Prepared to Lead?

Leadership Succession: To what extent are senior leaders in Catholic primary schools trained, prepared and willing to take on the role of Head Teacher?

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Abstract

This dissertation has been written in the context of Catholic school leadership and examines the extent to which senior leaders in Catholic primary schools are trained, prepared and willing to take on the role of Head Teacher.

In order to explore the preparation of potential Head Teachers, a number of key areas have been examined including: the role of the Head Teacher; the preparation essential to the role as well as potential challenges in recruiting Head Teachers to Catholic primary schools.

A small scale research project was then designed to evaluate the extent to which these key areas contributed to the preparation of potential Head Teachers in a sample of four Catholic primary schools. Members of the Senior Leadership Teams participated in the research through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The information from this research was then analysed in the light of the findings from the Literature Review.

The research suggests that these potential Head Teachers did not feel that they had been fully prepared for Headship and were not aware of specific opportunities that are available for those wishing to pursue the Headship of Catholic schools. They also felt that the role could be rather overwhelming and this, along with the lack of eligible candidates, seem to illustrate some of the challenges to recruiting Head Teachers to Catholic schools.

In conclusion, recommendations have been made on how to further develop the preparation and training opportunities available to potential Head Teachers. These include suggestions to offer opportunities to shadow experienced Head Teachers as well as developing a continuing formation programme and actively seeking practising Catholics to Senior Leadership Teams.

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CES	Catholic Education Service
CCRS	Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECAR	Every Child A Reader
EdD	Doctorate in Education
OFSTED	Office For Standards in Education
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
SENCO	Special Education Needs Coordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 **Aims and Objectives**

In this research project, I intend to explore how well senior leaders in Catholic schools are supported, prepared and trained to develop them for the role of Head Teacher.

Teaching has long been considered a vocation and leading in a Catholic school a ministry. Catholic school leadership is a calling to use one's gifts and talents to develop as a leader – educational and spiritual. Amongst many other qualities it requires commitment, vision and a desire to work for Christ.

> The Head Teacher strives to be a reflection of Christ in all that she says and does. (McIntosh, 2005:17)

Currently the education system is under extreme scrutiny with Head Teachers increasingly accountable to stake holders, initiative after initiative being introduced and schools tending to move toward business models. The role and responsibilities of a Head Teacher have also changed dramatically in the last decade and there is concern that the increased pressure and blame culture have led to positions of leadership seeming unattractive to suitable candidates who have the necessary skills, commitment and experience to effectively lead a school. It is possible that this is magnified for those in the position of Head Teacher of a Catholic school since they hold the additional responsibility of being a spiritual leader who is required to witness to their faith.

Effective school leadership is crucial in providing young people with the opportunity to meet their potential as full members of society, gain the necessary skills, qualifications and attitudes to make a difference in the world and gain a deeper understanding of who they are as children of God. The role of the Head Teacher and how well they are prepared for leadership is essential in ensuring that Catholic schools provide an excellent education with a clear vision and with Christ firmly at the heart of all they do.

In this study, I shall examine the extent to which Head Teachers have been prepared for their role and explore any barriers that may stand in the way of potential Head Teachers in taking this next step. In order to achieve this, I shall

- Examine the essential preparation and training requirements for those wishing to apply for the Headship of a Catholic primary school
- Explore the role of the Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school
- Examine some leadership styles that are adopted by Head Teachers of Catholic primary schools and the effect the leadership style may have on developing future Head Teachers
- Examine some of the issues in the current recruitment process of Catholic primary schools
- Examine potential barriers and challenges in recruiting Head Teachers for Catholic primary schools

1.2 Rationale

As a product of Catholic education, a teacher in Catholic schools for the past 12 years and now an Assistant Head Teacher working across two Catholic primary schools, I am passionate about Catholic education and value the distinctive, Christ centred ethos that it provides. I have experienced first-hand how schools guided by the spirit and led by informed, passionate and skilled Head Teachers can ,and do, build communities, provide an outstanding education and put Christ at the centre of lives – even in the most challenging of situations.

