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Formation in the Catholic primary school: how effective is it in the modern world?

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Abstract

This dissertation is presented in the wider context of Catholic Education in the 21st Century within the Diocese of Westminster. The aim of this research project is to reflect on the current formational practices of school leaders, assess how these provide spiritual development of teachers and to consider how the sustainability of future Catholic school leaders can be ensured.

I will begin my research by carrying out a Literature Review of the relevant materials written about this field, with particular focus on those aspects that relate to what leaders must do to ensure the mission of the Catholic Church for its schools, against the backdrop of a pluralist society in which they exist. This will be followed by a small scale research project based within schools in the Diocese of Westminster. I will employ the methodology of analysing the current place of formation in schools through interviewing school leaders (headteachers and their deputies), and deploy questionnaires for teaching staff in order to provide a reflection from teachers of the formational experience planned for an lived in Catholic schools. Following the research, it is my intention to be able share strengths, and provide recommendations, for current school leaders to consider when reflecting on their own practice.

The conclusion infers that much of the current espoused policy of school leaders is evident in how they provide formational activity for their staff, in encouraging the spiritual and Catholic life of the school, ensuring mission integrity and growing future leaders. The recommendations provide possible ideas for the refinement of current formational practice.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1 Aims

The aims of this enquiry are as follows:

i. I intend to reflect on past and present models of Catholic leadership. In the Literature Review and, in the light of Gospel values, consideration will be given to the context of Catholic school leaders.

ii. In addition, I shall explore the concepts of formation and vocation, with spirituality and Continual Professional Development (CPD), before considering the implications for Catholic school leadership.

iii. Practical research will be based in three Catholic primary schools in which I intend to evaluate the formational experiences of teachers in relation to their vocation (or their 'call' to leadership).

iv. I will also analyse the leadership of these staff formational experiences, how they have been planned for, the success of formational activity and its alignment with The Church's aims.

v. Analysis of data gathered from the investigation will provide the basis of recommendations for future development in the leadership of Catholic schools and explicitly leadership of Catholic staff formation.

1.2 Rationale

One of the major challenges facing Catholic schools today is the ever-present issue of a society which is passive or even negative towards faith. A resulting, and key issue for these schools is the sustainability of Catholic school leaders. The next section is concerned with providing a context for the research from a personal perspective and from the wider context of maintaining the 'mission integrity' of Catholic schools in the face of society's secular influence.

A Personal Perspective

In the wider context, Pope John Paul II (1982: n. 45) over 30 years ago, pointed to the implications of diminishing numbers of Religious in Catholic education

> Lay Catholic educators must be very aware of the real impoverishment which will result if priests and Religious disappear from the Catholic schools, or noticeably decline in number

The concern here is: can a lay Catholic school senior leader deepen a sense of spirituality and vocation in themselves, their staff and their students, without a religious present in the school? Benton (2015) strongly argues the need for formational and spiritual development to be distributed and planned for.

My particular interest in this field of research developed from a personal journey through a Catholic schooling and teaching career. I entered teaching and chose the Catholic sector simply because I 'belonged to it', Coll (2007: 452). A view argued from research carried out into reasons for choosing Catholic sector teaching, can be seen from two sides as

> not a healthy option, since students may be blinkered in their choice … *or* … paradoxically…a very strong position…because they are so immersed in their tradition and feel strongly about remaining within it.
> (ibid)

Through continuous professional development and growing commitment to becoming a Catholic school leader a deeper sense of vocation grew in me. I began undertaking a Masters Degree for which this research project constitutes a part. Throughout the course, I have considered the impact of formational activities upon my own career, how they influenced my practice, guided me towards school leadership and deepened my faith, before questioning the extent to which the developmental and formational activities experienced where strategically planned for. In short, to what extent did

formational experience have on my 'spiritual capital', sense of vocation and call to leadership, and how much was left to chance?

Wider Context

In exploring the wider context of the research explored I will draw strongly from Grace's (2002) research as it encapsulates the current faith / culture interchange and poses deeper questions for my research.

> Catholic schools are expected to give primacy to the formation of a spiritual and moral life as realised in Catholic religious culture and practice
>
> (Grace; 2002: 3)

Grace then leads us to the Church's perspective which encapsulates mission for its schools. In the secular world this could raise questions such as; is the leader from this experience, formed by it and what impact has this had on the leader? Grace states that the advancement of skills and abilities in a Catholic school

> …are to be developed to the highest possible degree but always with a religious and moral understanding that such personal empowerment is to be used for the benefit of others …
>
> (ibid: 6)

> … [before questioning the reality] …

> … But some fundamental questions for research investigation and discussion are to what extent are Catholic school leaders actually realising these principles in their policies and day-to-day practices?
>
> (ibid: 6)

This question reaches into every aspect of the headteacher's role and could have a significant impact on the promotion of staff formation. The concern here is that the leader must understand that deliberate, planned for, formational activity is imperative, as Benton (2015: 30) argues for "distributed spiritual leadership" to ensure that staff will work collegially in moving others.

1.3 Context of the schools in the study

In this section I will look at the context of each school in the study. For ethical reasons, I have changed the names of the schools, i.e., St Paul's, St Peter's and St John's Catholic primary schools. Using the Diocesan and OfSTED reports for each school, I will highlight features of each school relevant to this study.

The three schools are all over-subscribed two-form entry primary schools with a large majority of Catholic children and Catholic teaching staff.

(i) St. Paul's Catholic Primary School

St. Paul's is situated to the west of London with 404 children on role. One fifth of the children have special needs and the number of children receiving free school meals is very low (at 4%). Of the nineteen teaching staff at the school 63% are Catholic with 8 holding the Catholic Certificate for Religious Studies (CCRS) qualification.

St. Paul's Mission Statement aims for the children to

> Develop a Christian and challenging learning environment in which our children feel happy and secure, and to provide a quality education which will enable all of them to reach their full potential
> (School website; 2015)

This is seen to be lived out through the work of the teachers as recognised in the school's diocesan inspection report

> Pupils generally make good progress in their subject knowledge of the Catholic faith through the expectation of their teachers
> (Diocese of Westminster; 2014: 1)

The report goes on to state that there is a strong sacramental life within the school, with close links to the parish and priest, reflecting a strong vision of spiritual leadership in an enabling environment.

> All staff receive regular in-service support and training related to the Catholic life of the school…The parish priest supports the prayer and sacramental life and liaises with staff for a planned programme of masses and liturgies. He also acts as an additional teaching resource on his visits to classes
>
> (ibid: 5)

Leadership and management are reported as 'Good' because the academic and spiritual development of staff is clearly seen as important by the leadership and staff

> Catholic life is central to the work of the school and leaders encourage all staff to develop their skills to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher, governors and senior staff are committed to the Church's mission in education and ensure policies and practices reflect this
>
> (ibid: 6)

> Good leadership of religious education supports staff as they seek to provide good quality religious education
>
> (ibid: 1)

(ii) St. Peter's Catholic Primary School

St. Peter's is a larger than average primary school with where almost all the children are Catholic. There is a strong sense of leadership in the school, the headteacher is given particular credit for his mission practices in their diocesan inspection report but more interestingly it points to a collegiate approach to leadership

> This includes "peer mentoring activity" which allows the RE subject leader time to discuss fully with staff their views and difficulties. This in turn leads to whole staff feedback and action planning. Training is encouraged by the school leadership and nine teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS)
>
> (Diocese of Westminster, 2013: 4)

The impact of leadership extends to the priority given to the children's experience

> Prayer, worship and sacramental celebration have a powerful role in school life and pupils are provided with a wide diversity of celebrations. The high priority given to the promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development is reflected in their excellent behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils say "we all try to follow God's way"
>
> (ibid: 5)

The practice of inviting the children to lead is clear

> Older pupils plan and lead class worship. Mass is regularly celebrated. The parish priest makes a powerful contribution to the liturgical life of the school.
>
> (ibid: 5)

The school's Mission Statement states that

> Our school is a place where we all come together as one community to learn, have fun and make lasting friendships, all under God's love and care
>
> (School website; 2015)

Government inspection confirms the living of the mission statement

> The Catholic ethos underpins strong spiritual development. Pupils are reverential in prayer and discuss sensitive issues with maturity
>
> (OfSTED Report; 2007)

The diocesan perspective (Diocese of Westminster; 2007) reiterates this view in recognising St. Peter's many outstanding features where

> Prayer and worship underpin the Catholic life of the school…pupils and parents value the sense of being part of a Christian community where people care for each other
>
> (2007: 4)

The report also recognises the reality of the spiritual life of the school, where,

> Pupils are given time to develop in 'the understanding and growth of their faith' and are given time for 'meditation and reflection
>
> (ibid)

There is outstanding leadership and management of religious education, the religious education co-ordinator

> Ensures high standards and new staff [are] well supported … All staff are fully committed to the highest standards in religious education
>
> (ibid)

There are indications of collegiality, a sense of the staff working together in search of

> Ways of enhancing the spiritual and faith development of pupils through classroom religious education and worship'
>
> (ibid)

(iii) St. John's Catholic Primary School

St. John's has a population of 400 children, 95% of whom are Catholic; of nineteen teachers in the school, sixteen (80%) are Catholic (Diocese of Westminster, 2008). Currently 14 teachers hold the CCRS certificate.

Government inspection reports that the school provides outstanding 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' and comments on the 'exceptional range of opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school' provided for the children (Ofsted Report; 2008: 5).

The diocese inspection report points to strong spiritual leadership in that worship and prayer life are 'integral to the life of the school and the pupils are

given time for meditation and reflection' (Diocese of Westminster, 2008; 2) and that

> The school provides a good atmosphere for social and moral education and conversations with pupils indicate that this has an impact on behaviour and attitudes
>
> (ibid)

Leadership in the school strongly advocates continual professional development; the diocesan report recognises that

> The headteacher has instigated developments in the wider life of the school which focus on the learning process for all'. Within the management structure the RE subject leader has recently been given the title of 'Spirituality Leader'
>
> (ibid)

The report also found that the headteacher demonstrated excellent leadership of the Catholic community, supported ably by governors who understand their role in promoting the Catholic identity of the school.

1.4 Methodology

The proposed line of inquiry for this study is to examine different aspects of Catholic school teachers' teaching careers including faith commitment and formational experiences, before going on to consider the impact of these on their careers and the impact that these experiences have had on progression to Catholic school leadership.

The research will be carried out in three Catholic primary schools all within the same diocese. Quantitative data will be elicited through distributing questionnaires to teachers at these schools. Examination of this data will be followed by conducting interviews with headteachers and deputy

headteachers which will provide perspectives from different points on the journey towards leadership.

Analysis of the data will lead into the examination of particular aspects of staff formational activities (such as strategically planned activities, the delivery of such activities and the consideration of the impact on the audience) and a reflection into whether these activities are providing potential Catholic school leaders with the spiritual development and providing them with enough to help them nourish their sense of vocation to become school leaders. The research will also potentially uncover prevailing attitudes to different forms of formational activities, before providing recommendations for current Catholic school leaders on the delivery of such activities.

1.5 Implications for Leadership

The example of Jesus is the model on which a Catholic school headteacher would base their actions. The headteacher is a servant to the school community and they must lead children and staff to a greater personal communion with Jesus.

Jesus showed his servitude through countless examples in His life. Indeed, God chose to become fully human in His Son

> …who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped

> (Philippians 2: 6)

Jesus resisted the draw of office; instead choosing to be hands on, he didn't mind interruptions and provided time for the lowliest of people. The trappings

of office didn't distract him from the reason he was here. The Catholic school leader must demonstrate authenticity to the model of Jesus before he can begin to invite others to follow him in helping deliver the school's mission. The spiritual nature of the role must be clear for people to engage with. Jesus too invited people to follow Him, the most apt example being in His instructions to Peter

> The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep"
>
> (John 21: 17)

The focus of the headteacher when planning formational experiences must also consider their impact as an authentic model for the school community. The invitation to Peter from Jesus to take over His ministry when He was gone also has prompts school leaders about ensuring sustainability.

1.6 Summary

In summary, this enquiry will investigate current practice, experience, impact and leadership of formational activities in Catholic schools. Together with an examination of scripture, Vatican documents and scholarly works explored in the Literature Review in the following chapter, the study will provide insight into:

- the special demands of leading a Catholic school;
- the formational activities of previous and current Catholic schools and leaders;
- the impact of formational activities on individuals and community;
- staff formation - planning and delivery, before;
- providing a series of recommendations for formational experiences for Catholic school teachers and aspiring leaders.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Having outlined the context of this enquiry into formation in Catholic schools in the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to review the literature concerned with the subject. In this chapter, therefore; the foundations of Catholic education, the model Jesus presents for Catholic school leaders and Gospel values will be examined, as these propel the mission of Catholic schools. Then the idea of spirituality will be examined, exploring its meaning both in a secular and Catholic perspective.

The focus will then turn to continual professional development (CPD) and how this ties in with formation in the Catholic school. It must be noted at this point that the breadth of the areas mentioned above are all worthy of much deeper analysis, for the purposes of this research however, only a brief review of literature to compliment my aims is necessary.

The final section of this chapter will be concerned with implications for leadership, which will involve a reflection on the research provided here with a look at what Catholic school leaders can do in providing and leading formational activity.

In the first section of this chapter, Catholic education will be viewed in the context of the modern world, with consideration given to some of the factors that affect Catholic education and its leaders.

