mahony (2010) found that God is important to most people and that approximately 90% believe in God, 70% believe in life after death and 50% believe in hell. Féich and O'Connell's study (2015) discovered that, although religious beliefs and the importance of God in people's lives remained high, faith and morality have become privatised. Studies by both O'Mahony (2013) and Dillon (2015) revealed a decline in Mass attendance, with older generations attending Mass more frequently than younger generations. In addition, Donnelly and Inglis' study (2010) showed that many Irish people have lost trust in the institutional Church because of the CCSA scandals. Conversely, Ganiel (2017) concluded that faith can be renewed through participation in Catholic organisations and other institutional "spaces" such as parish pastoral councils. Of particular relevance is

Inglis' (2014) hermeneutic phenomenological study that investigated different experiential structures of people's lives today. It discovered that Irish people find meanings through culture, place, family, identity, money, politics, sport, religion and love. Inglis concluded that most people's lives are "spun" around love and care for others. This study uses Inglis' religious categories to group the principals according to their beliefs and religious worship.

What remains to be discovered is the faith dispositions of a cohort of CPS principals and the role of faith in their lives. The next chapter outlines hermeneutic phenomenology as the research methodology and the six steps involved in the research process.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter there will be discussion about the reasons for choosing hermeneutic phenomenology as the research methodology to discover the role of Christian faith in the lives of a cohort of CPS principals. There will be then a brief outline of the philosophical assumptions that underlie this methodology. This is followed by a review of the research methodology developed by Max van Manen in 1990, a proponent of hermeneutic phenomenology for education. Finally, there will be an outline of other considerations such as validity, reliability, bias, sampling, and limitations of the research.

5.1. Qualitative Research and Social Constructivism

Research studies usually fall into two categories, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methodologies are often used by researchers of natural sciences when a positivist approach is needed to search for objective truths about the world; they aim to be bias-free and values-free and should be unaffected by the researcher's worldview (Duffy and Dibley 2016). Researchers of human sciences, on the other hand, often use qualitative methodologies to discover subjective truths; they give an opportunity to hear the voices of individuals in order to probe for understanding about complex issues within a certain context. This qualitative study seeks to gain insights and a deep understanding of the lived experiences of a cohort of principals in relation to faith and principalship. Creswell (2013) explains that qualitative studies use different interpretive frameworks. This study uses a social constructivist framework that has four different philosophical assumptions. Philosophical assumptions are an important aspect of qualitative research as the enquirer brings his or her philosophies or paradigms to the research process. According to Creswell, philosophy is important to researchers as its shapes all aspects of the research process. He outlines four philosophical assumptions that need to be addressed in qualitative studies: axiological, epistemological, ontological, and methodological.

Firstly, the enquirer addresses axiological beliefs by positioning him or herself at the start of the research and reveals his or her values, bias and experiences that may influence the process (van Manen 2016b). Therefore, I have positioned myself at the start and at the

end of this study using vignettes of my professional practice as a teacher and a researcher.

Secondly, epistemological beliefs relate to knowledge. Within the social constructivist framework knowledge is constructed from the participants' subjective experiences. During the interviews, the principals described their experiences, their worldviews, and their faith perspectives. Chapter Six presents a descriptive analysis of the data and Chapter Seven presents an interpretative analysis of the data. Together they form new knowledge about the role of faith in the lives of this cohort of principals.

Thirdly, ontological beliefs are concerned with the nature of being. This study uses a social constructivist framework with the following ontological assumption:

> In social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences - meanings directed toward certain objects or things. (Creswell 2013, 24)

This study is rooted in Martin Heidegger's philosophy of ontology. His main philosophy is that to be human, *Dasein*, is to be a person situated in the world interpreting his or own existence in relation to time. In this ontological paradigm, the principals' mode of being is as interpreters of their lived experiences and the researcher's mode of being is also as an interpreter of the data. This study relies on the data from eighteen participants as they describe and interpret their experiences of faith and principalship. It also relies on the researcher to describe and interpret their lived experiences by using van Manan's methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology. It is imperative to note what Creswell says about the openness of interpretations in all qualitative studies.

> Ultimately, our writing is an interpretation by us of events, people, and activities, and it is only our interpretation. We must recognize that participants in the field, readers, and other individuals reading our accounts will have their own interpretations. Within this perspective, our writing can only be seen as a discourse, one with tentative conclusions, and one that will be constantly changing and evolving. Qualitative research truly has an interpretation element that flows throughout the process of research. (ibid., 278)

Therefore, it follows that the themes, findings and conclusions of this study are one interpretation of the principals' lived experiences and are open to interpretation by the reader.

The fourth assumption is the methodological assumption. The human science researcher has a range of qualitative methodologies from which to choose. Creswell (2013) outlines five approaches: narrative inquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and

case study. I chose hermeneutic phenomenology as the most appropriate methodology based on the research question and the intention of the study after considering the following methodologies.

Creswell outlines each methodology as follows: In the narrative inquiry approach the researcher collects stories from individuals. It focuses on investigating an event or an action in narrative form that is experienced by a small number of individuals and is usually presented in chronological order. Secondly, the purpose of grounded theory is to generate a theory that is grounded in the experiences of participants. It usually presents a theory in diagram form and hypotheses based on the data collected. Using grounded theory as an approach, the research question might have been: What theory explains the role of faith in the principals' decision making? Thirdly, the purpose of ethnographic research is to study the behaviours and language of an intact culture-sharing group who interact with each other. It is undertaken over a long period of time by the researcher who is immersed in and observes the culture. Although the principals are immersed in Irish culture and work within schools that have similar cultures, they do not work in the same school or interact with each other. Fourthly, case studies use multiple sources of data to investigate a bounded system within a single site, multiple sites or it can be a collective case study. Creswell (2013) identifies two types of case study: an instrumental case study is used to understand an issue or event; and an intrinsic case study is used to highlight a unique situation. For example, Mahon (2017) and Mullally (2018) both used a case study approach to investigate primary school communities by interviewing teachers, principals, chairpersons and parents. In both studies, the focus was on the case or schools under investigation rather than one group of participants. In contrast, this study aims to highlight only the voices of principals in relation to the role of faith in their lives.

Phenomenology was chosen as the research methodology to explore the unique lived experiences of individuals who have experienced CPS principalship as a common phenomenon. Two phenomenological research approaches are transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology. Moustakas' (1994) transcendental research methodology is based on Edmund Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology that is used mostly in psychological research studies. Max van Manen's research methodology is based on Martin Heidegger's philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology that is used mostly for health and educational research studies. Hence, van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological methodology for education was chosen for this study.

Examples of studies referred to in the literature review chapters that used hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology are: Inglis (2014), Schuttloffel (2013) and Flintham (2011). In the book, *Meanings of Life in Contemporary Ireland*, Inglis (2014) applied hermeneutic phenomenology to discover "webs of significance" that people create for themselves in their lives. He highlights seven experiential structures, including religion, that give people meaning in their lives. In the second example, Schuttloffel (2013) used hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate contemplative leadership practice among principals in England, Australia and the Netherlands. Flintham's (2011) study investigated how principals sustain hope through spiritual practices. He categorised them into three groups according to their principalship practice: spiritual leaders; vocational leaders with 'foundations of faith'; and principals who undertook 'labours of love' in deprived areas. The findings of these three studies will be compared to the findings of this study in Chapter Seven.

5.2. *Hermeneutic Phenomenology as Philosophy*

Phenomenology is rooted in the philosophies of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Hans-Georg Gadamer (Duffy and Dibley 2017). It is important that a researcher using a phenomenological methodology has an understanding of the philosophy as the study needs to be based on primary, scholarly phenomenological literature (van Manen 2016a, 350). While phenomenological methodologies are similar, in that they all seek to address particular phenomena, there are subtle differences in types. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology provides a scientific epistemology about the nature and grounds of knowledge and participants provide descriptions of lived experiences. In this approach the enquirer "brackets" his or her thinking and personal experiences and "reduces" the meaning of the phenomenon in order to discover the essence of the phenomenon under investigation. One of the challenges of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is that it can be difficult for the researcher using the methodology to bracket his or her personal experiences, assumptions and interpretations of the topic (ibid.). Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, later pioneered hermeneutic phenomenology that explored ontology, the nature of being. Other philosophers developed different phenomenological theories such as the consciousness of being (Sartre), the psychological meaning of the lived experience (Merleau-Ponty), and the role of language in evidencing human understanding (Gadamer).

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), is considered an influential philosopher of the twentieth century as his ontology was considered revolutionary and perceptive. Heidegger's *Being and Time* (2010), originally published in 1927, his speech "Discourse on Thinking" (1966), as well as Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1975) provide useful insights into the philosophical tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology for this study.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* (BT) is a study of phenomenological ontology in which he examines the structures of human existence. The German translation highlights his approach to ontology that to be human is to be a person situated in the world and who interprets his or her own existence.

> Thus, in *Being and Time* (1927) Heidegger announces that he proposes to investigate the "question of Being" (*die Seinsfrage* BT §2,1) that is the "question of the meaning of Being" (*die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*, BT §19, 1).
> (Moran 2000, 195)

In order to explain his phenomenological approach, Heidegger returned to the Greek etymology of the word 'phenomenon', that he translated as "to show itself" (BT §7, 27), and the word 'logos', which he translated as "letting something be seen", a type of interpreting (BT §7, 30). Thus, he translated phenomenology as, "to let what shows itself be seen from itself" (BT §7, 32). Heidegger also used the Greek word for truth, *aletheia* to explain the process of phenomenological inquiry as disclosure or uncovering (BT §7, 31). Therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology is then a way to uncover, reveal or make manifest the truth of human existence and experiences (Moran 2000). Heidegger posited that what makes human beings distinctive is their ability to question and interpret their own existence, hence the name *Dasein* which literally translates as "being there." Moran explains Heidegger's phenomenology as uncovering existential structures of living.

> Heidegger's analysis of Dasein, of that particular entity of 'being' (*das Seiende*) which is uniquely concerned about its mode of Being, and whose Being is an issue for it, uncovers broadly existential structures of living (which show the influence of Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Dilthey), but more than any of these philosophers, Heidegger has raised to an ontological level the essential role of humans as *questioning* beings. (ibid., 197-198)

Therefore, according to Moran, Heidegger's ontology is a fusion of phenomenology and hermeneutics rather than phenomenology that just describes a phenomenon.

> Since things don't always show themselves as they are, phenomenology cannot be simply descriptions, it does not depend on the fulfilling intuition as Husserl thought; rather phenomenology is seeking after meaning which is perhaps hidden by the entity's mode of appearing. In that case, the proper model for seeking

> meaning is the interpretations of a text and for this reason Heidegger links phenomenology with hermeneutics. How things appear or are covered up must be explicitly studied. The things themselves always present themselves in a manner which is at the same time self-concealing. (ibid., 229)

In the book *Being and Time*, Heidegger reveals one of the basic features of human existence is "being-in-the world" (BT §17), we exist in a concrete material environment and are inter-dependent on others. We often exist in an inauthentic mode when we are absorbed with the quotidian and the public self. However, we are usually pushed to live more authentically when we are anxious (BT §40), when our conscience calls us and guides our decisions (BT §55) and when we have to face some fear in our lives (BT §30). The positive effect of anxiety is that it can lead us to understand that our whole existence is structured by care (*Sorge*) (BT§ 41). Care is both affective and projective: I care about what affects or matters to me such as the world and my place in the world; and I also undertake projects that show that I care about others and the world.

According to Heidegger, the whole of our existence must be considered in relation to our temporality; our past, our present and our future are all inter-connected. We have no influence on our past: "being-already-in the world" consists of our "thrownness" (our culture, family) (BT §38), our "facticity" (our environment and circumstances) (BT§12) and our "disposedness" (our dispositions, aims, desires and skills) (BT §29). However, our past influences our present and our future: how we understand and interpret the world; the way we articulate the meaningful structures of our lives through conversation; our "resoluteness" towards the future; and the decisions we make about our future "possibilities" (BT Division 1, Chapter 5). We are free to choose different "possibilities" but they are contingent on our past and present circumstances. When we allow the "temporal ecstasies" of past, present and future to cohere, we experience a unity of stable self and live authentically (BT§64). Later in Chapters Six and Seven we see that some of the above features are evident from the principals' descriptions and interpretations of their lives: they work with others in school and at home; they care for their school communities; they make decisions based on past experiences and the culture in which they find themselves; and have different dispositions that relate to their past and the present.

In a later publication, *Discourse on Thinking* (1966), Heidegger developed a theory on the need for humans to think meditatively in order to understand and unveil the truth about our being. His discussion helps the researcher to reflect on descriptions of lived

experiences and to understand and interpret the phenomenon in question. Heidegger uses the words "releasement," "openness" and "indwelling" to describe the process: as we think meditatively, we release ourselves from the world, we become open to the mystery of being, and wait patiently as we dwell within our being in order to reach further understanding and interpreting. Meditative thinking reveals the truth about being itself and can change how we live our lives.

> Releasement towards things and openness to mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperilled by it. (Heidegger 1966, 55)

In *Truth and Method* (1975) Hans-Georg Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, examined the importance of language as the medium of hermeneutics and explored the relationships between thinking and speaking, understanding and interpreting. In a conversation both partners' thoughts, understandings, interpretations and language come together in a "fusion of horizons" (ibid., 388). Gadamer explains that experience "seeks and finds words to express itself" (ibid., 417). Therefore, in an interview the researcher and participants co-constitute the nature of lived experiences (Flood 2010). It seems then that language is like a door through which we can see into and express human experiences.

Heidegger's philosophy of ontology and meditative thinking and Gadamer's philosophy of language are useful references for using hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology.

5.3. *Hermeneutic Phenomenology as Research Methodology*

The essential difference between hermeneutic phenomenology as a philosophy and a methodology is that the philosophy is a way of investigating the nature of our existence while the methodology is a way of investigating the nature of lived experiences. In other words, Heidegger's philosophy of ontology encompasses human existence and van Manen's methodology encompasses lived experiences. In the book *Phenomenology of Practice* van Manen (2016a) points out that the German word for experience, 'erlebnis', contains the word 'life' and explains the connection between human existence and experiences:

> From a phenomenological point of view, experiences seem to arise from the flow of everyday existence. They are recognisable in the sense that we can recall them, name and describe them, reflect on them. (van Manen 2016a, 35)

He explains that we take many of our experiences for granted but when we reflect on them and retell them, we bring a new awareness to them. Even naming an experience brings it into focus, as if it were lifted up from everyday reality. We recount many of our experiences through storytelling.

> Stories or anecdotes are so powerful, so effective, and so consequential in that they can explain things that resist straightforward explanation or conceptualization. Anecdotes bring things into nearness by contributing to the vividness and presence of an experience.   (ibid., 251)

In relation to this study, the principals' experiences of principalship are connected to their faith experiences. By just naming the phenomena of CPS principalship and faith, it highlights the uniqueness of the phenomena. Thus, the principals' experiences of principalship are distinguished from other people's experiences in CPSs such as those of a child, teacher, parent, chairperson of a BoM or school secretary. The principals' experiences of faith are also different from their experiences of love or hope. They recounted many anecdotes and stories as way of recalling their experiences of both principalship and faith.

Hermeneutic phenomenology has two distinct parts: phenomenology concentrates on gathering descriptions of experiences and hermeneutics focuses on interpreting experiences. Researchers who use this methodology attempt to capture descriptions of lived experiences but they are also aware of the impossibility of doing so because the moment has already passed. Furthermore, the "body-I" who experiences the actual phenomenon in the present moment is different from the "reflective-I" who reflects afterwards on the experience (ibid., 55). "Lived time and the living moment of the now are indeed enigmas" (ibid., 59). Phenomenological inquiry is akin to digging in the sand and "exposing the ground of our living existence" (ibid. 41). Previously, van Manen equated the methodology with: diving, "the meanings we bring to the surface from the depths of life's oceans have already lost the natural quiver of their undisturbed existence" (2016a, 54): and ploughing land, "tilling and turning the soiling of daily existence" (ibid., 119). Van Manen's similes of digging, diving and ploughing are reminiscent of Heidegger's translation of phenomenology, "to let what shows itself be seen from itself" (BT §7, 32). Furthermore, experiential descriptions and interpretations are communicated through language and these always remain partial. Hence, this study presents a 'glimpse' of the principals' experiences at this particular time rather than the 'whole picture'.

Understanding happens in a hermeneutical circle that involves a "relatedness backward or forward" (BT §2, 7) as we continually interpret ourselves over time. We are constantly open to reinterpreting our experiences and ourselves. Diekelmann and Ironside opine that: "The thinking that accompanies hermeneutical scholarship is reflective, reflexive, and circular in nature" (1998, 244). Notably, the aim of the research is not to provide psychological or political explanations about or reasons for particular experiences but instead to describe and interpret the lived experiences (ibid.). Therefore, the emphasis in this study is discovering the role of faith in their experiences rather than looking for the reasons why their experiences differ.

5.4. Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Method

In order to aid the research process, it is helpful to follow a clearly defined methodological structure. Van Manen's (2016b) approach, that he originally developed in 1990, is particularly suited to this study as his methodology concentrates on hermeneutic phenomenological research for education. He outlines six research activities to which this study adhered.

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;

2. Investigating experience as we live it rather that as we conceptualize it;

3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;

4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;

5. Maintaining a strong and orientated pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;

6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.
(Van Manen 2016b, 30-31)

The following section reviews what van Manen and others have to say about each of the six steps.

5.4.1. The question

The hermeneutic phenomenological researcher is on a quest to find the nature and significance of some aspect of human existence in which he or she is deeply interested. The researcher asks questions such as: "What is it like to be an educator? What is it like to be a teacher?" (van Manen 2016b, 45). The main question of this particular study is to discover the role of Christian faith in the lives of a cohort of CPS principals. In other

words, the aim is to reveal the part Christian faith plays in their lived experiences. The interview questions fall into three categories: principalship, the CPS and faith (Appendix B Interview Schedule). Questions about principalship and the CPS are included since faith is not just confined to one aspect of our lives but encompasses our whole existence. According to St. Paul, Christian faith manifests in the way we live our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. Faith involves every part of our beings: our heads, our hearts and our hands (Groome 2011) and spirituality is part of everyday moments of principalship in Catholic schools (Clegg 2012).

5.4.2. *Gathering experiences*

As recommended by Creswell (2013), the interview questions were open-ended in order to focus on the central phenomenon. Furthermore, I conducted four pilot interviews in order to refine the interview questions. Prior to the interviews, I emailed the principals the following documents: an invitation to participate (Appendix C Letter of Invitation to Participants); the interview schedule that contained sample questions (Appendix B Interview Schedule); and an information sheet about the study (Appendix D Participant Information Sheet). They all signed the consent forms (Appendix E Informed Consent Form) that stated that they could withdraw from the interview process at any time if they so wished. The interviews were held in the principals' offices and were recorded on a digital recorder. Later, the interview data were transcribed to a word processer on a password-protected computer to ensure confidentiality. Participants were given pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity and the names of the schools, locations and any other means of identifying the schools were also changed so that participants could not be identified. This study respected and adhered to all ethical considerations required by MIC and UL.

A semi-structured interview allows for an exploration of issues as they arise while an unstructured interview is more a conversation about a topic with broad open-ended questions. In the interview process, the researcher and the interviewee are brought on a quest of listening, thinking, understanding and interpreting (Smythe et al. 2008). The interviews for this study were semi-structured; the interviewees were asked all of the questions (Appendix B Interview Schedule) and some were followed up by other questions in order to clarify and probe for further descriptions and interpretations of their experiences.

Creswell (2013) and van Manen (2016a, b) give practical suggestions about the interview

process:

> Stay close to the questions, complete the interview within the time specified (if possible), be respectful and courteous, and offer few questions and advice…a good interviewer is a good listener rather than a frequent speaker during the interview.   (Creswell 2013, 166)

- Consider holding the interview in a non-formal setting;

- Be personable in order to gain the trust of the interviewee;

- Think of it as a conversation;

- Give plenty of time so that it is not rushed;

- Keep the phenomenological question in mind throughout;

- Do not be afraid of silences;

- Try to keep the interviewee close to the experience;

- Explore the whole experience to the fullest.
                                              (van Manen 2016a, 314-317)

In order to keep close to the lived experience, van Manen advises the interviewer to ask participants to think of a particular instance, example or event. To prevent the participant from generalising, the researcher asks, "Can you give me an example?" "What was it like?" (ibid., 68). Usually in hermeneutic phenomenological research, the interviewee has a special interest in the topic and cares about the question and the interview becomes an interpretative conversation to find meanings. There are two main processes involved in the interview:

> Of course, the gathering of and reflecting on lived-experience material by means of conversational interviewing may be two different stages in a single research project. It may be helpful to keep these two different functions of the interview in mind.   (van Manen 2016b, 63)

Notably, Ryan, Coughlan, and Cronin (2009) point out that it is important for the researcher to be aware when an interviewee does not want to answer sensitive questions and when to stop probing for more detail. While interviews can act as a medium for participants to express distress, they are not a therapeutic intervention and therefore thoughtful planning is required. Furthermore, I expected that principals would tell stories and anecdotes about their experiences. "We are our stories" and "store our experiences as stories" (Jacobson 2014, 124). When we tell our stories, we are both narrator and character as we invite others to listen to events in our lives.

> These plots, characters, scenes, and locations are archived in human memory and can be accessed in key times and places. When we access these elements of story, they give us hooks on which to hang new moments and frames within which to make sense of some new experience.　　　(Jacobson 2014, 128)

5.4.3. Reflecting on themes

Creswell (2013) suggests the following practical approach to thematic analysis in phenomenological research.

> Develop a list of significant statements;
>
> Group the statements into larger meaning units or themes;
>
> Write a description of "what" the participants experienced that include examples;
>
> Write a description of "how' they experienced the phenomenon;
>
> Write about the essence or culminating aspect of the phenomenon.
>　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Creswell 2013, 193-194)

Reflection is an important aspect of the research process in order for themes and patterns of the phenomenon to emerge. Phenomenological themes are "like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes" (van Manen 2016b, 90). To uncover the themes, the researcher can read the whole text, select and highlight particular statements, or do a detailed line-by-line analysis. Some themes are major, they cannot be omitted as without them the phenomenon would not be what it is, and other themes are minor to the phenomenon. Themes may not be part of all of the participants' experiences but instead they are like 'findings' that the researcher discovers and invites the reader "to come and look and think along with us" (Smythe et al. 2008, 1393).

In addition, space, time, body and human relations can help guide the reflection process (van Manen 2016b). When reflecting on the experiences, the researcher keeps in mind that we experience our world in a certain space or place; we live in and meet others through our bodily presence; past, present and future revolve around lived time; and we live and share this world in relation to others. Van Manen's reference to God in the human search for meaning is pertinent to this study:

> In a larger existential sense human beings have searched in this experience of the other, the communal, the social for a sense of purpose in life, meaningfulness, grounds for living, as in the religious experience of the absolute Other, God.
>　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(van Manen 2016b, 105)

In this study, I recorded each interview on a digital recorder that I later transcribed onto

my computer. In the process of re-reading the transcripts, I wrote notes in the margins of the pages and then revisited and noted significant statements made by the interviewees. Next, I manually colour-coded the transcripts to highlight recurring themes and then clustered the major themes and sub-themes. In Chapter Six, I wrote descriptions of these themes and sub-themes and in Chapter Seven I interpreted the themes in dialogue with the literature review in order to validly and accurately reflect the findings of the research.

5.4.4. *Writing and re-writing*

Hermeneutic phenomenological research is really about thinking, understanding, interpreting, speaking, reflecting and writing about lived experiences (Gadamer 1975). In hermeneutic phenomenology, "Writing is our method" (van Manen 2016b, 124) because what is being thought about internally becomes externally apparent in writing. Writing is a concrete way of describing and interpreting experiences and grasping the nature of a phenomenon. It requires the researcher to go "backward or forward" (BT §2, 7), to write and to re-write, to go between the unique and the universal, as the researcher interprets and re-interprets the data (van Manen 2016b, 131). The interpretative process requires patience as the researcher dwells on the nature of the phenomenon, waiting for the elusive to become clear. Often in moments of "active passivity", such as during a walk or waking in the night, sudden insights occur (van Manen 2016a, 346). It is more about thinking and waiting than writing: "No-one can tell anyone else what to do with the data. One has to dwell with it oneself" (Smythe et al. 2008, 1395). Hermeneutic phenomenological research should lead to insights into the mystery of another world that provoke "graced moments" and "sacred silence" in the reader (ibid., 1396). The process resembles Heidegger's philosophy of meditative thinking to discover mystery and truth and Gadamer's philosophy of language. In addition, when writing up the study I followed the advice of Crowther et al. (2017) to remove extraneous detail to keep the flow of the story.

5.4.5. *Maintaining a strong and orientated pedagogical relation*

Van Manen focuses on hermeneutic phenomenology for education and as such he advises researchers to keep pedagogy at the centre of the research. He asks, "Where does all this theorizing and research still connect with the lifeworlds of children?" (van Manen 2016b, 139). The educational researcher is "orientated to the world in a pedagogic way" (ibid., 151). The text should be rich and deep, as it captures life events and explores the nature

of the phenomenon. Hermeneutic phenomenology is different from other human science research methodologies.

> …traditional behavioural research leads to instrumental knowledge principles: useful techniques, managerial policies, and rules-for-acting. In contrast, phenomenological research gives tactful thoughtfulness: situational perceptiveness, discernment, and depthful understanding. The fundamental thesis is that pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact are essential elements of pedagogic competence. (van Manen 2016b, 156)

The focus of this study is on the experiences of eighteen principals as their 'lifeworlds' directly connect to the 'lifeworlds' of children in their schools. It is hoped that the descriptions and interpretations of their experiences of faith and principalship will bring the reader to a new understanding of the lifeworlds of CPS principals. Ultimately, it is hoped that the study will also make a difference to the 'lifeworlds' of children.

5.4.6. *Considering parts and the whole*

According to van Manen (2016a), the researcher needs to have an overall design plan for the research as well as concentrating on the parts that make up the whole design: "Compare this approach to what a painter does in the preparation of a canvas for the imagery it is to serve" (ibid., 167). This study followed van Manen's suggestions: organise the text around themes; analyse the interviews and rework the data into reconstructed life stories or anecdotes; use varying examples to show the nature of the phenomenon; reflect on and discuss other comparable phenomenological studies; or weave together the phenomenological descriptions with existential schemata such as time, space, body and relationships with others.

5.5. *Other Research Considerations*

Some other issues that affect research were taken into account in this study such as validity, reliability, bias and reflexivity, sampling size and the limitations of the research.

5.5.1. *Validity*

Human science studies are usually subject to validation criteria such as the sample size, sampling selection, members' checking and empirical generalisation (van Manen 2016b). Significantly, hermeneutic phenomenology has specific validation criteria such as: whether the research question is a phenomenological question about human experiences; whether the analysis provides experiential descriptions, sound and original interpretations, and experiential structures of the phenomenon; whether the study is

rooted in primary and scholarly phenomenological literature; and whether the reader is moved by a sense of contemplative wonder at the original insights that are revealed. Hermeneutic phenomenological studies are judged by the experiential structures of the phenomenon, rather than the factual empirical. Similarly, Creswell (2013) states that the final research report should enable the reader to transfer the information to other settings. An external consultant or peer review can help a less experienced researcher to examine the process and the product in this regard. According to van Manen, studies that use hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology do not require triangulation as a form of validation. Therefore, the principals' interviews are the only source of data in this study.

5.5.2. *Reliability*

Creswell (2013) advises that qualitative researchers ensure they record and transcribe data accurately. Reliability of phenomenological studies has to do with lived experience descriptions and uncovered experiential structures. "However phenomenological evidence is ultimately ambiguous and never complete" (van Manen 2016b, 351). In relation to repeatability, studies on the same phenomenon can be very different as the descriptions gathered and the interpretations formed vary from one study to another and from one researcher to the next. As for the truth of the participants' descriptions and interpretations:

> Whatever people describe in their interview sheds light on their lifeworld, at the same time conceals their lifeworld, because it is a partial perspective they are describing - a facet of their experience. This is not necessarily an intentional act (though of course it might be): it is merely their perspective at the moment in time when they are describing their experience to the other. The essence of truth is what is revealed in the telling.   (Taylor and de Vocht 2011, 1581)

Prior to the interviews, the principals were asked to answer the questions honestly and openly (Appendix B Interview Schedule). In hermeneutic phenomenological studies, what is important are the experiential structures found rather than factual evidence gathered. No empirical evidence or any other form of triangulation was sought to corroborate or verify their answers. Therefore, the data gathered were self-referential. Moreover, the descriptions and interpretations of their lived experiences were compared to and contrasted with theories and relevant research studies presented in the literature review. In relation to interpretations, they are always ambiguous and open to challenge since the participants, the readers and the researcher are all human, *Dasein,* open to interpreting and re-interpreting experiences over the constant flux of time.

5.5.3. Bias and reflexivity

As with all other human science studies, bias can lead the researcher to oversimplify, misinterpret or overinterpret experiential structures (van Manen 2016a). In light of Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein* as someone who brings prior understandings to the interpretative process (BT §2), the researcher acknowledges that his or her prior understanding of the phenomenon influences all aspects of the research. "Hermeneutic researchers do not attempt to isolate or 'bracket' their presuppositions but rather to make them explicit" (Diekelmann and Ironside 1998, 243). While it is virtually impossible to eradicate bias, Creswell (2013) and van Manen (2016) recommend that the researcher becomes aware of prejudices by writing about his or her experiences of the phenomenon. The enquirer reflexively examines his or her beliefs and values, his or her cultural and political background, as these affect the interpretation of the phenomenon.

> So too an interpretation of human experience cannot be neutral, dispassionate, theoretical contemplation, but must take into account the involvement of the enquirer him or herself in the undertaking.   (Moran 2000, 197)

Hence, I wrote about my position in the Introduction to this study and referred to my values, my beliefs and my experience as a CPS teacher and school leader.

5.5.4. Sampling

Creswell (2013) explains that qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling by selecting participants who can purposefully contribute to the research question. In phenomenological research, all participants must have experienced the phenomenon that is being studied. The sample size depends on the phenomenological question and studies can range from one to hundreds of participants. "The important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it" (ibid., 161). Rather than focusing on the sample size, the phenomenological researcher aims to get enough examples of experiential descriptions in anecdotal or story form or in sentences that portray the essence of the phenomenon (van Manen 2016a). This study concentrates on depth rather than breadth as, "too many transcripts may ironically encourage shallow reflection" (ibid., 353).

In this particular study the sample comprised eighteen participants who are all CPS principals in the RoI (Appendix F Participants' Profiles). They all responded to an advertisement on the IPPN website or to individual emails. They have a variety of personal and professional experiences that resulted in maximum variation within the

sample: there is a range of gender, age, and place of birth; they have a wide range of years of principalship experience; they have undertaken various educational leadership courses; their school contexts differ by location and socio-economic circumstances; and the sample consists of administrative and teaching principals (Appendix G Analysis of Participants' Profiles).

5.5.5. *Limitations of the research*

Many factors limit human research studies such as time, the sample size, and the researcher's capability and competency. Other factors limit hermeneutic phenomenological studies such as the fact that the participants must have all experienced the phenomenon being examined. Furthermore, the researcher needs to elicit from the participants descriptions and interpretations of their lived experiences rather than their opinions and general statements. Even then, their descriptions and interpretations, mostly given in story or anecdotal form, are only partial as the experiences have already taken place in the past. Moreover, self-selection was the method used to find participants. It is possible that self-selection leads to sample bias whereby those interested in the topic are more likely to respond to an advertisement or emails. Therefore, the findings from this qualitative study cannot be generalised to the population of CPS principals and further quantitative research would assist in this regard.

Conclusion

This qualitative study highlights the voices of eighteen CPS principals in relation to their lived experiences of faith and principalship. Hermeneutic phenomenology was chosen as the methodology that best suits this study. It is based on Martin Heidegger's philosophy of ontology that considers the person as an interpretive being. The methodology follows Max van Manen's research methodology for education. The six steps involved were: formulating a phenomenological question; gathering experiences; reflecting and thinking on themes that emerge from the data; writing and re-writing about the phenomenon; relating the research back to education; and considering individual and collective experiences. Consideration is also given to other aspects of the research such as validity, reliability, bias, reflexivity and limitations. A descriptive analysis of the data is presented in Chapter Six and an interpretive analysis of the data is presented in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER 6

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the data from interviews with a cohort of eighteen CPS principals. The principals described and interpreted their lived experiences that shed light on different threads of their personal and professional lives. Each principal's life seems like a rich, colourful, elaborate tapestry in-the-making. The different threads appear to intertwine and crisscross to form knots or seven main themes. The aim of this study is not to determine the strength or depth of the principals' faith but rather to discover the role of faith in their lives by finding themes and patterns from within their experiences. One participant identified the complexity of faith:

> There's a danger in measuring people's Catholicity or their faith by Mass attendance. You can't throw open a measuring tape and say where along this is your spirituality. (Vincent)

In this chapter there is a discussion of the data under the following themes: (1) how the principals embody faith in their heads, hearts and hands; (2) how faith intertwines in their life experiences; (3) the cultural influences on their faith; (4) their motivation to apply for the job and their perspectives of principalship as a vocation and a profession; (5) the influence of faith on their principalship; (6) how they develop the Catholic ethos and (7) their preferences for school patron. The seven main themes together reveal the role of faith in the principals' lives. In the next chapter the data will be analysed by comparing them to some of the theories and research findings discussed in the first four chapters.

6.1. Theme 1: Faith in the Head, Heart and Hands

"Jesus embodies the being that we are." (Órla)

6.1.1. The head

Christian faith is very important to the majority of this cohort of principals. Most believe in God, depend on Him and are guided by their faith. Most share similar beliefs but demonstrate different levels of theological understanding and literacy. When asked about the meaning of Christian faith in their lives, they all talked about God and only four talked about Jesus without being prompted.