I have been incredibly fortunate to have been supported and encouraged by senior leaders throughout my career. I have been given countless opportunities to develop my leadership skills, learn from those around me and engage in professional development courses such as this Masters in Catholic School Leadership: Principles and Practice. It was during these studies that I became aware of just how much more there was to learn about leadership and indeed how much more I could learn to become an effective leader in a Catholic school - from exploring Catholic theology and leadership styles to understanding the history of Catholic education. There were so many areas that I had

not encountered on other professional development courses which led me to consider how well we, as school leaders are prepared for Headship and what training we really require to take on the role of Head Teacher in a Catholic primary school.

I am also interested to explore what the potential barriers may be that make the role of Head Teacher unattractive to some and recruitment increasingly difficult. It seems, from my experience, that many suitable candidates shy away from the role citing the pressures associated with the job or the huge responsibility that it involves. I wonder however, whether they are missing the rewards that leadership surely brings and whether there are particular ways of preparing and styles of leadership that would lessen this burden.

In terms of my personal interest in this subject, I am a serving Assistant Head Teacher who, myself, am finding it challenging to consider Headship due to the enormity of the role. However, I am very aware of the increasing difficulty that schools in my area have in recruiting Head Teachers and am keen to evaluate whether the current preparation opportunities are relevant and encouraging for potential Heads or whether there is more that needs to be done to prepare and attract suitable candidates.

For the continuity and sustainability of Catholic schools, it seems that the Catholic community has a responsibility to examine the issues around leadership succession and ensure that we are getting it right. Research is crucial in getting to the heart of current practice and I feel that this study may be useful in supporting the schools as they nurture and develop future Head teachers.

1.3 Context

Whilst recognising that all schools, all local authorities and all dioceses may have different priorities, different resources and different structures, I intend to explore my objectives within one particular area. I have chosen to base my studies on a Catholic cluster of four primary schools – St Anne's, St Bede's, St Catherine's and St David's[1]

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[1] [1] For ethical reasons, fictitious names have been adopted for the schools.

- all located in the same city in the South of England. This cluster have worked together for many years with initiatives such as Head Teacher meetings, subject leader focus groups, governor training and as joint celebration and reflection events. As with all partnerships, there have been times when relationships between the schools has been supportive and mutually beneficial and times of challenge and competition. Each of the schools is located in a distinctively different community and so has a distinctive culture to meet the needs of the families it serves. However, the staff of all four schools share a vision to provide an excellent Catholic education to the children of the city and have a genuine desire to work together to make this a reality.

The city itself is one with high levels of deprivation and a large proportion of the community living below the poverty line. The four schools serve the whole pastoral area with a shared admissions policy which seeks to provide a Catholic education for Catholic families within the area. As with other clusters of Catholic schools, staff often move between the schools seeking promotion or simply to gain experience in different settings.

Each of the schools has a slightly different structure for their Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which have been developed to meet the needs of the individual schools whilst also, on occasions, respond to difficulties in recruiting. Two of the schools – St Catherine's and St David's – currently share an Executive Head Teacher and an Assistant Head Teacher after St David's governors were unable to appoint a Head Teacher in 2014.

St Anne's is a two form entry primary school situated on the northern side of the city. It is situated in the centre of a social housing estate and draws children from families with high levels of deprivation as well as a smaller proportion from an area of more affluence to the north east of the city. The SLT leading the school is comprised of the Head Teacher, a Deputy Head Teacher, an Assistant Head Teacher and a Lead Practitioner. In April 2015, the school underwent an OFSTED inspection and was moved from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good'. The Head Teacher was credited in the report with her ability to draw out the leadership skills of others.