2.2 Context

Before entering into discussion about the formation of staff in Catholic schools, a look first at the world in which Catholic schooling exists is important in order to begin. Here consideration will be given to the effects of the post-modernist world on the progress towards the mission of the Catholic school and the challenges that current leaders face in working towards sustaining the leadership of these schools. Treston (1991) reminds us of the old religious, a pre-Vatican II view of spirituality with

> images of ponderous religious dogma, rigid Christian rituals…considered the reserve of holy people
>
> (1991: 7)

Such practices could be viewed as successful in passing on the charism of faith and in securing the future spiritual leadership of Catholic schools. The rigidity, the certainty, that Catholics were used to in their evangelisation in the faith, has given way to a more uncertain and ever-changing moral theology, creating a new baseline from which individuals base their spiritual lives (McCormick 1989). This watering down of the faith, through the influence of such things as individualism, pluralism and *a la carte* Catholicism, (Lydon, Murphy & Fincham, 2015: 3.15) will be considered more closely in later sections.

Holman points to factors within modern society upon the decline in the practice of faith and non-engagement with the liturgy, as being the consumerist society and toleration. He suggests that making Christian schools places of ministry includes

> Developing the ministry of teachers…and developing classroom pedagogy in a way that enables young people to be more open to the call of the Lord
>
> (Holman; 2002: 75)

Through participation in the modern world, Arthur (1995) argues that Catholic schools are undergoing processes of 'cultural incorporation'. Headteachers however must remain true to the mission of the Church if Catholic education is to continue to succeed (O'Keefe; 1996: 210). In examining the success of Catholic education in the past obtained through the experience of headteachers, Grace's (2002) research into mission integrity in Catholic schools makes clear the outcomes

> What has emerged…is just how much the Catholic schooling system internationally has depended upon the vocational commitment, spiritual capital and faith leadership of it school principals, headteachers and school leaders
>
> (Grace; 2002: 11)

Grace also warns of the influence of market values on education, a consequence of current ideologies, on the education of the 'whole being'.

A leadership aspiration question in research conducted by d'Arbon and Dorman (2004) showed that

> 53 percent of those who responded to the survey were unwilling to apply for a principal position

This was the first time that any reliable figure had been provided for a situation which many had felt was the case but not to any detailed extent. More recent research paints a worsening picture

> The figures show that of the 261 English primary schools which advertised for a head teacher in January 2013, 26% were forced to re-advertise within 60 days. The previous January just 15% of the 249 job adverts were re-advertised.
> (BBC news - http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22554938
> accessed on 29/09/2015)

Considering these statistics, it is worth asking to what extent this is a reflection on society or how much is it an indication of current practice in formational activity.

2.3 Gospel values

This section is concerned with uncovering the mandate for employing formational activity in Catholic schools and will consider the leadership actions expected from Catholic school leaders to develop formational activity through reflection of Gospel texts. It has been argued that Jesus is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise, (Lydon, Murphy & Fincham, 2015: 2. 1.7). By virtue of our baptism we are called to model our lives on that of Jesus, authority for this is seen in his final words in Matthew's Gospel

> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
>
> (Matthew 28: 18-20)

Mark's Gospel describes how Jesus called his first disciples, where we can make a closer link with the work of school teachers and their leaders

> And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him.
>
> (Mark 1: 17-18)

Church documents reiterate Jesus' instruction to His first disciples. The Catholic character of a Catholic school is rooted in the

> Christian concept of life centred on Jesus Christ
>
> (Pope John Paul II, 1997; n: 33)

> He is the one who ennobles people, gives meaning to human life, and is the model the catholic school offers it pupils
>
> (ibid, n: 35)

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education argues that

> The Catholic school loses its purpose without constant reference to the Gospel. It derives all necessary energy for all its educational work from Christ. It thus creates in the school community an atmosphere permeated with the gospel spirit of freedom and love…In this way the school is faithful to the claims of the person and of God
>
> (Pope Paul VI; 1977: n.55)

In Matthew's Gospel, we see Jesus instilling the basic principles of Christian teaching; He bestows the role of teacher on the disciples and commands them to pass on the lessons they have learned from Him. The role of teacher, therefore, becomes entwined with disciple and as such the teacher must pass on the messages Jesus gave through their vocation/role. The teacher must pass on these Gospel values as a disciple in Christ.

The task of discipleship is being a learner and is associated with many features (Fincham, 2007) such as

> Proclaiming and preaching of the message of Jesus Christ … The call of vocation … Service to God and to others, witnessing and the performing of a mission
>
> (2007: 38-42)

Fincham also discusses how in Jewish life a Rabbi would discuss interpretation of the law

> With interested people who 'with guidance and extensive training, might themselves expect to become Rabbis in due course
>
> (ibid)

There are comparisons to be drawn here with a Catholic teacher's journey to leadership, and the common threads of good practice are discussion, as opposed to telling; and engagement, with the interested parties having a vision of a path to leadership themselves. One could argue there is a sense

of vocation in those listening to the Rabbis which was fuelled by discussion of the law (formational activity).

The Catholic school leader must also base their authority on that of Christ. Luke's Gospel reminds us of Christ's philosophy of leadership when Jesus intervened on the disciples arguing who was the greatest among them. Having warned them of the use of power by pagan kings who wielded power over their people, Jesus adds

> But it is not this way with you; rather the greatest among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant
>
> (Luke 22: 26)

The idea of servant leadership has taken its rightful place in modern secular leadership theories (Greenleaf; 1977) and seen from this lens can incorporate activities such as coaching or even inquiry (Moore; 2000). However, Greenleaf's theory and subsequent practice, he is regarded as one of the chief exponents of servant leadership, is a purely secular theory and has no roots in Christian traditions (Punnachet, 2009).

Servant leadership must be the default style of any Catholic school leader, if based on the person of Jesus, and involve imitation of His actions and words. The greatest actions and commandments from Him involved love

> My commandment is this…Love one another just as I love you
>
> (John 15: 12)

The wells from which leaders can draw energy to attain this standard needs to be revisited and replenished. Seymour (2001: 33) challenges the leader to 'discover the Sabbath places in his or her ministry', and Sullivan (2002: 105) warns that 'personal renewal is not a luxury; it is a necessity', in arguing that formation and reflection then are essential practices for Catholic school leaders. In the next section formation will be the focus.

The idea that one can base their life, and indeed leadership, on that of Jesus is seen as having a sacramental perspective. O'Leary describes sacrament as

> Central to our understanding and spreading of the Christian faith' [and that] 'in solidarity with Jesus, everyone is a sacrament of God
>
> (2008: 77-78)

Groome (1996: 12) describes sacramental consciousness as

> Being aware of the presence of God as the backdrop and foreground of life [and being able to] look through reality to 'see' for oneself 'the beyond in the midst'

Groome (ibid) argues that teachers must instil a sacramental consciousness in their students. Jesus was able to remain focussed on the future, living through the pains of the present, while leading His disciples into seeing God in all things such as in chastising the men who stoned the sinful woman.

Lydon (2009), in his exploration of the Salesian charism, found

> Pastoral care, advocated by Bosco, is modelled on that of Jesus the Good Shepherd. The teacher is, in effect, a sign, or sacrament, of the presence of Christ among young people
>
> (2009: 51)

For Catholic school leaders, enabling a sacramental perspective in others demands an enlivened spirituality. There is hope in that by engaging in the ministry of teaching, the individual Christian is responding to their primary call to be a disciple of Jesus in a distinctive manner. This fundamental calling demands that all Christians model their ministry on that of Christ.

For the Catholic teacher to reflect Christ would involve a desire to be present for their pupils in the first instance, learn and develop their pedagogy, then possibly their leadership capabilities as their career progresses. An awareness and a want to develop are central to personal improvement, and central to this awareness, is the idea of spirituality which is the focus of the next section.

2.4 Spirituality and Formation

In the last section the foundations of Christian teaching were considered, alongside the idea of discipleship and how teaching develops a vocational character. Underlying a sense of vocation must be a personal spirituality directed outwards, so the focus here becomes spirituality. The section will firstly define spirituality, working from a secular to a religious and then a specifically Catholic understanding. Attention will then be given to spiritual formation from the point of view that this must precede professional development, before uncovering exemplars of practice and factors which should underpin spiritual leadership.

The *Oxford Thesaurus for Students* defines spiritual well-being as

> Inner, mental, psychological, non-material…intangible, transcendent, ethereal, other worldly, mystic

(2007: 770)

Dictionary.com describes spirituality as "the quality or fact of being spiritual" (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/spirituality accessed on 29/09/2015). Being spiritual then involves seeing into one's self, one's state of mind, while separating one's self from everyday challenges hence cultivating an inspiration to achieve more or develop. Wikipedia describes the experience of spirituality as "personal growth, or [a] blissful experience" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirituality accessed on 29/09/2015)

Gutierrez-Zamano and Yasuno make the point that

> Spirituality takes place at the unit of the individual in the community
>
> (2002: 4)

Two reflections for the Catholic school leader emerge from this; firstly, that spirituality is an individual concern for each person; and secondly, there is an assumption that for spirituality to occur the individual is part of a community.

For leaders, Treston (1991), from a religious standpoint, corroborates this view, arguing that spirituality in leaders is aroused by the Spirit in the community. In their bibliographical exercise Gutierrez-Zamano and Yasuno, list Beck's (1986) thirteen characteristics of a spiritual person including the

> Integration of mind, body, soul and spirit [and] gratitude, an attitude to life that is not necessarily directed toward someone or something
>
> (2002: 15)

Aspects of this description highlight a common ground between religious and secular spirituality but also may blur an individual's understanding of religious spirituality. The authors go on to quote Schaper (2000), in distinguishing spirituality from religion, argues that spirituality

> Spirituality promotes disproportionate focus on the self, in contrast to religion, which seeks to integrate the human experience and unite people on a fundamental level
>
> (ibid)

Seymour (2001) perhaps giving us a more modern Christian perspective sees spirituality as

> The search to live out our understandings of how all the realities of life relate: enlivened, enlightened and empowered by the Spirit of God ... therefore I see spirituality as being based on: Our belief systems; the relational concept of human beings interacting with each other
>
> (2001: 33)

O'Malley brings the meaning even closer to God, stating that

> Christian spirituality is built on the lived experience that God became a human being. Therefore God is to be discovered within human experience, in what happens to us and how we cope with life
>
> (2007: 8)

Pope Paul VI asks that each of us through our beliefs, actions or abilities

> Must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and a symbol of the living God … must nourish the world with spiritual fruits … must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, the peace makers-whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed
>
> (1964: 38)

A Catholic perspective of spirituality therefore is, through personal insight, a point argued secularly by (Covey 2001); to succumb to a life which is in service of God, to model one's life on Jesus, using our own skills, talents and gifts to enrich the lives of others, accepting the joys and challenges of life presented to us in the same spirit.

Having considered spirituality and its place in the lives of Catholic teachers, the next section will consider CPD and formation where the argument that whether formation or vocation should come first is considered.

2.5 Continual Professional Development (CPD) and Formation

Having considered the need for spiritual formation in the Catholic teacher the idea of formation as an intrinsic part of a Catholic teacher's professional development will be considered in this section. Here formation will be defined in both the secular and Catholic sense, before considering the case for formational activity for Catholic teachers. The argument that formation is a prerequisite for vocation is highlighted before considering some challenges and concerns for planned developmental and formational activity.

The dictionary definition of formation describes it as "the act or process of forming something or of taking form" (Dictionary.com). This sits well with Gronn's (1999) definition, which places formation in the childhood sense, describing it as

> Those preparatory socialisation processes and experiences which served to later position them … in a state of social and psychological readiness to assume responsibility and authority
>
> (1999: 32)

For educators, formation can be described as the process through which a teacher goes on their journey to leadership. In the Catholic sense this formation must involve the spiritual element.

Treston (1991) argues that presence is the starting point from which one can argue the case for formational activity for teachers and points out that developing the teacher's spirituality is a prerequisite for developing the pupil's spirituality.

Lydon (2009) cites a study by Steven Shafran SDB (1994), which argued the need for an organised

> It would be necessary to introduce an organized training programme and to create a new written resource on the Salesian educational methodology in order to maintain its abiding influence
>
> (2009: 51)

This provides ample reason for planning formation in teachers in that a teacher will make a profound difference to the lives of pupils through 'being there' in the pastoral sense. A point which, for Catholic educators, provides much more clarity through the words of Pope Paul VI

> Today young people do not listen seriously to teachers but to witnesses; and if they do listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses

(1976: n464)

Seen from a sacramental perspective, teachers are, in effect, signs of the presence of Christ within their educational community as St John Bosco puts it, they are

> Signs and bearers of God's love for young people
> (http://www.salesians.org/salesians.html accessed on 29/09/2015)

This provides a stark warning that those not open to formational experiences could simply be going through the motions of teaching and missing opportunities for the development of the whole child, which contravenes the mission of Catholic education. Fr Jim Gallagher (Lydon, Murphy & Fincham; 2011, 2: 5.4) provides further weight for this stance

> Teachers can never be neutral in support of the mission of the catholic school – they either help to build it or they work against it

Moore (2000: 100) argues that the

> Spiritual goals of teachers in Catholic schools must be addressed both in the spiritual formation sense and in application of the curriculum

For Catholic teachers this provides a clear link between continuing professional development (CPD) and formation. Moore's reflections in leading staff development in schools mention experiences of sharing the leading of the gathering prayer, theological readings and discussing articles on teaching techniques but summed up the success of the activities in stating

> Our own development as persons and as teachers was elevated to a new position of importance as witnessed in our professional conduct

(ibid)

The Catholic Education Service (CES) in England provide reason for delving into professional development and formation in stressing the importance that

> The values and attitudes which underpin curriculum content and methodology of teaching and assessment are consistent with the Catholic vision of individuals, of relationships and of society
>
> (1999: 32)

Therefore, in the explicitly Catholic sense, professional development in schools

> Should recognise their [teachers] need for on-going support in deepening their understanding of the Church's teaching
>
> (ibid)

Further guidance for school leaders is bookended with a reminder to include this provision in any development planning.