> It means trying to live your life as Jesus would intend. For me, personally, there's a huge sense of duty in it. (Vincent)

> It's a very intimate relationship with your God. I do believe that one has to develop one's faith. It just doesn't happen. I suppose I have been fortunate; I've had a very, very good life. I attribute a lot of my journey here and where I've arrived at to my faith, my faith in humanity and my trust in God that whatever is laid out for me will be, that I can deal with it and have the resilience to accept whatever it is will be. (Órla)

When they were asked about the significance of the person of Jesus Christ in their lives, there were more definite responses: Jesus Christ is God in a "physical form" (Donal); He is the "Son of God" who was a "historical figure" and "a deity" (Helen); He is "part of our human story" (Gráinne). Some male principals emphasized the importance of Jesus' message and Jesus as a role model for living. Vincent, who undertook a Master's degree in Christian Leadership in Education, seems to have developed a comprehensive rational understanding of Jesus. However, he spent fifteen minutes considering the word "person" and admitted that, until the interview, he had not thought of Jesus as a person with whom he could have a relationship. Contrastingly, Anna is exemplary in expressing her affective relationship with Jesus: she does not attend Mass but is creative in developing her faith by going on retreats and practising meditation regularly.

> Is the person [emphasis] of Jesus Christ significant in my life? I'd say yes. Do I have a personal relationship with Jesus? I'd say that that would be something I would still be in an infant stage. (Vincent)

> For me, the Jesus who went into the desert for forty days to get to know himself, that's who inspires me. The Jesus who went through really hard times who had challenging situations and friends who let him down, that's the more real person. I see Jesus as a very kind and loving person that took time to be with himself and be present, and that's the side of me as a Christian that I'm developing. (Anna)

While sixteen principals believe in God, Deirdre and Josephine have doubts about the existence of God and are agnostic. Ciara is also unsure about the identity of Jesus and spent time during the interview distinguishing between a father and son relationship to explain the difference between God the Father and God the Son. Similar to the rest of the cohort, she seems preoccupied with the present life rather than the next life.

> Jesus Christ was a very good person, left us a lot of good messages, but is He God? Why would we just choose Him as the one true God? Is there a God? I don't know. But I don't really need to know at the moment. I will do and live a good life now, do the best that I can. Whatever is out there, I'll find out someday. Or maybe there's nothing. (Josephine)

> I believe there's a God but I also don't know if I believe that he created the world. Scientists, The Big Bang. I think there's something in that as well. I don't know that I believe. I would say to my children that God created stuff [laughter] and I

> would like to think He exists… I think that maybe Jesus is a prophet like lots of others were, and that the important person is God… Is God a person? I don't know. Can you call Him a him? …I don't have enough space in my head to be bothering questioning things anymore.   (Ciara)

While they all know about Jesus Christ, his life and message, most seem to lack a spiritual imagination to recognise Him as a person with whom they can relate as a friend. For example, most talked about their faith in God rather than faith in Jesus Christ; some principals said that Jesus Christ is significant in their lives but did not explain why; and two principals, Noel and Eimear, talked about their relationship with Our Lady instead of Jesus Christ.

> Jesus would be significant, just with going to Mass but I don't think of Him as 'Jesus Christ,' I just think of God.   (Aidan)

> I have great faith in Our Lady. I'm not saying Jesus isn't important but if you mean 'Do I think about him a lot?' No.   (Eimear)

Most principals did not talk about the Eucharist spontaneously but they talked about First Holy Communion for children. Some of the principals, who could be considered orthodox, talked about the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and their desire to receive Communion at Sunday Mass. They expressed a variety of interpretations about the Eucharist:

> Jesus embodies the being that we are.   (Órla)

> It is the real presence of Jesus.   (Helen)

> I believe in the whole nature of the Mass and the Eucharist.   (Noel)

> It's a time to talk to Jesus.   (Gráinne)

> Transubstantiation is the part of my faith with which I struggle the most.
>   (Vincent)

> It's a symbol of Jesus.   (Aidan)

> I'm not quite convinced it is the body of Christ.   (Josephine)

Although faith is important to the majority, they seem to have different levels of theological literacy: Vincent has developed a very good cognitive understanding of God and explained that God is love; most said they do not usually talk about their faith to adults; and Noel said he does not fully understand the Holy Trinity.   Only Helen mentioned that she prays to the Holy Spirit even though the principals talked about the sacrament of Confirmation. No principal referred to the Kingdom of God or the Paschal

mystery directly although Helen talked about comparing difficult circumstances to the crucifixion.

> I wouldn't understand the Trinity very well. It's hard for me to bring up from my subconscious something to say about it because they're things that are not frequently talked about. (Noel)

> I ask the Holy Spirit for help; I ask my guardian angel for help; and quite often then I've a cheeky one to the Holy Trinity when I need help or I try to bribe him. I'd say, "Jesus can't refuse anything his mom asks [laughter] and God can't refuse anything Jesus asks [laughter] so I ask our Lady to ask Jesus to ask God." And then I say a Holy Trinity prayer… Is Jesus Christ significant in my life? I suppose there's times you kind of go, "I'm not exactly being crucified" [laughter] so I think "I'll walk out of this one" and I can keep going. (Helen)

The principals who believe in God also believe in the afterlife, heaven and purgatory. However, most of them are unsure about hell. They acknowledged the existence of sin and evil within each person and in society. Noel pointed out that the Church's interpretation of what constitutes sin changes over time and Vincent said that the Church does not communicate as much about sin as it did in the past.

> I'm not sure of the heaven and hell piece. My faith doesn't let me think of that really, being honest with you. It's more I hope I have affected change in life. I hope I have made a difference in my life here with the staff and this community, and with my boys. (Órla)

> I don't think heaven is a place and therefore I don't think hell is a place either. I think it's a state that is all around us. I think heaven is all around us when you're at peace. If you're not at peace then you're in hell. (Helen)

> Everyone's a product of their experiences so I think that everybody is forgiven eventually, ultimately, but that doesn't give you the right to harm others. (Donal)

They all seem to be in some way immersed in the mystery of God regardless of their beliefs, faith or religiosity. As the principals talked about their strength or lack of faith, they all revealed elements of questioning and wondering about God. The principals all seem to seek visible evidence of God and most are satisfied by sensing His presence.

> An experience of God in your life? Our Lady appeared to me in the office one day, just over there [Laugh]. No, I can't say. For me, He's ever present. (Vincent)

> Faith would have strong meaning for me as I believe in Christ, in God and in the resurrection and all of that. I don't attend Mass regularly but I would have faith. (Aisling)

> Christian faith means that I try to live the way that Jesus would have wanted me to live, and to do the best job that I can do to lead a good, moral, ethical life and that's what I try to do. Whether I believe everything that the Christian faith wants me to believe is probably not there, but I try to do my best in living the best life

155

that I can live in a Christian way.   (Josephine)

I don't have a faith and that's where my journey is now. Am I searching? I don't
know. I would love to have faith but I don't have it. I'm sure, when it comes to
that last moment that I'll take the anointment if it comes [laughter] because I can't
be certain there isn't a God but I don't believe there is. Nothing has shown me
that there is.   (Deirdre)

Although Josephine and Deirdre are both agnostic, they still hope that there is a God, they seem to lead good moral lives, and continue to question the existence of God.

6.1.2. The heart

All of the principals who are believers seem to communicate with God through spiritual practices and religious worship. There seems to be gender differences in their spirituality and in their ability to express their faith. Male principals described major and minor events that were faith-deepening: Vincent undertook a Master's degree; Henry volunteered for the World Meeting of Families in Dublin; Henry and Brian went to see Pope Francis on his visit to Ireland in August 2018; and Brian and Kevin visit the Church regularly to light candles and use this time to reflect and pray. When asked about how they sustain their spiritual lives, some male principals talked about their families and friends, Mass and faith. A few talked about being sustained by outward pursuits such as work and Brian talked about his work with an Irish Catholic organisation for developing countries. Other males openly admitted that they have difficulty with their own spirituality.

I'd be the first to admit, I am not the most spiritual of people. It's not me
[laughter]. I'm a very pragmatic, practical kind of person. Getting in touch with
my inner self, it's not something that appeals to me [laughter].   (Eoghan)

I went to Kylemore Abbey. My wife is a very spiritual person and she has no
problem at all going into a room and spending an hour praying. I couldn't do
that. I'd still find that challenging enough. My mind would be racing too fast
and I wouldn't be up to being still.   (Vincent)

As ways of sustaining their inner lives, the female principals talked about family, friends, faith, nature, holidays, exercise and their relationships with children and colleagues in school. Four out of five female principals, who said that faith nurtures their inner lives, seem very connected to their inner spirituality and explained that they go on retreats or pilgrimage and practise yoga or meditation.

I do meditation and pray. I go to Seatown, there's a friary over there, and I go to
other quiet places of prayer where it's a holy centre. I've been to Lourdes and
I've been to Lough Derg five or six times. I find that sitting quietly, feet on the
ground, grounds me and it helps me make decisions.   (Marie Therese)

> I'm very, very aware of the importance of having that inner life experience or that inner relationship with God because at the end of the day, it's you and your God, isn't it, really? And you need to dig deep.   (Órla)

The role of faith for most of the principals also seems linked, in some way, to attending and participating in Mass. What is not obvious is the correlation between faith and religion: some who are believers do not attend Mass regularly and two principals who are agnostic attend Mass irregularly. The principals' religious journeys have taken different paths. In general, they demonstrate elements of four religious groups: orthodox, cultural, creative and disenchanted. They all grew up in orthodox Catholic families and attended Catholic schools as children; they all seem to have been imbued in a Catholic culture that prevailed in Ireland when they were growing up; they are creative in following their own faith journeys or alternative paths; and they all expressed a degree of disenchantment with the institutional Church. However, each principal has distinctive beliefs, practices and perspectives that are more attributable to one particular religious group than another group.

Thirteen principals could be considered orthodox Catholics as they seem to have orthodox beliefs and most of this group attend Mass regularly. Three in this group are actively involved on committees in their local dioceses: Donal and Vincent are on advisory diocesan education committees and Marie Therese has given talks about Christian meditation for schools in her diocese. Four other orthodox principals volunteer in their own parishes: Noel is a minister of the Word; Kevin is a minister of the Eucharist; Órla is a member of a parish liturgy group and is a member of a Church choir; and Gráinne is a member of a parish pastoral council. Other younger principals within the orthodox group, who do not attend Mass as regularly, are actively involved in the wider Church: Brian and Aisling volunteer to work abroad during the summer holidays in developing countries; and Henry volunteered for the Catholic World Meeting of Families in Dublin 2018.

Two principals, Ciara and Eoghan, could be considered cultural Catholics. Eoghan who lives and works close to the border with Northern Ireland, did not talk about attending Mass, declared he is not spiritual, enjoys being a CPS principal and is adamant that the school remains under Catholic patronage. Ciara said she is "one of those people doing First Holy Communion and not going to Mass every Sunday." Both principals in this group are in the middle age group (40-49). Anna could be considered the most creative in her faith: she has moved away from the Church but attends retreats, goes on pilgrimage

and practises meditation to deepen her faith and spirituality. She is in the middle age group (40-49). Deirdre and Josephine seem very disenchanted with the Church and are agnostic. They both still attend Mass at Christmas and other times during the year and both are in the older age group (50-59). Later in the chapter, the principals' Catholic upbringing and their faith journeys will be discussed further in *Theme 6: Cultural Cycles of Influence on Faith*.

6.1.3. The hands

The hands represent the principals' behavioural responses to their faith in God such as their moral views, moral codes and principalship practice. They all talked about being "good, kind, caring and gentle" (Ciara) and "treating people with respect" (Eoghan). With regard to a moral code, they seem to share a common impulse to abide by the Golden Rule of treating others as they would like to be treated. Even with doubts about the existence of God, Deirdre and Josephine seem to adopt values and a moral compass closely aligned to the majority.

> I don't have religious beliefs, but I have a very strong moral compass and I believe in doing the right thing. I would be hard on myself that way. But it's not a religious thing, I just think you have to be good, to be kind to people and I think it's the natural law of humanity that you have to be good to people.
> (Deirdre)

> I try to live by the commandments, that's a good guideline to start with. I try to live a very good life, to do my very best, not to hurt anybody with what I say or do, to strive to help others, to do whatever I can to help others around me or further afield, to be kind and honest. (Josephine)

The principals were not asked any specific questions about their opinions on the moral teaching of the Catholic Church. However, the cohort revealed some of their personal views, some of which are aligned to Church teaching and others that are more liberal.

> I would have made no bones before the referendum about the fact that my marriage to my wife is a marriage between a man and a woman. I feel that is the essential meaning of the word marriage. (Noel)

> I don't care if you're gay, straight or Australian. It doesn't bother me. I think if two people love each other that's OK. (Vincent)

> I have no problem in saying I want to repeal the eighth amendment for a million reasons and I found it difficult that I couldn't say that. I had to be very muted and careful. It's not really okay for me to wear a badge, to say what way I think, one way or the other. (Ciara)

Most male principals seem to associate their faith with conscience, duty and morality while most female principals connect their faith with a way of coping with life, a source

of resilience and a way of discernment. Some of the principals are motivated by their faith to work for peace and justice: Brian and Aisling work with Catholic organisations abroad during their summer holidays. Individual principals are motivated by social justice: Eimear is a mediator with the INTO; Anna is interested in women in politics; and Deirdre who is agnostic is involved with a global charity. Deidre and Josephine said that, regardless of their unbelief, they try to lead good moral lives and concentrate on the present. Significantly, six out of the eighteen principals seem to predominately adopt a moral leadership style that will be discussed in *Theme 6*. In this study, school principalship and the role of developing the Catholic ethos are considered behavioural aspects of the principals' faith and will be discussed later in *Theme 5: Faith and Principalship* and *Theme 6: Faith and Developing the Catholic Ethos*.

6.2. Theme 2: Faith and Life Experiences Intertwine

"It's not one day or one flash. It's not Saul on the road to Damascus. It's a gratitude for everything." (Henry)

6.2.1. God and nature

When asked about experiences of God in their lives, most of the principals talked about God in everyday experiences: God as "ever-present…God as love" (Vincent); "in the little things" (Anna); "just having God in the middle of it" (Marie Therese). Anna talked about an experience of nature and the wonder and awe it inspired in her.

> I also did a retreat here with the nuns one time and that was really nice. I remember during that time talking to one of the nuns and I noticed the moon, and it was just everything made sense to me in that moment. And she was like [laughter]-- she just thought this was amazing, and I'm like, "I know. I know. It's unbelievable, isn't it?" But little moments like that for me kind of-- I don't even know what it means in terms of faith, but I believe that God has created it.
>
> (Anna)

Josephine and Deirdre, who are agnostic, also find wonder and solace in nature. While they do not connect those experiences to God, nature seems to inspire them to question His existence.

> An experience of God in my life is when I am doing something that I'm completely happy, and calm, and in my flow or in my element. Yesterday evening going for a lovely long walk on the beach. And the sun was setting and the light was shining out and there was a boat. It's a red boat out just beyond me. And I said, "This is Heaven." So that was my experience of God in my life. When things are not going well, do I rely on God and do I call on God? I might get annoyed and say "For God's sake. Why has this happened?" When things are not going

159

well, I will invariably go back out onto the beach or climb a mountain just to clear my head so I can go back to that space where I'm happiest. So, I'll go for my long walk. I'll look out at the sea. I'll think and take time. So that's my space. That's where I get my calmness from. And I walk it out or I run it out of my legs [laughter]. (Josephine)

When I'm out in nature, sometimes I think, "My God, this is an incredible creation," and I always think, "How could it be ascribed to a Being?" I do wonder at how it happened. I do think, "God, it's just incredible," but I don't find God there. I find wonder there, yes, on a day like today, and I love going for a walk. And I've a very good friend, and he's very religious, and he sees God in all of that kind of thing. And we have very robust arguments. But I can't see why it's God.

(Deirdre)

Therefore, the believers seem to feel and sense God's presence but He somehow remains hidden to the agnostics. Despite their belief or unbelief, they all seem to seek Him.

6.2.2. *Relationships and love*

All of the principals talked about their families, friends and colleagues in loving terms and about their care for their school communities. The birth of children seemed to be a turning point in many of the principals' lives and some described those times as an experience of God.

I suppose when you have a child and you realise that they have all the toes in the right place, all the teeth in the right place. It's amazing. I don't know. Science can't explain how that can all come together. That kind of deepened my faith, that there definitely has to be some bigger power controlling all this. (Donal)

Deciding to have their children baptised also seems to have been a time when they reviewed their own faith and most renewed their commitment to the Church. In addition, four out of eight of the male principals inferred that they take responsibility for their own children's faith by bringing them to Mass and saying prayers with them.

I'd have a firm belief that we made a commitment to raise our kids as Catholics and to have a faith. I'd be the one that says the prayers with the kids at night. I bring Molly down to the church where we light the candles. (Brian)

I had my second child Chloe and we didn't get around to baptising her. I don't know what it was, partly due to the fact that she was very sick, partly due to the fact that I was figuring out all of that and partly laziness. So, she was about five before we got around to it and it was actually a lovely thing. (Ciara)

The importance of fostering relationships in school and caring for the school community is discussed in *Theme 6: Faith and Developing the Catholic Ethos.*

6.2.3. *Suffering and death*

Some of the principals also talked about other threshold events in their personal lives such

as the death of family members and friends. A few principals experienced faith encounters during times of intense suffering: one principal suffered from post-natal depression, another from a mental breakdown, and another from alcohol addiction. Órla described a time of anguish when she was grieving for her dead father and suffered from post-natal depression at the same time. She described an "out of body experience" in which her father spoke to her and asked her to care for her son. Marie Therese talked about a spiritual experience when she almost died from alcohol poisoning and she asked God to help her live and she attributes her recovery to God. Noel described how he wanted to change jobs: while on holiday in Medjugorje, he had a "weird dream" in which he was lying in the bed and got a phone call from a priest to say he got a job, all of which happened when he went home. These principals acknowledged that serendipity could have played a part in these experiences but they believe God intervened and answered their prayers. During times of deep personal suffering, it seems as if these principals reached out to God in prayer for help and they were answered. These faith encounters seem to have had a profound effect on their faith as they pray about their decisions, allow themselves to be guided by God, and are in the orthodox and creative religious groups.

> I let God guide me in my life or Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit or whoever it is. But there's somebody guiding me and looking after me in my life. I know that and looking after me and the children here in school.   (Marie Therese)

> I have the Bible beside the bed. I'd read a bit of it, particularly when I was really, really down. I think it played a huge role in pulling me out. When I was walking and going to Mass, I just took refuge from Bible stories in my head without having to read them.   (Brian)

Some of the principals also discussed the death of their parents or close family members. The experience of a loved one dying seems to have affected their faith and was a time when they contemplated the afterlife and the temporality of this life.

> After my father and my mother died, I did question my faith a lot in the sense of, "Is there anything?"   (Eimear)

> Even in my forties I think about how temporary life is, because you are witnessing it far more. So, you've seen the birth of new children and then the passing of relatives.   (Donal)

> I can remember when my mother-in-law died. She was very ill and she was just asking "I want to die. I just want to go to heaven." Her belief that she was going to go to heaven and she was going to see her mother and father again made me just think, "Oh, wow, she has some faith there."   (Josephine)

6.3. Theme 3: Cultural Cycles of Influence on Faith

"As Catholics we've become a little apologetic." (Gráinne)

6.3.1. Childhood experiences of faith

In the tapestry of their lives, the threads of faith seem interwoven with various cultural threads such as the postmodern culture in contemporary Ireland, the school culture and the culture of their youth. The principals' faith experiences in childhood seem to have had an enduring influence on most. Their descriptions of childhood were vignettes of religious families who attended Mass regularly, said prayers and recited the rosary at home. As children, they were actively involved in their parishes: many sang in church choirs, acted as altar servers, and read at Mass.

> Growing up, we would have been at Mass every Sunday and it was a big deal. It was getting dressed up. The hair had to be done properly with rollers. (Anna)
>
> I was in the Boy Scouts of Ireland and we walked down to Mass in a parade once a month. Then you still had the priests coming into school and then my mother and uncle would be very religious. We were brought as a family uniformly to Mass on Sunday. I remember playing communion at home and one of us playing the priest. But then as a teenager it was, 'grab the bulletin' and 'find out who said Mass' and there you go. (Brian)
>
> Initially, I went to a primary school which was run by the Christian Brothers. Then I went to St. Kevin's College, which was, at the time, run by principals who were priests. Throughout school, I would have been a reader at Mass and in the boys' choir in the cathedral. As I progressed to St. Pat's college, I was involved by giving out communion and reading in the church. (Eoghan)

They all attended Catholic primary and Catholic post-primary schools. Some were taught by religious brothers and nuns and a few have aunts who were religious nuns. As teenagers, some of the male principals revealed that they often did not go to Mass because of peer pressure while others continued to attend regularly and a few were ministers of the Word. As a teenager, Ciara explained that "hanging out with my friends or staying in bed" was more appealing than going to Mass. Contrastingly, Donal thought about a vocation to the priesthood and Órla planned to go to college to study theology but instead her parents wanted her to do primary teaching. Most of the principals attended Catholic Colleges of Education and four attended secular universities and subsequently qualified as primary teachers. With more freedom during the college years, some continued to attend Mass while a few did not. Josephine and Deirdre, who are agnostic, attended Catholic Colleges of Education and talked about looking for rational answers to faith questions: Deirdre was in a "Burning Questions" group; and Josephine questioned her RE

lecturer so much that her friends feared she may not get a job in a Catholic school. Coincidently, the four principals who attended secular universities are all in the orthodox religious group and attend Mass regularly.

> I did my BA in university first. I remember going to Mass at 12 o'clock for St. Patrick's Day. Everyone had started drinking at 12 o'clock and they were wondering where I was. I just said I went to Mass. I didn't get much comments but I suppose some people thought it was strange.   (Aidan)

They seem to have followed diverse paths to get to their present faith positions. Some talked about a constant path, "a fairly consistent and strong faith" (Donal); a path with "no particular milestones" (Helen); faith that "comes in waves" with "peaks and troughs" (Henry) and "highs and lows" (Eimear). Two principals pointed out that their faith journey parallels their life journey; and Órla said, "your faith's your own journey" with "no signposts". Regardless of their home, parish or school background, each principal seems to have made a decision in early adulthood about their faith.

6.3.2. *The Catholic primary school subculture*

The data suggest that the Catholic school ethos, teaching RE, and preparing children for the sacraments have an effect on most of the principals' faith. Eoghan observed, "other than the priesthood or becoming a nun, I can't imagine where you would have a closer relationship with the Church than as a primary school teacher." He also pointed out that he sends a copy of the Schedule (CPSMA 2016, 15) to interviewees to inform them about the Catholic school ethos. Most of the principals told anecdotes of how they teach abstract religious concepts to children in school.

> If you took the fruits of the Holy Spirit in sixth class, are you showing those? Are you nearly modelling being a good Christian for the children themselves? I think that modelling being a good teacher and modelling being a good Christian are almost intertwined.   (Henry)

> I love teaching religion with the children. I can remember how purgatory came up in class and I found the most beautiful description. I explained that it's like you're invited to a party and you're in clothes that are ripped and mucky and you would want to change those clothes before you go to the party.   (Helen)

> When we're discussing confession, for example, I would always say it's like making a phone call when you have one bar or five bars [signal]. You have the hotline straight to the man above and you've a clean slate. The joke would be, that doesn't mean you go out now and straightaway take five cookies from the jar at home. But when you go to the church it's just better reception and that things are heard quicker and it's clearer. That makes sense to the children as opposed to saying, it cleanses your soul.   (Donal)

Aisling, a teaching principal, said she learns as she teaches and understands her faith more

from teaching RE and the Confirmation programme. Consequently, when second class children celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation, she brought them to her classroom for cake afterwards because, "it's a sacrament and there should be a little party." Somehow, being immersed in the Catholic ethos and teaching RE seem to have an influence on most of the principals' faith.

6.3.3. Faith in postmodern Ireland

Most of the principals seem to question their beliefs and moral teachings of the Church and a few principals asserted their faith is different from their parents' faith. Marie Therese said her parents' faith was "based on fear," and a "punishing God." Henry pointed out that he is "far more inquisitive, far more questioning and sceptical of certain things" in comparison to his parents.

> It was very, very Catholic-based, probably fear-based - fear of the church. My nanny had 16 kids and they followed the priests' rules. There was no contraception and my nanny and grandad believed that and stuck to that even though they lived in a tenement flat in the city. To me, that was wrong. That's not God's rule. To me, that was a church-imposed thing and a way to keep poorer people down. (Anna)

The principals all think Irish society is more tolerant than in the past. However, the believers think it is difficult to be a person of faith. Some principals in the orthodox religious group said that their faith requires courage: they think they are perceived by others as, "a bit of a weirdo" (Noel), "odd" (Brian); and "very uncool at the minute now to be a Catholic" (Aisling). Most of the orthodox principals stated that they do not discuss their faith, even among friends, and are sometimes subject to snide remarks about attending Mass. They think faith in Ireland is in decline for various reasons: the media gives the Church and Catholic schools negative press; the Church scandals and cover-ups have caused immense damage; most people are interested in consumerism and materialism rather than religion or faith; and it is not popular for younger generations to practise their faith.

> I just think our faith has been lost along the way. Around here, it's all about bigger and better things and having a bigger and better car. You're nearly laughed at if you have faith or you're running there to Mass. (Marie Therese)
>
> I do feel for the priests and nuns. They've been bashed so much. (Aisling)
>
> I would imagine there's a lot of hidden faith out there. A lot of people who are just not willing to say it. As Catholics, we've become a little apologetic.
> (Gráinne)

Despite the negativity, the principals in the orthodox group seem confident and comfortable to promote the Catholic ethos in their schools and some are active in their parishes and dioceses. Kevin said, "It doesn't bother me" about his public role as a minister of the Eucharist. Helen and Noel pointed out that they see themselves as part of the Church rather than separate from the institutional Church. Órla stated, "I am so grounded in my own faith…This is who I am." Most orthodox principals think that the Church is often undermined by the media, the government, other school patrons and even teacher organisations.

> Even the IPPN, a few years ago, came out with some statement about bishops. That really annoyed me because I thought, "How dare you speak on my behalf as a principal and say that about them." They made a statement about 98% of principals, whatever, feel like this. And I went, "Nobody asked me. I never made a comment on that."   (Eimear)

> The INTO used to be a good solid organisation and didn't have all these issues. The INTO are kind of anti-Church too. They seem to celebrate diversity. We're celebrating diversity in this school for donkey's years.   (Vincent)

The orthodox principals shared their concerns about the institutional Church. Vincent thinks there should be women priests and the Church needs to move towards joy; Aidan believes priests need to be personable and be seen on a human level; and Kevin and Henry want Church teachings on same-sex relationships updated. Anna is also critical of the institutional Church that she believes has moved away from the person of Jesus Christ.

> Even as a child, I always heard something completely different when they talked about Jesus calling the children towards him. I knew he had no time for those businessmen. Whereas now, our church leaders, I feel they have more time for the businessmen. I mean, look, even the connection between the Catholic Church and Allianz, the insurance company, it's all too much. It's all too far removed from Jesus for me.   (Anna)

> I do think that certain aspects of the Catholic Church's teaching are out of sync and out of kilter with society today and the needs of society today. I think that the sooner the Catholic Church acknowledges that and embraces it, the better it'll be for everybody and for the Church. I think it was a stumbling block ten years ago; now it's becoming a barrier.   (Henry)

A few principals, in the creative, cultural and disenchanted groups, think it is problematic for principals and teachers in Catholic schools to declare their lack of faith. Anna thinks teachers cannot express sentiments that oppose the Church's moral teachings, especially in regard to gender and sexuality.

> So, in society as a whole, it's getting easier to be a person of no religion but I think the schools, teachers, principals, we've a long way to go to catch up with

> that… I have Pope Francis up there and I used to have a lovely picture of him actually with a dove. Pope Francis, I suppose he's probably the most positive pope we've had, I think, since I've been born. But I suppose there's still things he said in relation to homosexuality and that still upsets them. It's not treating people as equals. I don't think Jesus would have been like that. (Anna)

The principals all mentioned the Church scandals that seem to have had an enormous negative impact on their faith: these events are a cause of deep embarrassment, shame and hurt and made them question their participation in the Church. Five of the principals who do not attend Mass regularly talked about their journey away from Mass attendance.

> I think I was probably a teenager to early twenties when my mum stopped going to Mass herself when all the scandals about the [pause] Magdalene laundries came out. My mum had me outside of marriage and she probably would have known people in that situation who had to go in there. She herself didn't have to go, but my granddad wanted her to go in and my nanny stood up and said it wasn't happening. So, I suppose when my mum lost faith in the Church, I would have gone along with her. I would have understood why. So, the Church, for me, for a good number of years served a purpose. And now it doesn't really have to serve that purpose anymore. (Anna)

> I had a kind of falling away I suppose from it, particularly with the scandals and everything like that. (Brian)

> I think all the cover-ups and all the scandals and all those things have really damaged the Church. (Marie Therese)

There seems to be complex reasons for their detachment from the institutional Church; their experiences were different but the outcome was the same as they have decided not to attend regularly. Deirdre talked about going to Australia and experiencing a different culture where "God was never mentioned" and she "gradually" lost her faith. Ciara seems to be reluctant to go down the same path as her aunts, a "born-again Christian" and "a fundamental Catholic". Aisling experienced "an awful time" of bullying by the chairperson who was a priest. Josephine said, "various things happened with the Church, on a personal level and then at a more national, international level." Regardless of their beliefs or frequency at attending Mass, the principals continue to contribute to the Church by working in CPSs.

6.4. Theme 4: Principalship as a Vocation and a Profession

"It depends on what you think vocation is." (Josephine)

6.4.1. Motivation to apply for principalship

At the root of this cohort's motivation to apply for the job of principal were both personal and professional factors. The reasons ranged from career progression to a desire to

maintain and develop the school culture. No principal referred to the word 'vocation' when discussing the reasons for applying for the job. However, Helen recounted that she prayed to God at that time and asked for His will for her and the school. Twelve principals were external appointments and six were internal appointments. Internally appointed principals indicated their fear of what changes an externally appointed principal might have brought.

> I was a teaching principal at 30. I was very ambitious. But I was motivated not by money or status, but by the passion that I have for education, the passion I have for children. Then I moved schools and after a few years here I became assistant principal and then deputy. I didn't jump any queue. I had worked tirelessly and very hard to build the confidence of the staff in terms of our journey with special education and wellbeing. Principalship seemed a natural progression. I knew in my heart and soul I could do the job. (Órla)

> Becoming a principal was never an aim. Years ago, it might have been. But then when our previous principal announced her retirement, that's when I thought about it but I didn't know. So, I said a prayer, funnily enough given your topic. I said, "If it's meant to be and if I'd be good at the job and good for the school, then give it to me. And if not, fair enough." That was how it came about. Then once I applied for it though it became a competition and I wanted it.
> (Helen)

Some principals also seem to have had a career plan and acquired educational postgraduate qualifications prior to appointment.

> I really enjoyed the Master's and absolutely found it fascinating. It gave me for the first time an insight into the world of management. Then the job came up here, and I thought, "Well, why am I doing all this extra study if I'm not willing to put it into practice?" (Henry)

> I found it helpful to think and to look at models of leadership and just to get time to read outside of the everyday. It gave me time to reflect and to think and to meet with other people who were in different scenarios and different schools.
> (Josephine)

Even with prior knowledge about the role, the principals seem to embrace the challenges and perceive them as part of the job while also acknowledging their lack of foresight:

> I applied in a moment of lunacy. (Josephine)

> Be careful what you wish for. (Eimear)

> It was an awful shock. (Ciara)

> I really don't know what could prepare you for it other than doing it. (Anna)

Many of the principals also talked about family members who are also teachers and principals. Only Noel spoke about financial remuneration as a motivating factor. He

applied to be a principal of a medium sized school and later moved to a larger school because of increased remuneration and because of conflict.

> I had four kids and my wife is also a teacher and had taken a career break. We couldn't get by. I couldn't bring them on holidays, I couldn't straighten their teeth, I couldn't change the car, and our pay was rubbish. (Noel)

> I was teaching initially and when you are in that career you look at the next step. So, the opportunity came along to become a principal and I took it and then a further opportunity came along to become a principal of a bigger school and this is where I am now, so eight years as a principal. (Kevin)

> The family business is education. Two aunts and my mother were all teachers and principals. I have various cousins in different forms of education. So, it was part of where I came from. (Josephine)

Some female principals talked about gender discrimination with regard to appointments, career progression and relationships with BoM chairpersons. Órla related that she was re-interviewed for the job because of discrimination and a flawed selection process. Other female principals told different stories.

> I went for three big schools myself and I was a lot more qualified and they all went to males. There are a few schools around where male principals have literally stayed for about two years and moved on to larger schools. It doesn't matter what qualifications you have or how dynamic you are; at the end of the day, it's a boy's club. (Aisling)

> My chairperson is male and I think he feels I should consider myself lucky that I got the job. Certainly, there would be comments that I would find discriminatory but they're very kind of discreet, they're very subtle. So, it's very hard to call someone out on it. But it's there. (Anna)

Previous leadership experience also seems to be part of the impetus to apply for principalship. Three female principals had previously been DPs and were later appointed as principals. One trend is that some principals moved from smaller schools to larger schools. Another trend is that external appointments were mostly male candidates while internal appointments were mostly female (Appendix H: Analysis of Gender Differences). There also seems to be a gender difference regarding their motivation to apply for principalship: the overall male mentality hinges on career progression while the five internally appointed female candidates expressed their interest in continuing the school culture (Appendix H: Analysis of Gender Differences). Regardless of their motivation to apply for principalship, as incumbent principals they all talked about working to make a difference in the lives of children. However, no principal associated their motivation to apply for the job as a response to a call from God.