> The headteacher's especially strong determination to bring about improvement is matched with her very effective skills in enabling other leaders to fulfil their roles well. (OFSTED, 2015)

St Bede's is a one and half form entry primary school with a less than an average percentage of pupil premium children but a large number with English as an additional language (EAL). The school is led by a large SLT which consists of a Head Teacher, School Leader, two Assistant Head Teachers, a SENCO and Business Manager. The OFSTED report from the inspection in December 2013 rated the school as 'good' and noted the effectiveness of the Leadership Team on developing staff.

> Improvements in teaching and learning have been sustained by the coaching and mentoring of staff by senior leaders and good training within and outside school. (OFSTED, 2013)

St Catherine's is a one form entry school in the centre of the city. It is surrounded by social housing, has 27% of pupils currently eligible for free school meals and a dramatically increasing number of children with EAL. Children enter the school with below average attainment in Key Stage 1 but by the end of Key Stage 2, SATs results are consistently above the national average and the school regularly tops the Government League Tables for the area.

The school is led by a Senior Leadership Team comprising of an Executive Head Teacher, School Leader and Assistant Head Teacher. In the most recent OFSTED report (2008), the school was judged to be 'outstanding'. Inspectors reported that the Head Teacher 'has a clear vision for the direction of the school.' The Section 48 Inspection in February 2014 graded the school as 'Good' with school leaders noted for their personal witness to the faith and 'constant drive for improvement and insistence on high standards in all aspects.'

St David's is a one and a half form entry primary school on the south of the city. It is situated in one of the more affluent areas of the city but still has an increasing number of pupil premium children and those with English as an additional language. Children enter the school with above average attainment and have good levels of parental support but are currently not making the expected rate of progress as prescribed by

Government targets. This resulted in the school being rated as 'requires improvement' in June 2014 although the governors had already recognised the issues and, just prior to the OFSTED visit, had re-evaluated the structure and skills on the Senior Leadership Team resulting in them employing a shared Executive Head Teacher, a shared Assistant Head Teacher, two temporary Key Stage Leaders whilst also retaining the School Leader and one other member of the SLT. OFSTED recognised this change in leadership and noted the Executive Head Teacher to be effective in beginning to raise standards. This was echoed in the Section 48 report (December 2014) which stated that 'The leadership, dedication and role model of the executive headteacher is a key strength of the school'. St David's is seeking to move to 'good' under this new and more effective leadership structure.

1.4 Methodology

In order to fully explore the objectives of this research project, I shall review a range of current literature written on the subject of the role of Catholic Head Teachers. I shall then be able to examine the skills, attributes and preparation required for this vital role. I shall also examine a representative sample of the many documents that have been published on how to develop leaders and leadership learning.

In order to evaluate the extent to which these principles are part of current practice, I shall then undertake a small-scale research study on a cluster of four Catholic primary schools. I intend to survey senior leaders within the schools to establish how well they feel their professional and spiritual formation has been attended to through the opportunities and experiences that they have been offered and the extent to which they feel that the current preparation programmes are effective. I also intend to explore the experiences of Head Teachers who I will invite to reflect on the preparation they received and draw out suggestions for an improved training programme.

1.5 Summary

This study aims to examine both a selection of modern literature on the subject of developing leadership and the experiences and reflections of current practitioners. It

should then be possible to identify the preparation required for Headship and also to evaluate the extent to which primary school leaders are prepared for the role of Head Teacher in Catholic primary schools.

The focus of the study will centre on the formation of the Catholic Head Teacher as both an educational and spiritual leader. From this, I intend to examine how school leaders are trained and prepared for this role and whether this is effective in addressing any potential barriers that may deter candidates from taking this step.

The following chapter seeks to examine a selection of current literature from the vast amount written on leadership and in particular the information written on the subject of developing Catholic school leaders.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter explores current literature covering the areas of school leadership, recruitment and leadership succession. It is my intention that through this Literature Review, I shall be able to identify the essential elements in the preparation of Catholic Head Teachers. I also intend to explore the role of the Head Teacher in a Catholic school and establish the fulfilment and challenges that this may bring.