Arguing that teaching in a Catholic school requires more of the individual, a particular type of vocation, Sullivan (2002: 93) claims it is

> The sense of where God wants me to be; this is what God wants me to do; this is how God invites me to share my talents; and most important of all, this I who God wants me to be

The argument that the spiritual base from which new leaders will emerge is being watered down, through individualism and *a la carte Catholicism,* emerges again. How can one claim to be the person God wants them to be if they are able to choose which parts of their faith they agree with, and which they don't? It was argued by the De La Salle Christian Brothers' conference in (2002; http://lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Rule-and-Foundational-Documents.pdf accessed on 29/09/2015), that past confidence in the knowledge that all teachers joining Catholic schools had a sense of vocation; whereupon a programme of formation would develop their vocation, can now be seen in reverse. It was argued that we can no longer be certain of vocation being present in Catholic educators and that a programme of formation should now precede the vocation of the teacher.

Formation then should be seen as an essential element in the career path of any Catholic teacher. In summing up the requirement for staff development in Catholic schools, Moore places it directly at the doorstep of formation

> ...we care for people because of their intrinsic value. This, then, is the starting point, or fundamental assumption, which underlies all staff development

(2000: 93)

Moore then compares the provision of developmental activities with the parable of the sower and the seed, warning that even the best provision can be met with mixed results depending on the culture of the school. The readiness of the individual to receive such formation is also a factor to consider.

Having gained insight into formation and its place in staff development in Catholic schools, the implications for Catholic school leaders in this area will be considered in the final section.

2.6 Implications for leadership

This section will focus on the example and style of Jesus' leadership from which leaders within Catholic schools can draw from. The model of Jesus is the perfect model on which teachers espouse to exemplify their teaching methods and pastoral role. Leaders therefore, should draw from the same example of leadership, and it is His example that is looked at first in this section before considering the implications for leaders in the context of the modern Catholic school.

> Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear

Pope John Paul II (1997) raises the concern about the 'contemporary world'. The intrusion of outside organisations in schooling, it is noted, can reduce education 'to its purely technical and practical aspects' (1997: n10). In encouraging leaders to advertise the school's ecclesial identity the document also asks that this is

> Not a mere adjunct, but is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which penetrates and informs every moment of its educational activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission
>
> (1997: n11)

Recent research articles in the area of leadership succession points to the diminishing spiritual capital of current and future headteachers, an issue through which research data highlights staff development and formational activity as a factor in developing spiritual school leadership for tomorrow. For Catholic schools there are growing concerns as Cook and Durow (2008) point out that

> Leaders lack the formal religious training and background considered necessary to lead catholic schools…the majority of new administrators lack the theological knowledge and spiritual leadership skills
>
> (2008: 355)

From an Australian perspective, in a review of lay Catholic school leaders, it is argued current headteachers

> Acknowledged that they had a significant responsibility for their own faith formation … [they recognised diocesan and education agencies] … have a responsibility to facilitate and support the spiritual as well as the professional growth of principals
>
> (Belmonte and Cranston; 2009: 311)

For the Catholic school leader, having considered their own faith development, the next stage will be to understand the context of the world in which they operate, a process which headteachers must understand first,

then transmit to their staff. This then provides a starting point from which leaders can plan for formational activity in their staff.

Interviews with headteachers by Grace showed an understanding of their mission as based on

> Gospel values, the teachings of Christ and the nurture of community
>
> (1995: 166)

Love is the basis of all Gospel values and the ultimate act of love, as shown by Jesus, is to lay one's life. O'Malley (2007) recognises this in describing the actions of a leader seen as a good shepherd as Jesus described himself. O'Malley also suggests

> Knowing the sheep individually…In time the leader will be trusted by the individual with opportunities for personal guidance
>
> (2007: 83)

There are clear links here between O'Malley's vision of a leader and Stock's (2008) vision in the *National Standards for Headteachers: Contextualized for Catholic Schools* these are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of findings

Being vigilant in watching for wolves and other threats	***and***	Shaping the future … ensure the visions of the 'preferred future' to achieve the mission of the school are clearly articulated, shared and understood and acted upon effectively by all (2008:2);
Creating sheepfolds, safe places for the sheep	***and***	Managing the organisation … ensure the school environment meets the needs of the curriculum and health and safety regulations (2008:8)…to promote the well-being of pupils at the school (9)
Laying down ones' life when needed	***and***	Promote a culture of 'vocation' in your work by articulating and demonstrating your headship as a calling to do God's will and His work' (2008:6)
(O'Malley; 2007: 83-87)		(Stock; 2008: 2-9)

Sergiovanni (2001), in discussing how headteachers can solve the paradox of nurturing community, discusses the difference between ego-centric love and altruistic love. The former assumes that high levels of community are established based on 'mutual goals and shared fellowship' but once the community is no longer needed for personal reasons these bonds are easily broken. Altruistic love assumes generous concern for each other member of the group

> To help, to serve, to be in communion with others
>
> (2001: 69)

The messages for Catholic school leaders then is that

> The virtues of serving, caring, respecting, empowering and helping without asking for anything in return are far more powerful "motivational devices" than the artful manipulation of motivational science that seeks to trade need fulfilment for compliance. The altruistic love modelled…not only binds teachers together as colleagues and fellows, but binds them to obligations and commitments as well
>
> (ibid)

Sullivan (2002: 103) argues that leaders should intentionally exercise spiritual leadership to

> Promote spiritual development among the adults as well as among the pupils

Pointing to one of many aspects of this role, Sullivan states that

> The spiritual development and on-going formation of the staff must remain among the priorities of the head teacher
>
> (2002: 105)

Sullivan (ibid) argues that this must take on a non-intrusive, non-didactic style but that colleagues should be challenged. In other words there should be an invitation for them to participate in such activity but the degree to which they

engage is an entirely personal decision. Leithwood and Riehl suggest that in developing people,

> Offering intellectual stimulation…to examine assumptions about their work
>
> (2003: 6)

This is an important approach for leaders to adopt. Leaders have to also concern themselves with their own spiritual needs; Seymour (2001) challenges the leader to

> Discover the Sabbath places in his or her ministry
>
> (2001: 33)

Before proceeding, one must consider the challenge for the headteacher that may lie in unreflective or unreceptive teachers at which point the leader may need to employ other models of leadership. Jesus Himself did not reject other forms of leadership, the school leader too must recognise times when situational or even transactional models need to be employed. These decisions need to be made in the context of keeping true to the Church's mission.

Turning to the Gospels for the encouragement of Christian leaders Treston (1995) presents lessons from each Gospel and reveals Jesus' transformational style of leadership. He asserts that Mark's Gospel recognises the lesson in triumph over adversity of the Risen Lord and reminds us that a true leader has come 'not to be served but to serve'

Treston argues that Matthew's Gospel presents leaders with

> A model of how the process of change can be managed
>
> (1995: 44)

Using John's Gospel, Treston again, warns us that

> Leaders should not stand on the status of their office as the source of authority but on their intimacy with Jesus
>
> (ibid)

In a statement by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (1996) there are expectations of what leaders should seek to understand

> We believe each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God … the test therefore of every institution or policy is whether it enhances or threatens human dignity
>
> (1996: 9)

This task demands that leaders build social capital which O'Keeffe (1998) describes as that

> Found in catholic schools which combine with the church and the parish to form a supportive enclave…united around a system of shared beliefs and values about the nature and role of education
>
> (1998: 41)

Sergiovanni (2001), in analysing leadership of community, touches upon the spiritual qualities of belonging as

> Being connected to others…to institutions we value is a way of becoming connected with ourselves
>
> (2001: 63-64)

He goes onto describe cultural connections as covenantal more than contractual in that 'covenants are planted in the hearts of people' (ibid). An important device for Catholic school leaders to utilise is a form of bargaining with people to create a covenantal institution for the Church where

> Understandings and commitments that obligate people to each other and that obligate people to the institutions they value
>
> (ibid)

The Catholic Education Service (1999) asks leaders to

> Use all opportunities to deepen their community's understanding of the Christian principles which underpin the daily life and work of the school…give witness by their example to the central importance of prayer and reflection…demonstrate qualities of love and forgiveness, of service, of respect for the uniqueness of the individual
>
> (1999: B-13)

With reference to providing a Christian community *Gravissimum Educationis* demands from Catholic schools, that they

> Create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity…while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God
>
> (Pope Paul VI; 1965: n8)

Before looking to the leadership of CPD and formation of staff, any idea of planning to enhance the vocational commitment and spiritual capital of teachers through school leadership activities one has to consider the amount of capital of each individual member of staff, the type of experience will have little impact unless the intended audience are engaged in the activity. In vocational terms this would mean touching their spiritual being, enabling them to reflect on their own spiritual journey and their reasons for teaching. Losito (2000) suggests bringing *inquiry* back into staff development activities, in terms of formational activities what could this mean engaging staff in regular analysis of faith / charism documents. Rogus and Wilenhaus (2000) propose planned informal and formal programmes of staff development which in essence can be described as tailored formational activity.

The CES provide direction on the process of CPD stating the need for a

> Managed programme that derives from agreed policies [that] will help to ensure the needs, including the spiritual needs, of the individual and of the community are addressed through a range of opportunities
>
> (1999: X-68)

The CES goes on to state that the policy should reflect the particular needs of the institution in relation to its mission statement, informed by training needs analysis, appraisal, and action planning following inspection. It suggests that forming a professional development group with a brief

> Linked to the mission statement will help ease the tensions between individual and institutional needs
>
> (1999: X-68)

This provides some very helpful direction on the strategic management of development activities and again a consideration of relationships within the school.

Flintham (2007) points out that

> For aspirant and potential principals, there was a need for specific staged succession preparation programmes for Catholic schools…Such programmes should aim to give aspirant principals a deeper embedded personal spirituality before appointment to principalship
>
> (2007: 12)

The outcomes of the research gave clear guidance for sustaining Catholic headteachers and proposed strong link with formational activities

> Spot and grow your own future leaders; invite and identify, nurture and affirm them; see potential and provide appropriate developmental opportunities for them
>
> (ibid)

Guerra (2000) also adds that

> New generations of faithful leaders will create a bright future for Catholic schools, if the current generation has the wisdom and generosity to find them, encourage them, train them and support them

Flintham's (2007) study also highlights the prevailing 'post-modernist' attitudes of the middle leaders for whom

> It was felt that a more structured programme of spiritual formation should form a mandatory gateway to the role [headship] to develop them not only as professional leaders but as religious leaders within the school

(2007: 12)

This is a call for a measured programme of formational activities aimed at aspiring leaders who, 'post-modernist' in mind, are still the early generations of lay headteachers, yet are perceived to require vocational training in their faith. The study also recognises that 'the voices in the study' call for a different vision or 'an alternative paradigm which places the development of leadership capabilities above competencies (Duignan 2007), 'being' above 'doing', relationships above results, and Christ at the centre of all things, rooted and grounded in faith in Him.

2.7 Summary

In the light of work carried out by researchers in the field of Catholic school leadership, and especially in the area of spiritual leadership and formation, some key ideas for research emerged which form the basis from which the research methodology will be designed. The questions will link to provide an overall view of the current state of formational practice in Catholic schools and seek to identify areas of strength and areas where school leaders can work to improve the sustainability of Catholic leaders in future years. The questions are:

- What do leaders understand and implement in terms of vocational experience in the current social and educational climate?

- What are teachers' experiences of formation and what are their views on the spiritual leadership of headteachers?

- How are Catholic schools ensuring mission integrity in a secular educational world?

- Are the current formational practices of Catholic schools working to ensure the future success of Catholic schools?

In the next chapter I will describe how these questions inform the design of the research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will provide a definition of research. Then I will revisit the overall aims and objectives before exploring the research methods employed, justifying my reasons for the design of each method used. I will then explain why and how I carried out the research before considering any ethical considerations.

3.2 Research

A general meaning of the word 'research' is given in Dictionary.com

> [The] … diligent and systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions

Systematic investigation implies that there is thought and planning involved before the research begins. It can also be implied that the researcher has a reason therefore to carry out the research, a want to discover more or to prove a theory or hypothesis. It is certainly true that the reason for this research has a personal perspective borne from progression in the Catholic educational system. From a more academic perspective Bassey states

> Research is systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute towards the advancement of knowledge and wisdom
>
> (1999: 38)

Developing the systematic approach, Bassey (ibid) refers to the personal skills and qualities required to complete a thorough piece of research which can be regarded favourably in the eyes of those with a vested interest in the area. Being critical and self-critical, and proving this, provides the researcher with a tool from which to view their work from other perspectives and attempt to eliminate prejudice from their work. The nature of this particular research is inevitably based around (mainly Catholic) teachers, on a 'spectrum of faith'

where people are on various journeys – some buy in totally, some live by the principles alone and various other junctures in-between. Therefore it is of crucial importance that the researcher can distinguish between objective and subjective standpoints. Personal subjects such as faith are difficult to measure or capture in a direct question or to quantify in raw data, therefore the idea of qualitative and quantitative approaches to this research is considered.