6.4.2. *Principalship as a vocation*

There were diverse responses among the cohort about whether principalship is a vocation: eight principals consider it a vocation; seven debated the possibility of it being both a vocation and a profession; and three stated that it is solely a profession. Some of the principals think that teaching and principalship in any type of school is a vocation and that some people are more suited to the job than others. There seems to be ambiguity about the meaning of the word 'vocation' as it invoked various connotations. The principals associated it with: doing work for little or no pay; extra time at work; suitability to the profession; difficult work; a permanent obligation; and self-sacrifice. When I suggested that the word 'vocation' can also be considered a call from God, some principals told stories about their decisions to become teachers, of changing schools and of becoming principals. Some discussed the possibility that these events could be linked to a call by God.

> I am going to tell you something which sounds mad. When I got the email for the interview, we were climbing Croagh Patrick that day, and I said, "If I can climb Croagh Patrick, I can do anything. I can go and I can ace that interview." When I went to do the interview, I couldn't get out of the car. I just found myself just kind of stuck in the car. And I said to my mum, who had died at this point, I said, "If this is meant for me, get me out of the car, get me into the room. I'll do the rest of it. I'll do the interview, but I can't move." Now, I felt something beyond myself got me into that room, do you know? So, whether that makes it a vocation, that it was meant for me, and that it's a call from God or that's the path God wants me to be on, I don't know. I could, in a small way, believe that. But to me, when you say vocation, people have this idea of martyrs and do-gooders. At the end of the day, I'm being paid for the job I do, and I have free choice. I can leave.
> (Anna)

> But when we were in St. Pat's years ago, definitely it would have been, "You got the call to Pats." It was a call to teaching.   (Vincent)

> It depends on what you think a vocation is. So, if it's a strong feeling of suitability, yes, I think I'm suited to this job. I think this is the best job that I've had. I don't think it was a calling from God. Well, maybe it was because I'm sure He can call in mysterious ways if He's there. I fell into teaching. I mean, the last thing I wanted to be was a teacher. I deferred my place in university for the year and I went to Carysfort. I didn't like it; it was like I had gone back into boarding school again, but I stayed there.   (Josephine)

Eoghan perceives it as a profession but conceded that it has a vocational element.

> I worry sometimes that there are attempts by certain elements within the State to undermine teaching. When we had our economic crash, the private sector organisations went to town on the public sector. It was all about money. But in doing so, there was a significant undermining of the status of public servants. So, I'm quite fussy about it being a professional job. Having said that, you have to have a vocational element to it. I get student teachers over the years who have

169

come in here and I say in my head, "Yep, you're a teacher." You can spot them a mile off. But I've also had students coming in here and they're not teachers.

<div align="right">(Eoghan)</div>

Previously in the interviews they had all expressed concern about the demanding workload, poor remuneration, the time spent at work and the toll on their wellbeing. Their interpretation of principalship as a vocation and a profession seems to be coloured by those experiences.

6.4.3. Principalship as a profession

The principals have all engaged in professional development for their leadership role. Despite the time and financial commitment involved, twelve of the principals have postgraduate qualifications. Half of the principals have a Master's qualification: five in educational leadership and management; and four females have Master's degrees in other areas of education such as SEN, technology, music, and educational disadvantage; and Vincent has two Master's degrees, one in business leadership and the other in Christian Leadership in Education. Three principals, Noel, Eoghan and Helen, are qualified to Doctoral level (Appendix G Analysis of Participants' Profiles). Significantly, six principals have no postgraduate qualifications.

> The Ed.D. [Education Doctorate] was very useful because leadership and vision don't happen by accident. You have to know what you want, and you have to work steadily and slowly and incrementally to achieving the kind of relationship with a staff that you want. And if you want to generate a sense of trust, a sense of shared vision, a sense of collective purpose, you have to work very purposely towards that.   (Noel)

The principals all attend one-day seminars organised by the INTO and the IPPN. Almost all attended longer term courses run by the PDST and CSL: two attended *Tóraíocht* prior to appointment; fourteen attended *Misneach* as newly appointed principals; others had undertaken or applied for *Forbairt* with their DPs; and one principal is involved in *Meitheal* (Appendix G Analysis of Participants' Profiles). They confirmed that the courses were very informative and provided opportunities to network with other principals.

> I go to every principal seminar that's around because I find you're always garnering something from other principals or from some speaker. I attend *Meitheal* meetings in the education centre one afternoon every two months. It's a totally confidential forum. We have an IPPN briefing day every September in Citywest. I find that excellent. There are a number of days with the PDST, one last month and another in May, to have a look at your school, look at your policies, look at your ethos, look at your vision. I find those days great.
>
> <div align="right">(Deirdre)</div>

> So, there's a Master's online that I've applied for. Now, I've four young children
> at the moment, and a wife working full time. So, there's that to balance with it.
> So, I'm not sure if I'll be starting it this year. But it's on my radar purely because
> I want to show the staff that self-development is important.   (Donal)

Most of the principals are also involved with the CSL: James and Aidan act as coaches and mentors to newly appointed principals; and Helen and Ciara are newly appointed principals who have been assigned mentors. Other principals volunteer with the INTO: Eimear, a very experienced principal, works as a mediator in school disputes and Aisling co-ordinates a substitute teacher list in her union branch. However, learning on the job, reflective practice, seeking advice, and past experience as DP or AP all contribute to the principals' learning.

> I kind of learned on the job as I went along. I had good support. I kind of relied
> on my old principal. If I needed anything, we would pick up the phone or I'd talk
> to him or that.   (Kevin)

> We are naturally reflective practitioners. I have a reflective diary at home, so I
> will evaluate my day. You're all the time looking to see, "How can I change the
> structure of what we're currently doing? Is there anything we can do better?"
>   (Órla)

6.5.   Theme 5: Faith and Principalship

"It's not like, 'Oh, let's see how Jesus would see it.' But I just think that being fair to people comes from my faith." (Anna)

6.5.1. Everyday experiences

The principals in this cohort fall into two distinct categories, teaching principals and administrative principals, and the everyday experiences of both groups are very different. Of the three teaching principals: Aisling and Henry are class teachers and Brian is a Special Education Teacher (SET). Their main duties are firstly teaching and secondly administration. They carry out their principalship responsibilities: before school hours; at lunch-time; after school hours; and they have between nineteen and thirty administration days during the school year depending on the size of the school. There is a general feeling of dissatisfaction among the three teaching principals as they try to fulfill both roles to an adequate level. Five others, who were previously teaching principals and later became administrative principals, agree with the sentiment that teaching principalship is too onerous.

> It's very difficult to keep on top of everything, keeping on top of admin, things
> that come from the department and trying to get them back in time, and yet still

effectively deal with your class. Today's the first day of the Easter holidays and I actually spent the morning in school catching up on paperwork and tidying up.

(Aisling)

My job spec was principal, deputy principal, secretary, part-time caretaker, and fifth and sixth class teacher. I ran every sports team in the place. It was a rollercoaster. But I think the real thing with being a teaching principal is you can end up doing too much. It's very much like spinning plates, something's going to fall at some point and I did. After that I decided to teach in learning support and it just gives me that little bit more time.

(Brian)

So, you can't really do the two jobs. Now as admin I still do all the same paperwork but I have all day to do it in the office.

(Aidan)

All of the administrative principals, neophytes and veterans, reported the busyness of their schedules. Some described their day-to-day experiences as being "steamrolled" (Helen), "utter insanity" (Ciara), and "fire brigading" (Deirdre). Most seem to have developed their own routines that mainly include: arriving at school early; dealing with emails and post; meeting and greeting staff, parents and pupils at the start of the day; visiting various classrooms; leading school assemblies; teaching or supervising classes; supervising yard; staying after school hours for staff meetings and administration; and returning to school some evenings for BoM meetings or parent evenings. However, these routines were also broken by the "unknown" (Donal), the "unexpected" (Deirdre), and "constant interruptions" (Helen). Unexpected events include: issues related to discipline and staff relations; meetings with parents; phone calls; administration related to child protection guidelines; extra-curricular activities; and care-taking duties. Administrative principals seem to spend more time on leadership and management duties than the teaching principals. Their leadership role includes: developing and managing relationships; communicating and meeting with staff, parents, pupils and outside agencies; and being involved with curricular and extra-curricular learning activities. Their management role includes: administration; employment and promotion of staff; school building maintenance and care-taking duties; policy development and planning; contacting outside agencies; and dealing with compliance issues. Even though leading teaching and learning is their main responsibility, the principals all said a plethora of other duties supersede it.

I mean, when you say to me, "your ordinary everyday experience," there is no day that is the same as the previous day. The only thing that I can anticipate is something is going to come up that I haven't anticipated. I have an agenda every day and every evening I prepare one for the next day. I rarely get more than two or three items done, so I transfer it to the next day. I would love to say that I lead teaching and learning but very often I'm involved in other duties.

(Deirdre)

172

However, experience in the role seems to enable principals to cope more effectively with their work. Most of them described the initial years of principalship as very difficult, the steep learning curve of the first few years, and then gradually learning to have a work-life balance. Henry, who undertook the *Tóraíocht* course and a Master's degree in educational leadership, described his panic in his first few weeks about completing the Online Claims System (OLCS), redrafting policies after BoM meetings and basic management issues.

> I lost two nights sleep thinking, "There's no oil. I've got to initiate the Critical Incident Policy here. I've got to notify my board of management that I won't be opening the school on Monday morning. I'm here six weeks and I've already messed up." I actually looked to see if there was any chance I could reverse the decision to go back to teaching. And now I look at it, I know where the gauge is and I won't break a stride about it. Since then I've told teachers to turn down the thermostats and if we run out of oil, the children just have to put on their coats until the delivery gets here. (Henry)

Like other neophytes, he learned to seek advice from his previous principal, the school secretary, his mentor from the *Misneach* programme and a network of local principals. Contrastingly, Noel, who is near retirement and has twenty years of experience as principal, believes principals complain too much about their workload and that they need to exercise their autonomy.

> You don't take it on and then moan about it. A big school demands a certain amount of paperwork, and it involves keeping on top of it. A lot of people make work for themselves; they don't control their own freewill and they become puppets of the State. I haven't. I feel a certain amount of freewill and I exercise it. I don't believe in being a public servant in an office. (Noel)

6.5.2. Challenges and conflict

Despite the positivity conveyed about principalship, the principals also discussed a myriad of major and minor challenges they face on an everyday basis. The major challenges fell into three main categories: compliance with DES directives; time and resources for children with SEN; and school buildings and maintenance. There was a general consensus among the cohort that they are overloaded with administrative duties and compliance issues. They believe the DES lacks a cohesive plan for introducing new initiatives and educational changes. The DES directs legislative changes through circulars but the principals reported the DES does not provide training or support to implement school policies and they rely on other bodies such as the CPSMA, the IPPN and the INTO to guide them. In particular, they discussed administration duties related to recent changes such as the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and child

protection guidelines.

> The responsibility can be a bit daunting sometimes. And the classic example of that is the current move on the child safeguarding inspections. Ok, the workload is a pain but the real frustrating bit and the challenging bit is that it's nothing to do with keeping children safe and it's everything to do with protecting the department so they won't get sued like in the O'Keefe case.   (Vincent)

> Well, the number of directives from the department, the number of circulars and all the changes are challenging. We've just rewritten a plan or a policy and it has to be written again. And in fact, the department are the ones requiring us to do the GDPR and child protection policies. They should give us training, give us facilitators, give us support rather than saying, "And do literacy and numeracy, and do and do and do."   (Gráinne)

The principals all welcome the integration of children with SEN into mainstream classes and special units and they strive to have an inclusive ethos. However, they also discussed the implications of integration as they spend extra time: managing special units and dealing with children who have social and emotional issues; meeting with parents about assessments and progression; precuring resources; and ensuring staff are trained to support children with SEN.

> That is one of the most time-consuming areas that I've dealt with in recent years. So, you could easily say that out of a school of 240 children, I would have maybe 6 children who would be diagnosed as having very specific special education needs and a significant number of those are very serious. There are times in the year when addressing those needs will take up 60% or 70% of my time on a daily basis.   (Eoghan)

> Everything states, 'Refer to your NEPS psychologist' but we don't have NEPS here. We took 20 international refugees, and they arrived here, and there was absolutely nothing for them. There wasn't an extra penny. I was sent from department to department. Eventually, we got 12 and a half hours EAL [English as an Additional Language] for them, which is not enough.   (Marie Therese)

A common problem that principals highlighted is the voluntary nature of the BoM and the lack of expertise within boards to manage schools. This has led to a situation where the principals take on extra responsibilities such as maintaining school buildings and acting as project managers for new school buildings and extensions.

> So, basically with the new building, I became project manager of that building company. Now I am lucky that the chairperson is an accountant but, all the paperwork was done between myself and himself. He's been tremendous but the board really overall does not function as an entity. I think a lot of boards are like that, where you're looking for volunteers, they're grand, they're happy to come to a meeting or two but they do not actually get actively involved.   (Brian)

> In areas like this, nobody wants to be on a board. And when something goes belly up, as happened with the summer works programme when the roof was leaking,

all the people who dealt with the project were retired. So, it falls on the principal and the new volunteer chairperson, who's a layperson from the parish, to pick up the pieces. But there's still a reliance on the individual man or woman who functions at the center of everything. And at the beginning, I think that's what makes your job so hard, in that you simply don't know.   (Noel)

The principals all find dealing with conflict in school difficult. At the root of conflict with parents seems to be parents' bias for their own children. Some principals also discussed parents of children with SEN who sometimes have unrealistic expectations and demands that cannot be addressed by the school.

So, I would find the most challenging parents are parents of children in the ASD [Autistic Spectrum Disorder] classes. Some parents are probably at a denial stage or may be unwilling, or they just don't have that awareness that we have. You're trying to bring people on a journey and it can go either way. Some people can come on board straight away with you, and other people just will become absolutely defensive and feel you're taking issue with their parenting. And that can go on for the entire time their children are here.   (Anna)

In general, the principals think parents appreciate the work done by schools. They talked about parents as the children's primary educators, welcoming them, parental involvement through the Parents' Association, having an 'open-door' policy, and inviting parents to talk about concerns. Some of the principals know the parents very well as they have built up "social capital" (Noel) over many years, by living in the community or having taught parents. They deemed communication with parents as the key to successful relationships and principals do this through face-to-face meetings, newsletters, and parent information evenings. While on the school premises, the principals expect parents to act with respect and dignity. However, there seems to be a difference in how male and female principals approach conflict situations. They all reported that when meeting with parents about a concern, they listen carefully, try to solve the problem and deal with the issue. During these meetings, some of the female principals reported that they try to manage their own emotions and have empathy. If there is a complaint about a teacher, they usually deal with this informally and speak to the teacher about the matter. Contrastingly, some male principals described incidents that verged on confrontation.

I will always try and deal with it as quickly as possible so it's not festering. So, I will let them sit down and listen to their side of the story, and then I will listen carefully, paraphrase what they're saying to me so they're getting it back. I'll take notes as I'm going, and then I will tell my side of it. And then I will usually try to come to a compromise so we both feel that we have achieved something. It's very hard to let somebody walk out the door and feel that they have lost.
                                                                                   (Josephine)

If they refuse to be reasonable and somebody is just being completely belligerent

and not listening to a word you're saying, you say "Right, there's the door. Come
back to me when you have a cool head."   (Vincent)

When push comes to shove, we need somebody to hold the line. When a parent
comes in shouting, I take the lead. You can nearly physically see my body
language change. One time a parent came in shouting, really annoyed by the
level of support that a child with SEN was getting. I was taken aback and the
teachers were absolutely flabbergasted. It was just instinctive. I told the others,
"Step back behind me now. When this lad comes in here, I'll deal with this." That
was how I reacted to the situation.   (Henry)

The principals all seem to place a high priority on staff relationships. They talked about:

knowing the staff; getting staff consensus about decisions; listening, communicating,

being open, honest and fair; empowering staff with knowledge; and supporting staff in

times of personal crisis.

In general, there's a lovely atmosphere, everybody gets on really well, it's positive
and we work very hard on that. We've put a lot of work and energy and money
and time into trying to keep staff relations as positive as possible. Every three
weeks, they just get pizza unexpectedly and bring goodies in once a month on a
Croke Park day.   (Ciara)

Class allocations and promotions seem to be causes of conflict with staff. Brian described

how staff conflict ensued when he made a change to the staff allocation in order to resolve

an issue mid-year. As a consequence, he was 'sent to Coventry' by staff members for

three years. The principals all reported other incidents of staff conflict.

When I told one teacher about a class move, there was a massive conflict, to say
the least. I mean, we had tables banged, and shouts at me, and tears. The lot. I
explained my rationale behind my decision. I had said that I'm not going to
change my mind. I had a few people speak on behalf of the teacher and said that
I was making a mistake. And I'd even gotten certain things that I thought were
maybe of a personal nature.   (Henry)

Since I've been here five years, I've had a new deputy principalship, five AP ones,
and three AP twos to appoint at certain points. So, there's been lots of senior
members of staff that I would've worked with who were unsuccessful. I'm a firm
believer in the best candidate gets the position. Now, most people have been very
professional. But I can understand people being a bit disappointed and angry
initially.   (Donal)

The principals described their relationships with staff as professional rather than personal.

In the case of internally appointed principals, who had previously been friends with

colleagues, they now experienced a sense of loneliness and isolation because of their

decision-making responsibilities as principals.

I don't socialise with staff. Before this, I had a lot of friends on the staff, I used
to go on all the Erasmus trips and I used to do all the travelling with the girls on
midterm breaks as well. I've had to step back from all of that, but I did that very

> willingly, and I think one has to look inwards and become very resourceful in oneself. I hope they all consider me a really good colleague.   (Órla)

> I'd keep a little bit of distance. They don't want to be my friend. You know, they have their friends. They want my support and they want to feel that if they work hard it's recognised.   (Vincent)

Almost all of the principals talked about their positive relationships with their DPs and there seems to be a sense of shared leadership when DPs act as a source of support and advice. However, Brian described the breakdown of that relationship, the effects of which were both personal and professional. In order to cope, he started to read the Bible, to practise meditation and the priest acted as a friend and confidant.

> I would get a lot of advice really from my deputy principal, just talking to her about the situation and between the two of us, thinking what would be the best way to handle this. She's kind of like the Yin to my Yang. I'd be more emotional and she's very kind of common sense.   (Anna)

> If you haven't got your deputy buying in, it's very difficult to ask other people who aren't being paid to do work too. Despite bringing them on courses and trying the best efforts to awaken them, they just weren't interested. So unfortunately, sometimes you have to wait until people retire.   (Brian)

Most principals spoke about very positive professional relationships with chairpersons of BoM. However, four females and one male principal had negative experiences with chairpersons. Órla's experience of being re-interviewed for the position caused her extreme distress. Aisling considers she is being bullied by the chairperson; and Anna believes the male chairperson makes discriminatory sexist comments. Noel's experience of conflict with a chairperson was a key factor in his decision to apply for a job in another school.

The principals know about the importance of fostering relationships and building a community spirit so that teaching, learning, management and leadership are optimised. However, what is not evident from the data is how principals themselves contribute to interpersonal strife and a negative school climate. Some of the principals confessed to: handling conflict badly; apologising for their part in disputes; thinking about how they may have hurt others; and dealing with staff abruptly. Thus, it seems that the human side of the principal can often be forgotten.

> I don't really feel that the principal can ever have an off day or even an off moment. So, I find there's very little patience and understanding of the principal as a human being.   (Anna)

6.5.3. *Leadership styles*

Faith also influences the principals' leadership styles. During the interviews, the principals emphasized various aspects of their principalship. They are grouped into six main categories based on the educational leadership styles within the literature review and an analysis of the data: distributive and shared (1), authentic (3), ethical (1), moral (6), servant (3), spiritual (1) and contemplative (3). However, I am aware that the theoretical models are fluid, many attributes are common to various styles, and the principals' espoused leadership styles may be different from their operant styles.

When asked about their leadership styles, the principals talked mostly about using a democratic approach. They described the importance of developing a school culture based on positive relationships, democratic decision-making and collaboration. While they aim to be democratic, they sometimes use an autocratic style in special circumstances, such as when no consensus can be reached or when the principal has sole responsibility for a particular decision or duty. Deirdre pointed out that she uses many leadership styles and she also perceives herself as *primus inter pares*. Conversely, Vincent points out the necessity of having a leader.

> I'm a conglomerate of a load of different styles, and it depends on what I'm managing, to be honest. And I can't put myself into a little box. I believe in the maxim: if you share your knowledge, you share your power. I see myself as part of a team. I don't see myself as the boss. (Deirdre)

> They talk about distributed leadership and it is important. But people still like to see who's in charge, for a couple of reasons. When there's nobody in charge the place falls apart. I have seen that. Who's the one person leading this? It gives them comfort that, he or she is there to steer us back into calm waters. They don't have ultimate responsibility, the leader does. That's why you get paid the big bucks. (Vincent)

The principals reported that they try to distribute leadership with the ISM team that consists of the DP and APs, and with other teachers who volunteer to lead different initiatives. Josephine specifically talked about adopting a distributive leadership style and consciously forgoes control in order to allow others to be leaders.

> We have all these other initiatives that are dealt with by class teachers who have taken something on, whether athletics, football, Green School, the Young Entrepreneur. But I must say, people here generally work very well together and are good at taking things on but then I have to relinquish control as well. (Josephine)

However, individual principals recounted difficulties with distributive leadership: Noel thinks it is a government driven leadership model aimed at driving school outcomes and

that it relies heavily on the goodwill of teacher volunteers and overburdened DPs and APs; and Aisling believes it is impossible to implement in small schools.

> I've just a deputy. Well, I actually advertised for an AP II post, and the other two didn't go for it. So that was the end of that. (Aisling)

The rhetoric of the three principals in the authentic group centred on the importance of identity and integrity. They engage in activities that show their authentic selves: Aidan explained that it is important for the children to see him play football with the local club and they perceive him as "human"; Henry trains the school hurling team before and after school; and Gráinne conducts the school choir.

> I train an afterschool team, so they see me. I'm still playing sports locally, so they might see me playing soccer or at the local hurling field. So, they know that I'm human and that I don't live in the school and sure this is me. So, I think the children see me as approachable. (Aidan)

Aisling seems to adopt an ethical leadership style: she talked about learning from Jesus' parables and is aware that her faith is a source of her moral behaviour. During the interview, she retold the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt 10: 1-16). She believes the parable helped her deal with a parent of a child with SEN who complained that the class did not get sufficient learning support time. In this instance, she interpreted her role as the vineyard owner who manages time and resources within the school.

> I was like, "That's the Workers in the Vineyard. Now, be happy with what you have. Don't be always looking at others. The reason your son didn't get extra help is he doesn't need it." (Aisling)

Many of the principals seem to demonstrate elements of moral leadership and associate their faith with moral values such as honesty, forgiveness and compassion. When asked how faith influences their leadership: Eimear said, "I don't lie, I don't embezzle money"; Kevin stated, "I don't use bad language, I don't fight with anyone"; and Donal disclosed that his faith inspires him, "to forgive staff if they are being unfair and not to seek revenge on them by sticking them into Junior Infants [laughter]." Each principal seems to be programmed to abide by the Golden Rule, to treat others as they would like to be treated. While faith inspires most of the principals to live by the Golden Rule, Deirdre perceives it as a humanist precept and is motivated by her "strong moral compass".

> Through your actions in your daily living, you love your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind because you're doing the things He wished you to do, which for me is looking after other people. I think it's infused into me. (Helen)

179

> I don't see the Golden Rule as distinctive for a Catholic school. That, to me, is a kind and respectful school. I worked in an international school and we had the exact same rule. So, I don't see that as being anything different. It's a moral compass. It has nothing to do with Catholicism. (Deirdre)

All three principals in the servant leadership group believe in God and talked about serving the children and the school community: Vincent talked specifically about serving the children, many who are children of immigrants; and Ciara and Noel work in DEIS schools in socio-economically deprived areas.

> It would be a bit like your own kids at home sure. I see my role is to serve them. And you know I would always make the point to the teachers that the school is here for the kids, it's not here for the teachers and there's great enjoyment in that. (Vincent)

> The demand on us as a Catholic school in a DEIS area is that we would provide what's needed for the body of stakeholders at the school. We're simply here to fulfill that duty. In a disadvantaged area and most of the time, it doesn't really matter whether we're a Catholic school or not. That's our mission, that's our role, that's our function. But we are a school with a Catholic ethos. I'm very conscious of it. Personally, it's a thing that's very important to me. (Noel)

Anna seems to mostly adopt a spiritual leadership style and 'brings her soul to work': she is in the creative religious group and has developed a deep spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ and stated that He influences her leadership style.

> It's not like, "Oh, let's see how Jesus would see it." But I just think that being fair to people comes from my faith. So, for example, if my caretaker came and asked me for a day off, it would be no different than my deputy. That's my idea of Jesus, something about him I would've liked. (Anna)

A few principals in the orthodox religious group also ask God to help them with major decisions in school and talked about taking time to consider, to pray, and to come to a decision, as if they were considering those decisions with God. These principals seem to be able to discern God's presence in the midst of a situation and contemplate with Him. Helen, Órla and Marie Therese, are in the contemplative group as they pray about decisions and talked about 'leaving things in the hands of God.'

> Everything I do, any decision I make, is for the good of everyone, not for me personally. And sometimes I have to make decisions that don't suit everyone, but it's for the good of everyone. My faith definitely influences that there because I try to see the good in everyone and to bring out the good in everyone else. (Marie Therese)

> I would've spent two whole weeks debating a staff move, the pros and cons, weighing it up, the impact, the ripple effect on everybody else, and, thinking, "What message am I sending out?" So, if one doesn't have an inner faith, I don't know what one is going to rely on because you won't be relying on these cryptic

circulars and policies.   (Órla)

When asked about their role models of leadership, the principals talked mostly about previous principals who they described as supportive, hard-working, affirmative, appreciative, encouraging, kind, compassionate and respectful. In some cases, their role models were religious nuns, brothers and priests while others were lay principals. This cohort of principals seem to wish to emulate the positive aspects of their role models. However, they are also aware of the negative aspects of their role models' leadership, such as an inability to balance managing the organisation with building positive relationships.

> My previous principal took on a very difficult situation. I wouldn't have agreed with everything that she did but neither would she agree with everything I would do now. We're still in close contact and she's still a good guiding hand.
> (Brian)

> So, there are many people but mainly principals that I've worked with and even teachers who weren't principals that had great leadership qualities themselves. You don't have to be a principal to be a leader in a school.   (Donal)

Previous principals also seem to act as a source of advice and support for this cohort especially when they were first appointed to the role. They also mentioned other role models in their lives such as family members, sports coaches, political leaders, and other professionals. They all talked about being open, approachable, acting as role models, and not asking teachers to do something they would not do themselves.

Faith seems to lead most of the principals to think, feel and act in certain ways and help them cope with adversity. When asked how faith influences their leadership, Noel recounted a visit to a Marian pilgrimage site where the villagers used a statue of Our Lady to protect them against oncoming invaders. He said: "I like that story, it's all me". He inferred the villagers' experience was like his experience of conflict with a former chairperson and he wears a Marian medal for protection. Brian reads the Bible and practises meditation because of his experience of conflict in school. Helen said she is compassionate as her faith is "infused" into her.   Anna said "it keeps me grounded" and that she goes on retreat to be able for the job. Marie Therese stated "I'm not controlling from the top" because of her faith; and Henry admitted "it helps me deal with setbacks" and "I definitely know it's there punctuating the day."

> The more time I give to my faith and the more consideration I give to the spiritual side of my life, the more discernment I have in my job. It helps me be a better principal without a shadow of doubt.   (Vincent)

I try to be compassionate, which is not always easy and it can be tiring, but everyone is different and everybody sees the world differently, and everybody has different things going on in their lives. You have to take those things into account and just be a shoulder for people when they need it.   (Helen)

6.6.   Theme 6: Faith and Developing the Catholic Ethos

"Whatever hope we have of trying to keep the faith, if it goes out of schools, then it's gone forever." (Marie Therese)

6.6.1. Creating a distinctive Catholic culture

The interviews were all held in the principals' offices and many of the schools were on the same site as parish churches. All of the schools had a sacred space in the reception area. On display in most of their offices were distinctive Catholic signs and symbols such as pictures of Pope Francis, statues, crucifixes, St. Bridget's crosses. The principals have all spent most of their teaching careers in CPSs and some hesitated when asked about the distinctiveness of Catholic schools.

> I've nothing to compare it to. The primary school and all my schools were Catholic so I don't see a difference in being the principal of a Catholic school or being the principal of a school.   (Helen)

They described the visible aspects of their schools such as the proximity and links to the parish church, sacred spaces, crucifixes, the RE curriculum and prayer. They all oversee various religious activities during the school year such as the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation and liturgical events such as Christmas, Easter and other holy days. All of them lead school assemblies with prayers and most arrange school Masses during the year. Two male principals went to remarkable efforts to have visible Catholic symbols in the school: Brian had a large family-owned statue of Jesus restored and painted for the school foyer; and Vincent had a stone cross displayed at the front of the school. Conversely, Deirdre and Josephine, who are agnostic, had no Catholic symbols in their offices. Ciara, who has doubts about Jesus as the Son of God, said she displays a cross in her office because the chairperson of the BOM asked her to do so.

Some talked about the invisible Catholic ethos that permeates the school day and manifests in how people treat each other and others talked about Gospel values. Brian initiated restorative practice for children in his school because of his faith.

> We've got the crucifixes in every classroom and we've got our sacred space and all that. But I think you can have all of them, they could be window dressing. It's

182

how you exhibit it. I was dealing with a bullying issue today, and it was about trying to restore the relationship back to how it was at the start, restorative practice. I think that's one of the key things that we learn from Jesus is to treat people the way you would like to be treated and do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I think that's the way I try to run the school. I think they're all the Christian values that you want children to learn.   (Brian)

You only have to look 50 yards, turn your head to the left, and you'll get a very visual reminder [the church]. It's not just the half an hour of religious education. It's showing the Gospel values in the school and the ethos permeates the day.
(Henry)

Number one, is all those things that we do are underpinned by Gospel values. That is the rudder that steers the ship here.   (Vincent)

When describing the Catholic ethos, some principals identified Jesus as their role model of how to treat others and they stated that the school promotes Gospel values of caring, kindness, forgiveness, compassion and inclusion. However, some principals did not mention Jesus Christ as the source of those values and Ciara expressed hope that all schools exemplify these values.

I would just hope that all schools are inclusive and caring and kind, and it would greatly disappoint me to think of any school, Catholic or non-Catholic, that are not those things. I just think our children are far better behaved and they're far more respectful and far less millennial.   (Ciara)

The principals are aware they are carrying on a tradition. A few stated that Catholic schools are recognised as a world-renowned service that provide good quality education. Others talked respectfully about the Catholic Church's contribution to education, that it had bought sites to establish schools and had invested in school buildings. They think most parents want their children to attend Catholic schools because of tradition and culture. Parents in three of the schools were surveyed about a change of patron and these principals reported that more than 90% of parents in each area voted for the schools to remain under Catholic patronage.

Catholic schools have a standard of excellence throughout the world, as well as care for the student, strong academic skills and equally the opportunity to develop as a whole person, either with music and sport and various things. Those are always well done in Catholic schools, so there's great richness in it. They are recognized worldwide as having a great sense of self-discipline that they instil in the children and you know we're here to work together, and we're doing this for a greater good. It's not just for me, but for my community.   (Gráinne)

There's a strong tradition in Catholic schools around education, valuing a structured education. It has been there for hundreds of years. I actually believe that it works. They keep tweaking with the curriculum, but I think it's good to learn the tables off-by-heart, to stand up and say it in front of the crowd.
(Vincent)

> It's continuing on a tradition, a culture, that's part of what most of the parents would have come from or their grannies and granddads. It's part of who we are. It's our culture. It's spiritual. They see Jesus as a role model for them. I think that's part of what makes us different from the ETBs or the Educate Togethers.
>
> (Josephine)

Even though they think CPSs are distinctive, a few principals reported that the schools have adapted to accommodate a more diverse population, are inclusive and welcome children of all faiths and none. They stated that non-Catholic parents often choose to send their children to a CPS even where there is a multidenominational school in the area.

> I think we have had to evolve over the years. We welcome diversity and have broadened the ethos somewhat to make sure that we're fully inclusive.
>
> (Órla)

> We have a lot of diversity within our pupil intake here. I think it's always difficult to find the balance between being proud of being a Catholic school and not leaving somebody out or making them feel that they're different. Even though there are other school types in this area, children who are not Catholic come here and I think this is still their first choice. (Anna)

> Even for the sacraments, they're quite happy, here in the parish, for other children who don't have faith to come to the church on the day to celebrate with the children, which is nice. I think the inclusivity of it is the biggest thing for me.
>
> (Eimear)

In addition, Brian and Eimear believe Catholic schools have a distinctive spirituality. Ciara, Gráinne and Vincent think children are more respectful and disciplined in Catholic schools than in other school types because of a well-established tradition of teaching and learning. Eimear tends to the school garden and identified environmental awareness and fostering a community spirit as important characteristics of Catholic schools.

> In Catholic schools, we're into caring for the earth, caring for the environment, caring for everybody, and I would like to think that a Catholic school is more of a community school as well. (Eimear)

6.6.2. *Forging links with parish, home, and school*

The principals all foster school links with the home and parish. When asked about the parish's contribution to children's faith development, the principals all responded by talking about the parish priest. Most have a good relationship with the local priest and talked of him as a friend. His level of involvement varies: in all schools the priest celebrates the sacraments of initiation; in most schools he acts as chaplain by visiting and talking to classes; in some schools he is a member of the BoM; and in a few schools he acts as chairperson of the BoM. The principals invite the priest to officiates at school events: sometimes he attends school assemblies; he is often present at Grandparents' Day

during Catholic Schools Week; he attends retirements and graduations; and celebrates Christmas carol services. Some principals described how the whole school or classes attend Mass in the church and occasionally the priest celebrates Mass in the school. In schools that are in close proximity to the church, children often act as altar servers during the school day for weddings and funerals. However, the principals also recognise that priests have a heavy workload, are often responsible for multiple parishes and schools, and are usually quite elderly.