2.2 The preparation and training essential for those pursuing Headship

All teachers, whatever their role, are expected to be life-long learners. Teaching is both a vocation and a profession with all those involved needing to possess, and constantly hone, the necessary skills, qualifications and personal attributes to ensure that they are able to make a difference to the lives of the children, families and staff that they work with. It is through this constant personal development that educators are able to ensure that they are offering their students the very best, preparing themselves for the next step in their career and developing as individuals.

Leading a school requires a set of skills that can be acquired or developed through training and experience, but equally it requires certain personality traits that include a personal love of learning, compassion and understanding. Sullivan explains just how critical a teacher's personality is, as it is projected into the classroom and is crucial for teaching to be effective. He goes on to argue that the values and beliefs of the teacher are integral to their role and vital in developing positive relationships. (cf. Sullivan, 2002:93) It surely must also be true for school leaders since they too are influencing those they lead and project much of themselves through their daily interactions. Without having the opportunity to develop and reflect upon their values, vision and philosophy of education, potential Head Teachers may well find it challenging to effectively lead their team with a clear, dynamic and compelling vision.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is an essential part of teaching, beginning at the moment an individual accepts their calling to pursue a career in education and

continuing throughout their career regardless of professional aspirations or intentions. John West Burnham (2001) explores the importance of continuous learning for school leaders. He argues that reflection, experience and coaching are all crucial to development – assuming however that the leader themselves has...

> ...the personal motivation and desire to develop as a leader. Without this, everything else is superficial. In essence, effective schools are led by effective people, school improvement is contingent on personal improvement, and organisational development requires individual development. Most importantly, a learning organisation (and what else can a school be?) has to be led by leaders who are learners. (John West-Burnham, 2001:5)

This learning journey will involve some formal courses and training events, as well as the informal daily experiences and work experiences. For future leaders, these informal, early experiences of the culture and leadership of their schools is believed to have a significant influence on their development and can often have a considerable impact on the leadership styles and choices they make as leaders themselves.

> Effective school leadership in context provides the vital role model for the development of school leaders of the future. What is seen and experienced on a day-to-day basis helps form and sustain personal perspectives of school leadership. Serving headteachers can help cultivate and foster personal motivation for leadership, particularly through work related experiences. (Hughan, Saunders, West-Burnham, 2012:28)

Thus it is essential that potential Head Teachers are exposed to excellent, effective leadership and indeed, for potential Catholic Head Teachers, that they have experience of Catholic leadership.

Alongside these informal experiences and opportunities, formal CPD is very much part of education and relevant to all stages in one's career. Schools often have a budget set aside to train and develop staff; from updates on curriculum changes to specific leadership courses. Potential Head Teachers will inevitably be exposed to numerous courses, programmes and experiences during their careers and many will have had specific training for the role of School Leader or Head Teacher. These may include academic study such as a post graduate degree courses, specific National College courses and the, previously essential, National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers (NPQH). These opportunities are often specific to the managerial and

business responsibilities of a Head Teacher and not necessarily focused on spiritual or faith matters so Catholic educators will need to consider whether this fulfils their requirements for preparing to lead a Catholic school. Following a programme designed specifically for Catholic leaders such as the Masters level course run by St Mary's University entitled 'Catholic School Leadership: Principles and Practice' may offer an excellent alternative for potential Head teachers of Catholic schools since it explores the distinctive nature of Catholic schools and Catholic leadership. However, there are very few such specifically 'Catholic' educational opportunities at present.

Catholic schools offer a distinctive education and therefore a distinctive leadership experience requiring distinctive Headship preparation and training. To be truly effective, teachers and leaders in Catholic schools must be helped to understand their vocation as more than simply educators but as an act of service – a ministry.

> Teachers...do not just do their jobs, they fulfil a ministry...It is a ministry founded upon a vocation from God and one that is vital to the future welfare of the community of believers in this country. (Holman, 2002:77-78)

Teachers and leaders in Catholic schools must ensure that they are contributing to building authentic Christian communities that enables every member to be educated and developed in the Gospel values of Christ. The Vatican II Declaration on Catholic Education (*Gravissimum Educationis* 1965) establishes that the role of the Catholic teacher, and therefore the continuous professional development (CPD) required, must be clearly built around the understanding that the teacher teaches, not just through their words, but as a witness through their very lives.