Both of the references above agree that the outcome of research is to enable further knowledge or draw new conclusions. This research aims to highlight current practice and principles amongst Catholic teachers and leaders with a view to possibly offering more strategic approaches to formation of leaders in Catholic schools.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research

There are two broad research paradigms which are characterised as qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Bell (2010) argues that that there is no approach to research that would necessarily accept or reject either qualitative or quantitative research outright. The researcher must discern what approach they require from the type of information they hope to gather.

> Quantitative researchers collect facts and study the relationships of one set of facts to another … Researchers adopting the qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world
>
> (Bell; 2010: 5)

Bell goes on to point out the need to consider the context of the study before engaging with either type so that no one approach should be selected over

the other, in fact the information desired should drive the type of approach used. Briggs and Coleman argue that the

> Qualitative researcher … is likely to be searching for understanding rather than facts; for interpretations rather than measurements; for values rather than information
>
> (2010: 355)

Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies have their strengths and weaknesses. One advantage of quantitative approaches of gathering data is that they can provide a broad picture of a situation. These approaches are relatively objective, in that they are conducted dispassionately and in a detached way. In a questionnaire survey, for example, the researcher does not normally engage with participants in a personal and individual manner.

Questionnaires have the advantage of being cheap and easy to administer. They can be conducted by post or in face-to-face contexts and can provide standardised answers that lend themselves to the clear presentation of graphical results.

However, there are potential disadvantages of using questionnaires, for example;

- It is difficult to gauge whether a respondent is being truthful,
- It is impossible to tell how much thought a respondent has given to the answer,
- The respondent may not be thinking about the full context of a situation,
- Respondents may interpret questions differently and may therefore respond in a way that is based on their own perception / experience of the question – for example, what is 'good' to one person may be 'poor' to someone else. Therefore, there is a level of subjectivity;

- There is a degree of researcher imposition. For example, when developing the questionnaire, the researcher is making their own decisions and assumptions as to what is and is not significant – they may therefore be missing something that is important

Qualitative research methodologies, on the other hand, enable the researcher to understand the underlying meaning of situations and experiences. They are more subjective in the sense that they would normally involve the researcher directly with participants. Qualitative research would include ethnographic and phenomenological studies, in which the researcher observes situations from the point of view of the subject of the study.

Drever (1995) argues that this approach in a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to try

> To understand another persons' culture through a fairly lengthy non-directive approach
>
> (1995: 17)

This would allow for a much deeper understanding of the interviewees concerns and issues. As understanding the culture of schools is an important element of the research aims of this study, using interviews to see through the eyes of the school leader is imperative in gaining an insight into the practice of Catholic schools today.

Further factors to consider when conducting interviews for qualitative purposes include, for example;

- Allowing the interviewee time to expand when answering, however, this is dependent on the interviewers planning of, and skills during, the session,

- Flexibility - when respondents answer the same question they provide comparability of answers and there is opportunity to expand,

- A chance for the interviewer to see the interviewee, to pick up on non-verbal cues and hear the depth of passion in certain responses, when considering the issue of *culture in schools* this could be very useful,

- Clarity - if the interviewer feels an issue or question has not been answered fully enough for the needs of the research they can repeat questions or refocus the interviewee on a specific part of their answer to obtain a view or opinion which they may not have given.

3.3 Research Design

The outcomes of this research are not designed to give a factual picture of how a Catholic teacher's journey to leadership can be mapped out or how their spirituality or vocation may be used as a reference point from which to plan formational CPD but there may be connections and different viewpoints which could be uncovered. The use of both avenues in gathering data will help when one's beliefs, practices and experiences are considered along with their factual responses, general trends can then be shown to have relevance when statistical analysis is considered in line with the rich descriptions and varied points of view.

(i) Questionnaires

The choice of questionnaire as a tool for gathering facts was an easy one to justify for its inclusion, and in the context of this study I was required to know various facts about the respondents in order to investigate links between personal experience and outlooks. The design of the questionnaire as such includes each of the elements described above. The advantages and disadvantages are described below.

Care was taken to ensure that the questions were designed to be non-presuming, not hypothetical and, considering the nature of the subject, non-offensive and non-leading

> Drafting questions is an enjoyable, interesting and frustrating process … [and that the] … questions should be "clear and unambiguous"
>
> (Munn and Drever; 1990: 19-20)

In developing the questionnaire I ran through the questionnaire a number of times with a few colleagues, including my headteacher, to refine the design and nature of some questions. Bell points out the disadvantage in questionnaire

> The aim is to obtain answers to the same questions from a large number of individuals to enable the researcher not only to describe, but also to compare, to relate one characteristic to another and to demonstrate that certain features exist in certain categories
>
> (2010: 12)

The process of involving others in developing the questionnaire was useful on two fronts as it ensured that any subjective questioning could be identified and omitted as well as ensuring the language was accessible by all respondents.

The questions in Section A of the questionnaire were included in order to gather facts about the respondent as a faith practitioner and as a teacher. List questions were used to gather faith practise, experience in teaching, and teaching in Catholic schools.

Section B was concerned with gathering respondents experiences of formational activity, the multi-choice type question enabled more than one preference to be given. These were fact gathering questions as opposed to the remaining focus of the questionnaire.

Section C was aimed at gathering the preferences between vocational and formational viewpoints. This was a closed choice, either- or- , type statement. There was no option to disagree with either statement, the respondents were asked to state which one they agreed with most. The disadvantage of this method is that the strength of feeling cannot be gauged; however this was not the intention of the question, a preference for either vocation or formation was more concerning.

The strength of feeling was a key factor in deciding to use the Likert scale in Section D. The desired responses, again due to the nature of the statements, were best gathered on strength of feeling and the question type choice was useful for this.

> Strength of feeling or attitude towards a given statement…the implication here is that the higher the category chosen, the greater strength of agreement
>
> (Bell; 2010: 146)

Whilst acknowledging this Bell also recognises that the answers are only ranked and that a higher answer does not mean it is twice or five times better. The statements, against which the respondents were required to tick how much they agreed or disagreed, were concerned with the impact of their own experience and views, therefore a good choice for which to gather their personal responses.

Establishing groups in various categories would enable me to penetrate further links between age and role, or experience and formational experience, to attempt to highlight common threads in current practice and experiences before considering their impact.

There is of course a limit to the depth of response that can be gathered from a questionnaire. Again I felt that gathering a deeper response from those who could possibly verbalise their journey (school leaders), experience and practise in this area was an essential part of the study. I therefore chose to include interviews as part of the research; the reason for undertaking interviews is discussed in the next section.

(ii) Interviews

Patton (1990) suggests that where open ended questions, in the form of a standardised interview, are delivered in the same way in each interview, they

> Constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers
>
> (1990: 289)

However, Patton also states the strength in this approach is a greater ability to compare responses and aid in the organisation and analysis of data.

Interviews are adaptable but exhaustive. They can reap great benefits if, in semi or unstructured interviews, a certain topic may elicit a passionate response, the interview may change track. At such times the non-verbal responses can become important in the interview, as Bell (2010) states

> The way in which a response is made … can provide information that a written response would conceal
>
> (2010: 161)

Alternatively, a structured interview may require ticking responses to a previously prepared schedule where one should be able to leave the interview with the desired information.

It was decided to adopt an approach to gathering data that employed a semi-structured interview as an instrument of measurement. The reasons for this include; the leaders in the survey would need to be given the opportunity to provide detail and elaborate their responses and to provide examples to strengthen their point of view. The most important consideration though is that each respondent would have the chance to share their understanding of the question or topic being discussed, after all, this study is a leadership focussed one, and a clear insight into the views expressed by leaders will help provide a basis on which to see strengths and make recommendations.

3.4 The Sample

The three schools were chosen for the research as I felt I had a positive relationship with the headteachers and leaders in each school.

Context of Research

The three schools were chosen mainly due to familiarity but also due to the fact that they were similar sized schools and faced the same external issues, coming from a similar geographical area (with similar levels of deprivation) and serving the same deanery. Admissions are similar and all schools are achieving well, judged good or better by OfSTED and diocesan inspection. Catholic leadership was reflected as strong in all schools selected. Familiarity with the schools, and their leaders, enabled me to ascertain that there is a great deal of experience amongst the leadership of the schools but there are emerging leaders also, which is something I judged to be pertinent to the study.

3.5 Ethical considerations

(i) Questionnaires

There are many factors to contemplate when consideration is taken of the ethical issues in conducting research which contains the views of different respondents.

These could have influence on the reliability of outcomes/findings, confidentiality and the honesty of the intentions of the research. As such all participants were informed, by a slip of paper attached to the questionnaires, that all responses were indeed completely confidential and that there would be no potential for identifying individual responses once analysis was completed. All questionnaire responses would be destroyed once the research had been completed.

(ii) Interviews

Faith, being at the centre of this research has deep ethical reflections; strong opinions will be sought and gained. The respondent will need to ensure their confidentiality is guaranteed. With this in mind I reassured all respondents to questionnaires and interviewees that their confidentiality and anonymity would not be compromised.

> Confidentiality is a promise that you will not be identified or presented in identifiable form, while anonymity is a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses came from which respondents
>
> (Bell; 2010: 49)

The advantage of having an already established relationship with the participants in the interviews ensured confidence in the reassurances I had made about confidentiality. The recordings and written responses would not be shared, and would be disposed of after completion of the research.

To enable to confidentiality of the schools in the research, the references from OfSTED and diocese reports have been omitted from the References section.

3.6 Procedures

(i) Questionnaires

Once I had agreed administrative and diary considerations with the headteachers of each school I ensured that questionnaires and cover letters were sent to schools. I agreed a timescale of a week or two to pick up the completed questionnaires, as each headteacher very kindly agreed they would try to provide staff meeting time for teachers to complete them. As such the distribution and collection of questionnaires took several weeks to complete but this enabled me to personally deliver and collect the completed forms, as well as begin to collate the data in smaller and more manageable parts.

(ii) Interviews

Having contacted each headteacher, I explained the reason for my research and what my objectives were, before discussing my proposed methods and how they would fit into their diary without compromising outcomes (such as ensuring interviews would be uninterrupted or distribution and collection of questionnaires).

Interviews were recorded with the permission of each individual; confidentiality and ethical considerations were discussed and agreed beforehand. All deputies and headteachers were assured that their personal views expressed would be confidential.

As I knew the headteachers and deputy headteachers well, we dispensed with formalities at the beginning of the interviews as we welcomed each other as we normally would beforehand. All interviews were conducted at a time of mutual agreement, the room was of the interviewee's choice and were organised to be uninterrupted. All interviews were clear that their confidentiality would be maintained despite the use of recording equipment.

Using a recording device to ensure the whole interview could be not only re-read, listened too repeatedly, was important as it was expected that interviewees would respond with many stories and analogies of their points of view, manually recording this during the interview would not be efficient use of time. Bell (2010) argues that recording interviews allows further content analysis by listening to the recording several times to

> Identify categories … it allows you to code, summarise and to note comments which are of particular interest
>
> (2010: 167)

Having considered both options, in line with the desired outcomes and nature of the topics being discussed, I decided that I would ask a small number of questions, the same for each interviewee, while proceeding along the interview schedule there may be the opportunity to dig a little deeper for clarity or further information. I wanted the interviewee to respond as freely as they could to the question. A challenge here was to ensure the questions were truly open-ended which Patton again argues

Allows the person being interviewed to select from among that person's full repertoire of possible answers

<div align="right">(1990: 296)</div>

3.7 Summary

Throughout this section the usefulness and limitations of my choice for research approaches have been considered. Issues such as the post interview administration time, such as typing up interviews and accurately classifying responses. What became apparent was that the design and administering of the research would involve communication, flexibility and timely action on my part.

Further acknowledgement must be given to the limitations of the actual research, for a number of reasons. The size of the study is small scale; there is no intention to prove my findings are empirical, or to disprove a theory. The study is more a reflection on current approaches and attitudes to formational practice in a small number of schools.

A final consideration was ensuring confidentiality. As the headteachers were well known to me, integrity was incumbent upon me to guarantee their discretion.

In the following section I will provide the results of the research I have carried out, before providing analysis of these results with emphasis on the implications for Catholic school leaders.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the attention will be given to the factual reporting of the main findings from the research (questionnaires and interviews), before focusing on analysing the outcomes in line with the themes investigated in the Literature Review.

4.2 Presentation of results

(i) Questionnaire Results

Section A

Section A of the questionnaire gathered facts about the respondents, the results of these are described here. Each of the 35 respondents represented 3% of the total answers received.

86% (30) of respondents were female, 11% (4) were male and there was one no response.