> Now, the only problem is the parish priest is flat to the mat. He's actually the parish priest for three parishes and the chairperson of two boards of management. He's organising weddings, funerals, and, obviously, maintains all the churches. Talk about a man. So, at Christmas time, unless the school is on fire here, you won't get him. Every child in the school would know him. He comes in as much as he can but I'd love to have him in once a week. (Henry)

> The parish involvement can depend very much on the parish and the parish team and who is in situ at any one time. (Josephine)

> We've had great people over the years and we've had people who don't know how to engage with children. So maybe the parish needs to think about training them up. (Eimear)

Four principals spoke enthusiastically about local nuns and parish groups who visit schools and host prayer services or Bible studies with different classes.

> We're very lucky that our St. Teresa of Avila group, a local parish group of elderly parishioners who come into our school every Wednesday for half an hour to our sixth classes. They work on scripture and have discussion groups. That goes on for a number of weeks. Then they have a day retreat, class by class, and at the end there is an overall Mass for all of the sixth classes. So that's very good. (Donal)

Most of the principals spoke very positively about the Do This in Memory preparation Masses for First Holy Communion and preparation Masses for Confirmation. In most cases the Masses are co-ordinated by a parish representative and are led by a group of parents and the schools are not usually involved in these programmes. On the other hand, Órla stated that she instigates communication about the Masses by texting parents in a WhatsApp group. The teachers in the same school prepare children for the liturgies and the choir and some of the teachers attend the Masses. However, Noel and Ciara, who work in disadvantaged areas, said that there is poor uptake from families; and Aisling, who works in a rural parish, stated the programme does not run there. A few principals wondered how parishes will manage sacramental celebrations without school involvement in the future.

> I thought we were heading in the direction that more was to be taken on by the parish, particularly in relation to the sacraments. They were talking about a two-

year lead into it but I can't see it going in that direction in this area. I still think the majority, 90% of it, is left to the school.   (Anna)

I think because maybe there's a history of schools doing it so well themselves, looking after the faith, relying on your staff. I feel if I wasn't as proactive as I am, and my staff, because we want everything to be right, I'm not sure if it was left to the parish that it would actually happen.   (Órla)

The principals are aware that parents are the primary educators regarding children's faith development. They think there is a variety of parental involvement in children's faith development and only a minority of parents actively foster their children's faith. They surmised that: most parents are passive in regard to faith; do not attend Mass or say prayers with their children; make little or no reference to God at home; are happy for their children to be in Catholic schools; and would not like to see a change of patronage.

I think it is the job of the parents. They're the primary educators so it needs to be fostered at home. If it isn't, we cannot fill in those gaps. I'd say about 85% of the school is Catholic, but in regard to how many are practising, I think there are maybe only 20%, 25% who are actually practising.   (Josephine)

It's a bit like Irish. The only place they're really going to get religion and Irish is in the school.   (Donal)

But what I find is, people do really want the Catholic education. They want it but they're not necessarily actively practising though and that's the difficulty.
                    (Brian)

In order to verify their assumptions, some principals in the past have sought empirical evidence about the number of families that attend Mass.

If they're preparing for First Holy Communion and you're just sort of curious, you'd ask the question, "Who goes to Mass?" and not too many hands would go up.   (Aidan)

When you ask the First Communion classes how many children went to Mass the Sunday following their First Communion, you might get two out of 30.
                    (Helen)

Like some kids, they'd go to a school Mass maybe at Christmas and they'd say, "This is my second time ever to have Communion." It's just a joke and this is a country school in a very traditional area that would have great faith.
                    (Aisling)

The pattern seems to be that most parents engage in the preparation and celebration of First Holy Communion and Confirmation and then disengage from involvement in the parish. Donal thinks parents in his school generally engage with the homework section in the RE curriculum *Grow in Love* (IEC 2015) and Gráinne has asked teachers to assign RE homework every Thursday. The principals all think that the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation have become cultural events regardless of the school

context. However, Órla pointed out that in her parish parents are willing but need guidance.

> The sacraments are nearly like cultural events now, more like a rite of passage rather than any meaning behind them.   (Brian)

> I love doing the sacraments but I just feel they are doing nothing at home and it's just, 'Get them ready for a party,' and there's just no point in it.   (Aisling)

> We always have been able to get volunteers to help with the Do this in Memory programme and help with doing the tea and the coffee and those sorts of things, but how much prayer happens in the homes or that? Probably not a lot.
>   (Gráinne)

> With all due respect, parents need guidance. They're such a supportive community that if they're given the right guidance, if they're given the invitation to participate and support the school, they do.   (Órla)

There is a sense among the principals that: parents lead busy lives; contemporary Irish culture has also changed in relation to faith; and other distractions and needs take precedence.

> It's way more important to go hurling on a Sunday morning or whatever. I suppose generally, it's not trendy to have your faith now, is it? Now, they don't object to it, but I'm not sure they engage.   (Eimear)

> I mean, the mobile phone has become who they talk to, who they play with, who they look at. God isn't part of the picture at home.   (Josephine)

> A lot of the people around here are very hard-pushed to cope with their daily existence, and when you find out about what's happening in their lives, it's tough going for them, to be honest. So, people going to Mass, having the faith support for the school, it's not really a priority.   (Noel)

Grandparents, rather than parents, were identified as the main faith witnesses for children. Furthermore, two principals think parents of children of other faiths are more actively involved in their children's faith than Catholic parents. Only Eoghan stated that parents are very active in fostering their children's faith. This school is in a rural area in the Northwest and seems to be an exception to the norm.

> You are in a part of the country where Catholicism is still very strong. As for attendance at Mass here on a Sunday, cathedrals in Dublin wouldn't have the same numbers. So, it is very different.   (Eoghan)

When principals were asked about the teacher's role in children's faith development, they all responded that teachers have a key role especially when parents are not practising or fostering their children's faith. From their informal observations and from the diocesan advisors' reports, principals recounted that teachers say prayers with children at different times during the day, teach the RE curriculum, and are willing to prepare children for the

sacraments. There was no evidence that principals actively monitor the teaching of RE or the preparation of children for the sacraments but they are aware of what is going on. Notably, principals identified members of staff who not only uphold the Catholic ethos but consistently and actively promote it.

> One of our post-holders has the position of religion and she does a very good job of it and genuinely believes in what she's saying. She would instil a pressure on my behalf and she would do a lot of promotion of the ethos at different times of the year. Our board, on behalf of the diocese, asked us to respond to the NCCA's proposal to increase discretionary time and put religion into it along with lots of other things. We had a discussion and we held two meetings. Actually, I say we, our post holder held two meetings where teachers were asked for their feedback on this and how they felt about it. I was quite surprised at the strength of feeling of not wanting to get rid of religion altogether. Obviously not everyone agreed, but there was a good discussion.   (Ciara)

> We have some very religious people on staff, so they would remind me just before Easter, that we need to get the priest up to do confessions.
> (Deirdre)

The principals acknowledged that teachers are a "very mixed bag" (Noel), with a variety of sensibilities regarding beliefs, faith, religious practices and moral perspectives. Most think that the majority of teachers do not attend Mass regularly and younger teachers have a different faith than older teachers. A few principals were concerned that some teachers do not agree with some of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. They noted that there were no conversations in staff rooms about the recent referenda on same-sex marriage and abortion.

> I don't know where teachers actually lie in their faith because that will be down to the individuals. I think a lot more of them teach RE here than they did at my previous school.   (Ciara)

> Conversations around faith with staff, they don't happen because I wouldn't feel comfortable going there with people. We have a lot of younger staff in their early thirties and their upbringing is completely different to mine. So maybe their faith isn't as deeply embedded as my generation would have been. We have only one older member of staff who would be very, very religious. So, it is difficult. There isn't consistency or consensus. And you have teachers, maybe with different sexualities. I find they can't be open in a Catholic school. There's still a fear.
> (Anna)

> I think it's very difficult for some teachers because they don't have the belief anymore. Everybody's working away though I know myself that many of the teachers, even those in the sacrament classes, are not practising and would have fundamental objections to some of the teachings of the Church. But in the classrooms, they are upholding the ethos, the culture of the school and they are teaching the programmes that are in place. So that's all I can ask them to do and that's all we can do as a school.   (Josephine)

> Whatever hope we have of trying to keep the faith, if it goes out of schools, then

it's gone forever and there's no way we'll get it back because I don't know who's going to do it. Even younger teachers coming up here, they don't have the same faith. (Marie Therese)

They related that teachers are all willing to prepare children for the sacraments and other staff members also attend and help out although these celebrations are usually held on Saturdays. No teacher has voiced a conscientious objection to any of the principals about teaching RE or preparing children for the sacraments. Notably, Marie Therese said that she would accommodate a teacher if he or she did not wish to teach the subject.

> I think a lot more of the teachers teach religion here than they did at my previous school. So, it does happen. (Ciara)

> It's all down to the teacher's own faith. I suppose they go through the motions here at school. I'm not going to go and enforce that on them because that is their own thing. If any teacher had really, really strong views about anything, then they will be accommodated as well. So, for whatever reason, because we don't know where they're coming from in their lives or what experiences they have had, but if they made it known to me, somebody else will do it or I can step in and do it and respect them as well. (Marie Therese)

When employing teachers, two principals said that they ask interview candidates if they are willing to teach RE and promote the Catholic ethos. Henry deduced that what is important, from the perspective of school management, is the willingness of the teacher to teach RE and uphold the Catholic ethos rather than the teacher's faith. Conversely, Deirdre, who is agnostic, said she does not send the Schedule for a CPS (CPSMA 2016) to interviewees for teaching positions.

6.6.3. A holistic vision of education

The principals' overall vision seems to focus on children's happiness and education. They all have a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of children and create a school culture that brings this to reality.

> I still want the child to be happy but learning: I want us to have a high standard of education but, at the same time, I want us to be a caring community. So that is my vision, and I'm very driven with that vision. (Deirdre)

> I didn't take on this job because I want to be a principal in the parish, I took it on because I wanted to make a change for the children that I meet every day. We always have to be thinking and mindful of these children coming in to us and we may be the only stable thing in their lives, the only bit of love that they're shown. I'm rewarded by seeing them happy, seeing them achieving, and introducing different things. It doesn't matter what it is, so long as one child is sparked by something that'll lead them to go on and do something else. The school is bright, warm and inviting. We love our school motto, 'Let your Light Shine.' It gives permission for everyone to shine. So, it's that idea; don't be dulling your sparkle and allow people to be whatever it is they are meant to be. (Marie Therese)

189

Overwhelmingly, the most rewarding aspect of principalship for this cohort is forging relationships with children and staff respectively. They really enjoy interacting with children, being part of their development and witnessing their happiness. They work with other staff members at creating a teaching and learning environment and an ethos that is conducive to children's happiness and education.

> The children are the most rewarding. And also seeing the change of mindset among staff that I have been able to bring so that parents and children are now being treated with respect and dignity. Previously, the focus was too strong on academic achievement and not strong enough on the people's health and happiness and safety. (Ciara)

> Dealing with people actually is by far the most rewarding part of the job. I'm on the yard every day and I'm in the staff room most days. I try to keep in personal contact with the kids. I figure I'm not going to be able to deal with staff very effectively if I don't know who the kids are. My main responsibility is to the adults, who come in the door, to enable them to do the best job they can for the children who are in school. I am kind of a second-line of support to enable their good work. (Noel)

> Love is the power that drives everything. It's the power that drives you to help, it's the power that drives you to work for others, it's the power that drives you to consider others, welcome others, and make our world a better place. It helps me contribute in any small way that I can. (Vincent)

They all seem to consider themselves in *loco parentis* and treat the children like their own. The teaching principals are in constant contact with children and know each child in the school. For example, Brian and Henry are teaching principals and both manage school sports teams. On the other hand, the administrative principals have developed strategies to learn children's names and to foster good relationships with them.

> It's important to know their names, something about them and I suppose I would be strategic in how I do this. I would literally spend time looking at the pictures of the children on the computer going, "That's who they are." (Donal)

Significantly, the principals' faith seems to influence their vision of education. While they all talked about a child centred approach to education, most principals also talked about children's faith development.

> It is not just about looking at those who have the highest test marks but valuing each individual and what they can contribute to society and the school, as well as to larger society. (Gráinne)

> Whilst we have Maths, English, Irish, Geography, History, all of those subjects, you're not educating someone as if everything's based on scores, results, and just the curriculum. There's a person there that has to be nurtured as well. That's where the ethos of the school becomes very important. (Eoghan)

While Josephine and Deirdre also cherish the children in their care, their rhetoric did not include any reference to children's spiritual or religious development. Instead, Josephine talked about providing an "excellent education"; and Deirdre said children should be taught "a civics type programme" instead of RE. Despite their doubts, they both uphold the Catholic ethos.

> I'm very happy to promote the Catholic ethos because that's where I've come from and that's my background as well. As to whether that is part of my belief now, that's another question, but I'm very, very happy to uphold that and continue to work on that because that is my job and that's what I've been employed to do and that's what I have said I would do and I'll do it. (Josephine)

> I mightn't believe but I know it's my duty. I do it. I say prayers every morning, I conduct a religious assembly every Monday. I support the faith formation hugely. And I talk about God. I would say that nobody here would think that I don't have a faith and belief. Because, in my position, it mightn't be tolerated. (Deirdre)

In both cases, other teachers seem to step into a faith leadership role within the school: in Deirdre's school a senior teacher reminds the principal of special liturgical events and in Josephine's school another teacher sets up the sacred space in the school foyer. In Ciara's school, an AP takes responsibility for promoting the Catholic ethos and RE. It seems that Catholic schools can appear to emanate a Catholic ethos even when principals have little or no interest in faith. Noel made the following observation about two friends who are principals, one is a believer and another shows no interest in the Catholic ethos.

> If you walk in and around the three schools, I don't think you'd see much difference in the way they're run or in sacramental preparations or anything else. You don't have to be a holy Joe to be a principal of a Catholic school. (Noel)

> If they have the job of principal of a Catholic school and they're not a person of faith, they have to take the job of faith formation seriously, because that's the job. Now it helps if you are a person of faith. (Brian)

The principals all arrange school Masses, say prayers with children at school assemblies and oversee sacramental celebrations. Significantly, there seems to be an impulse among the believers to develop children's faith, directly as teaching principals or indirectly as administrative principals. According to Aisling, "faith is sharing it with everyone" and Eoghan thinks that being a principal of a Catholic school is "a serious responsibility that you're entrusted with." Because of their personal faith, Marie Therese introduced Christian meditation in school and Brian introduced restorative practice for children. The importance of faith for the principals seems to determine their motivation to promote or uphold the Catholic ethos.

6.7. Theme 7: Faith and School Patron

"I want to be a principal of a Catholic school because I believe in the Catholic ethos."

(Donal)

6.7.1. Patronage support structures

Almost all of the principals were very positive about the CPS patronage support structures consisting of the BoM, the parish, parents and the community. They think the CPSMA provides schools with a very effective and efficient legal advice service. In addition, most of the principals seem to know the personnel in the diocesan education secretariats. They described their interactions that include: school building works; appointments of teachers; teacher qualifications to teach RE; assessors for interview panels; the operation of teacher-panels; training for BoM; teacher seminars on the RE curriculum *Grow in Love* (IEC 2015); and training to comply with child protection guidelines. Individual principals expressed their appreciation of events organised by dioceses such as: Mass at the start of the school year (Vincent); outdoor Mass for Confirmation classes at the end of the year (Marie Therese); and a diocesan choir festival (Gráinne). In relation to the diocesan advisors, almost all of the principals described their positive interactions and perceived them as having both a supportive and an evaluative role. Deirdre was the only principal who perceived their oversight negatively.

> Our diocesan advisor comes out once a year to us about two weeks before Christmas. She's an absolutely lovely lady and a fantastic person. Inspirational I'd say, just is a breath of fresh air into the school. Then she attends our Christmas liturgy a few days after. (Henry)

> The last time they gave us a nice card afterwards and said, "If you could bottle what you have here and sell it all over the diocese, we'd be laughing." (Vincent)

> I object very much to the last diocesan visit. In the feedback she told me, she'd like more work in their copies. I took umbrage. "Now, you're very lucky we're delivering it. Be happy." (Deirdre)

Individual principals made some suggestions and comments about the patronage support structures: Deirdre thinks that there is too much oversight of building works and school management, and substitute cover should have been provided for teachers to attend the *Grow in Love* seminars; Aisling pointed out that it is male dominated; and Eimear suggested a diocesan financial advisory service would be very helpful and she would welcome a visit by the Bishop to the school. Donal would like children to attend retreats provided by the diocese but he knows from working voluntarily with his local diocesan education secretariat that there are constraints on resources.

> The education secretariat, could play a much bigger role if finances and manpower allowed. But I know they don't, so it's not a criticism of them, but I think it's vital. (Donal)

Notably, the principals, rather than the chairpersons of the BoM, communicate with the CPSMA and diocesan education secretariats.

Almost all of the principals talked about the need to cater for parents who want to send their children to Catholic schools and the importance of faith for life. However, they also recognise the need for more choice within the system. Many principals believe that most parents send their children to Catholic schools because of tradition and would be opposed to a change of patron. A few principals think the Church is 'holding on' to schools and that parents should take on more responsibility for their children's faith. Individual principals made the following suggestions: Josephine stated that parishes should provide more support to schools; Aisling believes sacramental preparation should take place outside of school; Deirdre is adamant that the Church should withdraw from schools altogether; and Henry suggested that half of primary schools in Ireland should be multidenominational to cater for a more diverse population and changing religious sensibilities.

6.7.2. *Preferences and willingness to change patron*

The majority are proud to be principals of Catholic schools. When asked about Church involvement in schools and faith education in schools, there were diverse responses. Some principals think that Catholic schools nowadays are often undermined by the media, the government and other patron bodies.

> The media had the term 'baptism barrier'. I think it was a coined phrase. There's a fabulous ring to it. (Helen)

> Catholic education has such a good brand worldwide. Why are we trying to get rid of it? Everyone in the world wants more of it, we have loads of it and we're trying to get rid of it just because a very, very loud minority have a bee in their bonnet and they're anti-Catholic. (Vincent)

Catholic school patronage seems to be a controversial issue among the general population of primary principals.

> I was at an IPPN meeting once and they were talking about patronage and divestment. It was an explosive conversation. There were very conservative people really, probably very, very loyal to the Church and then you had people who were very open-minded in relation to other people's beliefs. It was very, very difficult to get a consensus in that room as to how to manage both. (Anna)

193

Ten principals stated they would prefer to work only in CPSs as faith is an integral part of their lives, they are happy to promote the Catholic ethos and they actively foster children's faith.

> I was asked a question; how would I feel about being principal in a non-Catholic school? And my answer was, "Well, I wouldn't take the position." And I wouldn't. I want to be principal in a Catholic school because I believe in the Catholic ethos. So, I think it's a huge honour, huge responsibility, especially in modern society, but one that I enjoy.   (Donal)

> It's very important to me. I'm a practising Catholic. I go to Mass weekly. My own faith journey is very much bound up with being principal of this school.
>   (Noel)

Eight principals inferred that they were open to a change of patron and could envisage themselves as principals of multidenominational schools. Some of the reasons they discussed included: a perceived lack of parental support in fostering children's faith; recent Church scandals; and a lack of personal belief and faith.

> To be honest I find it quite challenging because of my own practice and spirituality. Jesus would still be a very positive influence in my life. However, it's very, very difficult to defend the actions of priests and the Church over the last few years and how they've dealt with things and to be proud of being Catholic as well.   (Anna)

> I'm a Catholic myself and we do go to Mass a lot more since we've had our child but I'd be equally happy to be a principal of an Educate Together or Community National School either. I have a strong Catholic faith, but Ireland is changing. I have one friend and he's in a Community National School. I think they are the way forward. They focus on different faiths for different periods throughout the year and they learn about everything and everyone: they still learn about the Catholic Church but they also learn about the Muslims, the Hindus. I just think it's a very good model. Speaking to friends like, they don't have to worry about a lot of the day to day running of the school. They have somebody who's in charge of the finance and wages and the cleaning contracts. So, it takes that stress away from the principals as well.   (Aidan)

Aidan is the only principal who talked about the multi-belief RE curriculum and management support system avail to principals of Community National Schools. Regardless of their faith, the principals all take their responsibility seriously and keep their word to uphold the Catholic ethos.

Conclusion

The principals' lives appear as varied, rich, and colourful tapestries and for most the threads of faith seem to influence and colour the other threads of their lives. Seven main themes emerged from the interview data that reveal that most of the principals have a deep sense of faith.

Theme 1: Faith in the Head, Heart and Hands. Sixteen principals are believers whose faith influences how they think, how they feel and how they act. While two principals are agnostic, they continue to question God's existence. The principals who believe in God seem to embody their faith: in their beliefs and in their theological understanding and literacy (heads); in their values, spirituality, and religious worship (hearts); in their moral views and codes, in their principalship practice and how they develop the Catholic ethos in school (hands).

Theme 2: Faith and Life Experiences Intertwine. Most of the principals connect experiences of God with experiences of nature and with experiences of relationships and love. In particular, suffering and the death of family members and friends has deepened the faith of a few principals.

Theme 3: Cultural Cycles of Influence on Faith. Three major cultural cycles seem to influence the principals' faith: their Catholic upbringing continues to have an influence on them; they are all part of and create the Catholic subculture in school; and most think it takes courage to be a person of faith in postmodern Ireland.

Theme 4: Principalship as a Vocation and Profession. When applying for the job, the principals were motivated by career progression and a desire to continue the ethos of the school rather than consciously responding to a call from God. Most of the principals consider principalship a vocation and all of them engage in extensive professional development and networks. However, there is ambiguity among the principals about the word 'vocation' and only one principal has undertaken postgraduate study in Christian Leadership in Education.

Theme 5: Faith and Principalship. The everyday experiences of teaching principals are very different from administrative principals. Notably, the three teaching principals consider the dual role of teacher and principal an untenable position. They all discussed various challenges including: the implementation of DES directives; the lack of time and resources to enable the inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream schools; and undertaking BoM duties such as building works and maintenance. Most experience conflict with some parents, staff and chairpersons of BoM. In relation to leadership styles, most adopt a blend of styles, they all aspire to be democratic and find it difficult to distribute leadership for various reasons. For most, faith influences their leadership styles and moral leadership is the most used style. Significantly, faith is a source of

morality, resilience and protection for those who believe in God.

Theme 6: Faith and Developing the Catholic Ethos. The principals who believe in God deliberately cultivate a distinctive Catholic culture. They display Catholic signs and symbols in their offices and school foyers and Jesus is model of how they treat others. They all foster links with priests of the parish and with parents but feel most of the work of developing children's faith is left to teachers. Children's happiness and learning are at the centre of their vision of education and they all enjoy forging relationships with staff and children. Significantly, the principals who believe in God seem to creatively promote the Catholic ethos and actively develop children's faith and the principals who are agnostic seem to uphold the Catholic ethos out of a sense of duty.

Theme 7: Faith and School Patron. All but one principal is happy with the support structure of the Catholic school patrons and some made suggestions for improvement. The majority are proud to be principals of Catholic schools as they believe Catholic schools have a tradition of high-quality education. However, some feel Catholic schools are being undermined by the media, other patrons and teacher organisations and they all expressed shame about the Church scandals. Ten principals prefer to work as principals of CPSs because their faith is an integral part of their lives and eight principals inferred they are open to a change of patron.

CHAPTER 7

INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The lived experiences of eighteen CPS principals, that were described in Chapter Six, are now interpreted in this chapter using the research methodology hermeneutic phenomenology. As discussed in Chapter Five, the researcher makes interpretations about the phenomenon that are open to interpretation by others:

> Ultimately, our writing is an interpretation by us of events, people, and activities, and it is only our interpretation. We must recognize that participants in the field, readers, and other individuals reading our accounts will have their own interpretations. (Creswell 2013, 278)

Each of the seven themes is interpreted by comparing and contrasting the findings with relevant theories and research studies from the literature review chapters.

7.1. Theme 1: The Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Expressions of Faith

> I would suggest that it is our mindscapes [Sergiovanni 2005, 25] that determine how we construct reality and so inform the nature of our personal and professional journeys. Each leadership mindscape is unique, the product of all that makes us who we are. Effective leaders understand their mindscapes, work to systematically enrich and deepen them and use them to navigate their world. (West-Burnham 2009, 8)

In this study, the principals' 'mindscapes', the cognitive dimensions of faith, are seen to influence the affective and behavioural dimensions of faith. In this section, there is an interpretation of how the principals embody faith in their 'heads, hearts and hands' (Groome 2011, Sergiovanni 1992).

7.1.1. A reflection on beliefs and theological understandings

When discussing the meaning of faith, the principals talked about God and four principals talked about Jesus Christ without being prompted. They all seem to have different levels of theological understanding and literacy and many seem to have a vague understanding of the Holy Trinity. How they differentiate between the three persons of the Trinity varies considerably.

> I ask the Holy Spirit for help; I ask my guardian angel for help; and quite often then I've a cheeky one to the Holy Trinity when I need help or I try to bribe him. (Helen)

I don't think of Him as 'Jesus Christ,' I just think of God.   (Aidan)

It's hard for me to bring up from my subconscious something to say about it [the Blessed Trinity] because they're things that are not frequently talked about.
(Noel)

According to Gaillardetz, most Christians know there are three persons in the one God but operate from a 'solitary' theism,' they think of God as "the divine individual residing in heaven far away from us" (2007, 35). The sixteen principals who believe in God, communicate with Him and have faith in Him. However, it is difficult to discern to what extent they differentiate between each person of the Holy Trinity, to what degree they operate from a relational trinitarian theism (Rohr 2016) or solitary theism (Gaillardetz 2007). Nevertheless, Jesus Christ seems to hold a central place in their minds, most attend Mass and celebrate the Eucharist and pray to Him.

According to the Church, the person of Jesus Christ is at the centre of Christian faith:

At the heart of catechesis, we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father.   (CCC § 426)

For the believers, their relationship with Him varies considerably. On a cognitive level, the principals all know about Jesus Christ: fifteen believe He is the Son of God and pray to Him; two revealed their doubt about God; and Ciara believes in God but has doubts about the identity of Jesus Christ. When they were explicitly asked about the significance of Jesus in their lives, the majority mostly talked about Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus as a role model, and His message. Noel and Eimear spoke about their love for the Blessed Virgin Mary instead of discussing their relationship with Jesus Christ. Their love for her seems to reflect the Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Vatican II Council 1964) and her central place in the lives of some Catholic teachers (Bollan 2007). Those who believe in God also believe in the afterlife, heaven, and purgatory. However, they all have doubts about hell, a finding in line with other Irish people's beliefs (O'Mahony 2010). Moreover, the majority have a Christian anthropological outlook on life and death; most seek to follow Jesus Christ and hope in the afterlife with God (Groome 2011, Jones and Barry 2015, Sachs 1991). There are generational differences: all of the principals in the younger age group and middle age group believe in God; and the two principals who are agnostic are in the older age group (Table 1) (Appendix I Analysis of Generational Differences). The findings of this study are similar to Richardson's (2014) finding that fifteen headteachers in England had varying levels of theological understanding and literacy.

198

Belief in God	Younger (30-39)	Middle (40-49)	Older (50-59)	Total
Believers	3	7	6	16
Agnostic	0	0	2	2
Total	3	7	8	18

Table 1 Principals' belief in God according to generation

7.1.2. *A question of spirituality and religious worship*

On the affective level, values, spirituality and love seem to emanate from the principals' hearts. They all prize the values of respect, care, and kindness and some of the believers also stated that faith inspires them to forgive and to have compassion. The principals all talked about sustaining their inner lives through their relationships with family and friends. Therefore, it seems that even without believing in or understanding the Holy Trinity as relational and invitational (Gaillardetz 2007, Rohr 2016), the principals all develop loving relationships with family and friends that reflect the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For most of the principals, their spirituality seems to emanate from their hearts. However, there are gender differences in how they attend to their spirituality. The male principals talked about 'outward' spiritual pursuits such as studying, attending the World Meeting of Families, going to see Pope Francis in 2018, and lighting candles in the Church. A few males revealed they find spirituality and being still very difficult. They reflect Michael Conway's assertion that "Interiority is in serious crisis in our culture." (2018, 100). On the other hand, the female principals seem to sustain their inner lives in similar ways but added other pursuits such as walking in nature, going on holidays, and exercising. The four female principals who practise 'inward' spiritual pursuits, such as going on retreat, pilgrimage, yoga and meditation, all seem to be deeply spiritually connected to God. Anna seems to embody the new wave of spiritual awakening in Ireland (Conway 2018, Flanagan 2015, Murphy 2018, O'Murchu 2014) and keeps Jesus Christ firmly at the heart of her faith:

> The Jesus who went into the desert for forty days to get to know himself, that's who inspires me. (Anna)

She has made a conscious decision not to attend Mass after the Church scandals affected

her family. She thinks the Church is far removed from Jesus Christ. Her voice seems to echo other voices in Ireland about the need for conversion to Jesus Christ (O'Hanlon 2017) and injustices within the Church:

> What would Jesus say or do? And I am constantly appalled at how far our Church has removed itself from him in too many areas.   (Molloy 2013, 202)

However, many of the principals seem not to have developed a deep affective personal relationship with Jesus Christ. According to Graham (2015) many Catholics treat Jesus as a 'Facebook friend,' rather like an acquaintance than a close friend. Some writers also suggest that for us to really get to know Jesus Christ, we need to make a long inward spiritual journey to the heart (Conway 2018, Palmer 2000, 2007, Rohr 2012, 2019). Faith involves both an intellectual understanding and a relational journey of the heart (Colwell 1991, Muldoon 2005). The Church (CCE 2014, IEC 2010) and others researchers (Friel 2018, Grace 2010, Richardson 2014, Sullivan 2006) have recommended that Catholic school principals' avail of faith development courses that include both theology and spirituality.

The principals' affective search for God also seems to be related to Mass attendance. The principals fall into four main religious groups in relation to their beliefs, Mass attendance, and participation in the Church: orthodox (13), cultural (2), creative (1) and disenchanted (2). These groups follow the categories of another study of religion in Ireland (Inglis 2014) and are based on a review of the literature and an analysis of the data. Most of those in the orthodox group have orthodox beliefs, attend Mass regularly, and many of them volunteer in their parishes, dioceses and the wider Church. The principals who actively participate in the institutional Church do so because of their faith. According to Ganiel (2017), 'extra-institutional spaces' in the Church serve as places in which faith is nurtured. The voluntary nature of their participation is very different from Australian and British Catholic school principals who are expected to fulfill faith leadership roles in their parishes (Belmonte and Rymarz 2017, Gallagher 2007, Neidhart and Lamb 2010). This requirement has proven to be a disincentive for some teachers to apply for Catholic school principalship in these countries (Gallaher 2007, Sinclair and Spry 2005).

In the cultural group, Eoghan and Ciara attend Mass irregularly and are highly influenced by the culture in which they are immersed. Anna is a "spiritual seeker" (Taylor 2007, 533) who does not engage formally in the Church but has developed a deep relationship with Jesus Christ by going on retreats and pilgrimage and by practising meditation. While

Josephine and Deirdre are in the disenchanted group and are agnostic, they still attend Mass on special occasions. Significantly, most of the principals are "faith dwellers" (ibid..) who are attached to the Church in varying degrees. They lead quiet lives of faith and follow a 'middle way,' they do not have fundamentalist or relativist beliefs (Boeve 2003).

In relation to the aforementioned religious categories, the most significant generational difference is that all of the principals in the younger age group and most of the principals in the older age group are orthodox Catholics (Table 2) (Appendix I Analysis of Generational Differences). The principals in the older age group attend Mass regularly in contrast to the younger principals who vary in their attendance. This finding correlates with other Irish studies that found that older generations attend Mass more frequently than younger generations (Dillon 2015, O'Mahony 2010). Moreover, the principals all seem to concentrate on their busy, demanding professional lives and on their personal lives and they give varying degrees of attention to their faith, spirituality and religious worship. Theologians have observed that society today is more concerned with this life rather than the next life (Conway 2018) and many leave matters of faith until they retire (O'Murchu 2014; Rohr 2012).

Religious Practice	Younger (30-39)	Middle(40-49)	Older (50-59)	Total
Orthodox	3	4	6	13
Cultural		2		2
Creative		1		1
Disenchanted			2	2
Total	3	7	8	18

Table 2 Principals' religious groups according to generation

7.1.3. Expressing morality

On a behavioural level, the hand represents the principals' moral views, moral code and principalship practice. Firstly, some seem to have more liberal moral views than the Church's moral teaching, just like the rest of the population (CSO 2017, Féich and O'Connell 2015). A few male principals suggested that Church teaching on gender and sexuality and women priests needs to change:

> I do think that certain aspects of the Catholic Church's teaching are out of sync and out of kilter with society today and the needs of society today. (Henry)

Significantly, their opinions about same-sex relationships and women priests have been expressed by others within the Church (Conway 2017a, b, 2018, Molloy 2013, Regan 2013, Tighe-Mooney 2018). Notably, the principals recounted that there were no conversations in staff rooms about the recent referenda to legalise same-sex marriage and abortion or discussions about beliefs, religion, spirituality or moral perspectives. The reluctance of staff to enter those conversations suggests an element of privatisation of faith within CPSs. The prevailing silence may be because staff are sensitive to other people's opinions and experiences, as observed by an Irish religious and social commentator:

> Others still consider spirituality (and religion) a largely private affair, not to be exposed, where it might prove offensive to colleagues or loved ones.
>
> (O'Murchu 2014, 14)

Secondly, the principals' moral codes seem to be on a spectrum that ranges from the Golden Rule to the greatest commandment depending on their faith. The principals all seem to abide by the basic moral code, the Golden Rule, to treat others as you would want to be treated. Notably, Flintham (2011) also found that principals in the UK and Australia adopted the Golden Rule as a common moral code:

> Headteachers operating from a personal faith perspective identify bases of belief which are couched in a specific language of faith yet show commonality of fundamental adherence to the Golden Rule of 'love your neighbour as yourself', encompassed within Gospel imperatives of inclusion and justice.
>
> (Flintham 2011, 171)

Some of the principals in this study talked about Jesus as their role model, following the ten commandments, and being guided by God to love neighbour and self. Therefore, their morality seems to stem from a combination of Christian discipleship, abiding by the commandments, the beatitudes and their own conscience. It will be seen in *Theme 3* that teaching RE and telling stories about Jesus to children have an influence on their faith and this probably also applies to their moral codes. By teaching Catholic morality, they have taught children that:

> We are not being called to follow rules, as necessary as they may be, but to follow a person, Jesus Christ. (Sachs 1991, 104)

In relation to the "inner secularisation" of their faith dispositions (Gallagher 2008, 5), the beliefs of the majority are aligned to Catholic Church teaching but the moral views of

some differ from Church teaching.   Their rhetoric resembles Michael Conway's observation that most people think the institutional Church has not kept abreast of today's culture and the Church needs to become more inclusive and person-centred:

> And when culture changes, so too must Church (if it is to be faithful to itself).
> (Conway 2018, 91).