> But let the teachers recognise that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world. Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students, and endowed with an apostolic spirit, may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique teacher. (Gravissimum Educationis, 1965:n.8).

Sullivan also suggests that the Christian idea of teaching reflects a fulfilment of God's plan – his call and our response.

> In Christian terms, it requires a vocation: 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 is who God calls me to be. (Sullivan, 2002:93)

Leading in a Catholic school can be considered a response to Christ's invitation and an answering of the call 'to be with him' (Mark 3:14). It is essential then that potential Head Teachers not only develop their leadership skills and understanding of the Church, but are also encouraged to grow and develop spiritually.

> Apart from their theological formation, educators need also to cultivate their spiritual formation in order to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ and become a Master like Him. In this sense, the formational journey of both lay and consecrated educators must be combined with the moulding of the person towards a greater conformity with Christ (cf. Romans 8:29) and of educational community around Christ the Master. (Educating Together in Catholic Schools, 2007:26)

Since teaching in a Catholic school is a response to God's call, surely potential Head Teachers should be regularly engaged in formation development with opportunities to explore their faith; their perception of Christian leadership and to be fully supported on their own faith journey.

Grace (2002) suggested that this area of development is a cause for concern for Catholic education since potential Head Teachers are increasingly prepared for the managerial and business tasks of leadership, but do not always possess the religious literacy or theological knowledge that the role requires. He argues that the decline in the influence of religious orders involved in schools and the decline in religious observance could result in a lack of 'spiritual capital'; leaders not having been exposed to spiritual leadership and therefore not able to emulate this themselves.

> many candidates for the headship of Catholic schools in England can now talk confidently about achievements in test scores and examinations, business planning and budgets, marketing and public relations, but are relatively inarticulate about the spiritual purposes of Catholic schooling…...it

demonstrates that the traditional spiritual capital of Catholic school leadership is a declining asset (Grace, 2002: 237-238)

He goes on to say that the challenge now is to find a new way for the '*transmission of lay charism*' so that the faith is passed on, understood, articulated and witnessed by the leaders of Catholic schools. Findings from a study conducted on the theological disposition of Head Teachers by Christopher Richardson (2014) concurred with this belief that potential Catholic leaders should have a better understanding of their distinctive role. The study revealed a need for Catholic educators to be provided with teaching about the faith and opportunities to develop themselves as spiritual individuals.

> There is a need for the Catholic community, under the guidance of their bishops, to provide clearer catechesis... and explore ways of helping Catholic teachers and headteachers to engage in continuing adult formation. (Richardson, 2014:71)

This then suggests that the current training and preparation programmes may not be entirely appropriate for those wishing to lead Catholic schools.

In her EdD thesis (2004) entitled 'The Making of Catholic Secondary Headteachers', Catherine Feeney explores the formation and career progression of twenty secondary Head Teachers. She concludes that whilst traditionally Catholic faith and heritage has been passed on through relationships with family members and religious educators, it is increasingly common for individuals to have missed out on these experiences and thus if leaders are to be effective in Catholic schools, this will need to be addressed through more formal means.

> This study would imply that leadership development is part of a lifelong process of formation commencing in the home, reinforced through school careers and a range of professional opportunities appropriate to the career stage; while also holding an expectation of continuing post-appointment support. Given a decline in the influence of religious and patterns of family observance, more formal programmes of study and spiritual reflection will be required for aspirant and serving Catholic teachers and headteachers. (Feeney, 2004:172)

Although this study was based on secondary school Head Teachers, it is relevant to primary school Head Teachers since much of the training and formation programmes available are identical for those in all phases of the education system. However, it is clear that this aspect of training and preparation is a concern and that if Catholic schools are to effectively prepare future leaders, then spiritual formation and catechesis must be prioritised.