Over three quarters were Catholic (77%), with the majority of remaining respondents coming from the Church of England faith (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Faith

Catholic ■ Church of England ■ Sikh ■ Baptist ■ No answer

3% 3% 3%

14%

77%
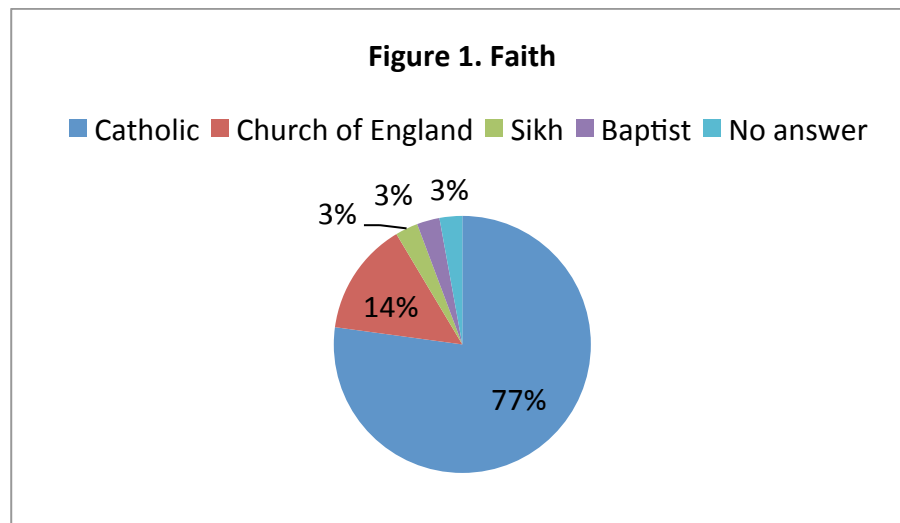
Many of the respondents practised their faith regularly, with 27 practising once a month or more regularly, (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Faith practice

Weekly	Once a month	Twice a year	Once a year	No answer
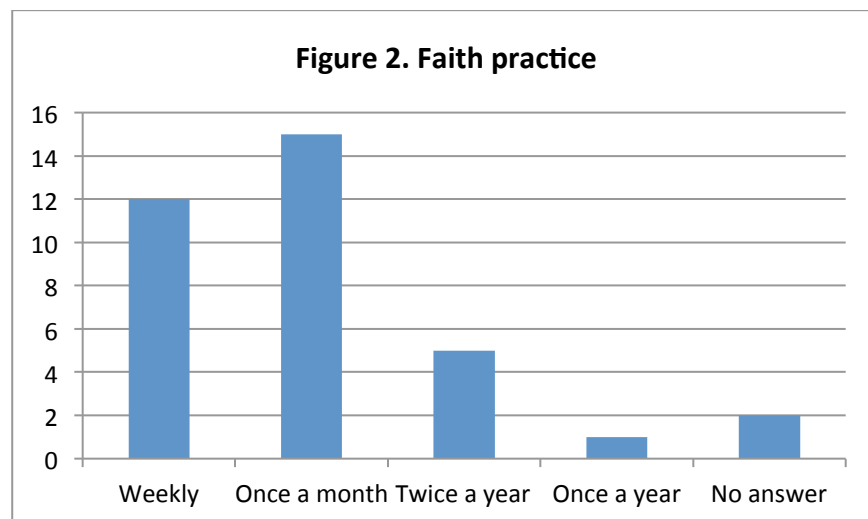
Many of the teachers responding were under 30 years of age (30), while two-thirds were under 40. Of the remaining third of respondents only 2 were over 60 years old, (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Age of teachers

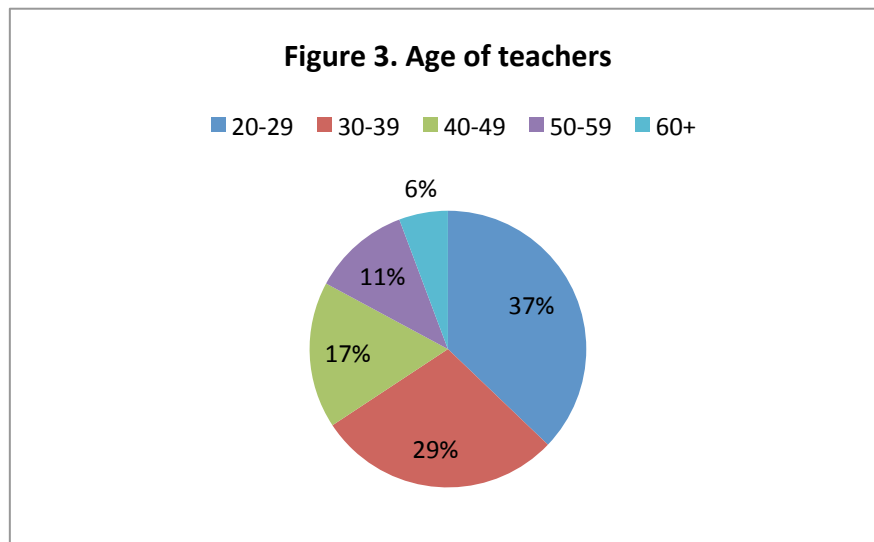■ 20-29 ■ 30-39 ■ 40-49 ■ 50-59 ■ 60+
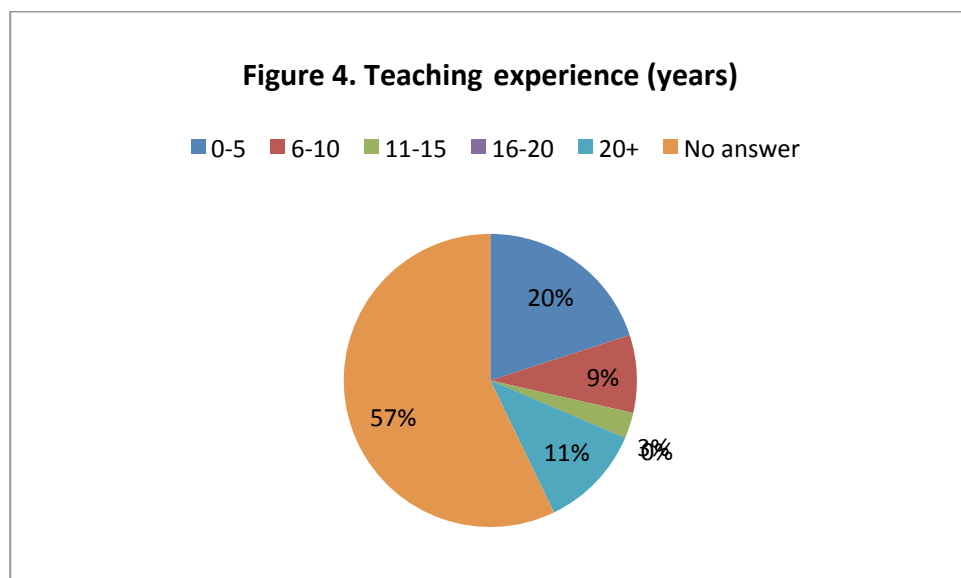
6%

11%

17%

37%

29%

Figure 4 shows the teaching experience of the respondents, over 40% had less than 5 years teaching experience. 29% of teachers had between 6-15 years' experience which could be described as the time during which they develop into leaders in schools.

Figure 4. Teaching experience (years)

■ 0-5 ■ 6-10 ■ 11-15 ■ 16-20 ■ 20+ ■ No answer

20%

9%

57%

11%

3%0%

Just over half (54%) have only taught in Catholic schools. The distribution of roles as provided by respondents is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Type of experience

Other schools 46%

Catholic schools only 54%
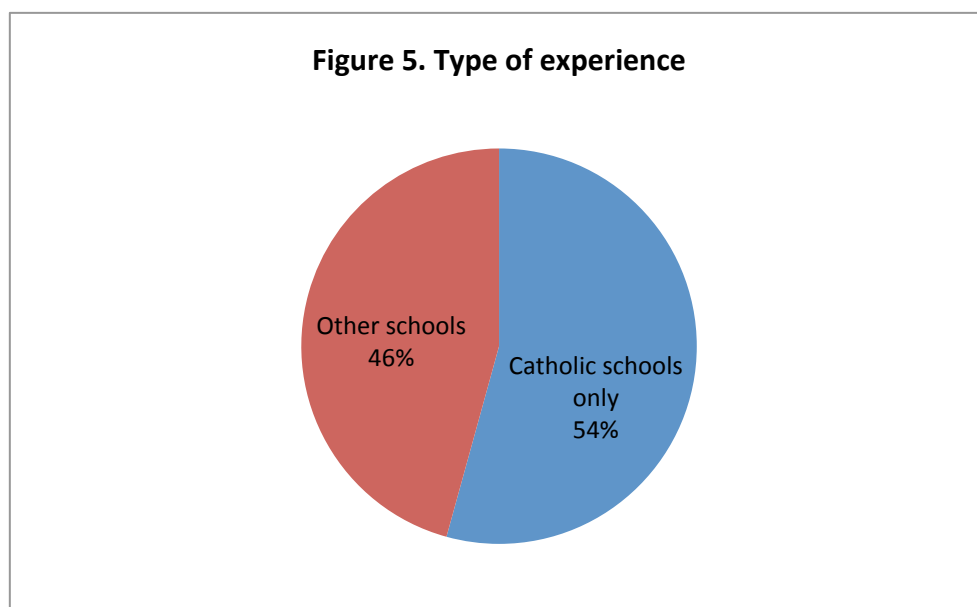
Figure 6 below, shows the experience that teachers have had in Catholic schools.

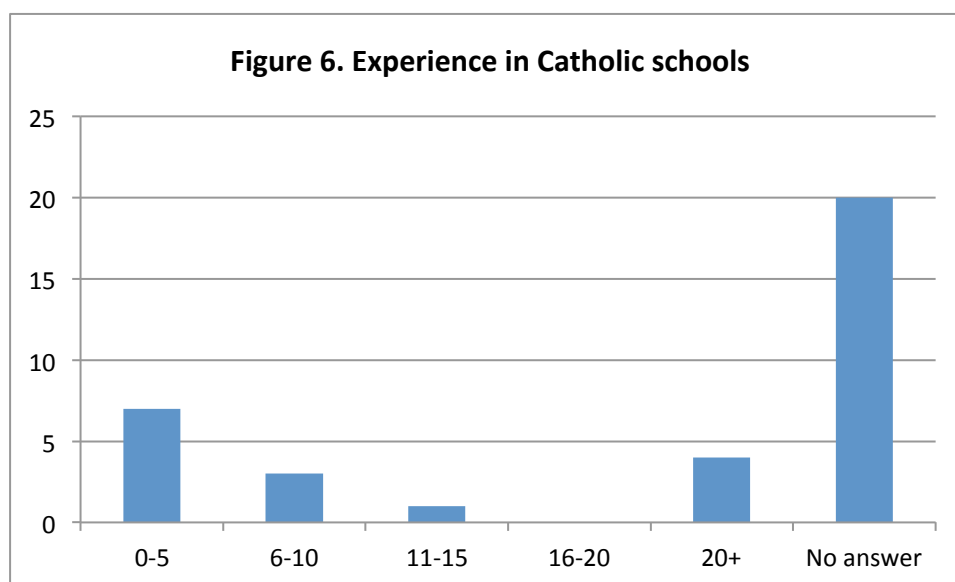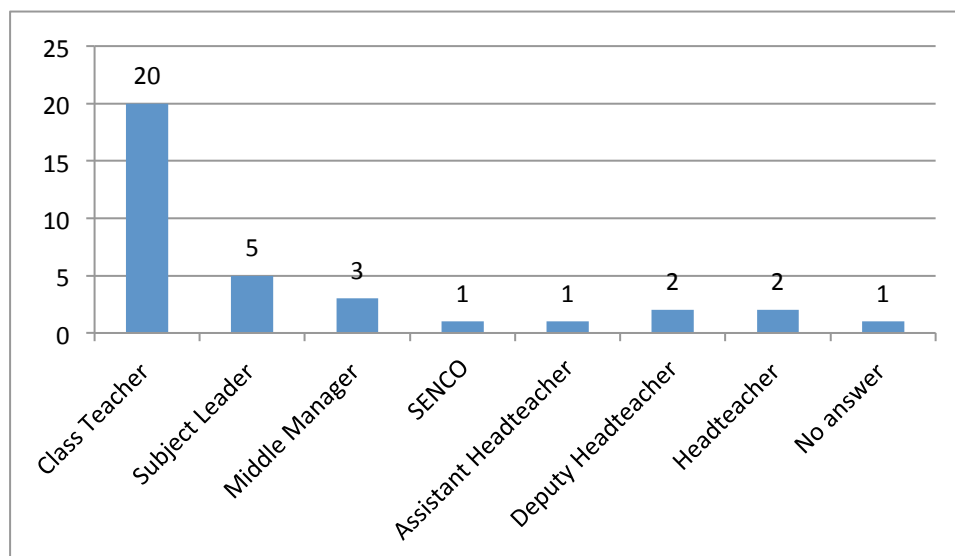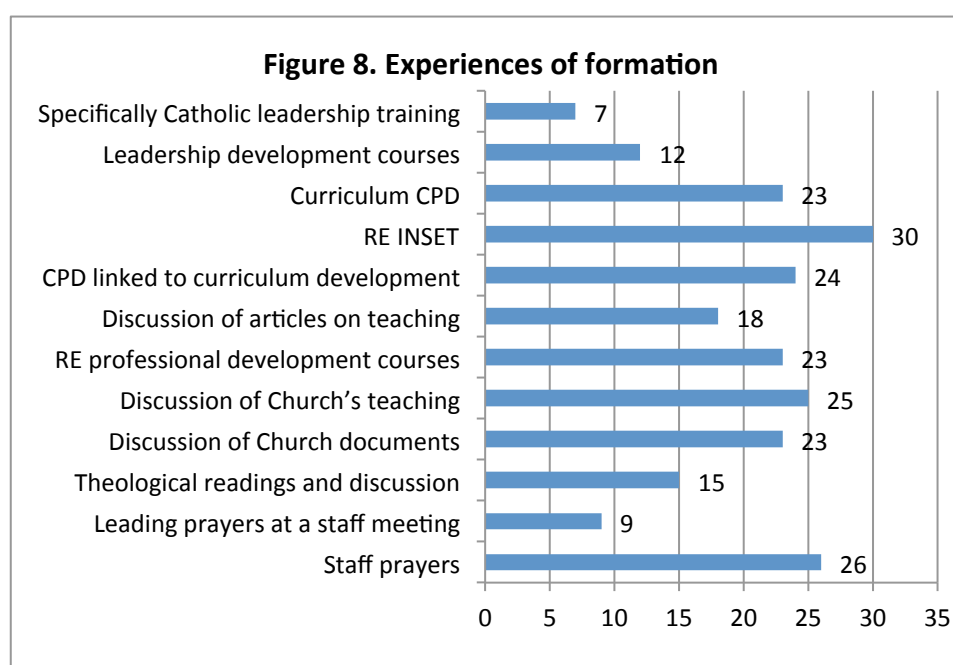**Figure 6. Experience in Catholic schools**

Figure 7 shows the distribution of respondents' roles in their schools.