Significantly, most of the believers are "faith dwellers" (Taylor 2007, 533) who participate in the Church to varying degrees; some are "spiritual seekers" (ibid.) who engage in spiritual practices; and the two agnostics do not totally adopt "exclusive humanism" (ibid., 27) as they still wonder about God and other people's faith and they uphold the Catholic ethos in school.

In this study, the principals' leadership and how they develop the Catholic ethos are interpreted as ways in which most enact their faith. These behavioural aspects of faith will be discussed later in *Theme 5* and *Theme 6*.

7.2.   *Theme 2: The Link between Life Experiences and Faith*

> For the Christian, our ultimate reality - our heaven or hell - ultimately rest in the prejudicial perspective we bring to the givenness of our experience and not the givenness itself.   (Danaher 2006, 27)

This section explores the principals' experiences of nature, love and relationships, suffering and the death of loved ones. The believers and agnostics view their experiences very differently. Those who believe in God all seem to have experienced 'something' in their lives. Five decades ago, Karl Rahner predicted, "The devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic,' one who has experienced 'something,' or he will cease to be anything at all." (1971, 15). For the believers the 'something' they experience is God.

7.2.1. *Being grounded in nature*

The believers seem to take God's presence for granted, almost like the air they breathe, similar to the principals in Richardson's study (2014). While they all enjoy nature, the believers associate nature with God's creation and their inner lives are sustained by nature. Contrastingly, the two principals who are agnostic perceive nature as beauty, it inspires them to question God's existence but He seems to remain hidden from them. Therefore, the believers seem to have a sacramental imagination (Meehan 2013). They see the interrelatedness between creation, humanity and God as explicated in *Laudato si*:

> The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us.

Notably, they have all taught RE classes and taught children that God is creator of the world which may explain why most adopt a 'Catholic cosmology' (Groome 2011). From a Christian perspective, creation and incarnation are part of revelation, ways in which God reveals Himself to us (Apostolic Constitution 1994), as felt by the believers. In contrast, Heidegger (2010) theorised that 'being in the world' is part of our existential structure but he does not associate our existence in the world with God, as expressed by the agnostics.

7.2.2. *The centrality of relationship*

Regarding experiences of love and relationships, the principals all talked spontaneously about their families and friends without being asked. Relationships seem to be a priority for all of them, regardless of their faith. Love seems written in their hearts and they all seem to emanate love for others. From a Christian perspective, the principals' love for their families and friends and their care for their school communities can be interpreted as a reflection of the Holy Trinity and God's love. Vincent was the only principal who expressed a theological understanding of God as love. Therefore, it seems their hearts are all implicitly orientated towards love, even without a theological understanding of love as a virtue from God or the theological literacy or understanding that "God is love" (1 John 4:16). Significantly, they seem to exemplify Karl Rahner's theory of the "supernatural existential" (1961, 302) that proposes that we are all graced by God, always orientated towards Him and open to communication with Him. While the believers communicate with God through prayer, religious worship or spiritual practices, the two principals who are agnostic are unconvinced of His existence and occasionally attend Mass. In addition, from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, they all exemplify Heidegger's philosophy of care that he proposes is at the core of each human being. Later, the principals' care for children and school communities will be discussed in *Theme 5* and *Theme 6*.

7.2.3. *Faith encounters suffering and death*

The principals who believe in God associated the birth of their children and the death of family members and friends with experiences of God. During times of grief, they all thought about God, their own faith and the afterlife. Birth and death are considered threshold experiences in a person's faith journey (Gallagher 2016, Graham 2015, Rohr 2012). In addition, a few have experienced deep suffering and anxiety that seem to have

brought them into a deeper relationship with God and Jesus Christ. Individual principals described experiences of mental breakdown, post-natal depression and alcohol addiction. The Church teaches that faith is a person's response to God (CCC §26) and in difficult circumstances, it seems as if they called on God and He reached out to help them. Their turning to God seems to depend partly on their faith background but mostly on their personal decision to place their trust in God. Those who reported experiencing God's presence during periods of intense suffering seem to have a deep connection with Him and are in the orthodox and creative religious groups. Significantly, their faith influences their principalship and they are keenly interested in promoting the Catholic ethos and in developing children's faith as will be discussed in *Theme 5* and *Theme 6*. Some theologians have deduced that a crisis often leads people to become more spiritually mature and wise (Gallagher 2016; O'Murchu 2014; Rohr 2012):

> Normally a job, fortune, or reputation has to be lost, a death has to be suffered, a house has to be flooded, or a disease has to be endured. (Rohr 2012, xix)

In Christian theology, suffering is considered part of the Paschal Mystery and the human journey towards the Kingdom of God and as Christians we share in universal love and suffering as the Mystical Body of Christ. Similarly, Heidegger (2010) asserts that anxiety leads us to understand that care is at the heart of each person's being, we are all beings towards death and we lead more authentic lives as we become aware of the temporality of life. This study finds that through experiences of suffering, a few principals have drawn closer to God and know that He dwells in their presence.

The theme of 'seekers and dwellers' is found throughout the literature explicitly and implicitly. For example, St. Paul declared the Athenians' worship of an 'unknown god' as seeking and reaching out for God (Acts 17: 27-28); Taylor (2007) identifies two groups, an inner core of "faith dwellers" within the Church and an outer core of "spiritual seekers" (2007, 533); and O'Murchu describes those who want to renew their faith as "adult faith seekers" (2014, 17). I am convinced the principals are not just 'faith seekers' (O'Murchu 2014) who seek a deeper understanding of faith; they are 'Christ-seekers' who seek a deeper relationship with the person Jesus Christ.

7.3. *Theme 3: The Influence of Culture on Faith*

> Today, there is no going back to the previously unquestioned place of the Church in Irish society. Rather, a new era of Catholicism and of the Church's role in Irish society is dawning. (Dillon 2015, 46-47)

Different 'cycles of influence' within our culture appear to be moving in opposite directions and are forcing some of the principals to question their faith and the mission of CPSs. This study finds three main 'cycles of influence' on their faith: their childhood faith experiences; the Catholic subculture within their schools; and the wider contemporary secular postmodern culture in Ireland.

7.3.1. *Initial faith formation of principals*

The principals' Catholic upbringing seems to act as an important 'cycle of influence' on their faith. They were all 'cradle Catholics': they all grew up in Catholic homes, attended Mass in their parish communities and attended Catholic schools. Similarly, other studies found that principals were influenced by their Catholic upbringing, their Catholic schooling and participation in parishes (Grace 2002, Nsiah and Walker 2013, Richardson 2014, Schuttloffel 2013). During their childhoods, the principals in this study were all immersed in a Catholic culture in Ireland almost like a collective religious heritage from which they can draw (Inglis 2007) and they were "steeped in faith" (Fuller 2012). They all underwent a process of socialisation by attending Catholic schools and formed:

> …a Catholic habitus…a deeply embodied, almost automatic way of being spiritual and moral that becomes second nature and creates a Catholic sense of self and interpreting the world. (Inglis 2007, 205)

As teenagers, most continued to practise their faith and a few began to waiver. While their faith journeys began to vary during their teenage years, the majority seem to have made a conscious or unconscious decision in early adulthood to have faith in God. This time is considered a key stage in a person's faith journey when one accepts or rejects God (Dulles 1997, Fowler 2000, Groome 2011). In relation to tertiary education, most attended Catholic colleges of education while four principals attended secular universities. Paradoxically, the two agnostics attended Catholic colleges of education while the four who attended secular universities are in the orthodox religious group. According to Groome (2011), people can 'lose' their faith when they are influenced by a secular culture, when they cannot reconcile suffering with a loving God, and when they have not developed their faith. Dulles (1997) and O'Murchu (2014) theorise that most people reach a mid-point of conventional faith and then either embrace faith or become agnostic.

Most of the principals seem to have reached adult stages of faith (Fowler 2000): they have chosen their beliefs and values (stage 5 individuative-reflective); are committed to one

faith, accept the paradoxes of life and faith and are open to other religious traditions (stage 6 conjunctive); and at times of deep suffering, a few seem to have also entered the last stage (stage 7 universalising) when they felt oneness with God. These principals are very different from the participants in Inglis' (2014) study that discovered that:

> Religion is not in the hearts, in the minds or on the lips of Catholics in Ireland.
> (Inglis 2017, 21)

This study finds that faith is an important part of the lives of the majority; most do not usually talk about their faith outside of school due to the predominant secular culture but God is in their hearts and in their minds. Their faith and their ability to articulate their faith have been highly influenced by their childhood experiences of faith and the Catholic subculture in their schools.

7.3.2. *The significance of the Catholic school subculture*

A Catholic subculture exists within the schools that seems to influence most of the principals' faith perspectives. The main spokes of the subculture comprise of the following: applying for a teaching position in a CPS; teaching RE; preparing children for the sacraments; and working within the Catholic ethos. The CPS interview process seems to select teachers who are willing to promote the Catholic ethos. For example, Eoghan sends the Schedule for a CPS (CPSMA 2016, 15) to applicants and asks candidates at the interviews about their willingness to teach RE. The principals all would have gone through the same selection procedures and have worked as teachers in CPSs for most of their professional careers. Many told anecdotes about how they teach religious concepts to children. They seem to have 'learned by teaching' RE and preparing children for the sacraments. In the teaching process, they all seem to engage in a process of 'ongoing translation' (Sullivan 2012) whereby they interpret Christian concepts to make them relevant to children's lives. Therefore, most seem to embody what they teach through the processes of socialisation in CPSs, 'learning by teaching' and 'ongoing translation.' This 'cycle of influence' may partly account for the majority having faith in God. Despite these processes, two principals seem immune to the influence of the Catholic school subculture in which they are immersed.

7.3.3. *Faith in contemporary Ireland*

The principals all agree that the fabric of Irish culture and society has changed dramatically in relation to faith in recent years. Their opinions correspond with the observation that Ireland has experienced a rapid secularisation process (Dillon 2015,

Flanagan 2015, Fuller 2011, 2012, Gallagher 2008, Littleton 2015, Murphy 2018, Rogers 2015). The principals have observed a decline in families attending Mass in Ireland, as shown from other studies (Dillon 2015, Fuller 2011, 2012, O'Mahony 2013). In addition, they think the cultural *milieu* is dominated by materialism and consumerism as described by social observers interested in religious affairs (Gallagher 2003, Inglis 2014, 2017). Many of the believers also think that the media is negatively biased towards the Church and Catholic schools. The principals all live within this secular postmodern culture and are not immune to its influence on their faith. Significantly, the believers feel it is countercultural to be a person of faith and do not discuss their faith even with friends. This seems to reflect an element of "secularist marginalisation" (Gallagher 2003, 131) in Irish society whereby most of the principals seek to privatise their faith lives outside of school in varying degrees. Conversely, the two principals who are agnostic think Irish society is more open than in the past but they find it difficult to be unbelievers. They do not express their unbelief 'inside the school door' and seem to leave their authentic selves 'outside in the school car park.' These two principals seem to represent teachers identified by Tuohy (2006) who entered the profession when there was no other choice of school other than Catholic schools and who do not endorse the Catholic vision of education.

Many of the principals think that faith and religion in Ireland have been affected by recent Church scandals and cover-ups and most expressed disappointment, embarrassment, shame and hurt at these events, similar to the general Irish public (Donnelly and Inglis 2010, Fuller 2011, Garrett 2013, Regan 2013).

> Various things happened with the Church, on a personal level and then at a more national, international level.   (Josephine)

The scandals have shaken their religious commitment, some of the principals demonstrate varying degrees of "institutional detachment" (Inglis 2007, 208) and a few have lost trust in the institutional Church like many other Irish Catholics (Donnelly and Inglis 2010). Despite the negative effects of the Church scandals: most have chosen to "*inhabit* the crisis" (Regan 2013, 164) and remain involved in their parishes, dioceses and the wider Church; some seek a renewal and transformation of the Church, especially in regard to gender and sexuality; and a few consider themselves part of the institutional Church.

7.4.   Theme 4: Exploring Decisions to Become a Principal

> Catholic schools must be run by individuals and teams who are inspired by the Gospel, who have been formed in Christian pedagogy, in tune with Catholic schools' educational project.   (CCE 2014, 10)

The Church has long considered teaching a profession and a vocation (Vatican II 1965b, CCE 1977, 1982, 1988, 1997, 2007, 2013) and the word vocation is often interpreted as a faithful response to God's call to do His will (Jacobs 2005, Palmer 2007). This section analyses the principals' motivation to apply for principalship, their interpretation of principalship as a 'vocation' and their uptake of professional courses.

7.4.1. The role of motivation

Most of the principals were inspired to apply for principalship by a personal desire for career progression and some were inspired by a professional desire to maintain the culture of the school. None of them talked about a vocational call in relation to applying for the job although Helen prayed for God's will beforehand. Interestingly, a significant gender difference emerges between the male and female principals in relation to their motivation. While almost all of the males were motivated by career progression, the females were motivated by both career progression and a desire to continue the school ethos (Table 4) (Appendix H Analysis of Gender Differences).

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Principals	8	10	18

Table 3 Principals according to gender

Motivation to apply for principalship	Male	Female	Total
Career progression	7	6	13
Continue the ethos	1	4	5
Total	8	10	18

Table 4 Motivation to apply for principalship according to gender

Three female principals reported gender discrimination for principal positions and discriminatory remarks regarding female principals. Statistics from the DES website for 2017/2018 show that there is gender disparity in relation to primary principalship. While 85% of primary teachers are female, only 66% of primary principals are female. Conversely, 15% of primary teachers are male but 33% of primary principals are male

(DES 2020). A large-scale Irish study found reasons why some females do not apply for principalship:

> In the main, experienced female teachers were more likely to state that a lack of experience and/or confidence in their abilities were factors that would discourage them from applying for principalship.   (RTU and LDS 2009, xi)

The same study found other disincentives for potential applicants included: terms and conditions of the job, poor remuneration and the lack of career mobility. The Catholic Church, as the largest provider of primary schooling in Ireland, must ensure there is gender equality in relation to principal appointments and Catholic schools should be places where discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

7.4.2. *Exploring the meaning of vocation*

Most think principalship is a vocation and a minority thinks it is just a profession. However, there was ambiguity about the meaning of the word 'vocation' and the principals associated it with suitability for the job, religious commitment, a permanent obligation and voluntary work. Previously in the interviews, they had expressed concerns about their workload, wellbeing, remuneration, responsibilities and the time they spent at work. These concerns seem to be part of the reluctance of some to consider principalship as a vocation. A few principals also had misgivings about the term as they associated it with government attempts to undermine and downgrade the professional status of principals and teachers during the last financial recession. Similarly, in the 'Visions for Educational Leadership' study of Catholic principals in England and Wales:

> …a sizeable and interesting minority voiced their real misgivings around the term [vocation].   (Watkins 2018, 160)

 In addition, one hundred principals in a large-scale study in Ireland (RTU and LDS 2009, vii) and sixty principals in the 'foundations in faith' group in Flintham's (2011) study were motivated by the vocational nature of the role. However, neither study offered an interpretation of the word 'vocation.' When I suggested that the word 'vocation' could be interpreted as a call by God to do His will, a few principals reconsidered the concept by recounting anecdotes of their professional and faith journeys. Until this suggestion was made, most did not consider this interpretation. Writers have suggested that hearing God's call involves a spiritual journey of the heart "inwards and downwards" (Palmer 2007, 80) and principals who have a foundation in faith see their work as vocation (Flintham 2011, Jacobs 1996).

The Church has been concerned for almost forty years that Catholic lay teachers' faith development is not the same as their professional development (CCE 1982, 2007). It recommends that Catholic school principals undertake formation so they are inspired by the Gospel (CCE 2007, 2014, IEC 2010).

> Those training for principalship in a Catholic school today and those already in position need to be offered in-depth and continuing formation on what is meant by Catholic leadership in the complex world in which we live. (IEC 2010, 146)

Only one principal undertook a Master's degree in Christian Leadership in Education. The lack of uptake of formal faith development opportunities by the principals is concerning as they hold pivotal roles and have responsibility to promote the Catholic ethos within their schools (IEC 2010, CPSMA 2016). Universities in many countries in the West offer accredited professional education leadership courses that align Catholic school leadership modules with national quality school frameworks: Loyola University Chicago (Boyle, Morten and Guerin 2013), Loyola Marymount University (Sabatino 2016), Boston College (Melley 2019), the Ontario Institute for Educational Leadership (Ontario Catholic Principals' Council 2020), the University of Notre Dame Freemantle Australia, The Australian Catholic University Melbourne and the Queensland Educational Leadership Institute. Most universities offer options for on campus lectures, blended learning and full-distance online learning. Almost two decades ago, Grace (2002) found that teachers and principals in the UK needed to formally renew their 'spiritual capital' because of the changed culture. The same applies to CPS principals in Ireland today. Both Grace (2009) and Sullivan (2006) recommend principals avail of a mixed provision of courses, professional development provided by the State and faith development provided by the Church. In the next subsection, it will be seen that the principals in this study avail of a wide range of courses provided by the State through the PDST and the CSL.

7.4.3. Being a professional

In relation to professionalism, the principals all invest time, energy and resources in CPD courses and educational qualifications. They all attend one day seminars organised by the INTO and IPPN and some are involved in the CSL. Many have attended educational leadership programmes such as *Tóraíocht, Misneach, Forbairt* and *Meitheal* run by the PDST. Despite the lack of remuneration, the majority have undertaken independent further education: nine have Master's degrees and three of these also have Doctoral degrees related to education (Table 5) (Appendix G Analysis of Participants' Profiles).

Educational Leadership Courses			
PDST courses			
Tóraíocht	*Misneach*	*Forbairt*	*Meitheal*
2	14	2	1
Level 9 and 10 Third Level Courses			
M.Ed. in Education or in related area	M.Ed. in Educational Leadership	M.A. in Christian Leadership in Education	Ph.D. /Doctorate in Education
4	5	1	3

Table 5 Educational leadership courses undertaken by the principals

Prior to appointment, nine principals, seven females and two males, had postgraduate qualifications (Table 6) (Appendix H Analysis of Gender Differences). This finding is significantly different from other Irish studies that found that principals had not prepared for the role (McHugh 2015, Ummanel 2012). The most significant gender difference is that the females had more academic qualifications than the males prior to appointment.

Postgraduate qualification prior to appointment	Male	Female	Total
Yes	2	7	9
No	6	3	9
Total	8	10	18

Table 6 Postgraduate qualification prior to appointment according to gender

The withdrawal of financial support by the DES for teachers and principals is of concern:

> The allowance, while not large, did provide an incentive to teachers undertaking certified CPD.   (Coolahan et al. 2017, 180)

The principals' engagement in CPD and in further postgraduate education seems to reflect their desire to be learners as well as teachers, their wish to become professionally competent and their aspiration to do the best they can for the children in their care. Notably, one principal remarked that:

> God can call in mysterious ways if He's there. (Josephine)

Regardless of their interpretation of the word 'vocation', I believe that the principals are

called to do God's will through their desires to progress their careers and their wish to continue the ethos of the school. However, a foundation in faith would lead to an understanding that vocation does not necessarily involve more work but instead it means aligning one's work and one's personal desires with the will of God in order to make a difference in other people's lives.

7.5.   *Theme 5: The Practice of Principalship*

> The world of the leader in a Catholic school is also the world of good and difficult students, of Facebook and Twitter, of hassled parents, of over-burdened professional colleagues, of regulation and accountability, of a genuine sense of community, of employment law, of competing rights and expectations, of confusion and uncertainty, of wonder and excitement, of the political processes necessary to achieve one's educational goals.   (Clegg 2012, 137)

Faith is therefore not just confined to the religious dimensions of principalship but encompasses every aspect of the role. According to Sullivan and McKinney 2013, principals engage in 'espoused theology' and 'operant theology' by attending to mission statements, policies, hiring staff, behaviour management, leading teaching and learning and attending to students' faith development. This section analyses the principals' everyday experiences, their experiences of challenges and conflict and their leadership styles in relation to faith.

7.5.1. Demands

Both sets of principals, teaching and administrative, seem to have developed their own daily and weekly routines that require energy, enthusiasm and endurance. The three teaching principals reported they juggle teaching children with managing the school in their 'spare time.' Significantly, they pointed out that their job is too onerous, similar to other Irish studies that found that teaching principalship leads to stress and job dissatisfaction (Darmody and Smyth 2016, IPPN 2002). Almost two decades ago, the Haygroup report found that teaching principals:

> … have insufficient time and energy to devote to the managerial aspects of the role while carrying responsibility for a full class teaching load. (IPPN 2002, 4)

Thus, the wellbeing of teaching principals is a concern as 56% of principals in the RoI undertake this role (personal correspondence with the DES 2020).

The duties of administrative principals seem similar to those outlined in other studies of principals in the RoI (Darmody and Smyth 2016, IPPN 2002, 2008, Morgan and Sugrue

2008, Stynes and McNamara 2019). While they seem to have more time than the teaching principals to concentrate on leadership and management, they reported that their main task of 'leading teaching and learning' (DES 2016b, 12), is superseded by other duties. The principals' routines are constantly interrupted by 'unexpected events' that result in everyday being different. The early years of principalship seem to be the most difficult as also found by another Irish study (Ummanel, McNamara and Stynes 2016). However, as the principals gain more experience, they 'learn the ropes' and try to leave their work in school. Similar to other primary principals (McHugh 2015), they are all part of principal networks in their locality through the IPPN and the *Misneach* programme and these networks act as a source of advice and support.

7.5.2. *Challenges and conflict*

Almost all of the principals stated they enjoy the job of principalship despite the challenges. The main challenges they experience fell into three categories: dealing with directives in the form of DES circulars; time spent accessing additional resources and supports for children with SEN; and managing school buildings. The principals all reported they are left to develop and implement a constant, un-coordinated raft of government policies and educational changes with poor support and a lack of resources. The constant pressure to comply with legislation and DES circulars seems to indicate the government's attempt to regulate the primary school system and its demand for conformity and accountability. It seems the principals' autonomy is exercised within these legislative parameters. Writers interested in the influence of politics on education have previously identified the trend of new-managerialism within the Irish education system (Lynch, Grummell, and Devine 2012, Mac Ruairc 2010). New-managerialism is marked by:

> …the language of the marketplace that delimits discussions and documentation emanating from the DES; the significant increase in forms and frequency of inspections and school/programme evaluations. (Mac Ruairc 2010, 230)

In the UK, studies have also found Catholic school principals struggle with the demands of accountability (Fincham 2010) and rapid changes in the education agenda (Gallagher 2007). In Australia, the growing responsibilities of the role are also proving a disincentive for teachers to apply for principalship (Fraser and Brock 2006).

Secondly, procuring resources for children with SEN, to enable them to integrate into mainstream classes effectively, proves challenging for the principals. They seem to

follow best practice for integration, as outlined in the EPSEN Act 2004 (GoI 2004), but resourcing the children's needs is challenging. The lack of resources for children with SEN has previously been identified as a concern by others (Coolahan et.al 2017).

The third major challenge experienced by the principals is the maintenance of school buildings, prefabs and new extensions, mostly due to the lack of expertise and the voluntary nature of BoM. Other studies have highlighted this deficit in the primary school system (Darmody and Smyth 2016; Stynes and McNamara 2019). In order to alleviate this particular challenge, educational researchers and practitioners have recommended that another tier of support be established between the BoM and the DES, similar to the ETBs that manage Community National Schools (Coolahan et al. 2017, Darmody and Smyth 2016, O'Reilly 2012). Some Catholic schools in the UK have been clustered together under multi-academy trusts in order to address governance issues and to allow principals more time for leading teaching and learning (Glackin and Lydon 2018). With all of the challenges involved in principalship, there is evidence that not much has changed over the last two decades in Ireland:

> There is a strong perception throughout the ranks of the principal generally that the role has become extremely difficult if not impossible to deliver effectively. This perception appears to derive from the lack of clarity around the role and a lack of time and resources.   (IPPN 2002, 35)

The principals are aware of the necessity to foster a positive school climate by developing good relationships with children, staff and parents. They seem to have an instinctive aptitude for emotional intelligence, social awareness and managing relationships. These 'soft' elements of leadership and management are recognised by the DES as key competencies for effective principalship in order to enhance teaching and learning (DES 2016b). However, the principals all reported experiences of conflict within their schools. Kitt (2017) points out that conflict is part of human relationships and change within schools. In relation to staff, the principals find that promotions and class allocations are often a cause of conflict. Leadership decisions in these two areas seem to lead to a feeling of isolation among the principals and they have a professional rather than a personal relationship with staff members. Other studies have found that principals experience stress due to poor staff interpersonal relations and the lack of staff support (Darmody and Smyth 2016). Loneliness is part of the leadership landscape of principals in Ireland (Ummanel 2012) and in Australia (Fraser and Brock 2006). Internationally, principals often struggle with allegiances between their staff and government education departments

215

(Kelchtermans, Piot, and Ballet 2011).

Almost all of the principals recounted that they have a good relationship with their DPs who act as confidants and share leadership and responsibility. The relationship between the principal and the DP is considered an important element of an effective, positive school climate (IPPN 2007). The DES circular 63/2017 confirms the importance of the relationship:

> Shared leadership requires openness and willingness on the part of the Principal and Deputy Principal to share and to distribute leadership and management responsibilities in a manner that encourages and supports partnership.
> (DES 2017a, 6)

However, one principal's relationship with the DP had entirely broken down resulting in severe occupational stress and professional disharmony within the school. According to an INTO report from a PDC meeting, conflict between principals and DPs mostly arises due to a lack of communication and trust (INTO 2017). Another study found that:

> Principals were also less satisfied with their jobs where teachers were seen as less open to new developments and where teachers provided less help and support to their colleagues. (Darmody and Smyth 2016, 124)

In her experience of mediation in schools, Kitt concludes:

> Toxic and unresolved conflict is one of the biggest causes of trouble and strife in a school. (Kitt 2017, 65)

Just like the "stumblers" in Flintham's (2011, 171) study, Brian experienced burnout and was considering leaving his position.

In disputes, the principals often act as mediators between children, as well as between parents and teachers. They find parents of children with SEN often have grievances that cannot be resolved despite their best efforts. In relation to managing conflict with parents, the principals all described how they listen and are often willing to compromise in order to resolve conflict. However, some male principals seem more prone to confrontation than female principals. In addition, five principals, four females and one male, also described experiences of conflict with BoM chairpersons. Conflict between principals and pastors was also discovered in Catholic schools in Australia (Fraser and Brock 2006).

Some principals in this study intimated that, on reflection, they had regrets about some of their past decisions and actions. On the one hand, it seems staff members sometimes do not see the principal as a person with innate limitations and needs:

> I find there's very little patience and understanding of the principal as a human
> being.   (Anna)

On the other hand, Kitt (2017) suggests principals can contribute negatively to conflict situations. In addition, Morgan and Sugrue surmised that "internal strife" or "turbulence in the personal lives of principals" can affect the school climate (2008, 18).

7.5.3. Leadership styles

Values seem to be at the core of the principals' leadership styles. They all talked about care, respect, and kindness and some of their values, such as forgiveness and compassion, derive from their beliefs and faith. In order to discover the influence of faith on their principalship, the data were analysed and the principals were categorised according to their leadership styles: distributive and shared (1), authentic (3), ethical (1), moral (6), servant (3), spiritual (1) and contemplative (3).

The principals all talked about how they try to distribute leadership with the ISM team and other staff members but only one principal specifically stated she adopts this leadership style:

> People here generally work very well together and are good at taking things on
> but then I have to relinquish control as well.   (Josephine)

In the distributive leadership model, principals share tasks, responsibilities and leadership with other teachers (Duignan 2008, Harris and Spillane 2008). However, the main difficulty with this model, according to the principals, is that it depends on middle management teachers who are already overburdened and on volunteer teachers who are not paid to take on extra responsibilities. This issue can be traced back to the 2008 recession when cutbacks in education resulted in a reduction in middle management posts (Coolahan et al. 2017). Furthermore, the teaching principals reported it is almost impossible to distribute leadership in small schools, an issue previously identified by Mac Ruairc (2010). Notably, the principals are all familiar with the distributive leadership model as it is embedded in the quality framework for primary schools (DES 2016b). Moreover, faith seems to colour the distributive leadership style: Marie Therese reported that she does not "lead from the top" because of her faith.

The three principals who mostly adopt authentic leadership have a well-developed sense of self and their beliefs and values. They engage in extra-curricular activities such as sports and choir that demonstrate their authenticity to others.

217

> I'm still playing sports locally, so they might see me playing soccer or at the local hurling field. So, they know that I'm human and that I don't live in the school and sure this is me. (Aidan)

These three principals resemble authentic leaders who:

> …stay their course and convey to others, oftentimes through actions, not just words, what they represent in terms of principles, values and ethics.
> (Avolio and Gardner 2005, 329-330)

The principals in the ethical and moral groups form the largest group. Their actions seem to derive from moral values, "consistent with personal and organizational values which are in turn derived from a coherent ethical system" (West-Burnham 2009, 64). For example, when asked how faith influences her leadership, Eimear answered:

> I don't lie, I don't embezzle money. (Eimear)

However, when asked about the significance of Jesus in her life she stated:

> I'm not saying Jesus isn't important but if you mean 'Do I think about him a lot?' No. (Eimear)

Therefore, their moral leadership styles seem to be mostly based on Gospel values, rather than Jesus as role model. Significantly, teaching RE from within the Catholic school tradition seems to have a strong influence on their moral lives, as discussed previously. Deirdre is the exception in this group:

> I don't have religious beliefs, but I have a very strong moral compass and I believe in doing the right thing. (Deirdre)

Similarly, most of the participants in McHugh's (2015) study also demonstrated moral leadership and most worked in CPSs.

The three principals in the servant leadership group work in schools with children from immigrant families and in socially deprived areas. They resemble principals in other studies who were highly motivated to make a difference in the lives of students in deprived areas (Flintham 2011, RTU and LDS 2009). In this group, only Vincent explicitly stated that he is motivated by Gospel values:

> Number one, is all those things that we do are underpinned by Gospel values.
> (Vincent)

However, he also stated that his relationship with Jesus was "at an infant stage." Thus, no principal in the servant leadership group seems to be inspired "to lead as Jesus led"

(Nuzzi 2000, 265). Instead, they seem inspired by their care for the children:

> Love is the power that drives everything. (Vincent)

His motivation resembles Sergiovanni's theory:

> Servant leadership requires that one loves those who are being served.
> (Sergiovanni 2005, 100)

Notably, international studies have found that principals adopt servant leadership with Jesus as their model when they engage in faith development courses and retreats for Catholic school principals (Stripe and Donoghue 2014, Nsiash and Walker 2013, Zamora 2013).

Anna seems to mostly adopt a spiritual leadership style: Jesus Christ is her model and she goes on retreat regularly to renew her spiritual energy. Her spiritual leadership is based on "communion with God" and "ritualistic practices, prayer, or meditating" (Thompson 2008, 164). Anna stated:

> I see Jesus as a very kind and loving person that took time to be with himself and be present, and that's the side of me as a Christian that I'm developing. (Anna)

She resembles the spiritual leaders in Flintham's (2011) study who were inspired by 'reservoirs of hope' and spiritual leaders who 'bring their souls to work' (Benefiel 2005b).

The three principals in the contemplative leadership group regularly pray about challenges and conflict at school.

> I would've spent two whole weeks debating a staff move…So, if one doesn't have an inner faith, I don't know what one is going to rely on. (Órla)

Finding a quiet time for reflection and praying for God's help is their main method of contemplation. This process seems less complex than the contemplative model described by Schuttloffel (2008, 2013) in which principals align their decisions with Church doctrines and theology in a metacognitive process. In addition, their mode of contemplation is not as developed as the *examen* in Ignation contemplation model (Lowney 2003). Notably, the three principals in the contemplative leadership group have a strong faith, have experienced deep suffering in their lives and are in the orthodox religious group.

In general, the principals all adopt a democratic approach by seeking staff collaboration and consensus, they all use a blend of leadership styles, and adopt a 'contingency

219

approach' (Bush and Glover 2014). For example, Deirdre revealed:

> I'm a conglomerate of a load of different styles, and it depends on what I'm managing, to be honest, depending on the situation. (Deirdre)

Her statement reflects Clegg's hypothesis:

> The essence of good leadership is the ability to judge what style of leadership will be appropriate and effective in a given situation and context and the ability to operate out of that style. (Clegg 2012, 72)

There is no evidence to suggest that the principals act as instructional leaders by monitoring or evaluating other teachers within schools, a style endorsed by the OECD (Pont, Nusche, and Moorman 2008) and proposed by the DES (CSL 2017). They all revealed they model their leadership on previous principals and family members in the profession. However, they are aware of both sides of their previous principals' leadership styles, as they aspire to emulate their virtues and avoid their vices. This suggests that it is important for teachers and aspirant principals to witness good principalship practice as part of the process of becoming responsible, effective and caring principals.