2.3 The role of the Head Teacher in a Catholic school

Headship is still a much respected and valued role which, as a career choice, requires careful consideration, thorough preparation and a deep understanding of the many facets of the role for those who wish to offer themselves as candidates.

There has been much written on the role of the Head Teacher in a Catholic school and there have been numerous analogies, metaphors and descriptions to emphasise the many aspects of the role. From being described as an icon of Christ and the Good Shepherd to spiritual leader and servant leader, being a Head teacher in a Catholic school involves leading as priest, prophet and king. (cf. O'Malley, 2007:16-18) These titles clearly assume a much more comprehensive leadership role than merely managing an establishment and directing a team.

According to Sergiovanni, 'Leadership is not a right, but a responsibility' (2001:14) Head Teachers are obviously ultimately responsible for the students, staff, environment, results etc. but are also responsible for the vision and direction of the school. They must be able to articulate the mission statement and communicate it effectively and passionately enough to inspire their team and build their policies around it.

> School leaders must be ready to use every opportunity to articulate the 'story' of Catholic education, it purpose and missions, its central features and constituent elements, its living tradition and culture, its leading principles and how these guide decisions, policies, priorities and practices. (Hayes and Gearon,2002:103)

In his paper, Living Logos, John Sullivan explores the concept of Head Teachers as symbols or icons who embody their values, mission and meaning. He explores the roles of Christian leaders as physical and visible bearers of their deeper values and vision. He argues that Head teachers

> Transmit meaning and values in all the seemingly mundane things they do...Their work lives are placards, posters and banners of symbolic meaning. (Sullivan, 2002:6)

He goes on to offer examples of the role of Head Teachers with a focus on communication. He suggests that when people interact with them, they should, 'give explicit expression to the school's vision...' (p5) and operate as a moral communicator.

> ...Heads do have to function as effective **moral communicators,** for values are at the very heart of their work. This work includes articulating the central values of the school, inspiring others to pursue these values, promoting and explaining them with all the partners and constituencies, defending them from undermining influences from within and without, securing their permeation throughout the life and work of the school, and, above all, reconciling those who interpret them differently**.** (Sullivan, 2002:8)

This is clearly a much more personal, value-led approach to leading than the managerial, business-first approach. Rather than selecting a Head Teacher simply on their skills and ability to lead, it suggests they should be selected also on their values and ability to live these out in their daily interactions.

Sullivan goes on to identify nine characteristics of Christian leadership which are useful in exploring the role of Head teachers.

The first three of these – discipleship, service and stewardship are concerned with rooting leadership in the ways of Christ by accepting that Catholic school leaders serve those they lead and hold the people, resources and position in trust. The attitude of potential head Teachers then, will be a willingness to be humbled by the position rather than exalted by it.

> 'leadership for service, not for lordship.' (Sullivan, 2002:2)

This is echoed in O'Malley's understanding of the leader as king – not an earthly king, but modelled on Christ the king. He argues that

> Kingly leaders accept the gift of authority and administration as a way of loving and serving the community to which they belong. (O'Malley,2007:18)

Sullivan then goes on to explore this style of leadership and offers two models which he argues are distinctively Christian – collaborative and invitational. It is through promoting participation and empowering others to share responsibility and truly feel part of the team, that a Catholic school leader can be effective and most importantly true to the example of Christ. This involves listening, nurturing, drawing out talent and sharing responsibility. It is a world away from the hierarchical, autocratic 'hero-headteachers' that Fincham refers to when exploring school leadership pre-Vatican II. (cf.Fincham, 2010:65)

The final four of Sullivan's nine characteristics of Christian leadership are all associated with the personal and spiritual life of the individual. They are forgiveness, being orientated to the Kingdom, connecting the mundane to the bigger picture and being open to the Spirit.