Figure 7. Role in school

Section B

The focus of Section B was concerned with teachers' experiences of formation. Figure 8 shows the spread of answers selected form the choices given.

Figure 8. Experiences of formation

Section C

The next section of the questionnaire concentrated on the impact that formation has had on teachers and their vocation. Figure 9 shows the responses to the statements provided. There are clearly strong opinions to these statements with preferences by the majority all being more than two-thirds of each answer given, except interestingly, the view on whether formation should be a personal choice.

Figure 9. Attitudes to Formation and Vocation

I believe that formation should be a community activity	74%	26%	I believe that the formation of teachers is a purely personal thing
My experience of formational activity has influenced my professional conduct	86%	14%	My experience of formational activity has not influenced my professional conduct
I had a sense of vocation before I started teaching	83%	14% 3% no answer	I developed a sense of vocation through participation in professional development courses
I believe that through my teaching career my sense of vocation has not changed	31%	69%	I believe that through my teaching career my sense of vocation has deepened
Formational activity should be a personal choice	43%	57%	All teachers should undertake formational activity

Section D

Section D sought teachers' views to aspects of mission integrity, the Person of Jesus being modelled by the headteacher and views / impact of formational activity. Figure 10 shows the results.

Figure 10. Attitudes to Formation and Vocation

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion	No answer
1.The Charism of the Catholic faith has been watered down in Catholic schools	2 (6%)	14 (40%)	10 (29%)	2 (6%)	4 (11%)	3 (9%)
2.Headteachers promote the Church's mission through their everyday activities	15 (43%)	20 (57%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3.Your activity in school contributes to the formation of other teachers	8 (23%)	16 (46%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	7 (20%)	1 (3%)
4.'The Catholic school loses its purpose without constant reference to the Gospel. It derives all necessary energy for all its educational work from Christ.'	9 (26%)	18 (51%)	5 (14%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)
5.Your sense of vocation is fuelled by discussion arising from participation in professional development courses	5 (14%)	19 (54%)	8 (23%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)
6.Participation in professional development courses has deepened your sense of vocation as a teacher	8 (23%)	15 (43%)	8 (23%)	0 (0%)	4 (11%)	0 (0%)
7.Participation in formational activity has helped in fulfilling your pastoral role as a teacher	5 (14%)	27 (77%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
8.Fulfilling your role as a teacher in a Catholic school requires regular attention to your spiritual well-being	7 (20%)	20 (57%)	6 (17%)	0 (0%)	2 (0%)	0 (0%)
9.Teachers need ongoing support to deepen their understanding of the Church's teaching	7 (20%)	23 (66%)	4 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
10.Participation in reflective / spiritual days is an important part of my role as a teacher in a Catholic school	6 (17%)	28 (80%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
11.Participation in formational activity has helped your career development towards school leadership	5 (14%)	10 (29%)	7 (20%)	1 (3%)	11 (31%)	1 (3%)
12.Your headteacher encourages shared working and fellowship	15 (43%)	19 (54%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
13.Your headteacher finds strength in their role from formational activity	12 (34%)	16 (46%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	6 (17%)	0 (0%)
14.Your headteacher tries to serve the needs of individuals in the school community	18 (51%)	14 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)
15.Your headteacher manages the changing needs of the school community well	15 (43%)	17 (49%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
16.Your headteacher's authority is based on their loyalty to the Church's mission	16 (46%)	13 (37%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (14%)	0 (0%)
17.Your headteacher's authority comes from their personality	16 (46%)	12 (34%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	5 (14%)	0 (0%)
18.Your headteacher's authority comes from their respect for each individual	12 (34%)	20 (57%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)
19.Your headteacher attends to the spiritual needs of everyone in the school	13 (37%)	13 (37%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	6 (17%)	0 (0%)

(ii) Interview Classification and Comparison

1. *What do you understand by formation or formational activity in a Catholic educational context?*

The outcomes of the interviews will be provided here. Interviewees often referred to factors regarding formation, vocation spirituality, CPD, leadership, and Church mission throughout the interviews, questions were often answered or expanded upon in other responses. For the sake of collating these results I have considered the whole interview when providing actual references to each category. Figure 9 shows the total references to different areas that were regarded as formational.

Figure 9. Leaders understanding of Formation

Real/relevant (authenticity of experiences)	1
Living the faith/Catholic life	5
Prayer	2
Development of Catholic teaching	1
CPD (INSET, courses, collegiate work)	7
Spiritual formation (emotional experience)	2
Theological understanding	1
Visits (spiritual leaders, RE advisors)	3
Being led	2

There was a general consensus amongst the headteachers and deputies that CPD was seen as formational. Other commonly mentioned themes were prayer and the day-to-day life of a Catholic school. Many examples were provided to substantiate their views and 'living the faith' was considered as important as planned CPD.

It was strongly felt that any planned formational activity should 'not be done to teachers', the interviewees felt that staff needed to feel it was of value to them. In addition to this there were two clear strands that added value to the experience. Firstly it should develop their understanding of their role as Catholic teachers and secondly, that it should develop them spiritually in the faith.

The example provided to the supplementary questions reiterated the leaders concerns about being seen as developmental both professionally and personally. Formational activity should not be seen ticking boxes by leadership teams but touching peoples' values came across strongly from the interviewees. A further point raised was that it should be built into the life of the school, drip fed, to keep peoples wells of spirituality topped up.

Internal delivery of CPD and formational activity was regularly highly shared by the interviewees; some cited the involvement of the parish priest as a key element to this also. On the same them, the idea of collegiality occurred often, with one interviewee mentioning a group of teachers undergoing CCRS.

In discussing impact the interviewees often mentioned staff prayer, and liturgies/activity being modelled well. Staff mass, staff/governor mass and deanery masses were also seen as impactful activities. Mention was also made of living the ethos of the school, making living the faith cultural.

The headteachers and deputies referred to formational activity needing to be of practical benefit to recipient, and cited examples such as, staff questions for the parish priest about teaching RE and interpreting the message from

Gospels and how focussing on the liturgical aspect of assemblies was a great success in one school. Further examples shared by interviewees included the importance of the spiritual faith and professional skill, and even the personality, of those delivering any such activity. Interpersonal skills and inspirational delivery were important elements of any delivery. Bible study at one school's INSET, discussed as old fashioned but delivered well, made a great impact on one headteacher and their staff, a strong feeling of personal formation from this activity was evident.

2. *Can you think of one course, training, experience or event that has had the most impact on your career?*

Courses both secular and Catholic were considered as having an impact on the headteachers and deputies, there were a few comments about lack of opportunity and a need for strategic provision from a higher level. Collegiality came across strongly and just working together as school leaders strengthened spirituality. All CPD was regarded as formational, including internal CPD, joint INSET with other Catholic schools.

The consideration of the individual, the timing of the activity on their faith journey was a factor considered. In one response the timing of specific event, a spontaneous mutual prayer with other headteachers one day in Rome had significant impact. Figure 10 shows references to CPD/formation/training that has or has not had significant impact.

Figure 10. Examples of Formational Activity, CPD, Training

Impact	No.	No impact	No.
Staff member leading 11	2	Diocesan training 1	1
Staff feel involved 1	1	Activities that 'tick boxes' 1	1
Collegiate working (intra/inter school INSET) 111	3	Externally provided INSET 1	1
Catholic heads working together 111	3	Person delivering external INSET	2
Catholic heads conferences 11	2		
National Association of Primary Education (NAPE) Conference 1	1		
Staff open to formation 1	1		
Developed from school needs / Catholic life 1	1		
Diocesan consultant 11	2		
NPQH 1	1		
Catholic life 111	3		
Parish Priest visits 111	3		
CCRS 1	1		
Prayer 1	1		
Timing of event 1	1		
Person delivering external INSET	2		

3. *To what extent do you (and your headteacher) consider the readiness of individuals within the staff to accept planned formational activity?*

In sharing their views on the delivery of formation, interviewees described the strong sense of collegiality with their schools and a culture of lifelong learning was cited, 'everybody chooses to be here' (Interview 2), and consideration of further induction for non-Catholic staff.

Figure 11 illustrates the responses given by headteachers and deputy headteachers in interview, when asked about their perceptions of staff readiness for formational activity. The results have been grouped into 3

distinct areas; the awareness of the individual, understanding the school's culture and engaging staff.