This study finds that the principals all face similar everyday routines, challenges and conflict in their schools. Significantly, faith influences most of their leadership styles, moral leadership is the most used style and only the believers exercise spiritual and contemplative leadership styles. However, their leadership styles seem inspired by Gospel values rather than Jesus as a role model. Faith is a source of resilience for those in the orthodox and creative religious groups when faced with adversity; they are aware of God's presence, they trust in Him, they pray about difficulties, and they explicitly and intentionally open themselves to God's grace through their spiritual and religious practices. However, the believers did not mention their faith communities and do not seem to rely on them for help or support. This contrasts sharply with other principals in Australia and the UK who drew succour from their faith communities (Flintham 2011).

7.6. Theme 6: A Vision of the Catholic School

> …the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture.
> (Schein 1985, 2)

Developing the Catholic school culture is interpreted in this study as a manifestation of the behavioural (hands) aspect of the principals' faith. This section analyses the role of the principals' faith in how they develop a distinctive Catholic school ethos, how they

forge links with the home and parish, and their vision of education.

7.6.1. *The Catholic ethos*

The Catholic ethos was very evident from the visible Catholic signs and symbols on display in all of the schools. The signs and symbols in the principals' offices seem to reflect their inner faith dispositions: sixteen principals had religious signs and symbols; and the two principals who are agnostic had no religious iconography. Paying attention to tradition, ritual, and symbols is part of creating a culture in all schools (Bolman and Deal 2010, Deal and Peterson 2009). In relation to Catholic schools, both Earl (2011) and Cook (2001) highlight the importance of displaying Catholic signs and symbols and continuing traditional spiritual practices to create a Catholic school culture. However, the visible ethos does not always reflect the active culture:

> Attending only to crosses, mission statements and other external manifestations of ethos is the equivalent of washing only the outside of the vessel (Mt 23:26). Attention must be paid to the inherent operative culture in Catholic institutions.
> (Conway 2015, 265)

As part of the invisible Catholic ethos, a few principals identified Jesus Christ as the role model for the school and their rhetoric reflects the espoused *modus operandi* for a Catholic school (CCE 1977, 1997, 2014).

> Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school … He is the One Who ennobles man, gives meaning to human life, and is the Model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils. (CCE 1977, §34-35)

The principals facilitate the teaching of the RE curriculum (IEC 2015) whereby children are formed in faith from within the Catholic tradition (Hession 2015). By listening to the story of Jesus in the RE curriculum, children are formed in 'Catholic anthropology' (Groome 2011) and 'Catholic morality' (Hession 2015). Most of the principals also have a Christian anthropological and moral outlook on life and death, as discussed in *Theme 1*. According to Sullivan (2006), Catholic school leaders have a distinctive view of humanity and creation and see Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life. Regardless of their beliefs, the principals all partake in a distinctive 'Catholic spirituality' (D'Souza 2012, IEC 2015) as they say prayers with children at assemblies, facilitate sacramental preparation and celebrations, and the school year follows the liturgical calendar. In relation to 'Catholic cosmology' (Groome 2011), only Eimear identified caring for the earth as part of the Catholic school ethos even though most of the principals see nature as part of God's creation, as discussed in *Theme 2*. While Vincent and Henry believe Gospel

values are distinctive elements of their schools, others think care, kindness and respect are common to all schools. Stock (2013) reminds us that Catholic schools specifically teach students to lead their lives according to Gospel values as taught by Jesus in the beatitudes. Significantly, the schools seem to adopt a value system and Catholic culture without necessarily identifying Jesus Christ as their source.

The principals are all aware of the tradition of Catholic schooling and a few referred to the high quality of teaching, learning and discipline in Catholic schools.

> Catholic schools have a standard of excellence throughout the world, as well as care for the student, strong academic skills and equally the opportunity to develop as a whole person, either with music and sport and various things. Those are always well done in Catholic schools, so there's great richness in it. (Gráinne)

Sullivan (2012) outlines the long tradition of Catholic schooling that emerged from monastic times, also referred to as 'Catholic historicity' by Groome (2011). Although the principals did not talk about the history of Catholic education, they are aware of the Irish tradition and a few expressed gratitude to the Church for establishing schools in Ireland. Contrastingly, Sugrue and Furlong perceived the Catholic tradition negatively in relation to the principals in their study:

> The weight of tradition circumscribes their identities as they labour to create schools of the future.   (Sugrue and Furlong 2002, 205)

Most of the principals in this study are happy to continue the Catholic tradition. Significantly, most follow the Catholic tradition in their personal lives and are happy to continue the Catholic tradition of education in their professional lives. Boeve (2003) points out that in order for the Catholic tradition to survive, it must have witnesses who practise the tradition as part of their lives. In light of this supposition, the believers in this study probably act as faith witnesses for others as they adhere to the Catholic tradition.

The principals all welcome non-Catholic children in their schools and have found ways to include them in religious celebrations if they so wish. In this regard, they follow the guidelines of the wider Church (CCE 2013) and the Irish Church (CSP 2015a, ICBC 2008) by including children of all faith backgrounds in Catholic schools. Belmonte and Cranston's (2009) finding that Catholic schools in Australia have made adjustments to the Catholic school culture in order to cater for higher proportions of non-Catholic children is reflected in the following statement:

> We welcome diversity and have broadened the ethos somewhat to make sure that we're fully inclusive. (Órla)

Notably, the principals were interviewed for this study before the introduction of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 (GoI 2018) that no longer allows schools to use religion as a criterion for admission, thereby removing what became known as the 'baptism barrier'. Therefore, this study finds the schools were inclusive of non-Catholic children even before the enactment of the new legislation. This finding is very different from another study that perceived the inclusion of non-Catholic children as mere tolerance:

> A rhetoric of inclusion [by CPS principals] appears to hide a reality of conformity where the cocoon of routine brokers marginally increased tolerance.
> (Sugrue and Furlong 2002, 202)

Contrastingly, the inclusive nature of the CPSs in this study is very different from Catholic schools in Australia (Benjamin 2010, McLaughlin 2005, Pascoe 2007, Engebretson 2008) and the USA (Baxter 2019, Hunt 2005) where private tuition fees inhibit some Catholic children from attending. Moreover, the schools in this study live out their 'Catholic catholicity' (Groome 2011) by welcoming children of all faiths and none. The schools also live out their 'Catholic politics' (ibid.) by welcoming children with SEN in mainstream schools and children from disadvantaged backgrounds in all schools and especially in DEIS schools.

7.6.2. The tripartite approach

The principals seem to perceive priests as the embodiment of the parish and identified them as primary agents of evangelisation. However, the quantity and quality of input from the parish seems to be determined by the age, capability and workload of the priest. Mahon (2017) also found that there was poor to mixed support from parishes and only one out of eight of the schools in that study had regular visits from parish personnel. Notably, voluntary parish groups were involved in developing children's faith in four schools in this study.

In relation to parents, the principals think most parents send their children to Catholic schools because of tradition and only a minority foster their children's faith. There was one exception to this pattern in a school in the Northwest where parents attend Sunday Mass regularly and the priest is very involved in school management:

> You are in a part of the country where Catholicism is still very strong. (Eoghan)

223

In general, the principals recounted most parents engage well with sacramental preparation Masses in parishes in which they are conducted, similar to a study by Gilligan (2008). However, after these two sacramental celebrations, the principals have observed that most parents disengage from their involvement in the parish. Mahon (2017) also found that most families in that study were not involved in their parishes between the two sacraments. Most of the principals in this study think that parents regard the sacraments as cultural events. Significantly, Coll's (2005) observation of the sacraments is similar to Aisling's experience.

> The real work for the preparation for these sacraments is left more often than not
> to the school. (Coll 2005, 328)

> Like some kids, they'd go to a school Mass maybe at Christmas and they'd say,
> "This is my second time ever to have Communion." It's just a joke and this is a
> country school in a very traditional area that would have great faith. (Aisling)

However, the principals also think parents lead busy lives, have other priorities and distractions but still want their children to attend a CPS. Non-attendance at Mass among parents and students is not unique to Ireland. Secularisation and a lack of commitment to the institutional Church affect Catholic schools in England (Watkins 2018), Australia (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013a, b) and the USA (Manning 2018). Instead of parents, the principals identified grandparents as the main faith witnesses for children. Previously, O'Murchu identified the phenomenon of retirees acting as "wise elders" in relation to spirituality and faith (2014, 13).

As for teachers' faith, the principals all think that they are 'a mixed bag' with a variety of sensibilities regarding beliefs, faith, religion and moral perspectives. They believe younger teachers do not have the same faith as older generations and most do not attend Mass regularly. However, the principals all reported that no teacher in their schools had expressed a conscientious objection to teaching RE. According to INTO surveys (2004, 2013), the percentage of teachers willing to teach RE has reduced, albeit very few do not teach the subject. Contrastingly, the principals recounted anecdotes of teachers who voluntarily contribute to the preparation of children for the sacraments and attend the ceremonies on Saturdays even when they do not teach those classes.

> I think because maybe there's a history of schools doing it so well themselves,
> looking after the faith, relying on your staff. I feel if I wasn't as proactive as I
> am, and my staff, because we want everything to be right, I'm not sure if it was
> left to the parish that it would actually happen. (Órla)

However, one must question the wisdom of CPSs continuing the tradition of co-ordinating sacramental celebrations, despite the good intentions of principals and teachers, when the primary responsibility for children's faith development lies with parents and the parish:

> The [Catholic] school and its teachers support parents/guardians and their parish
> in the Christian initiation of children, not the other way round. (IEC 2010, 146)

A few of the principals suspect that teachers object to moral teachings of the Church, similar to the views of participants in Mahon's (2017) study.

> But I suppose there's still things he [Pope Francis] said in relation to
> homosexuality and that still upsets them [teachers]. It's not treating people as
> equals. I don't think Jesus would have been like that.   (Anna)

Principals in another study had expressed concern that the Catholic school ethos hinders an effective delivery of the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum in CPSs (NCCA 2019). Therefore, it seems there is a disjuncture between Catholic teachers' private moral views, the moral teaching of the Church regarding gender and sexuality, and social norms in Ireland. The situation in CPSs in Ireland may very soon be like Australia where teachers under fifty years old are not involved in the Church:

> Church is another country. They don't always feel at home there, or understand
> its language.   (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013b, 178)

Notably, no principal made reference to faith development opportunities for teachers. Advocates of Catholic schools have previously expressed concern about teachers' faith (Clegg 2012, Lane 2012, O'Connell and Meehan 2012, Tuohy 2007). While the Church recommends the BoM offers opportunities for spiritual reflection for staff (IEC 2010), no principal referred to such provision. Teachers have been identified as the key agents of evangelisation in Catholic schools (Vatican II 1965b, CCE 1982).

> But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost
> entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. (Vatican II 1965b, §8)

However, it appears the ability of the CPS sector to carry out its mission to evangelise will imminently be unsustainable if teachers' faith is not nourished.

Significantly, Inglis' (2007) theory that Catholic schools contribute to cultural Catholicism in Ireland is borne out by this study. There was an overall consensus among the principals that the CPS, rather than the home or parish, is the main locus of children's evangelisation, an issue identified by Catholic school scholars almost three decades ago

in Ireland (Coll 2005, Kennedy 1999, Lane 1991, Ryan 2008, Tuohy 2007). The sacraments are truly "in trouble" (Coll 2005) because they have turned into cultural events for most families. The 'core set of believers' (Tuohy 2006) in these schools has reduced and the schools have possibly undergone a detraditionalisation process because of secularisation and pluralisation, similar to other Catholic schools (Mahon 2017, Byrne and Devine 2018). Notably, there is a sense of frustration among almost all of the principals about the untenable expectation to develop children's faith with poor support from most homes and declining support from most parishes.

7.6.3. An appreciation of Catholic education

The principals all expressed their desire for children to learn and to be happy. Therefore, they all follow the precept that a Catholic school, first and foremost, provides a high-quality education (CCE 1977). The priority of learning in these schools reflects Archbishop Diarmuid Martin's statement at an IPPN Conference 2005:

> The primary ethos of any school should be an educational one.
> (Archbishop Diarmuid Martin)

Sullivan (2000) and Tuohy (2006) both discuss how Catholic school principals need to prioritise student learning and excellence in education as well as providing opportunities for evangelisation. As children's education and wellbeing take precedence in the principals' minds, the principals all adopt educational leadership (West-Burnham 2009) rather than acting as business or company leaders. The Church (CCE 2013, §85) and Sullivan (2000) discourage thinking of a school as a business and encourage principals to be educational leaders.

The principals all stated that the most rewarding aspect of their job is contact time with children and staff, similar to a large-scale study of principals in Ireland (RTU and LDS 2009). Developing relationships and fostering community spirit are important aspects of building a Catholic school culture (CCE 1988, 2007, ICBC 2008) and are the hallmarks of 'Catholic sociology' (Groome 2011). Relationships seem to be the basis of learning in their schools; they all seem to strive to create an "ecology of relationships", and an "ecology of community" that form the basis of an "ecology of knowledge" in their schools (D'Orsa and D'Orsa 2013a, 177). Their desire to form relationships and build community reflects the loving nature of the Holy Trinity (Rohr 2016, Sachs 1991) and their rhetoric reflects "a flow of love, and also of grace" (CCE 1988 §112).

> When Christians say *communion*, they refer to the eternal mystery, revealed in Christ, of the communion of love that is the very life of God-Trinity.
>
> (CCE 2007, §10)

The principals' vision resembles the Irish Catholic Bishops' vision that Catholic schools "aspire(s) to create an open, happy, stimulating, and mutually respectful community environment" (ICBC 2008, 2). Although they made no direct reference to the Kingdom of God, the principals seem to consciously and unconsciously build 'kingdoms' of loving relationships in their schools. Notably, the Church (Vatican II 1965b, CCE 1977, 1982, 2007) and others (Groome 2011, Sultmann and Brown 2016) perceive Catholic schools as contributing to the Kingdom of God. However, the principals also reported conflict in their schools that reveals the presence of human weakness and sin, as described in Christian anthropology (Groome 2011, Jones and Barry 2015). One wonders how staff can be encouraged to adopt the Gospels values of forgiveness and compassion as ways of addressing disagreements in CPSs.

While the principals do not oversee the RE curriculum or sacramental preparation throughout the school, they are aware of whether these are being taught. A few principals discussed hiring teachers who are willing to teach RE. Notably, there is no history of principals in Ireland monitoring or evaluating teachers' professional work (Flood 2011, Mac Ruairc 2010) and the principals seem to rely on diocesan advisors to support the teaching of RE in classes. They did not refer to the schools' mission statements and did not express a desire to impose their faith perspectives on other staff. Instead, Marie Therese talked about her willingness to accommodate any teacher who did not wish to teach RE. Significantly, most seem to predominately give witness to their faith rather than undertake a missionary role. This approach is very different from the missionary role expected of principals in Australia and the USA where Catholic schools are in the minority. For example, in Australia D'Orsa and D'Orsa (2013a) describe Catholic school principals as 'explorers, guides and meaning makers' who are expected to fulfill faith leadership roles in their schools and parishes (Belmonte and Rymarz 2019, Neidhart and Lamb 2010). In the USA, it is proposed that the Catholic school is "first and foremost a community of faith and a gathering of disciples" (Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt 2013, 3) and some Catholic elementary principals there consider themselves faith leaders (Rieckhoff 2014). Contrastingly, the principals in this study all perceive themselves as school leaders with developing the Catholic school ethos as one of their many roles. Their approach resembles elementary school principals in another study that, "saw themselves as school

leaders, with the role of faith leader as one of the many other duties and responsibilities they held" (Rieckhoff 2014, 46). By their witness, the believers in this study probably influence the Catholic school culture and the faith of other teachers in their schools, as found in a study of Catholic schools in Scotland (Coll 2009). Moreover, most of the principals appear to lead quiet lives of faith in a postmodern secular culture, as discussed in *Theme 2,* and they also seem to take this approach when promoting the Catholic school ethos. However, there is a sense of loneliness about the believers' faith journeys, as most share their faith only with children in school and not with adults.

While the principals all fulfill their responsibility to uphold the Catholic ethos as prescribed in *Share the Good News* (IEC 2010) and the *Catholic Primary School Management Handbook* (CPSMA 2016), their faith influences how they develop the Catholic ethos. They all say prayers at school assemblies and facilitate the teaching of RE and sacramental preparation. Moreover, the believers volunteer to take RE classes, arrange school Masses and ensure Catholic signs and symbols are visible in school. Individual principals have also taken further steps by introducing faith development experiences for children such as restorative practice and Christian meditation. Contrastingly, Mahon (2017) found only one out of eight principals in that study was the driving force behind the Catholic school ethos. Notably, in three of the schools in this study other teachers take on a faith leadership role and promote the Catholic ethos. Significantly, this study finds that the believers actively and creatively promote the Catholic ethos because of their faith and the principals who are agnostic uphold the Catholic ethos out of a sense of duty.

7.7. *Theme 7: A Question of Patronage*

> The main site of struggle over the future of the Church has been in education. Once it loses control of the management of primary schools and the denominational form of religious instruction, the greater the danger that faith will not be passed on to the next generation. And yet, despite the result of the marriage equality referendum and the development of opposition to the Constitution on abortion, there appears to be little public interest or opposition to, the Church's control of primary education. This may be because many parents are happy for their children to have a Catholic cultural formation.
>
> (Inglis 2017, 22-23)

Almost all of the principals think there is a need for CPSs within the primary school system for children whose parents want them to attend. One of the main functions of Catholic schools is to assist parents in developing children's faith (Pope John Paul II 1983). Almost all of the principals have had positive experiences of the patronage support

structures such as contact with diocesan education secretariats, diocesan advisors and the CPSMA. A few principals made suggestions for improvements such as: providing substitute cover for teachers attending CPD for the RE curriculum *Grow in Love* (IEC 2015); a financial service for CPSs; more school visits by priests and bishops; and retreats for children.

A few principals stated there should be more multidenominational primary schools, as suggested by the Catholic Church and some commentators (CSP 2012, Drumm 2012, ICBC 2007, Mullen 2012, O'Reilly 2012, Tuohy 2013). However, no principal suggested that his or her school would be divested to another patron. This finding is in line with the IPPN (2011) survey in which most principals perceived the need for changes to the patronage system but most would oppose a change of patron for their own schools. It also reflects Tuohy's (2013) supposition that school divestment is hindered by local politics.

> All politics is said to be local: it is one thing to believe in divesting schools and promoting diversity in all schools; it is another to divest a particular school in a particular parish with particular parishioners.   (Tuohy 2013, 263)

Notably, Aidan, thinks the ETBs have better supports for principals and the multi-belief RE curriculum in Community National Schools caters for diversity and pluralism. His observation about ETBs follows the recommendation that all primary schools have an extra tier between the BoM and DES to help manage schools (Coolahan et al. 2017, Darmody and Smyth 2016, O'Reilly 2012). In relation to RE in Community National Schools, research by Mullally (2018) found that the Catholic majority had been given more time during school hours for sacramental preparation in the past and some parents of minority faiths did not wish their children to learn about other faiths. Therefore, it seems very difficult for any type of primary school to satisfy the needs of all who attend.

Ten principals indicated they would only work in CPSs as their faith is integral to their lives and eight principals inferred that they would be willing to work as principals in multidenominational primary schools. The preference of the majority seems linked in part to their Catholic identity, similar to a study that found Catholic identity was an important part of twelve CPS principals' characters (Sugrue and Furlong 2002). The personal faith of most of the principals in this study is aligned with the Catholic school ethos. The willingness of eight out of eighteen principals (44%) to change patron is also similar to a study by the IPPN (2011) that found 44% of principals would prefer to work

in multidenominational primary schools.

In this study, generational differences and the role of faith seem to influence their preference for patron (Table 7) (Appendix I Analysis of Generational Differences). Most principals in the older and middle age groups are orthodox Catholics and only want to work as principals of CPSs. The three principals in the younger age group are also orthodox Catholics but are willing to work in multidenominational schools. Interestingly, of the two principals who are agnostic, one would like to continue to work within the Catholic school tradition and the other thinks the Church should not be involved in schools. Significantly, they all fulfill their responsibility to uphold the Catholic school ethos as part of their jobs (CPSMA 2016) regardless of their preference for school patron or their willingness to work in a multidenominational school.

School Patronage	Younger (30-39)	Middle (40-49)	Older (50-59)	Total
Willingness to work only in a CPS	0	4	6	10
Willingness to work in a multidenominational primary school	3	3	2	8
Total	3	7	8	18

Table 7 Principals' willingness to change patron according to generation

From personal correspondence with the DES, it was discovered that only six CPSs have been transferred to multidenominational patrons between 2015 to 2020. In light of this study and the progress to date, the government's plans to divest schools through the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity Process (DES 2019a) may not happen at the pace intended. The government's target to have 400 multidenominational schools by 2030 (DES 2016a) may only be achieved by building new schools, as has been the trend since 2008 with the establishment of Community National Schools (DES 2019c). However, some Catholic writers suggest that if Catholic schools are not fulfilling their mission to evangelise, alternative needs should be sought to develop faith (Conway 2015, Sullivan 2000, Tuohy 2013):

> There may come a time when this [the Catholic school] is not seen as necessarily
> the right way forward, or at least not as the *only* possible strategy for upbringing
> and formation in the faith.   (Sullivan 2000, 16)

Instead of over-relying on Catholic schools, it is clear that the Church needs to establish alternative ways of developing the faith of adults by following the plans in *Share the Good News* (2010) and future recommendations from the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education, DCU research project into Adult RE and Faith Development (2018-2021).

7.8. Main Findings

Finding 1: This study found that most of the principals embody their faith cognitively, affectively and behaviourally. On the cognitive level; sixteen believe in God; two are agnostic; and their theological literacy and understanding vary. In relation to religious groupings (Inglis 2014): fifteen are orthodox Catholics, two are in the cultural group, one is in the creative group and two are in the disenchanted group. Their spiritual practices vary considerably according to gender and a few females who practise meditation or go on pilgrimage and retreats have a deeper affective relationship with Jesus Christ. They all adopt the Golden Rule as their moral code and faith influences the actions of most. A few expressed more liberal moral views on gender and sexuality than Church teaching, as expressed by others within the Church (Molloy 2013, Regan 2013, Tighe-Mooney 2018). They are aware of the silence among staff about religious and moral matters.

Finding 2: The believers associate life experiences such as nature, birth and death with experiences of God and these are occasions when the two agnostics wonder about God. Regardless of their faith, relationships with family and friends are a priority for all of the principals. A few believers who experienced intense suffering, turned to God for help and have a deeper relationship with Him.

Finding 3: The principals' faith is influenced by the culture in which they grew up, live and work. They were all 'cradle Catholics' and were socialised within Catholic schools and most made a decision in early adulthood to follow their faith. They have all taught RE, prepared children for the sacraments and worked for most of their professional lives within the Catholic school ethos and these experiences have deepened the faith of most. They all think Irish society is more open. However, the believers mostly talk to children rather than adults about faith. Conversely, the two agnostics do not talk about their lack of belief in school. The recent Church scandals have been a shameful experience for all which has resulted in some principals not attending Mass regularly.

Finding 4: Most think principalship and teaching is a vocation. The principals did not associate their motivation to apply for principalship with a vocation or a calling from

God. Instead they were motivated by career progression or a desire to continue the school ethos. However, there was ambiguity about the word 'vocation', similar to another study of principals in England and Wales (Watkins 2018). They all engage in CPD for school leadership, most have post graduate qualifications but only one principal has undertaken a Master's degree in Christian Leadership in Education. In relation to appointments, three females reported gender discrimination and the data show that more females had academic qualifications than males prior to appointment.

Finding 5: One of the main findings is that faith influences how most of the principals cope with everyday challenges and conflict and faith influences the leadership styles of most. The administrative principals have very different routines from the teaching principals who often struggle to cope with teaching a class and administration. The main challenges the principals face relate to implementing changes in order to comply with legislation and DES circulars, procuring resources for children with SEN and school buildings and maintenance. Conflict often arises because of staff promotions and class allocations and parents of children with SEN often have unresolved grievances. The principals all adopt a blend of different leadership styles and a democratic approach. Faith influences their leadership styles; moral leadership is the most used style among the principals and only the believers adopt spiritual and contemplative leadership styles. However, most of the believers are inspired by Gospels values rather than Jesus being their role model for leadership.

Finding 6: In relation to developing the Catholic school ethos, the principals all continue the Catholic school tradition by saying prayers at assemblies and by facilitating the teaching of RE and the preparation of children for the sacraments. The believers display Catholic signs and symbols in their offices but the two who are agnostic do not display any Catholic iconography. The principals do not oversee the teaching of RE and leave this responsibility to diocesan advisors. They all adopt Gospel values and develop a Catholic culture in school but they do not necessarily associate these values or culture with Jesus Christ. Their schools are inclusive as they welcome children of all faiths and none. Children's learning and wellbeing take precedence in their vision of education and the most rewarding aspect of their job is fostering relationships with children and staff. The schools receive mixed support from parishes and poor support from most parents to develop children's faith. Almost all of the principals believe the sacraments are "in trouble" (Coll 2005) and have become cultural events. In relation to teachers, the

232

principals think most young teachers do not attend Mass, some do not agree with moral teachings of the Church, but no teacher has objected to teaching RE.

Finding 7: The principals' experiences of the patron support services have been very positive. Many expressed their disappointment at the lack of commitment by parents and support from parishes to develop children's faith and some think there should be more multidenominational schools. Ten principals would prefer to only work in CPSs and eight inferred they are willing to work in multidenominational schools.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Easter 2019

This is the first day of the Easter holidays. Aisling is the last principal to be interviewed. She is in her thirties and is dressed in a tracksuit after tidying the school that morning. We are near the end of our conversation. We sip our coffee and look out at the river bulging over its banks, spreading across the field under the grey ominous clouds as the bright yellow daffodils wave in the breeze. Aisling sighs as she looks at me, "It's not easy." She tells me about the joys and struggles of being a teaching principal of a small rural school. She recounts the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard from the sixth-class curriculum and explains how it helped her deal with a parent. She tells me that she bought a cake for the children in second class to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. She arranges school Masses and intends to go herself during Easter. She is planning another trip to volunteer in Africa this summer. After the interview, she smiles and waves goodbye, trusting in my confidence and hoping that her stories will make a difference. As I drive away, I am left with the feeling that yet again I have met another person who is a mixture of sacredness and humanity.

During the next year, I listen back to the principals' stories on the recorder and think of Max van Manen's metaphor of digging in the sand to get to 'the bottom of things' and Martin Heidegger's definition of hermeneutic phenomenology, "to let what shows itself be seen from itself" (BT §7, 32). Each principal is different and yet they are similar: they have told me their personal and professional experiences that are both unique and universal. As I write and rewrite, I try to discover the truth about the role of Christian faith in their lives that seems almost enigmatic and clothed in mystery. Their stories and my story connect and we are at one in what seems to be an 'interpretive circle.'

8.1. Conclusion

Aisling embodies faith in a unique and creative way. Faith manifests in her head as beliefs and theological understandings, in her heart as spirituality and love, and in her hands as her moral code and principalship practice. The principals are all practitioners who deal with the everyday realities of leading and managing schools. For most, faith is part of their challenges and conflicts, their rewards and relationships, their leadership styles and

how they develop school culture. While most feel God's presence, a few feel His absence.

For the believers, God seems like the loom upon which their life tapestries are strung: they put their trust in Him to varying degrees; and faith is a source of their morality, duty, resilience and discernment. The believers seem to somewhat take for granted their groundedness in God and their relationship with Him. On the other hand, the two principals who are agnostic question God's existence and wonder at the strength of other people's faith and they desire to have faith. However, if God is the loom and the principals are the designers, the image of Jesus Christ seems somehow faded, hidden or brushed aside on some of the principals' life tapestries. Moreover, they all wonder about God and seem immersed in the mystery of God. Faith plays an important role in most of their personal and professional lives and most lead quiet lives of faith; hope manifests in the entire educational enterprise as they all strive to make a difference in the lives of children; and love seems embedded in their relationships and school communities.

The following conclusions and recommendations are drawn from the main findings of the research.

Conclusion 1: The majority of the principals have a Christian anthropological outlook on life and death and embody their faith cognitively, affectively and behaviourally. While Jesus Christ holds a central place in their faith, their relationship with Him is more cognitive than affective. Most are "faith dwellers" (Taylor 2007, 533) who participate in the Church, some are "spiritual seekers" (ibid..) and the two who are agnostic do not totally adopt "exclusive humanism" (ibid., 27) as they still wonder about God and other people's faith. The principals' moral outlooks stem from a combination of both Christian morality and a natural law to do good. With regard to "inner-secularisation" (Gallagher 2006, 5), some expressed more liberal moral views on gender and sexuality than Church teaching. While the principals are well intentioned in regard to faith and the Catholic school ethos, their faith development has been neglected. Moreover, there has been a deficit in the provision of faith development opportunities for principals even though the Church (CCE 2007, 2014, IEC 2010) and others (Friel 2018, Grace 2010, Richardson 2014, Tuohy 2007, Wilkin 2018) have long recognised this need.

Conclusion 2: For the believers, their life experiences are intertwined with their faith journeys. They have a sacramental imagination as God seems to reveal Himself to them through nature. Relationships are a priority for all of the principals and love is written

on their hearts. Therefore, they all exemplify Rahner's theory of the 'supernatural existential' (1961) whereby we are graced by God and open to communication with Him. They also exemplify Heidegger's (2010) theory that care is at the core of the human being. Personal suffering and crises have led a few principals to turn to God and that has resulted in them having a deeper sense of faith and they have moved from seeking God to knowing that He dwells with them. However, those who experienced crises drew on their own resources of faith and spirituality rather than a community of faith for support.

Conclusion 3: There are three major cultural 'cycles of influence' on the principals' faith: their childhood experiences; the Catholic school subculture; and postmodern culture. Most have formed a "Catholic habitus" (Inglis 2007, 205) from their Catholic upbringing and Catholic schooling. They all made decisions about faith in early adulthood and the believers seem to have reached adult stages of faith, as described by Fowler (2000). As teachers and principals, the Catholic school subculture has a strong influence on their faith whereby most embody what they teach in RE and preparing children for the sacraments through a process of 'learning by teaching.' The Church scandals have shaken the religious commitment of some but most remain loyal to the Church. The believers do not usually talk about faith except to children in school and they experience "secular marginalisation" (Gallagher 2003, 131) outside of school; and the two agnostics do not reveal their unbelief in school.   There is a sense of loneliness among both the believers and the agnostics that they do not reveal their authentic selves in relation to faith.

Conclusion 4: As aspirant and incumbent principals, they have all engaged in extensive professional development provided by the PDST and CSL but only one has undertaken any formal faith development. While most think teaching and principalship is a vocation, their lack of uptake of formal faith development courses means they do not associate the word 'vocation' with a call from God. In an investigation into their motivation to apply for principalship, a few female principals have experienced gender discrimination in principalship appointments and dealing with male chairpersons of BoM. Any form of discrimination is of grave concern within the education system, especially within the Catholic school sector that endorses 'Catholic politics' (Groome 2011) and within the Catholic Church that is meant to act as an instrument of equality and justice in building the Kingdom of God (Vatican II 1964, Vatican II 1965a).

Conclusion 5: The principals have extremely busy routines and the demands on teaching

principals are onerous as they juggle teaching and administration. They all face similar challenges because of the under-resourcing of the primary education system and BoM that do not function effectively. Principals find it difficult to distribute leadership in small schools and to already overburdened teachers. Conflict often arises with staff about promotions and class allocations and with parents about unresolved grievances especially in relation to children with SEN. However, one is left wondering how teachers and principals, as Christian disciples, can resolve disagreements with more forgiveness and compassion. For the believers, faith influences their leadership styles and faith is a source of resilience through prayer, religious worship and spiritual practices but they do not rely on communities of faith for support or help. Their journeys of faith are lonely and they need the support and companionship of a faith community.

Conclusion 6: The personal faith of most of the principals is aligned with the Catholic school ethos. The believers follow the Catholic tradition in their personal lives and all of them continue Catholic spiritual traditions in school. The importance of faith in the lives of the principals determines how they develop the Catholic ethos: those who believe in God give witness to their faith and promote the Catholic ethos actively and creatively; and the two principals who are agnostic keep their word to uphold the Catholic ethos and do so out of a sense of duty. Their faith is reflected in the display of Catholic signs and symbols in the principals' offices. The schools all live out their 'Catholic catholicity' (Groom 2011) by welcoming children of all faiths and none and the schools also live out their 'Catholic politics' (ibid.) by welcoming children with SEN and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The principals' vision is to provide for children's education and wellbeing and they try to build 'kingdoms' of loving relationships in schools.

However, most parents do not foster their children's faith or engage in parishes between the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation and parishes offer mixed support to schools. Sacramental celebrations have become more like cultural events rather than threshold experiences of encounter with God. Furthermore, CPSs are contributing to cultural Catholicism as posited by Inglis (2007). In addition, teachers' faith is not being formally nourished even though the ability of the CPS sector to carry out its mission depends on them. There is also silence in staff rooms about matters of faith and morality and it seems teachers do not agree with moral teachings of the Church.

There is a sense of frustration among the principals that CPSs are the main locus of children's faith development, rather than the home or parish. Parents and parishes must

fulfill their responsibility in this regard (IEC 2010). Parish based sacramental celebrations were the norm in 2020 and this time offers an opportunity for parishes and parents to take the lead in co-ordinating the sacraments from now on. CPSs need to be properly supported and resourced if they are to fulfill their mission.