As the spiritual leader of the Catholic school, the Head Teacher has the responsibility to model their leadership on Christ and indeed to ensure that they know, promote and bear witness to the spiritual journey of themselves, every member of the school community and the wider Church.

In the context of American schools, Drahmann (1989) identified the role of spiritual leader as someone who:

- Articulates the Catholic educational vision
- Knows the process of faith and moral development
- Knows the content and methods of religious education programmes
- Leads the community in prayer
- Provides spiritual growth opportunities for staff, students and others
- Integrates Christian social principles into the curriculum and the life of the school
- Links the school with the Church – local and worldwide

This seems to be equally relevant to English schools since they too were established to educate young people in the faith and are called to be communities of faith and love. As the spiritual leader of a Catholic school, the Head Teacher will embody this role in their actions, but also embody it in their whole life. McIntosh explored this in her dissertation 'The Head Teacher as an Icon of Christ' where she noted the importance of regular spiritual nourishment.

> The Head Teacher strives to be a reflection of Christ in all that she says and does. The Head Teacher finds her *raison d'être* in the life and teaching of Jesus, being constantly formed and reformed by a living relationship with him. Her life is transformed by continuous feeding from the gospel and from fellow pilgrims on the way. In order to live this out every day, the Head Teacher needs to enter the quiet, reflective space of the heart, to be open to the Spirit. Then they will be in a position to attend to the tasks of the day renewed and refreshed with a peace filled heart. (McIntosh, 2005:17-19)

The role of the Head Teacher of a Catholic school then, is much more than administration and management. It requires a deep understanding of the nature of the Catholic school, a personal and professional witness to the Gospels of Christ and a commitment to a continuing, spiritual journey. It also requires the personal qualities to listen, nurture and inspire so that every member of the community is drawn, through their work, towards Christ.

2.4 Leadership styles of Head Teachers

Potential Head teachers of Catholic schools will already have a preferred leadership style that they demonstrate each day through their work and relationships. This style may have been developed through experiences or influences or may have been deliberately adopted to suit the school or situation. Two leadership styles which are particularly relevant to Catholic leaders will be examined here to evaluate the potential they have for fulfilment and to ease the potential burden that Headship may bring.

Servant leadership is a model of leadership introduced by Robert Greenleaf (cf. Greenleaf, 1977) and, despite him introducing this model for secular life and neglecting its Christian origins, it clearly has its roots in the Gospels and is relevant to the role of Head Teachers in Catholic schools. Jesus was the ultimate servant leader

who made it clear, through his words and actions, that he came to serve and invited others to do the same. The servant leader is one who prioritises the team and the organisation above their own personal preferences in order to make progress towards an aim or outcome; they serve those they lead.

> You will know that the rulers of heaven have complete power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. This, however, is not the way it shall be among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, he must be the slave – like the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people. (Matthew 20:25-28)

Punnachet (2009) points out that Jesus contradicted the authority of the time and led with love and kindness, avoiding control and manipulation. She explores the philosophy of service 'which has love as its foundation' and is based on 'a genuine concern for others' (Punnachet; 2009:123/124). The challenge with this as a model for Catholic school leaders is that Jesus was the perfect example and even the disciples found it difficult to live up to the ideal.

> The Gospels show more than adequately that it seems to be the nature of human beings to be greedy for power, and that this makes people neglect their objectives and forget their own spiritual commitments. From the Gospels, Jesus was also face with the temptation that all leaders risk encountering: 'gratification, recognition and applause.'(Blanchard and Hodges, 2003:25 quoted in Punnachet, 2009:122)

Far from being a weak leadership model as has been suggested by some, servant leadership requires strength of character and a genuine love for the human person. Marshall (1991) suggests that it is a model concerned with nature rather than function since the characteristics of a servant leader are likely to be part of the leader's character and not simply acquired skills. They will be interested in those they lead; willing listeners, caring, humble, realistic and keen to develop others. Crucially, they are willing to share power and not autocratic in their approach to leadership.