Figure 11. Perceptions of staff readiness for formational activity

```
Relates to the individual
Awareness of different places on their journey

Feel for the culture at the time
Catholic more open others to it
Young staff are open already no need to consider readiness

Explanation of liturgy to staff
Staff have opportunity for input
Awareness of misapprehensions amongst non-Catholic staff
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The interviewees are very aware of staff readiness to accept planned formational activity. There was recognition in responses to active faith members being more receptive, as well as non-faith members really buying-in strongly also. Interviewees also recognised better ownership from leaders as they were on a specific career course. There was little mention of resistance to planned activity pointing to general acceptance from teachers. One response highlighted a strong sense of collegiality a Catholic strength in learning. Again the timing of activity in terms of where the school community or individuals were at in the faith journey was given consideration regularly.

4. *To what extent do the needs of the Church influence how you and your headteacher plan formational activity?*

This question has been touched upon in previous answers and referred to directly here it provided a variety of answer and interpretation. Issues such as the watering down of vocation due to external pressures, a decreasing Catholic population of schools and lack of opportunity at higher level (for

example, from the diocese) were seen as negative factors. There was recognition that all staff need to develop including headteachers, and that faith is personal response, some saw this an important factor. There was no expectation by the leaders of needing to receive formation but more an acknowledgement that living the Catholic life of the school was strongly formational.

The headteachers especially, mentioned the watering down of faith experience in younger generation of Catholic teachers as a factor in their thinking on this issue. There were references to how school leaders should be interpreting the Church's aims, from the responses it appeared the basic Church teaching was well understood but its modern social teaching maybe confusing, this was more prevalent in the responses of the deputy headteachers.

A reflection on staff was also a consideration, their individual and collective readiness, with reference made to faith journeys and demands on teachers. One response was that every communication by the headteacher should be from the Church's standpoint another saw that fundamentals in faith are being missed as Catholic education moves on. One headteacher spoke of planning INSET in response to the changes in the Church (in this example, the recent changes to the mass) as well as the need to revive the wonder of receiving the sacraments.

5. Additional comments

In offering further comments interviewees mentioned the need to keep the faith at the forefront of everything, that strong leadership was required (modelling) as well as serving the community responding and being sensitive to the different groups in schools but in balance with delivering the Catholic mission too.

4.3 Analysis

In the Research Methods section I have already considered the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. It is clear that for the purposes of this research a mixed method approach, involving both research methods, was a clear requirement of this study. The responses of many school teachers gained through questionnaires enabled a lot of views to be gathered. However, one can argue that the responses of the leaders interviewed could have more significance through a clearer perspective of the issues being discussed, by virtue of their role and experience in Catholic schools. An important reason for employing both approaches in the design of the research is enabling of triangulation to take place, there will be espoused practice discussed by headteachers – this will need to be mirrored against the responses from those they lead, highlighting the practice that occurs in schools.

Having factually reported the findings of the research, this section will focus on analysing the outcomes in line with the themes investigated in the Literature Review. Arising from the Literature were some key research questions, which would help refine the focus of the analysis. These key questions are refined here in light of the research carried out. Employing the technique of triangulation allows me to answer these questions fully from different perspectives.

1. Is there an awareness / recognition of the wider context in Church teaching and how is this seen in Catholic schools and in the leader's role in ensuring mission integrity?
2. What is the experience of teachers' formation and how does their experience of formation reflect the Church's aims?
3. How is spiritual formation experienced and received by the individual and community?

These questions will now be looked at in turn in this section.

1. Is there an awareness / recognition of the wider context in Church teaching and how is this seen in Catholic schools and in the leaders role in ensuring mission integrity?

Evident from interviews was a view shared that the religious certainties that leaders from previous generations were formed in is much less evident in todays' teachers. One headteacher used their personal experience to contrast the situation today

> I was a child in the sixties … since then you've seen the decline in mass attendance, I see it in our younger teachers, the absolute grounding of the rules and regs [regulations] of the church is not there
>
> (Interview 5)

A similar reference to being taught was made by another headteacher who recognised the lack of significance in the sacraments, and whose role it is to ensure it reverts back to that

> Maybe it's because of the educational system that they've experienced…the reverence has been taken away from a lot of the mass, the receiving of the sacraments, … because they've not been given the reason why that is so significant and it's up to us to make sure now that we bring it back into the schools
>
> (Interview 6)

The above responses were from more experienced leaders who would have experienced the change that Vatican II brought about; one deputy headteacher spoke of the impact personally

> I often thought that the things that I thought were dreadful – huge, massive sins, are now being wiped away and I feel it was a waste of my childhood, whereas now it's more of a forgiving God and its more about acceptance
>
> (Interview 2)

There is recognition too that newer, younger leaders need spiritual formation; one headteacher held that there is a mismatch between Church teaching and how spiritual formation is taken up – arguing that despite the lack of

formation during his younger years, there was enough in the experience of 'the certainties' of the faith a few generations back to support the leader spiritually (Interview 5). Other responses recognised the link between vocation and serving God, and developing staff spiritually is vital today in order to enrich the link (Interviews 5 and 6). More perceptively perhaps the same respondent made it clear where she thought the problem lay; the lack of experience in acknowledging the awe, wonder of receiving the sacraments and of reverence in the mass

> They weren't taught it at home, they weren't taught it in the Church and they weren't taught it in their schools
>
> (Interview 6)

This strong view certainly points to the impact of lessening formal religious instruction and the effects it has on subsequent generations of teachers, supporting Holman's (2002) view that Catholic pedagogy requires young people needing preparing to hear the call of the Lord, and as such teachers require the same.

Turning to the wider responses in the research, there were mixed views as to whether or not the faith has been watered down in schools (Figure 10: 4). There was almost an equal split on this view, and could have arisen from the fact that younger staff maybe didn't appreciate what occurred in generations before. Respondents in leadership positions were equally divided. However there was consensus that headteachers promote the Church's mission, all respondents agreed this was the case (Figure 10: 2/16), as well as strong agreement that help to understand Church teaching was needed (Figure 10: 9).

The wider view of the Church's teaching being passed on through headteachers' commitment to their role, modelling themselves on the Person

of Jesus and employing methods of invitational and servant leadership to 'pass on the charism' are clearly seen in other responses. Over three quarters of respondents (77%) recognised the need for constant reference to the Gospel and from Jesus (Figure 10: 4), 91% agreed that headteachers try to serve individual needs (Figure 10: 14) and 74% recognised the efforts made by headteachers to attend to the spiritual needs of all the staff (Figure 10: 19).

Despite the positive responses of staff towards the actions of their headteachers caution must be exercised when considering the young age of many respondents and their awareness or experience of the faith in the Post Vatican II Church, this fact must also be examined when considering the headteachers response to ensuring mission integrity in the modern social and educational context.

This leads to question what teachers are experiencing as formation, as that provided by Catholic school leaders, and to what extent their experience reflect the Church's aims.

2. What is the experience of teachers' formation and how does their experience of formation reflect the Church's aims?

The views shared by the deputy and headteachers interviewed gave great insight into how they saw formation should occur in Catholic schools. One response indicated that formation was 'how you make the transition from being a teacher, to a teacher with a Catholic ethos' (Interview 3), suggesting perhaps that formational experience for teachers is seen as occurring in the workplace, and also that it is a prerequisite. This may however prove a

narrower view of formation. Two specific references to spiritual formation were mentioned

> Developing their own spiritual understanding and theological understanding of the teaching of the Church
>
> (Interview 6)

After a targeted initiative, one headteacher spoke of

> The crossover … from a formal RE INSET to our own spiritual formation within that
>
> (Interview 5)

These provided a view of the depth of formational experience as touching people beyond their own development as a teacher, and more so, that planned activity based on developing ones' understanding of their faith led to spiritual formation afterwards. It was interesting to note that one headteacher recognised it as

> Things that are leading them that they might not recognise
>
> (Interview 4)

It was clearly felt that any planned formational activity should not be 'done to' teachers, staff needed to feel it was of value to them, there was consideration also for the timing of activities. In addition to this there were two strands that added value to the experience; that it should develop their understanding of their role as Catholic teachers, that it should develop them spiritually in the faith.

For leaders, acknowledging this spiritual element of formation is essential. They understand that spirituality takes places at the individual level within a community (Gutierrez-Zamano and Yasuno; 2002) but understanding that people are at different points on their journey. Therefore communal, developmental and spiritually engaging activities that provide the energy for

teachers to be witnesses are necessary, but also to be considered in line with the culture of the school.

All but one interviewee spoke of *living the faith* in school as formational, all shared personal and school wide examples and experiences throughout each interview. Examples shared included helping colleagues, ensuring the Mission Statement was being fulfilled and developing further research from the work of teachers; true collegial work that develops the individual and the community. One headteacher suggested why

> In terms of delivering CPD per se within school …subliminally all of that is spiritually forming because of the culture and ethos of the school
>
> (Interview 5)

Teachers' experience reflects the value that headteachers placed on the incidental idea of living the faith, with a high percentage of respondents citing participation in staff prayers, discussion of Church documents and teaching. This reveals that such activity occurs often in schools. However only 9 cited leading staff prayers as something they experienced. This may highlight that current practice is regular, however opportunities for leading such activity as prayer is available to fewer staff.

Of those who had led staff prayer; 5 were in leadership positions, 3 were subject leaders and 2 stated they were class teachers. More than half of those leading prayer were senior leaders indicating a trend towards those in authority being the spiritual leaders of the school. It is worth considering that there could be more opportunity for other staff to lead prayers, to *invite* people to lead (as Jesus did) and

> Give witness by their example to the central importance of prayer and reflection
>
> (Catholic Education Service;1999: B-13)

Four interviewees mentioned prayer in their school life, only one mentioned incidental prayer, where staff would automatically pray for a colleague or an event which touched the staff. The degree of formality of the prayer life experienced in their schools was dependent on the personality of the headteacher, in at least one school the RE Leader was seen as the spiritual leader, those that mentioned prayer spoke of

> A mini-staff meeting, and it always starts with a prayer and some spiritual thought
>
> (Interview 5)

One mentioned that staff meetings

> Start with a prayer so we are showing all the things we do, flagging up what we think is different about us as a Catholic school
>
> (Interview 4)

Another gave several examples of how the prayer and sacramental life can be directed at the level of the individual (Interview 6).

A clear majority of teachers themselves felt that their activity contributed to the formation of other teachers; 69% were in agreement (23% Strongly Agreed and 46% Agreed), although 20% gave no opinion on this statement (Figure 10: 3). Despite then, the lack of opportunities for leading activity such as prayer, staff generally felt that what they did in school helped form other teachers, an indication that there was a strong Catholic life in the schools in the study.

Of those (12) who stated that they had received leadership training (Figure 8), 8 stated that their sense of vocation had deepened during their career, similarly of the 7 who had received specifically Catholic leadership training 5

said their sense of vocation had deepened, 4 of these were senior leaders. Consideration of the openness of staff to accept formational activity has to extend to that of senior leaders also, as in both cases a percentage of leaders (14% and 33%) were not renewed or invigorated by their formational experiences. For Catholic school leaders this means they should continue to invite, engage and provide opportunities for leaders to grow and develop.

The breadth of opportunity offered as formational in the questionnaire provided scope for consideration of how teachers' experience of formation reflects Church aims and ensures mission integrity. Staff prayers were chosen by 26 teachers, however formal or informal, this reflects the overall percentage of Catholic teachers; in fact 21 of those were indeed Catholic. There is encouragement for headteachers here in that teachers from all religions represented in the study claimed prayer to be formational, evidence that the inclusion of other faith members into the Catholic life of the school. In the book of Revelation we hear of God's call to anyone whose is open to His call

> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me
>
> (Rev 3: 20)

The delivery of formation needed to be relevant and developmental to be successful. For leaders to engage with external advisors they needed to be seen as authentic and inspirational in their delivery. Authenticity to Gospel values and the mission of the Church were identified as being essential in internal delivery of formational activity and headteachers expected the same from outside provision; however, there was divided opinion as to the quality externally

> Where there's been an issue which has been received badly is when we've had straight RE INSET externally and the trainer has been poor, not spiritual formation

She feels passionately about scripture and how important it is and she wanted us to understand that bit of bible study as the background, and it was eye opening

The quality of training from [diocese] isn't great if truth be told

She is inspirational, and I think adults need inspirational teachers and leaders the same way children need inspirational teachers

Throughout the interviews there was regular reference to the quality of internal formation through working together, in addition to this 74% of questionnaire respondents felt that formation should be a community activity (Figure 9). One interviewee talked of a collegial approach, with high engagement of staff, to overcome their difficulty with moderation levels in RE as being a real success story (Interview 2); another described the manner in which a group of staff undertaking the CCRS course influenced the culture of the school

The CCRS was very developmental in terms of the staff because there was actually debate going on about issues that arose out of that study and therefore those who weren't studying were actively listening and actually take the ideas and question themselves

Another described how their staff changed a culture of assemblies, at which invited parents often clapped and cheered, into a more solemn liturgy which was

More a reflection than a performance

Others spoke of the influence of a member of staff

> Influencing the culture and everybody buying into it
>
> (Interview 5)

That particular headteacher considered the culture of the whole community, including parents.

Three interviewees described the work of the parish priest as being both relevant and authentic to the work of the school and touching individuals spiritually, while five interviewees mentioned the work of staff in the school as engaging and mutually developmental. There is a common feeling that all the schools in the research had good capacity for providing formational experience internally, there was a sense that when issues emerge and are dealt with within the school that this has much more impact on those involved

> It's geared very much to our own context, whereas I think when you have outside people coming in or you try to do joint things it doesn't always work
>
> (Interview 4)

There was a general consensus that CPD was seen as formational in its various forms with examples such INSET, discussion and bible study being noted as having impact. The success of such CPD did seem to depend on the faith (authenticity) and interpersonal skills of the provider especially when delivered by an external advisor.

A consideration for leaders is how their staff view formation; only 57% of staff themselves felt all teachers should undertake formational activity (Figure 8). 26 (74%) felt that it should be a community activity. Of those; only 1 felt that their experience of formation hasn't influenced their professional conduct, 19 felt their sense of vocation developed through their career, although 9 hadn't.

Of the 29 who said they had a sense of vocation before they started teaching, 18 claimed it had deepened.

3. How is spiritual formation experienced and received by the individual and community?

The crucial question to be asked for the delivery of any CPD, formational or communal spiritual reflection is how does it impact on the individual within that community? Does it enliven their spirituality enabling them to engage with it and enable them to grow both professionally and personally?

For headteachers the paradox is the knowledge that no matter what they plan, or how they lead the community, there will always be members of the community who oppose the way things are done, or for whom such activity has little impact. At these times the headteacher will find the resolve to continue with their initiative despite setbacks or non-engagement.

> We did have a mass together and I know that wasn't a prayerful situation
>
> (Interview 6)

> You send them [teachers] on training linked to the Catholicity of the school, understanding the mission of the school or the role of prayer in the school, then you're talking different things, and that's where I think it's harder, it's better if they are more involved
>
> (Interview 1)

The fact that 26% of respondents felt that formation of teachers should be a purely personal thing (see Figure 9), points to the challenge for headteachers. Any communal activity could have one in four participants potentially not engaged based on this view alone, disregarding other factors such as poor delivery.