Conclusion 7: Most of the principals prefer to work in CPSs as faith is an integral part of their identity. Those willing to work in multidenominational schools were mostly in the younger and middle age groups. However, the principals think most parents are sending their children to CPSs because of tradition rather than for faith development. Moreover, the future direction of CPSs needs to be discussed openly and honestly.

8.2. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Church should intensify the provision of faith development opportunities for CPS school leaders and teachers in all aspects of their faith: theological, spiritual and moral.

Professional and faith development postgraduate accredited courses for CPS leaders in Ireland should be aligned with the Quality Framework for Primary Schools (DES 2016b, 12) (Appendix A) similar to other universities in the UK, USA, Canada and Australia that align Catholic school leadership modules with national quality frameworks for schools. School leaders should have an opportunity to avail of a dual provision of courses: professional development courses provided by the State and faith development courses provided by the Church, as recommended by Grace (2009) and Sullivan (2006). In particular, an opportunity exists for the Church to provide faith development modules aligned to the existing Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) to cater for those who want a Master's degree in Christian Leadership in Education (MIC, UL). Options such as on-campus lectures, blended learning or full-distance e-learning with the support of a supervisor should be offered, as provided in St. Mary's University in Twickenham for a Master's degree in Catholic School Leadership (Sullivan, Murphy, and Fincham 2015). Theological development for principals and teachers could include modules on: historical Jesus, to develop their knowledge of Him as a person; Christian anthropology, to understand the connection between the life of Jesus and our lives; Christology, to discover the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives today; 'Catholic cosmology' (Groom 2011), to reveal the connection between creation, humanity and God; Christian vocation, to explore how working in CPSs is part of building God's kingdom;

and leadership styles, to discover how to model one's leadership on Jesus.

To deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, spiritual development should include walks in nature, meditation, pilgrimages and participation in the sacraments. School leaders could have their spiritual needs met with retreats, similar to the National Retreat for Catholic Headteachers provided by the National School of Formation in England (Friel 2008). Spiritual development courses should also be available as summer CPD courses that give teachers and principals three Extra Personal Vacation (EVP) days. Spiritual guidance, counselling and mentorship opportunities should be available to teachers and principals at all stages of their careers and especially when they experience crises in their lives. Spiritual guidance could explore ways of resolving conflict and grievances through prayer, forgiveness, compassion, healing and the sacrament of reconciliation.

Catholic teachers and principals need to form communities of faith in order to share, support and celebrate their faith through events and meetings. Support and advisory groups should be formed to give an opportunity for teachers and principals in CPSs to meet and discuss moral issues that affect them and families such as same-sex relationships, separation, divorce and lone parenting. In particular, CPSs need to be open and inclusive, welcome and celebrate the diversity and plurality of all staff, children and families.

Recommendation 2: As schools have become the main locus for children's faith, the Church needs to hold a discussion on the future of CPSs and the recontextualisation of CPSs (DES 2014, Flannery 2019). In relation to schools that want to remain as CPSs: dioceses should support them in developing the Catholic school ethos and provide faith development for teachers; parishes need to establish support groups to develop parents' faith; and the co-ordination of sacramental celebrations should take place in parishes.

Recommendation 3: A quantitative large-scale study is required into the role of faith in the lives of CPS teachers and principals that includes their beliefs, faith development needs and preferences for school patron.

Contribution to Knowledge

The aim of this study was to discover the role of Christian faith in the lives of a cohort of CPS principals in the RoI. The literature review is a contemporary presentation of relevant theories and recent international research that forms a repository and is a source

of knowledge for further research. This hermeneutic phenomenological study delves into the principals' experiences in relation to faith. No other published study has investigated this aspect of principals' lives in this secular postmodern time in Ireland. The combination of the themes and patterns elucidate the phenomenon and uncover the role of faith in their lives. The experiential structures that emerged in this research could be used as a lens to investigate the role of faith in the lives of others. The findings contribute to existing knowledge about CPS principalship and are of interest to researchers and providers of faith development courses for teachers and principals. In addition, the recommendations are an essential part of the study as they provide guidelines for the future development of the CPS sector in the RoI.

Limitations

This is a small-scale qualitative study that provides hermeneutical depth about the faith lives of a cohort of eighteen primary principals working in CPSs. It was limited by the size of the sample and the scope of the interviews. In addition, the principals were self-selected and all seem to have a deep interest in the topic. Therefore, it is difficult to make generalisations regarding the role of faith in the lives of the population of CPS principals. A large-scale quantitative study would complement this research and would yield a broad overview of principals' beliefs, faith development needs and preferences for school patron. Further studies could also be undertaken to explore each of the main findings more extensively and to investigate issues that have emerged in this study.

Hope for the future

It is hoped that children get to know Jesus Christ, they come to see Him in others, they meet Him in the sacraments, and they feel His presence in their journey through life. What is essential to the mission of evangelisation is the faith of parents, teachers and those working in parishes: *Nemo dat quot non habet,* no one can give what they do not have. In this regard, principals hold a pivotal role in CPSs as they lead and manage schools and develop the Catholic school culture.

APPENDIX A

Overview of Looking at Our Schools 2016: Quality Framework for Primary Schools (DES 2016b, 12)

	DOMAINS	STANDARDS
TEACHING AND LEARNING	Learner outcomes	Pupils: enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand themselves and their relationships demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the primary curriculum achieve the stated learning objectives for the term and year
	Learner experiences	Pupils: engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning
	Teachers' individual practice	The teacher: has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress pupils' learning selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning objectives and to pupils' learning needs responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary
	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice	Teachers: value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration work together to devise learning opportunities for pupils across and beyond the curriculum collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	Leading learning and teaching	School leaders: promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning
	Managing the organisation	School leaders: establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability
	Leading school development	School leaders: communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education
	Developing leadership capacity	School leaders: critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice, pupil participation, and pupil leadership build professional networks with other school leaders

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule

Personal Details

Name: _____

Gender: Male ☐   Female ☐

Age Range: 20-29☐   30-39☐   40-49 ☐   50-59 ☐   60+☐

County of Birth: _____

Number of Years as Principal: _____

School Details

Location: City ☐   Town ☐   Rural ☐ Area _____

Type of School: DEIS1☐   DEIS2 ☐   Rural DEIS ☐   Non-DEIS ☐

Number of Teachers in School: _____

Type of Role: Administrative Principal ☐   Teaching Principal ☐

Information Prior to Interview

- This interview should last about one hour.
- I need to gather examples of your experiences and to hear your honest opinions and views and not what you think I might like to hear.
- Take your time when answering a question- don't feel that you have to answer immediately, just because the recorder is running.
- If you don't want to answer a question just say this and I will move on to the next question.
- If at any point you want me to stop the recording or interview, please feel free to state this.
- If you use names of people, the school or the parish, I will change these when I am typing up the interview so that these names remain confidential and anonymous.
- Are you happy that it is being recorded?

Interview Questions

1. What **motivated** you to become a principal?
2. What is your ordinary everyday **experience** of being a principal?
3. In your experience as principal, what do you find most **rewarding**?
4. Can you identify aspects of your work that you find the most **challenging**?
5. How do you see your **relationships** with staff, parents and pupils?
6. Conflict is a normal part of everyday life; can you describe your experience of **conflict** at school and how you deal with it?
7. Have you had the opportunity to undertake **professional development courses** in educational leadership?
8. How would you describe your **leadership style**?
9. Are there people who have been **models of leadership** who have inspired you?
10. Can you describe any **strategies** you use to cope with the challenges of your job?
11. What do you consider is distinctive about a **primary school that is Catholic**?
12. What is like to be a **principal of a Catholic school**?
13. Can you give me an idea about how the **parish** participates in fostering children's faith?
14. To what extent are **parents** involved in fostering children's faith?
15. How do you understand the **teachers'** role in fostering children's faith?
16. What has been your experience of working within the **Catholic school patronage** structures?
17. What do you think about **Catholic Church** being involved in children's education and faith development?
18. On a more personal basis, what does **Christian faith** mean to you?
19. Have you had any experience that you would describe as an experience of **God** in your life?
20. Is the person of **Jesus Christ** significant in your life?
21. Does the concept of a **faith journey** have relevance to you and if so how would you describe your faith journey from childhood to now?
22. Did you ever have a **faith-deepening experience** in your life?
23. What is your experience of participation in the **institutional Church**?
24. What **religious beliefs,** if any, are most important to you?
25. As a principal of a Catholic school, what **sustains** or nurtures your inner life now?
26. **In Ireland today**, how easy is it to be a person of faith or no faith?
27. Do you see the role of principal of a Catholic primary school as a **vocation**?
28. If you see yourself as a person of faith**,** can you tell me specifically how your **faith influences your role as principal** in a Catholic school?
29. Is there **anything else you would like to add** about the meaning of faith for you?

APPENDIX C

Letter of Invitation to Participants

Date

Dear Principal

I am a primary teacher undertaking research as part of a Ph.D. degree and I would like to invite you to participate in research. The aim of the research is to discover the meaning of Christian faith in the lives of principals of Catholic primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. More information is available on the "Information Sheet" and sample questions are available on the "Interview Schedule" included with this letter. It will involve an interview that lasts approximately one hour.

I would really appreciate you taking part in this very topical and relevant research as the voices of principals with different perspectives need to be heard.

If you are willing to take part, please contact me to arrange a time and place convenient to you.

Thank you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely

_____

Máire Campbell

principalscpsroi@gmail.com

APPENDIX D

Participant Information Sheet

What is the study about?

This study involves interviewing principals of Catholic primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Who is undertaking it?

My name is Máire Campbell and I am a primary teacher for more than thirty years and a postgraduate student of Mary Immaculate College (MIC). I am presently completing a Ph.D. by research and dissertation in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies under the joint supervision of Rev. Dr. Denis Robinson and Rev. Prof. Eamonn Conway. The current study will form part of my thesis.

Why is it being undertaken?

The objective of the study is to investigate the meaning of Christian faith in the lives of principals of Catholic primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

What are the benefits of this research?

It is hoped that the data gathered from participants will enhance our understanding of the experiences of principals in Catholic primary schools. This knowledge may be helpful to stakeholders such as the Catholic Primary School Managerial Association (CPSMA), Catholic Colleges of Education, principals, teachers, and parents.

Exactly what is involved for the participants?

If you are willing to participate in the research, I will arrange an interview with you that will last approximately an hour. You will be asked to describe and interpret some of your experiences of Christian faith and educational leadership.

Right to withdraw

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequence.

How will the information be used / disseminated?

The answers from the oral responses from the interviews will be used as part of the research dissertation. A summary of the research may be presented in an academic journal.

How will confidentiality be kept?

The interview will be recorded and the data will be transcribed in a word document. All information gathered will remain confidential and will be stored on a password-protected computer that is only used by me. In the final dissertation a pseudo-name will be given to each participant to maintain his/her anonymity and any names, incidents or locations will be changed or omitted in order to ensure that the principal or the school cannot be identified.

What will happen to the data after research has been completed?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule all research data will be stored for the duration of the study plus three years.

Contact details:

If at any time you have any queries/issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:

Researcher

Máire Campbell

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact the Research Supervisors.

Rev. Dr. Denis Robinson   Rev. Prof. Eamonn Conway
Marino Institute of Education   Mary Immaculate College of Education

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

- I understand what the study is about.

- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage without giving any reason and without consequence.

- I am aware that the interview will be recorded.

- I am aware that the data will be kept confidential and anonymous.

- I have read this form completely; I am 18 years of age or older and am happy to take part in the study.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Researcher

Máire Campbell

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact the Research Supervisors.

Rev. Dr. Denis Robinson   Rev. Prof. Eamonn Conway
Marino Institute of Education   Mary Immaculate College of Education

APPENDIX F

Participants' Profiles

1 Vincent Age Range: 50-59	**2** Marie Therese Age Range: 50-59
3 Noel Age Range: 50-59	**4** Henry Age Range: 30-39
5 Ciara Age Range: 40-49	**6** Órla Age Range: 50-59
7 Kevin Age Range: 40-49	**8** Anna Age Range: 40-49
9 Eimear Age Range: 50-59	**10** Donal Age Range: 40-49
11 Gráinne Age Range: 50-59	**12** Brian Age Range: 40-49
13 Josephine Age Range: 50-59	**14** Deirdre Age Range: 50-59
15 Aidan Age Range: 30-39	**16** Helen Age Range: 40-49
17 Eoghan Age Range: 40-49	**18** Aisling Age Range: 30-39

APPENDIX G

Analysis of Participants' Profiles

Personal Details

Gender	
Male	Female
8	10

Age Range		
Younger (30-39)	Middle (40-49)	Older (50-59)
3	7	8

Place of Birth			
Dublin 6	Kerry 1	Cavan 1	Galway 2
Louth 1	Limerick 2	Donegal 2	Mayo 1
Meath 1			
Kilkenny 1			
Total			
Leinster 9	Munster 3	Ulster 3	Connacht 3

Professional Details

Years as Principal					
1 year	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years
1	1	3	1	1	2
8 years	9 years	10 years	18 years	20 years	
1	2	3	1	2	

Educational Leadership Courses			
PDST courses			
Tóraíocht	*Misneach*	*Forbairt*	*Meitheal*
2	14	2	1
Level 9 and 10 Third Level Courses			
M.Ed. in Education or in related area	M.Ed. in Educational Leadership	M.A. in Christian Leadership in Education	Ph.D. /Doctorate in Education
4	5	1	3

School Details

Location			
City 2	Town 6	Rural 9	
Provinces			
Leinster 13	Munster 1	Ulster 2	Connacht 2
Types of School			
DEIS 1 2	DEIS 2 0	Rural DEIS. 0	Non-DEIS 16
Types of Role			
Administrative 15	Teaching 3		

APPENDIX H

Analysis of Gender Differences

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Principals	8	10	18

Motivation to apply for principalship	Male	Female	Total
Career progression	7	6	13
Continue the ethos	1	4	5
Total	8	10	18

Appointment	Male	Female	Total
External	7	5	12
Internal	1	5	6
Total	8	10	18

Type of Principal	Male	Female	Total
Administrative	6	9	15
Teaching	2	1	3
Total	8	10	18

Postgraduate qualification prior to appointment	Male	Female	Total
Yes	2	7	9
No	6	3	9
Total	8	10	18

Belief in God	Male	Female	Total
Believers	8	8	16
Agnostic	0	2	2
Total	8	10	18

Religious Practice	Male	Female	Total
Orthodox	7	6	13
Creative	0	1	1
Cultural	1	1	2
Disenchanted		2	2
Total	8	10	18

School Patronage	Male	Female	Total
Willingness to work only in a CPS	6	4	10
Willingness to work in a multidenominational PS	2	6	8
Total	8	10	18

APPENDIX I

Analysis of Generational Differences

Age Groups	Younger (30-39)	Middle (40-49)	Older (50-59)	Total
Principals	3	7	8	18

Belief in God	Younger (30-39)	Middle (40-49)	Older (50-59)	Total
Believers	3	7	6	15
Agnostic	0	0	2	2
Total	3	7	8	18

Religious Practice	Younger (30-39)	Middle(40-49)	Older (50-59)	Total
Orthodox	3	4	6	13
Cultural		2		2
Creative		1		1
Disenchanted			2	2
Total	3	7	8	18

School Patronage	**Younger (30-39)**	**Middle (40-49)**	**Older (50-59)**	**Total**
Willingness to work only in a CPS	0	4	6	10
Willingness to work in a multidenominational primary school	3	3	2	8
Total	3	7	8	18

LIST OF REFERENCES

Apostolic Constitution. 1994. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Dublin: Veritas.

Avolio, Bruce J., and William L. Gardner. 2005. "Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership." *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (3):315-338.

Avolio, Bruce J., Fred O. Walumbwa, and Todd J. Weber. 2009. "Leadership: Current Theories, Research, and Future Directions." *Annual Review of Psychology* 60:421-449. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163621.

Baxter, Kevin. 2019. "Avoiding the "Nokia Fate" in Catholic Education: The Case of the United States and the National Catholic Education Association." *Review of Faith & International Affairs* 17 (4):72-75. doi: 10.1080/15570274.2019.1681725.

Beale, Noelle. 2013. "Catholic Generation X School Leaders: Their Impact on the Catholic School." Ph.D., Education, Fordham University, NY.

Belmonte, Angelo, and Neil Cranston. 2009. "The Religious Dimension of Lay Leadership in Catholic Schools: Preserving Catholic Culture in an Era of Change." *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice* 12 (3):294-319.

Belmonte, Angelo, and Richard Rymarz. 2017. "Willing to Lead: The Dual Role of Principal and Religious Education Coordinator in Small Rural Catholic Schools." *Leading & Managing* 23 (2):87-95.

Benefiel, Margaret. 2005a. "The second half of the journey: Spiritual leadership for organizational transformation." *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (5):723-747. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.07.005.

Benefiel, Margaret. 2005b. *Soul at Work: Spiritual Leadership in Organizations*. Dublin: Veritas.

Benefiel, Margaret, and Marjolein Lips-Wiersma. 2005. "Soul at Work, Spiritual Leadership in Organizations." *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* 2 (3):406-409. doi: 10.1080/14766080509518601.

Benjamin, Anne. 2010. "Faithful to uncertainty: Catholic schools and an evangelisation of hope for the poorest." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 2 (2):148-162. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2010.504020.

Black, Glenda Lee. 2010. "Correlational Analysis of Servant Leadership and School Climate." *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice* 13 (4):437-466.

Boeve, Lieven. 2003. *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context*. Belgium: Peeters-Leuven.

Boeve, Lieven. 2019. "Faith in dialogue: the Christian voice in the Catholic dialogue school." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 11 (1):37-50. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2018.1561132.

Bollan, John. 2007. *The Light of His Face: Spirituality for Catholic Teachers*. Dublin: Veritas.

Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence Deal, E. 2010. *Reframing the Path to School Leadership: A Guide for Teachers and Principals*. 2nd ed. USA: Corwin.

Boyle, Michael, Sandria D. Morten, and R. Guerin. 2013. The Catholic Principal Preparation Program Participant Handbook Loyola University Chicago.

Branson, Christopher. 2007. "Effects of Structured Self-reflection on the Development of Authentic Leadership Practices among Queenstand Primary School Principals." *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 35 (2):225-246. doi: 10.1177/1741143207075390.

Branson, Christopher, Maureen Marra, and Michael Buchanan. 2019. "Re-constructing Catholic school leadership: integrating mission, identity and practice." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 11 (2):219-232. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2019.1641053.

Brennan, Niamh. 2011. "Governance Matters." In *Leading and Managing Schools*, edited by Helen O' Sullivan and John West-Burnham, 24-40. UK: Sage.

Bryk, Anthony S. 1996. "Lessons from Catholic High Schools on Renewing our Educational Institutions." In *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, edited by Terence McLaughlin, Joseph O'Keefe and Bernadette O'Keeffe, 25-41. London: Falmer.

Bryk, Anthony S., Valerie E. Lee, and Peter Blakeley Holland. 1993. *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bush, Tony, and Derek Glover. 2014. "School leadership models: what do we know?" *School Leaderhsip and Management* 34 (5):553-571.

Byrne, Gareth, and Patricia Kieran, eds. 2013. *Toward Mutual Ground: Pluralism, Religious Education and Diversity in Irish Schools*. Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press.

Byrne, Richard, and Dympna Devine. 2018. "Catholic schooling with a twist?: A study of faith schooling in the Republic of Ireland during a period of detraditionalisation." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 48 (4):461-477.

Cannon, Helen M. 2004. "Redesigning the Principalship in Catholic Schools." Doctor of Education, Australian Catholic University Strathfield.

CCE. 1977. The Catholic School.

CCE. 1982. Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith.

CCE. 1988. The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School.

CCE. 1997. The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium.

CCE. 2007. Educating Together in Catholic Schools : A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful.

CCE. 2013. Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love.

CCE. 2014. Education Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion.

Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, Loyola University Chicago. 2012. National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools.

Ciriello, Maria J. 1993. *The Principal as Educational Leader: Expectations in the areas of Leadership, Curriculum, and Instruction*. USA: USCCB Publishing.

Ciriello, Maria J. 1994a. *The Principal as Managerial Leader: Expectations in the areas of personal management, institutional management, finance and development*. USA: USCCB Publishing.

Ciriello, Maria J. 1994b. *The Principal as Spiritual Leader: Expectations in the areas of faith development, building Christian community, moral and ethical development, history and philosophy*. USA: USCCB Publishing.

Clegg, Marie Céline. 2012. "The Future is Now- A Reflection on Leadership." In *Catholic Schools-Faith in our Future 1987-2012*, edited by Maedhbh Uí Chiagáin, 127-138. Dublin: Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools.

Coll, Niall. 2005. "Sacraments in Trouble: A Challenge to Home, School and Parish." *The Furrow* 56 (6):323-331.

Coll, Roisín. 2009. "Catholic School Leadership: Exploring its Impact on the Faith Development of Probationer Teachers in Scotland." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 1 (2):200-213. doi: 10.1080/19422530903138184.

Coll, Róisín. 2012. "The Provision of Catholic Primary Education in Scotland." In *Catholic Primary Education: Facing New Challenges* edited by Eugene Duffy, 110-123. Dublin: Columba Press.

Colwell, Gary. 1991. "What Is Christian Faith?" *Religious Studies and Theology* 11 (2-3):57-65.

Community National Schools. 2018. Goodness Me, Goodness You! Curriculum for Community National Schools.

Connolly, Michael, and Jean Clandinin. 1999. *Shaping Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice*. NY: Teachers College Press.

Conway, Eamonn. 2015. "Vatican II on Christian Education: A Guide Through Today's 'Educational Emergency'." In *Vatican II and Ireland: Essays Theological, Pastoral and Educational*, edited by Niall Coll, 253-270. Dublin: Columba Press.

Conway, Eamonn, Kerry Greer, John Murray, Rik Van Nieuwenhove, Anne Hession, and Thomas Finnegan. 2016. NCCA's Proposed ERB and Ethics Curriculum for Primary Schools: A Critique. *Written Submissions: Consultation on the Proposals for a Curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics*: 660-670.

Conway, Michael A. 2017a. "Faith-life, church, and institution." *The Furrow* 68

(9):461-474.

Conway, Michael A. 2017b. "New beginnings and painful endings." *The Furrow* 68 (5):268-278.

Conway, Michael A. 2018. "Changing foundations: identity, church and culture." *The Furrow* 69 (2):90-102.

Cook, Timothy J. 2001. *Architects of Catholic Culture: Designing & Building Catholic Culture in Catholic Schools*, *NCEA Catholic educational leadership monograph series*. Washington, D.C: National Catholic Educational Association.

Coolahan, John. 1981. *Irish Education: Its History and Structure*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Coolahan, John. 2006. "Church, State and Education in Contemporary Ireland: Some Perspectives " In *from Present to Future: Catholic Education in Ireland for the New Century*, edited by Eithne Woulfe and James Cassin, 88-110. Dublin: Veritas.

Coolahan, John, Sheelagh Drudy, Padraig Hogan, Áine Hyland, and Séamus McGuinness. 2017. *Towards a Better Future: A Review of the Irish School System*. Cork: Cityprint.

Coolahan, John, Caroline Hussey, and Fionnuala Kilfeather. 2012. The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Report of the Forum's Advisory Group.

Cowley, Ian. 2015. *The Contemplative Minister: Learning to Lead from the Still Centre*. Abingdon,UK: BRF.

CPSMA. 2016. *Catholic Primary School Management Association Handbook*. Dublin: Veritas.

Creswell, John W. 2013. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE Publications.

Crowther, Susan, Pam Ironside, Deb Spence, and Liz Smythe. 2017. "Crafting Stories in Hermeneutic Phenomenology Research: A Methodological Device." *Qualitative Health Research* 27 (6):826-835.

CSL. 2017. A Professional Learning Continuum for School Leadership in the Irish Context: Consultation Paper.

CSO. 2017. "Census 2016 Summary Results." Central Statistics Office. https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016summaryresults-part1/.

CSP. 2012. Primary Catholic Schools-Looking to the Future. Catholic Schools Partnership.

CSP. 2015a. Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland: Sharing Good Practice on Inclusion of All Pupils. Catholic Schools Partnership.

CSP. 2015b. A Process for Understanding, Supporting and Taking Ownership of the

Characteristic Spirit in a Catholic School. Catholic Schools Partnership.

CSP. 2019. *Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School*. Dublin: Veritas.

d'Arbon, Tony. 2006. "Career aspirations of potential applicants for principals of Catholic schools: an Austrailian perspective." *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice* 10 (1):46-60.

D'Orsa, James, and Therese D'Orsa. 2012. *Catholic Curriculum: A Mission to the Heart of Young People*. Australia: John Garratt Publishing.

D'Orsa, James, and Therese D'Orsa. 2013a. *Explorers, Guides and Meaning Makers: Mission Theology for Catholic Educators*. Australia: John Garratt Publishing.

D'Orsa, James, and Therese D'Orsa. 2013b. *Leading for Mission: Integrating Life, Culture and Faith in Catholic Education*. Australia: John Garratt Publishing.

D'Orsa, James, and Therese D'Orsa. 2015. *New Ways of Living the Gospel: Spiritual Traditions in Catholic School*. Australia: John Garratt Publishing.

D'Souza, Mario O. 2012. "The Spiritual Dimension of Catholic Education." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 4 (1):92.

Danaher, James P. 2006. *Eyes that See, Ears that Hear: Perceiving Jesus in a Postmodern Context*. Missouri: Liguori.

Dantley, Michael E. 2008. "The 2007 Willower Family Lecture Reconstructing Leadership: Embracing a Spiritual Dimension." *Leadership and Policy in Schools* 7 (4):451-460.

Darmody, Merike, and Emer Smyth. 2016. "Primary school principals' job satisfaction and occupational stress." *International Journal of Educational Management* 30 (1):115-128.

Darmody, Merike, Emer Smyth, and Selina McCoy. 2012. School Sector Variation Among Primary Schools in Ireland.

Davie, Grace. 1994. *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*, *Making Contemporary Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Davie, Grace. 2015. *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Davison, Liam G. 2006. "Lay Principals Under Contract: Going Down for the Good Turf: An exploration of the perceptions of selected secondary lay principals in relation to the religious and spiritual dimensions of the role." PhD, Education, Australian Catholic University, Victoria.

Deal, Terrence E., and Kent D. Peterson. 2009. *Shaping School Culture: Pitfalls, Paradoxes and Promises*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

DES. 1973. Circular 16/73 Posts of Responsibility: Duties and Responsibilities.

DES. 2014. Forum on Patronage and Pluralism: Progress to Date and Future Directions.

DES. 2016a. Action Plan for Education 2016-2019: A Department of Education and Skills Strategy Statement.

DES. 2016b. Looking at Our Schools 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools.

DES. 2016c. School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020.

DES. 2017a. Circular   63/2017. In *Leadership and Management in Primary Schools*, edited by Department of Education and Skills.

DES. 2017b. DEIS Plan 2017: Delivering Equality of Education and Opportunity in Schools.

DES. 2017c. Report for New Schools Establishment Group: Patronage for New Primary Schools for September 2017 & 2018.

DES. 2019a. Cumasú: Empowering through Learning: Action Plan for Education 2019.

DES. 2019b. Education Indicators for Ireland.

DES. 2019c. Statisical Bulletin: Enrolments September 2019.

DES. 2020. "Teacher Statistics." Department of Education and Skills. https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/teacher-statistics/teacher-statistics.html.

Diekelmann, Nancy, and Pamela Ironside. 1998. "Hermeneutics " In *Encyclopedia of Nursing Research*, edited by John Fitzpatrick, 243-245. NY: Springer Publications

Dillon, Michele. 2015. "Secularization, Generational Change, and Ireland's Post-Secular Opportunity." In *The Catholic Church in Ireland Today*, edited by David Carroll Cochran and John C. Waldmeir, 45-64. London: Lexington Books.

Dineen, Fiona. 2015. "Vatican II and Catholic Education in Ireland." In *Ireland and Vatican II: Essays, Theological, Pastoral nad Educaitonal*, edited by Niall Coll, 283-297. Dublin: Columba Press.

Donaldson, Aidan. 2007. "Catholic Education at the Crossroads: Issues Facing Catholic Schools in Northern Ireland." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, edited by Gerald R. Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 231-247. The Netherlands: Springer.

Donnelly, Susie, and Tom Inglis. 2010. "The media and the Catholic Church in Ireland: reporting clerical child sex abuse." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 25 (1):1-19. doi: 10.1080/13537900903416788.

Dorman, Jeffrey P., and Tony d'Arbon. 2003. "Assessing Impediments to Leadership Succession in Australian Catholic Schools." *School Leadership & Management* 23 (1):25. doi: 10.1080/1363243032000080014.

Drumm, Michael. 2012. "The Future of Catholic Schools in a Pluralist Society." Denominational Schools in a Pluralist Society, Iona Institute, Dublin.

Duffy, Eugene, ed. 2012. *Catholic Primary Education: Facing New Challenges*. Dublin: Columba Press.

Duffy, Mel, and Lesley Dibley. 2016. "Everyday Life Research: Understanding hermeneutic phenomenology as a way of knowing." Qualitative Research Summer School, Dublin City University.

Duignan, Patrick. 2006. *Educational Leadership: Key Challenges and Ethical Tensions*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Duignan, Patrick. 2008. "Building Leadership Capacity in Catholic School Communities: Is 'distributed leadership' really the answer?" In *Catholic Schools: Hope in Uncertain Times*, edited by Anne Benjamin and Dan Riley, 234-247. Australia: John Garratt Publishing.

Dulles, Avery. 1997. *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Dulles, Avery. 2000. *The New World of Faith*. Huntington, Ind: Our Sunday Visitor.

Earl, Patricia Helene. 2008. *Faith Formation of the Laity in Catholic Schools: The Influence of Virtues and Spirituality Seminars*. North Carolina: IAP.

Earl, Patricia Helene. 2012. "A Catholic School Spirituality " In *Scholarly Essays on Catholic School Leadership: Research and Insights on Attaining the Mission of Catholic Schools*, edited by Philip V. Robey, 1-14. USA: NCEA.

Engebretson, Kath. 2008. "The Catholic School Called to Dialogue: A Reflection on Some Consequences of the Ecclesial Unity of the Catholic School." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 29 (2):151-160.

Faas, Daniel, Merike Darmody, and Beata Sokolowska. 2016. "Religious diversity in primary schools: reflections from the Republic of Ireland." *British Journal of Religious Education* 38 (1):83-98.

Féich, Pádraig Ó, and Michael O'Connell. 2015. "Changes in Roman Catholic Beliefs and Practices in Ireland between 1981 and 2008 and the Emergence of the Liberal Catholic." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 30 (2):231-247. doi: 10.1080/13537903.2015.1025551.

Fincham, David. 2010. "Headteachers in Catholic schools: challenges of leadership." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 2 (1):64.

Fincham, David. 2019. "Headteachers in Catholic Schools in England: Contemporary Challenges. A follow-up research study: Part 1." *International Studies in Catholic Education*:1-14. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2019.1691820.

Flanagan, Bernadette. 2015. "Contemplative Strands in Irish Identity." In *The Catholic Church in Ireland Today*, edited by David Carroll Cochran and John C. Waldmeir, 143-153. London: Lexington Books.

Flannery, Brian. 2019. "A Locus of Dialogue: the Catholic School in a Pluralist World." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 108 (429):47-54.

Fleming, Brian, and Judith Harford. 2014. "Irish educational policy in the 1960s: a decade of transformation." *History of Education* 43 (5):635-656. doi: 10.1080/0046760X.2014.930189.

Flintham, Alan. 2011. *Reservoirs of Hope: Sustaining Spirituality in School Leaders*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Flood, Anne. 2010. "Understanding phenomenology." *Nurse Researcher* 17 (2):7-15.

Flood, Paddy. 2011. "Leading and Managing Irish Schools: A Historical Perspective." In *Leading and Managing Schools*, edited by Helen O'Sullivan and John West-Burnham, 43-58. UK: Sage.

Fowler, James W. 2000. *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*. Revised ed. San Fran: Jossey-Bass.

Fraser, Jennifer, and Barbara L. Brock. 2006. "Catholic School Principal Job Satisfaction: Keys to Retention and Recruitment." *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 9 (4):425-440.

Friel, Raymond. 2018. "Renewing spiritual capital: the National Retreat for Catholic Headteachers and the National School of Formation: the impact on Catholic headteachers in the UK." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 10 (1):81-96. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2018.1418948.

Fry, Louis, and Mark Kriger. 2009. "Towards a theory of being-centered leadership: Multiple levels of being as context for effective leadership." *Human Relations* 62 (11):1667-1696. doi: 10.1177/0018726709346380.

Fry, Louis W. 2003. "Toward a theory of spiritual leadership." *The Leadership Quarterly* 14 (6):693-727. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.001.

Fullan, Michael. 2003. *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership*. USA: Corwin Press.

Fullan, Michael. 2008. *The Six Secrets of Change: What the best leaders do to help their organisations survive and thrive*. USA: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, Michael. 2014. *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*. USA: Jossey-Bass.

Fuller, Louise. 2011. "Critical Voices in Irish Catholicism: Reading the Signs of the Times." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 100 (400):477-488.

Fuller, Louise. 2012. "Catholicism in Twentieth-Century Ireland: From "an Atmosphere Steeped in the Faith" to à la Carte Catholicism." *Journal of Religion in Europe* 5 (4):484-513.

Gadamer, Hans Georg. 1975. *Truth and Method*. London: Steed and Ward.

Gaillardetz, Richard 2007. *Transforming our Days: Finding God Amid the Noise of Modern Life*. USA: Liguori.

Gallagher, James. 2007. "Catholic Schools in England and Wales: New Challenges." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, edited by Gerald R. Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 249-268. The Netherlands: Springer.

Gallagher, Michael Paul. 2003. *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*. Revised ed. UK: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.

Gallagher, Michael Paul. 2008. "Secularisation Irish Style." *Teaching Religious Education*, 4-5.

Gallagher, Michael Paul. 2016. *Into Extra Time: Living Through the Final Stages of Cancer and Jottings Along the Way*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Gallet, Jeremy. 2000. "Bodily-based imagination and the liturgical formation of children." *Liturgical Ministry* 2 (Summer):113-112.

Ganiel, Gladys. 2017. "Ireland as a Post-Catholic Religious Market? The Role of Extra-Institutional Religion." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 106 (421):31-38.

Gardner, William L., Bruce J. Avolio, Fred Luthans, Douglas R. May, and Fred Walumbwa. 2005. ""Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development." *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (3):343-372. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.003.

Garrett, Paul Michael. 2013. "A 'catastrophic, inept, self-serving' church? Re-examining three reports on child abuse in the Republic of Ireland." *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 24 (1):43-65. doi: 10.1080/10428232.2013.740405.

Gilligan, Paddy. 2008. "Balancing the Three-Legged Stool." *The Furrow* 59 (12):692.

Glackin, Maureen, and John Lydon. 2018. "Getting Embedded Together: New Partnerships for Twenty-First Century Catholic Education." In *Research on Catholic Education: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Sean Whittle, 191-202. Singapore: Springer.

Gleeson, Jim. 2015. "Critical Challenges and Dilemmas for Catholic Education Leadership Internationally." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 7 (2):145-161. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2015.1072955.

GoI. 1937. Bunreacht na hÉireann: Constitution of Ireland. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

GoI. 1998a. Education Act 1998. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

GoI. 1998b. Employment Equality Act 1998. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

GoI. 2000a. Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

GoI. 2000b. Equal Status Act 2000. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

GoI. 2004. Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

GoI. 2005. Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

GoI. 2016. Programme for a Partnership Government.

GoI. 2018. Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018. Government of Ireland.

Goldschmidt, Erik P., and Mary E. Walsh. 2013. "Urban Catholic Elementary Schools: What are the Governance Models?" *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice* 17 (1):111-135.

Grace, Gerald. 2002. *Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality*. London: Routledge.

Grace, Gerald. 2009. "Faith School Leadership: A Neglected Sector of In-Service Education in the United Kingdom." *Professional Development in Education* 35 (3):485-494.

Grace, Gerald. 2010. "Renewing Spiritual Capital: An Urgent Priority for the Future of Catholic Education Internationally." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 2 (2):117-128.

Grace, Gerald, and Joseph O'Keefe. 2007. *International Handbook of Catholic Education:Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*. 2 vols. Dordrecht: Springer.

Graham, Ruth. 2015. "Knowing Jesus." *U.S. Catholic* 80 (5):12-17.

Greenleaf, Robert K. 2003. *The Servant-Leader Within: A Transformative Path*. USA: Paulist. Original edition, 1977.

Groome, Thomas. 2011. *Will There Be Faith? Depends on Every Person*. Dublin: Veritas.

Groome, Thomas. 2014. "Catholic education: from and for faith." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 6 (2):113-127. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2014.929802.

Hansen, Paul J. 2001. "Catholic School Lay Principalship: The Neglected Ministry in Church Documents on Catholic Education- An Australian Perspective." *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice* 5 (1):28-38.

Harris, Alma, and James Spillane. 2008. "Distributed Leadership through the Looking Glass." *Management in Education* 22 (1):31-34.

Heidegger, Martin. 1966. *Discourse on Thinking*. Translated by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund. NY: Harper Perenniel.

Heidegger, Martin. 2010. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. NY: Suny Press. Original edition, 1927.

Hession, Anne. 2013. "Learning How to Live: Offering Your Child the Gift of Catholic Religious Education." In *Why Send your Child to a Catholic School?*, edited by Maura Hyland, 121-136. Dublin: Veritas.

Hession, Anne. 2015. *Catholic Primary Religious Education in a Pluralist Environment*. Dublin: Veritas.

Hogan, Claire. 2011. "Accommodating Islam in the denominational Irish education system: religious freedom and education in the Republic of Ireland." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 31 (4):554-573.

Holter, Anthony C., James M. Frabutt, and Ronald J. Nuzzi. 2014. "Leading the Way: Catholic School Leaders and Action Research." *eJournal of Catholic Education in Australasia* 1 (1):Article 4.

Hunt, Thomas C. 2005. "Catholic schools: yesterday, today, and tomorrow." *Journal of Research on Catholic Education* 14 (2):161-175.

Hyland, Maura, ed. 2013. *Why Send your Child to a Catholic School?* Dublin: Veritas Publications.

ICBC. 2007. Catholic Primary Schools: A Policy for Provision into the Future. Dublin: Veritas.

ICBC. 2008. Vision 08: A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland. Maynooth: Catholic Communications.

ICBC. 2016. Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education. RoI.

IEC. 2010. *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*. Dublin: Veritas.

IEC. 2015. *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*. Dublin: Veritas.

IHRC. 2011. Religion and Education: A Human Rights Perspective.

Inglis, Tom. 2007. "Catholic identity in contemporary Ireland: belief and belonging to tradition." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 22 (2):205-220.

Inglis, Tom. 2014. *Meanings of Life in Contemporary Ireland: Webs of Significance*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Inglis, Tom. 2017. "Church and Culture in Catholic Ireland." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 106 (421):21.

INTO. 2004. Teaching Religion in the Primary School: Issues and Challenges.

INTO. 2013. Religion in Primary Schools: Analysis of Data Report.

INTO. 2017. "Effective Working Between Principal and Deputy Principal - Two Flints to Make a Fire." Principals' and Deputy Principals' Conference.

Iona, Institute. 2012. The Rights of Denominational Schools in Irish and International Law.

IPPN. 2002. Defining the Role of the Primary Principal in Ireland: A Report by HayGroup Management Consultants.

IPPN. 2004. The Value of Leadership.

IPPN. 2006. Quality Leadership, Quality Learning. Cork: Líonra.

IPPN. 2007. Giorraíonn Beirt Bóthar: Distributing Leadership-Deputy Principals. Cork: Líonra.

IPPN. 2008. Priorities for Principal Teachers-In Clear Focus. Cork: Líonra.

IPPN. 2011. Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector.

Jacobs, Richard M. 1996. *The Vocation of the Catholic Educator*, *The NCEA Catholic Educational Leadership Monograph Series*. USA: NCEA.

Jacobs, Richard M. 2005. *Building Spiritual Leadership Density in Catholic Schools*, *The NCEA Catholic Educational Leadership Monograph Series*. USA: NCEA.

Jacobson, Rolf A. 2014. "We are our stories: narrative dimension of human identity and its implications for Christian faith formation." *Word & World* 34 (2):123-130.

Jamison, Christopher. 2013. ""God Has Created Me to Do Him Some Definite Service" (Cardinal Newman): Vocation at the Heart of the Catholic Curriculum." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 5 (1):10-22.

Jones, David Albert, and Stephen Barrie. 2015. *Thinking Christian Ethos: The Meaning of Catholic Education*. London: Catholic Truth Society.

Kasper, Walter. 1980. *An Introduction to Christian Faith*. UK: Search Press.

Kelchtermans, Geert, Liesbeth Piot, and Katrijn Ballet. 2011. "The lucid loneliness of the gatekeeper: exploring the emotional dimension in principals' work lives." *Oxford Review of Education* 37 (1):93-108. doi: 10.1080/03054985.2010.545192.

Kelleher, Sheila. 2012. "Leading and Managing the Catholic School in an Era of Unprecedented Change." In *Catholic Schools-Faith in our Future 1987-2012* edited by Maedhbh Uí Chiagáin, 70-80. Dublin: Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools.

Kennedy, Martin. 1999. "Islands Apart: The Religious Experience of Children." *The Furrow* 50 (10):527-533.

Kieran, Patricia, and Anne Hession. 2005. *Children, Catholicism and Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas.

Kieran, Patricia, and Anne Hession, eds. 2008. *Exploring Religious Education: Catholic Religious Education in an Intercultural Europe*. Dublin: Veritas.

Kitt, Jacinta. 2017. *Positive Behaviours, Relationships and Emotions: The Heart of Leadership in a School*. Dublin: NAPD.

Kriger, Mark, and Yvonne Seng. 2005. "Leadership with inner meaning: A contingency theory of leadership based on the worldviews of five religions." *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (5):771-806. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.07.007.

Lane, Dermot. 1991. *Catholic Education and the School*. Dublin: Veritas.

Lane, Dermot. 2012. "Catholic Education and the Primary School in the Twenty-First Century." In *Catholic Primary Education: Facing New Challenges*, edited by Eugene Duffy, 28-51. Dublin: Columba Press.

Lane, Dermot. 2013. *Religion and Education: Re-imaging the Relationship*. Dublin: Veritas.

Lane, Dermot. 2015. *Catholic Education: In the Light of Vatican II and Laudato Si*. Dublin: Veritas.

Lavery, Shane. 2012. "The Catholic School Principal: A Transcendent Leader?" *Journal of Catholic School Studies* 84 (1):36-42.

Leithwood, Kenneth, Alma Harris, and David Hopkins. 2008. "Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership." *School Leadership & Management* 28 (1):27-42. doi: 10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077.

Littleton, John. 2015. "In *Periculo Mortis:* Can Irish Catholicism be Redeemed?" In *The Catholic Church in Ireland Today*, edited by David Carroll Cochran and John C. Waldmeir, 17-33. London: Lexington Books.

Lowney, Chris. 2003. *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-year-old Company that Changed the World*. USA: Loyolapress.

Lynch, Kathleen, Bernie Grummell, and Dympna Devine. 2012. *New Managerialism in Education: Commercialization, Carelessness and Gender*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lyons, Tony. 2012. "The Catholic Church and Primary Education in Ireland: An Historical Perspective." In *Catholic Primary Education: Facing New Challenges*, edited by Eugene Duffy, 73-90. Dublin: Columba Press.

Mac Ruairc, Gerry. 2010. "This Way Please! Improving School Leadership: The OECD Way." *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 42 (3):223-246.

Mahon, Elaine. 2017. "Investigating the Perceptions of Primary School Communities in the Republic of Ireland regarding their Catholic Identity." Doctorate in Education, DCU, Dublin, Ireland.

Manning, Patrick R. 2018. "Disintegrating Worldviews and the Future of Catholic Education: Addressing the Deep Roots of Catholic Disaffiliation." *Journal of Catholic Education* 21 (2):26-52. doi: 10.15365/joce.2102022018.

Martin, Diarmuid Archbishop. 2013. "Catholic Ireland: past, present and future." *The Furrow* 64 (6):323-331.

Mawhinney, Alison. 2015. "International Human Rights Law: Its Potential and Limitations in Effecting Change to the Place of Religion in the Irish Education System." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36 (3):291-305. doi: 10.1080/07256868.2015.1029891.

McCaul, Damon. 2019. "The Challenge for Catholic Schools in Contemporary Ireland." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 108 (429):64-73.

McEvoy, Francis J. 2006. "How is religious leadership understood and practised by principals in Catholic Secondary Schools in South Australia?" Doctor of Education, Australian Catholic University, Victoria.

McGorman, Enda. 2011. "New Schools for a New Century." In *Leading and Managing Schools*, edited by Helen O'Sullivan and John West-Burnham, 141-155. UK: Sage.

McGrath, Alister. 2015. Understanding seeking faith: the day I realized knowing about Jesus was not enough. *Christianity Today* 59 (1): 56-59.

McGrath, John. 2012. "Befriending Context and Tradition: Evangelisation and Catholic Schools." *The Australasian Catholic Record* 89 (3):283-298.

McHugh, Gerard. 2015. "The Leadership Careers of Selected Primary School Principals in Ireland: A Qualitative Investigation of the Formation of the Principal and What Inspires and Sustains the Principal in his/her Leadership." Doctor of Education, DCU, Dublin.

McKinney, Stephen J., and Robert Hill. 2010. "Gospel, Poverty and Catholic Schools." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 2 (2):163-175.

McLaughlin, Denis. 2005. "The Dialectic of Australian Catholic Education." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 10 (2):215-233.

McLaughlin, Terence H. 1996. "The Distinctiveness of Catholic Education." In *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, edited by Terence McLaughlin, Joseph O' Keefe and Bernadette O' Keeffe, 136-154. UK: RoutledgeFalmer.

Meany, Paul. 2019. "Catholic Education - the International Context." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly* 108 (429):32-46.

Meehan, Amalee. 2013. "What the Catholic School Has to Offer." In *Why Send your Child to a Catholic School?*, edited by Maura Hyland, 59-80. Dublin: Veritas.

Melley, Kristin Barstow. 2019. "Sowing the NSBECS: Professional Development Approaches For Sustained Catholic School Change." *Journal of Catholic Education* 22 (1):202-206. doi: 10.15365/joce.2201142019.

Migliore, Daniel L. 2014. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Molloy, Cathy. 2013. "A Future for Faith?" *The Furrow* 64 (4):196-207.

Moran, Dermot. 2000. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. NY: Routledge.

Morgan, Mark, and Ciaran Sugrue. 2008. The seven challenges and four rewards of being a school principal: results of a national survey. *OIDEAS* (53).

Morris, Andrew B. 2005. "Diversity, deprivation and the common good: pupil attainment in Catholic schools in England." *Oxford Review of Education* 31 (2):311-330. doi: 10.1080/03054980500117959.

Morris, Andrew B. 2014. "Some Social Benefits of English Catholic Schools." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 6 (1):75-90.

Morten, Sandria D., and Geralyn A. Lawler. 2016. "A Standards-Based Approach to Catholic Principal Preparation: A Case Study." *Journal of Catholic Education* 19 (3):332-349.

Moser, Paul K. 2014. "Philosophy and spiritual formation: from Christian faith to Christian philosophy." *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 7 (2):258-269.

Muldoon, Tim. 2005. "Postmodern Spirituality and the Ignatian *Fundmentum*." In *A Jesuit Education Reader: Contemporary Writings on the Jesuit Mission in Education, Principles, the Issue of Catholic Identity, Practical Applications of the Ignatian Way, and More*, edited by George W. Traub, 285-298. USA: University Press

Mullally, Aiveen. 2018. "We are inclusive but are we being equal? Challenges to Community National schools regarding religious diversity." Doctor of Education, DCU.

Mullen, Rónán. 2012. "Better Divest than Dilute." In *Catholic Schools-Faith in our Future 1987-2012*, edited by Maedhbh Uí Chiagáín, 103-112. Dublin: Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools.

Mulligan, James. 2007. "Challenges for Catholic Schools in Canada." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, edited by Gerald R. Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 125-147. The Netherlands: Springer.

Murphy, Timothy. 2008. "Democratic Schooling Practices in the Republic of Ireland: The Gaps between the Rhetoric and Reality." *Irish Educational Studies* 27 (1):29-39.

Murphy, Willa. 2018. "From Pontius to Pilates: Irish Catholic Devotion and the Spiritual Marketplace." *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture* 45 (1):253-272. doi: 10.1215/01903659-4295575.

Murray, Bishop Donal. 2012. "The Catholic Church's Current Thinking on Educational Provision." In *Catholic Primary Education: Facing New Challenges*, edited by Eugene Duffy, 52-72. Dublin: Columba Press.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. 2019. Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) in Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Neidhart, Helga, and Janeen Lamb. 2010. "Faith leadership and the primary principal: An expanding role in Catholic schools." *Journal of Catholic School Studies* 82 (2):13.

Neidhart, Helga, and Janeen Lamb. 2011. "Faith leadership and the Primary Principal (Part 2): Both Religious and Spiritual." *Journal of Catholic School Studies* 83 (2):52.

Neidhart, Helga, and Janeen Lamb. 2016. "Australian Catholic Schools Today: School Identity and Leadership Formation." *Journal of Catholic Education* 19 (3):49-65. doi: 10.15365/joce.1903042016.

Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education. 2008. "Making God Known, Loved, and Served: The Future of Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in the United States." *Journal of Catholic Education* 11 (3):276-312.

Nsiah, Joseph, and Keith Walker. 2013. *The Servant: Leadership Role of Catholic High School Principals*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Nugent, Michael, and Jane Donnelly. 2013. "Only Secular Schools Respect Every Person's Human Rights Equally." In *Toward Mutual Ground: Pluralism, Religious Education and Diversity in Irish Schools*, edited by Gareth Byrne and Patricia Kieran, 187-193. Dublin: Columba Press.

Nuzzi, Ronald J. 2000. "To Lead as Jesus Led." In *Catholic School Leadership: An Invitation to Lead*, edited by Thomas C. Hunt, Thomas E. Oldenski and Theodore J. Wallace, 259-270. USA: Routledge Falmer.

Nuzzi, Ronald J. 2015. "Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail: Leadership Succession In Catholic Education." *Momentum* 46 (2):18-25.

Nuzzi, Ronald J., Anthony C. Holter, and James M. Frabutt. 2013. *Striving for Balance, Steadfast in Faith: The Notre Dame Study of US Catholic Elementary School Principals*. USA: IAP-Information Age Publishing.

O'Connell, Daniel, and Amalee Meehan. 2012. "Exploring the Spiritual Dimension of the School Curriculum." In *Rethinking Education: New Educational Horizons in Contemporary Ireland*, edited by Thomas G. Grenham and Patricia Kieran, 193-211. Germany: Peter Lang.

O'Donnell, John. 2016. "Faith." In *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, edited by Martin Davie, Tim Grass, Stephan R Holmes, John McDowell and Tim A Noble, 375-386. UK: Intervarsity Press.

O'Hanlon, Gerry. 2017. "The Catholic Church in Ireland Today." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 106 (421):9-20.

O'Hanlon, Gerry. 2019. "After the Pope - the Catholic Church in Ireland." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly* 108 (430):126-137.

O'Keefe, Joseph. 1996. "No Margin, No Mission." In *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, edited by Terence McLaughlin, Joseph O'Keefe and Bernadette O'Keeffe, 177-197. USA: RoutledgeFalmer.

O'Keefe, Joseph. 1999. "Visionary Leadership in Catholic Schools." In *Catholic Education: Inside-Out/Outside-In*, edited by James C. Conroy, 15-38. Dublin: Veritas.

O'Loan, Nuala. 2013. "Catholic Education as Lived Experience of Faith." In *Why Send your Child to a Catholic School?*, edited by Maura Hyland, 47-57 Dublin: Veritas.

O'Mahony, Eoin. 2010. Religious Practice and Values in Ireland: A Summary of European Values Study 4th Wave.

O'Mahony, Eoin. 2013. Religion and Belief among Catholics in Ireland: A Short Review of Recent European Social Survey Data (5th Round).

O'Murchu, Diarmuid. 2014. *The Meaning and Practice of Faith*. NY: Orbis Books.

O'Reilly, Bishop Leo. 2012. "Providing Catholic Primary Education in Ireland: The

Patron's Perspective." In *Catholic Primary Education: Facing New Challenges*, edited by Eugene Duffy, 124-137. Dublin: Columba Press.

O'Sullivan, Denis. 2005. *Cultural Politics and Irish Education since the 1950s: Policy, Paradigms and Power*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

O'Toole, Barbara. 2015. "1831-2014: An Opportunity to Get It Right This Time? Some Thoughts on the Current Debate on Patronage and Religious Education in Irish Primary Schools." *Irish Educational Studies* 34 (1):89-102.

OECD. 2019a. Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators. doi:https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en.

OECD. 2019b. Ireland. *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1787/e6f76052-en.

Ontario Catholic Principals' Council. 2020. "Professional Learning: Ontario Principal's Qualification Program."

Otte, Suzanne. 2015. "Implementing a Dominican Model of Leadership." *Educational Considerations* 43 (1):4-12. doi: 10.4148/0146-9282.1030.

Ozar, Lorraine. 2010. "Voices from the Field: Interviews with Three Prominent Catholic School Educators about Leadership and Collaboration." *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice* 14 (1):114-127.

Palmer, Parker J. 2000. *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Fran: Jossey Bass.

Palmer, Parker J. 2007. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. Tenth anniversary ed. San Fran: Jossey Bass.

Parker-Jenkins, Marie, and Mary Masterson. 2013. "No Longer "Catholic, White and Gaelic": Schools in Ireland Coming to Terms with Cultural Diversity." *Irish Educational Studies* 32 (4):477-492.

Pascoe, Susan. 2007. "Challenges for Catholic Education in Australia." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, edited by Gerald R Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 278-810. The Netherlands: Springer.

Pont, Beatriz, Deborah Nusche, and Hunter Moorman. 2008. "Improving School Leadership: Policy and Practice." In: OECD. https://www.oecd.org/education/school.

Pope Benedict XVI. 2005. Deus caritas est: God is Love. Encyclical letter of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the bishops, priests and deacons, men and women religious and all the lay faithful on Christian love.

Pope Benedict XVI. 2009. Caritas in veritate. Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth.

Pope Francis. 2013a. Evangelii gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel. Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World.

Pope Francis. 2013b. Lumen fidei: The Light of Faith. Encyclical Letter on Faith.

Pope Francis. 2015. Laudato si: Praise Be to You. Encyclical Letter on Care for our Common Home.

Pope John Paul II. 1983. Code of Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church

Pope John Paul II. 1990. Redemptoris missio. Encyclical letter on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate.

Pope John Paul II. 1997. General Directory for Catechesis.

Pope John Paul II. 1998. Fides et ratio. Encyclical Letter on the Relationship between Faith and Reason.

Pope John Paul II. 1999. Ecclesia in America. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation.

Pope Paul VI. 1968. Humanae vitae. Encyclical letter on the Regulation of Birth.

Pope Paul VI. 1975. Evangelii nuntiandi. Apostolic Exhortation.

Prendergast, Ned. 2012. "What is Loved Survives." In *Catholic Schools-Faith in our Future 1987-2012*, edited by Maedhbh Uí Chiagáin, 18-28. Dublin: Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools.

Punnachet, Theresa Kaetkaew. 2009. "Catholic servant-leadership in education: going beyond the secular paradigm." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 1 (2):117-134.

Queensland Catholic Education Commission. 2006. Alternative Models of Principalship.

Quinlan, Christina. 2011. *Business Research Methods*. UK: Cengage Learning.

Rahner, Karl. 1961. "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace." In *Theological Investigations Volume I: God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, 297–317. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

Rahner, Karl. 1971. "Christian Living Formerly and Today." In *Theological Investigations Volume VII: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life I*, 3-24. New York: Seabury Press.

Ranson, David. 2004. "Spiritual Leadership." *The Furrow* 55 (10):554-556.

Reave, Laura. 2005. "Spiritual values and practices related to leadership effectiveness." *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (5):655-687. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.07.003.

Regan, Ethna. 2013. "Church, Culture and Credibility: A Perspective from Ireland." *New Blackfriars* 94 (1050):160-176.

Richardson, Christopher. 2014. "The Theological Disposition of Lay Catholic Headteachers." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 6 (1):60-74.

Rieckhoff, Barbara Stacy. 2014. "The Development of Faith Leadership in Novice

Principals." *Journal of Catholic Education* 17 (2):25-56.

Rogers, James Silas. 2015. "Holy Unpredictable: A Response to Maher and Littleton." In *The Catholic Church in Ireland Today*, edited by David Carroll Cochran and John C. Waldmeir, 35-42. London: Lexington Books.

Rohr, Richard. 2012. *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. UK: SPCK Publishing.

Rohr, Richard. 2016. *The Divine Dance*. UK: SPCK Publishing.

Rohr, Richard. 2019. *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality can Change Everything We See, Hope for and Believe*. UK: SPCK Publishing.

Rost, Joseph C. 1991. *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*. USA: Praeger.

Rougier, Nathalie, and Iseult Honohan. 2015. "Religion and Education in Ireland: Growing Diversity-or Losing Faith in the System?" *Comparative Education* 51 (1):71-86.

RTU, and LDS. 2009. School Leadership Matters: An Empirical Assessment of the Attractiveness of Principalship in the North of Ireland and the South of Ireland.

Ryan, Aidan. 2008. "'Occasional' Catholics and the Sacraments." *The Furrow* 59 (11):615-621.

Ryan, Frances, Michael Coughlan, and Patricia Cronin. 2009. "Interviewing in qualitative research: the one-to-one interview." *International Journal of Therapy & Rehabilitation* 16 (6):309-314.

Rymarz, Richard. 2010. "Religious Identity of Catholic Schools: Some Challenges from a Canadian Perspective." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 31 (3):299-310.

Sabatino, Anthony. 2016. "The Virtual Classroom and Catholic School Leadership Preparation: The LMU Certificate in Catholic School Administration (CCSA) Program." *Journal of Catholic Education* 19 (3):315-331.

Sachs, John R. 1991. *The Christian Vision of Humanity: Basic Christian Anthropology*. USA: The Liturgical Press.

Schein, Edgar H. 1985. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 1st ed. USA: Jossey-Bass.

Schneiders, Sandra Marie. 2003. "Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum." *A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 3 (2):163-185. doi: 10.1353/scs.2003.0040.

Schuttloffel, Merylann J. 1999. *Character and the Contemplative Principal*, *The NCEA Catholic Educational Leadership Monograph Series*. USA: NCEA.

Schuttloffel, Merylann J. 2007. "Contemporary Challenges to the Recruitment, Formation, and Retention of Catholic School Leadership in the USA." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*,

edited by Gerald R. Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 85-101. The Netherlands: Springer.

Schuttloffel, Merylann J. 2008. *Contemplative Leadership that Creates a Culture of Continuous Improvement*, *The NCEA Catholic Educational Leadership Monograph Series*. USA: NCEA.

Schuttloffel, Merylann J. 2013. "Contemplative Leadership Practice: The Influences of Character on Catholic School Leadership." *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 17 (1):81-103.

Sergiovanni, Thomas J. 1992. *Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement*. USA: Jossey-Bass.

Sergiovanni, Thomas J. 2005. *Strengthening the Heartbeat: Leading and Learning Together in Schools*. USA: Jossey-Bass.

Sinclair, Russell, and Gayle Spry. 2005. Principals in Parishes: A Research Project.

Smith, Paige A., and Ronald Nuzzi. 2007. "Beyond Religious Congregations: Responding to New Challenges in Catholic Education." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, edited by Gerald R. Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 103-123. The Netherlands: Springer.

Smyth, Emer. 2010. Religious Education in a Multicultural Society: School and Home in Comparative Context. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.

Smyth, Emer, Merike Darmondy, Frances McGinnity, and Delma Byrne. 2009. Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.

Smyth, Emer, Selina McCoy, and Gillian Kingston. 2015. Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.

Smythe, Elizabeth A., Pamela M. Ironside, Sharon L. Sims, Melinda M. Swenson, and Deborah G. Spence. 2008. "Doing Heideggerian hermeneutic research: A discussion paper." *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 45 (9):1389-1397.

Spears, Larry C. 2009. "Servant Leadership." *Leadership Excellence* 26 (5):20-20.

Spesia, David D. 2016. "Nurturing a Heart for the New Evangelization: A National Study of Catholic Elementary School Principals in the U.S." *Journal of Catholic Education* 20 (1):266-290. doi: 10.15365/joce.2001122016.

Spring, Maria. 2012. "Managing the Catholic Primary School in Contemporary Ireland." In *Catholic Primary Education: Facing New Challenges*, edited by Eugene Duffy, 138-148. Dublin: Columba Press.

Starratt, Robert J. 2004. *Ethical Leadership*. USA: JosseyBass.

Stock, Marcus. 2013. *Christ at the Centre: Why the Church Provides Catholic Schools*. 2nd ed. London: Catholic Truth Society.

Striepe, Michelle, and Thomas O'Donoghue. 2014. "Servant Leadership in a Catholic

School: A Study in the Western Australian Context." *Education Research and Perspectives* 41 (1):130-153.

Stynes, Martin, and Gerry McNamara. 2019. "The Challenge of Perpetual Motion: The Willingness and Desire of Irish Primary School Principals to Juggle Everything." *Irish Educational Studies* 38 (1):25-42.

Sugrue, Ciaran, and Catherine Furlong. 2002. "The cosmologies of Irish primary principals' identities: between the modern and the postmodern?" *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 5 (3):189-210. doi: 10.1080/13603120210122510.

Sullivan, Debra, and Jorge Peña. 2019. "The NSBECS: The Foundation for Effective Catholic Principal Preparation." *Journal of Catholic Education* 22 (1):188-196.

Sullivan, John. 2000. *Catholic Schools in Contention: Competing Metaphors and Leadership Implications*. Dublin: Veritas.

Sullivan, John. 2001. *Catholic Education: Distinctive and Inclusive*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Sullivan, John. 2006. "Addressing Difference as well as Commonality in Leadership Preparation for Faith Schools." *Journal of Education & Christian Belief* 10 (1):75-88.

Sullivan, John. 2012. "Catholic education as ongoing translation." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 4 (2):200-207.

Sullivan, John, and Stephen J. McKinney. 2013. "Exploring Practical Implications." In *Education in a Catholic Perspective*, edited by Stephen J. McKinney and John Sullivan, 209-225. UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Sullivan, John, Alan J. Murphy, and David Fincham. 2015. "The story of an educational innovation: the MA in Catholic School Leadership at St Mary's University College, Twickenham, 1997-2013: Principles, pedagogy and research studies." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 7 (1):28-45. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2014.998497.

Sultmann, William, and Raymond Brown. 2011. "Modelling Pillars of Catholic School Identity: an Australian Study." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 3 (1):73-90.

Sultmann, William F., and Raymond Brown. 2016. "Leadership and Identity in the Catholic School: an Australian Perspective." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 8 (1):73-89. doi: 10.1080/19422539.2016.1140419.

Taylor, Bridget, and Hilde de Vocht. 2011. "Interviewing separately or as couples? Considerations of authenticity of method." *Qualitative Health Research* 21 (11):1576-1587. doi: 10.1177/1049732311415288.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. USA: Harvard University Press.

Thompson, Scott. 2008. "Spiritual Leadership - The Invisible Revolution." In *Spirituality in Educational Leadership: The Soul of Educational Leadership*, edited by Alan M. Blankstein Paul D. Houston, and Robert W. Cole, 151-169. US: Corwin Press.

Tighe-Mooney, Sharon. 2018. *What About Me? Women and the Catholic Church*. Cork:

Mercier Press.

Treston, Kevin. 2007. "Five Key Challenges for Leadership in Catholic Schools for the 21st Century." 4th International Conference on Catholic Educational Leadership, Sydney, Australia.

Tuohy, David. 2006. "Issues in Catholic Education in Ireland." In *from Present to Future: Catholic Education in Ireland for the New Century*, edited by Eithne Woulfe and James Cassin, 20-46. Dublin: Veritas.

Tuohy, David. 2007. "Challenges for Catholic Education in Ireland." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, edited by Gerald R Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 269-290. The Netherlands: Springer.

Tuohy, David. 2012. "What it is to be a Learning Society? Exploring a New Horizon for Catholic Education." In *Catholic Primary Education: Facing New Challenges*, edited by Eugene Duffy, 157-180. Dublin: Columba Press.

Tuohy, David. 2013. *Denominational Education and Politics: Ireland in a European Context*. Dublin: Veritas.

Ummanel, Azize. 2012. "School Principals' Career Path: Ireland, Cyprus and Malta Sample." Doctor of Education, DCU, Dublin, Ireland.

Ummanel, Azize, Gerry McNamara, and Martin Stynes. 2016. "The career paths of primary school principals in Ireland." *Irish Educational Studies* 35 (1).

van Manen, Max. 2016a. *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*. USA: Routledge.

van Manen, Max. 2016b. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. 2nd ed. NY: Routledge. Original edition, 1997.

Vatican II, Council. 1964. Lumen gentium. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

Vatican II, Council. 1965a. Gaudium et spes. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

Vatican II, Council. 1965b. Gravissimum Educationis: Declaration on Christian Education.

Vatican II, Council. 1966. Ad gentes. Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity.

Wallace, Theodore J. 2000. "The Principal as Faith Leader in the Catholic school." In *Catholic School Leadership: An Invitation to Lead*, edited by Thomas C. Hunt, Thomas E. Oldenski and Theodore J. Wallace, 191-203. USA: Routledge Falmer.

Wallace, Theodore J., Carolyn S. Ridenour, and James R. Biddle. 1999. "Preparedness of Principals to Be Faith Leaders of Their Schools." *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 8 (1):107-129.

Walsh, Orla. 2013. "The Personal and Communal Nature of Faith: A Parent's Experience of Catholic Education." In *Why Send your Child to a Catholic School?*,

edited by Maura Hyland, 81-97. Dublin: Veritas.

Watkins, Claire. 2013. "Education, Formation and Conscience: 'Should teach his brethren, and inspire to suffer and to die'." In *Education in a Catholic Perspective*, edited by Stephen J. McKinney and John Sullivan, 123-135. UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Watkins, Claire. 2018. "Educational Leadership in Catholic Schools: A Practice-Based Theology of Vocation." In *Researching Catholic Education: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Sean Whittle, 155-168. Singapore: Springer.

West-Burnham, John. 2009. *Rethinking Educational Leadership: From Improvement to Transformation*. UK: Continuum.

Whittle, Sean. 2015. *A Theory of Catholic Education*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Wilkin, Richard. 2018. "Interpreting the Tradition." In *Researching Catholic Education: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Sean Whittle, 169-178. Singapore: Springer.

Wodon, Quentin. 2019. "More Schools, Larger Schools, or Both?: Patterns of Enrollment Growth in K12 Catholic Schools Globally." *Journal of Catholic Education* 22 (1):135-153.

Woulfe, Eithne. 2012. "Towards New Trustees…A CORI Perspective." In *Catholic Schools-Faith in our Future 1987-2012*, edited by Maedhbh Uí Chiagáin, 39-52. Dublin: Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools.

Wright, John H. 1978. "Meaning and structure of Catholic faith." *Theological Studies* 39 (4):701-718.

Zamora, Lisa. 2013. "An Examination of the Leadership Practices of Catholic Elementary School Principals." Doctor of Education, University of Southern California, EBSCOhost.