During the Literature Review attention was paid to the idea of leadership based on the person of Jesus, inviting and serving those to whom you are leader into the school's daily response to the Church's mission. The proposed strategy for Catholic school leaders should revolve around the premise of continually providing spiritual leadership and formational development while touching those non-engagers personally, inviting them to join in the communal aims. The leaders themselves spoke of engaging staff and the individual's readiness and understanding the school's culture when considering formational activity (see Figure 11).

It is clear that the school leaders here are certainly not didactic in their employment of formational activity and they do wrestle with the certainty of potential non-engagement. Helping school leaders in their role is their own engagement spiritually with the Church's mission.

There was a sense from the school leaders of living the faith as formational, no expectation of a personal need for formational training or experience was mentioned by interviewees, however this must be seen and felt by those they lead to be effective and engaging. The responses from teachers certainly pointed to a view that their headteachers were true to the Church's mission, seen through their everyday actions and that they serve the community at the level of the individual (see Figure 10: 2, 12-19).

Whilst not a perfect positive agreement with these statements resulted (Agree or Strongly Agree responses ranged from 74%-100%), there is clear impact on teachers of the headteachers role on the life of the community. Interestingly the least positive response from the group of statements was for 19: *Your headteacher responds to the spiritual needs of everyone in the school.* Strength can be again derived from Jesus' parable of the sower and

seed, Luke's gospel tells of the seed being the Word of God, falling on fertile soil, however the challenge for leaders is in creating the right conditions for growth to occur

> But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop
> (Luke 8: 15)

The teachers in the research, the places on which the seed falls, view the work of their leaders positively. Their experience of community based formational activity such as curriculum CPD, RE INSET, CPD linked to curriculum development, discussion (all options) and prayer were all experienced often (see Figure 8). This presents a picture of school leaders presenting many opportunities for communal formational activity in the schools in the study. The impact of such activity cannot be gauged from this research.

There is a need to engage the individual at a personal level in order for spiritual impact to occur (Seymour; 2011 and O'Malley; 2007), touching the individual's spirituality in part occurs through experience of the community dimension. School leaders in the research are certainly addressing the possibility that this happens, that in leading the Catholic life of a Catholic school, one must model the communal aspect of the faith in opportunities provided.

The 'watering down of the faith' is to be considered here. There were some differences in the faith experience and understanding of modern Catholic social teaching in the interviews.

While some spoke of understanding the lack of religious formality experienced by younger teachers compared to their own experience

> We know all the stories, if you are my age, we all learnt the Catechism
>
> (Interview 5)

> I've spoken to staff at school and they're not as convinced that it is the presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament as I am ... you're working with so many differences now … people are coming from different baselines
>
> (Interview 6)

> Particularly the younger generation, maybe it's because of the educational system they've experienced, the reverence has been taken away from a lot of the mass and the receiving of the sacraments and we've got to bring that back
>
> (Interview 6)

Another spoke of formation of the teacher or having the power to choose

> Now if you're a Catholic you have to be proactive in deciding what really is of value
>
> (Interview 2)

whilst another spoke of a formation as a making the leap from being a teacher to being a Catholic teacher

> It's how you develop as a Catholic teacher, how you make the transition from being a teacher to a teacher with a Catholic ethos which is embedded in the way you do things, the way you implement the curriculum and the way you tech children
>
> (Interview 3)

There are clearly some differing views on formation, and differences in experience of, and understanding, the Catholic faith amongst the school leaders. This reflects Treston's (1991) concerns about the rigidity of the faith amongst the old religious, and Holman's (2002) suggestions for ensuing that Catholic schools remain places of ministry have either diminished in practice or have been received in very different ways. The question of the leader's

views being in line with the Church's aims in Catholic schools could be questioned here.

Further to this a significant number of questionnaire respondents felt that the Catholic faith has been watered down in schools (disagreed 29%, strongly disagreed 6%, 9% didn't respond and 11% had no opinion). This is a clear reflection of the present predicament in Catholic schools.

A point for further research may be to what extent this view has on the individuals' acceptance in receiving formational activity, or if their view on this is supportive of the 'watering down', or indeed of they are disappointed by this fact.

Underlining all work in Catholic schools and therefore extending to the approaches used for the development of staff within these schools are the aims of the Catholic Church. Certainly the responses given in Section B and D of the questionnaire showed that teachers generally have experienced many opportunities and have positive attitudes towards, and positive experiences of, the activity that goes on in Catholic schools. Furthermore there is a strong sense of developing the faith of the teachers as well as developing them professionally, opportunities of reaching the individual at a spiritual level on two different fronts.

From a different perspective the activities provided in the multiple choice section B could provide insight into the culture of formation experienced. The types of activities are generally communal and experienced often, and activities such as the discussion of Church documents and teaching, reflect the type of formation provided by Jewish Rabbis towards interested parties

and those with a view to becoming a Rabbi themselves one day (Fincham 2007).

There are two points to reflect on here in light of this in the research; firstly, what is the leader's experience of faith? And therefore secondly, what message are they actually passing on?

Modelling ones' life on the example of Jesus is paramount in providing conditions for formation to be accepted by teachers. Jesus simplified what we should do to follow God, to love God and to love thy neighbour. In the very acts of serving, attending to the needs of the individual, showing compassion, understanding, inviting and forgiving, all while being a strong and courageous leader provide a solid foundation for the work of the headteacher to impact spiritually on those they work with. Shortcomings in the leader's own faith experience can be minimalised by the example they provide in their role. It is the concern of the individual as to how much impact this will have.

The views of the leaders' actions and mission are seen very positively and it was interesting to note that there were more No Opinions than negativity (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) towards their headteachers in these areas of the questionnaire (see Figure 10).

An engaging activity that many of the leaders spoke of was visits from the parish priest. As a representative from Church this enabled a sounding board for teachers to air their views but more importantly, to hear what the Church's response is

> He came in and actually answered the questions that staff put forward … then they [felt] that they actually got ownership of what's going on … they've had the opportunity to air their feelings and to hear [from] somebody who is speaking on behalf of the Church
>
> (Interview 6)

> Once a week we get Father [N] in … he will deal with issues in much greater depth
>
> (Interview 5)

A priest took questions about the teaching of RE in one school, the value was felt and more understanding was asked for

> I think just maybe we could do it more often … any questions we have about our own faith or about things we are teaching … when you are teaching the Gospel to find the message, you see the message but is that the message the church implemented this week
>
> (Interview 5)

The importance of priest involvement as a substitute for the lack of religious *actually working in* the modern Catholic school is seen as enabling clarity, ensuring mission integrity, providing definitive responses, and filling in the gaps for younger teachers. The role of the priest in the Catholic school can only be even more important in years to come.

4.4 Summary

Answering the three questions set out at the beginning of the Analysis section, has enabled me to collate findings and draw conclusions about the understanding, practice and impact of formational activity in a small group of Catholic primary schools.

In the following section I will share the conclusions I have drawn from my research and my subsequent analysis of it.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the results of the research were classified and analysed in lieu of the areas investigated in the Literature Review. Three key questions emerged which I felt needed to be answered to help provide an answer the question at the heart of this research project. Having considered these, I will now draw conclusions from the research carried out.

The issues at the centre of this research were to identify what Catholic school leaders were doing to ensure mission integrity, to pass on the faith, to ensure the sustainability of school leaders and to consider what they could do to promote these in a modern secular education system. Coupled with a reduction in the passing on of religious certainties, which was much more possible with religious working in schools, the aim was to gauge the current formational practices of school leaders, their impact on those they lead and consider how they could improve their practice.

Here I will share the strengths of the school leaders uncovered in this research, this will be considered followed by my recommendations which are intended to help Catholic school leaders ensure the success of their schools in light of the issues described above.

5.2 Implications for leadership in Catholic schools

Strengths

- *The leaders in the research were keenly aware of the wider social context in which their schools exist*

They recognise the challenges and articulate them well. Their awareness of the contributing factors to the diminishing sense of the certainties in the faith was clear. There was clear agreement of the need to keep Church's mission high on the agenda. The culture of the school was given plenty of thought in light of the church's social teaching, and leaders considered this, how and when to invite others in planning activities was a common consideration.

- ***The leaders were passionate about the Catholic life of the school***

Living a Catholic life in school and modelling this was passionately spoken about and reflected in the teachers' views of the headteachers actions and planned activities. Through discussion, prayer life (formal and informal) and collegial work, leaders employ a wide range of activity to engage staff with their own and the school's development. The leaders provided a positive view of how they 'walk the walk and talk the talk', of getting their hands dirty and how their actions have impacted on individuals, groups of staff and the whole community. In

- ***Teachers views of headteachers as good models of community and spiritual leaders***

Teachers too felt that the actions of their headteachers had a positive effect on the life the school and the individuals in it. Despite a strong feeling that formation should be an individual and with many stating that formation should be personal choice there was wide recognition of the work done by headteachers. It was seen that the experience of formation by teachers was generally one of it not 'being done to them'. Leaders can take heart that their efforts at ensuring teachers accept or engage with what has been planned for them reflects their awareness of the individual, and gives credence to their personality and the authenticity of their role.

5.3 Limitations

Research

As previously mentioned the views of only three Catholic schools and six leaders were gained for the purpose of this study, and as such, any outcomes provide only indications of encouragement or areas for concern for leaders.

I gave consideration to the success of my research into this area, and on reflection, the decision to have multiple choice questions in Section B of the questionnaire may have been wrong, a Likert type scale to gauge the impact that each activity had on the recipient may have been more useful for this research. Then the value placed on RE INSET (which occurred often) may be gauged and could possibly be considered of little value to respondents, providing a chance for a much deeper analysis. In short, a deeper analysis of the impact of formational activity could have helped provide a clearer picture of formation from the teachers' perspective.

5.4 Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this investigation, a number of issues have arisen that can be addressed in helping to improve the formational experiences of Catholic school teachers … so that they are able to develop their professional and personal competences in line with their faith to grow into future school leaders.

It is clear from the outcomes of the research that there were strengths in how spiritual leadership is epitomised by the school leaders, and there was also a very positive acceptance from staff. The role of the parish priest was seen as a very important factor in the Catholic life of the school. In light of both these

findings a clear and crucial recommendation for any Catholic school leader can be provided.

- ***Strategically engage the parish priest in the life of the community***

School leaders need to be aware of, and accept, when they may need help with their own spiritual leadership and also seek help in addressing the needs of the community. It is the leader's role to keep an eye on the horizon for emerging issues which affect the school. Church teaching and social issues are part of this and the leader can be seen to be watching over their flock, watching the horizon (Gallagher 2007), by ensuring the staff are aware of, engaging with, teaching and living correctly in light of changing social attitudes and the Church's response.

Sitting alongside this recommendation is a certainty that the views of the faith have changed from within its laity, and beyond those with faith also. It is realistic to assume that this will not improve wholesale however it can be managed and strategically used to refocus the school, its staff and community.

In the research the use of the parish priest was spoken of very favourably amongst school leaders and in filling the spiritual or theological gap in amongst staff. The parish priest provides a voice from within the religious of the Church, sharing this voice with staff can enable engaging discussion. Staff can question and form stronger views of their faith and understand more clearly how their own lives are aligned with Church teaching. When employed to discuss topical social issues which cause members of the faith to question their beliefs, the parish priest can underline the certainties of the faith which, is regularly argued *and identified in this research*, are diminishing.

For school leaders the strategy must revolve around a continuous reflection of the church's aims whilst addressing the current issues which affect the people of the Church. In working with staff, the priest provides certainty of mission, an ability to engage staff with a greater sacramental consciousness in their role and to revisit the Church's aims with clarity and authority.

A further benefit of this action might be that staff appreciate the headteacher's decision in relation to his or her own gaps in knowledge or ability, and see this as a more authentic action by their leader. It is important that leaders consider their own spiritual or professional needs in a positive light, know that asking for help in their mission only compliments the work they are doing, and feel comfort in the knowledge that Jesus too required help to fulfil His mission.

A factor for leaders to consider, as with any interaction, is the interpersonal skills of the priest. In the research findings there was mention of a cranky priest not engaging or welcoming in his dealings with school staff. Whilst a priest may therefore not be an option for some schools the need to look elsewhere is proving to be a greater imperative. The joy of this approach in engaging staff will be that such delivery is at least seen as authentic.

- ***Leaders need to recognise their own spiritual capital and engage with their own faith journey, separate to the needs of the community***

For all leaders and younger leaders especially, the need to replenish their spiritual capital either through directly leading the staff formally or informally, and more importantly by finding space to understand themselves, is imperative.

In receiving spiritual input and engaging with it at various points on their own journey through retreats, a focus on informal work, attending Catholic headteacher conferences or just meeting with their peers, strength was clearly gained form these types of activity. However leaders themselves didn't talk of replenishing their own spiritual capital through retreats or personal reflection. Their own spiritual capital was discussed more in terms of leading the community, which in itself can be spiritually rewarding. Separating oneself from the day to day life of the school to enable personal reflection is something that needs to be given much greater consideration. In light of the leader's need to model oneself on the person of Jesus, this aspect needs more consideration.

> Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray"
>
> (Matthew 26: 36)

The headteacher must recognise the effect that the emotional burden of leading a Catholic community has on them and follow this example of Jesus. They must see this as a necessity in carrying out their ministry, as Jesus did when seeking help from His Father in lieu of what was about befall Him.

- *School leaders should provide more opportunities amongst the staff for distributing spiritual leadership of the school community*

To lead prayer and liturgy provides the opportunity to invite people personally, enabling the individual to provide the focus for the group and lead them to an understanding of their own role from the Church's view. In doing this, individuals can engage more with the aims of the liturgy themselves at the planning stage. There is no doubt that the success of this cannot be always guaranteed but with a collegiate approach and a culture of seeking help, again factors that can be affected within the realm of the headteacher, a stronger culture will emerge as the spiritual capital of the teachers deepens

Emerging from this culture could be an improved sacramental perspective amongst staff as they immerse themselves in planning and delivering experiences which they have bought in to on a personal level, having been invited by their school leader. Such activity, and others besides, can be considered by colleagues from local Catholic schools. This peer reviewing of the Catholic life in each other's' schools, has the benefit of real teachers performing leadership activity at a high level.

- ***Headteachers should promote collegial working both within their schools and in their own work***

Leaders in the research clearly articulated how successful and engaging the effect of collegiate working had on their staff. As important as this is there are so many aspects of a teachers' role in school that this is not always possible to be planned and undertaken.

Views uncovered in this research present a wider view that at diocesan level there could be more effort to coordinate support; this could include the relationship and focus of the work of the parish priest with the school. This would ensure greater impact and help address the need to ensure teachers are up to date with the Church's social teaching, thus providing relevant and engaging formational activity.

Headteachers could take on this recommendation at a lower level and focus on ensuring that this is the case in their work with Catholic contemporaries, such as in their collaborative partnerships or clusters of schools. The quality of time spent with other leaders as well as the focus of their meetings is clearly spiritually rewarding for school leaders. With more focus on working together on common issues and jointly responding to the Church's social

teaching the strength of collegial working can be maximised to ensure the success of each school.

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