> Nobody – or no group of people – should have all the power and nobody should be without power. (Marshall, 1991:72)

Jesus himself, as servant leader, saw potential in those around him from all walks of life and delegated his authority to them. Catholic school leaders today can follow this example and serve those they lead by seeing the potential for leadership in them and loving them enough to trust them with a share of the authority.

A second leadership style which could be useful for potential Head Teachers to consider is Transformational leadership. According to Bass (1985) it is characterised by the influence of the leader on the team; a charismatic and influential leader is able to motivate and encourage staff for the advancement of the organisation rather than their own rewards.

The transformational leader recruits and develops a team to be effective by inspiring and enthusing. The passion of the leader moves the team on and gives them the energy to aim high and reach beyond their grasp. They set an example for others, but also give them the passion to be the best that they can be.

> Transformational leadership is about creating energy and involvement and setting a personal example – being an outstanding teacher and professional as well as the 'lead learner'. (HayMcber, 2000:9)

The key to transformational leadership is identity; a shared identity that inspires all members of the team to work hard for the greater good of the whole community.

> Emphasising, purposing and cultivating shared values provide the glue that connects people together in meaningful ways. Once purpose and shared values are in place they become compass points and milestones for guiding what is to be done and how. (Sergiovanni, 2001:25)

Murphy speaks of a 'community of leaders' in which there is a genuine shared vision that will move a school forward because all are committed to the vision and all feel responsibility for it. This energy and activity will ensure progress across all levels of the establishment and give every member of the community, whatever their role, a sense of ownership; a powerful tool for transformation.

> ...it is essential that the leader of a school or college has a vision or mission for the institution and that the leader can transmit their own commitment into one that can be shared by others. (Coleman, 1994:64)

Leaders of schools are by their very nature, leaders of communities. They can set the tone in a school and 'purposefully impact the culture to achieve school development.' (Stoll and Fink, 1995:106).

> In this they bring all their skills of keeping people together, helping them to work cooperatively, overcoming dissention and rows, keeping all eyes on the tasks in hand and maybe, most importantly, keeping well rooted in the well-springs of life and faith which give character to the enterprise. This is the work of 'Koinonia', building up the body of Christ, drawing nurture from the Lord who gives himself to us entirely. (Nichols, 2009:12)

Jesus himself demonstrated the power and effectiveness of transformational leadership as he inspired and transformed those he met by sharing his vision and mission. He recruited and developed his followers and communicating a compelling vision that they felt inspired to continue with, even when he was no longer visible – a useful idea when recruitment of Head Teachers in Catholic schools is becoming a challenge. Leaders in Catholic schools then, can reflect on the leadership of Jesus and the importance of having a clear vision that builds a community and values every individual within it; supporting growth and transformation.

The role of Head Teacher is undoubtedly a huge responsibility and could easily be overwhelming. However, adopting leadership styles which share responsibility and build on the talents of those in the team surely offers a way forward and an answer to the suggestion that Headship is a burden. It also offers an answer to leadership succession issues since a style that prepares others to move into leadership and take the helm when the leader moves on will ensure continuity and a future for Catholic education.

2.5 Recruitment of Head Teachers

The recruitment of school leaders in faith schools has been a concern for a number of years with many posts having to be re-advertised several times or remain unfilled for many months. This was highlighted in the NCSL's publication in 2008.

> Faith schools are also disproportionately represented amongst so called 'hard-to-recruit' headships – defined as those schools having to re-advertise twice or more in order to secure a headteacher. (NCSL, 2008:2)

Catholic schools recognise this difficulty in recruiting suitable candidates for senior leadership positions and Gallagher points out that the challenge is to identify and encourage potential leaders from within Catholic schools (cf. Gallagher, 2007:263) Addressing issues in leadership succession requires preparation and support which is perhaps not currently available or accessible.

In his 2011 study, Richardson finds that this concern is also shared by the Head Teachers who were involved in his study. He found that Head Teachers feared the difficulty in nurturing leaders could threaten the very future of Catholic education. Furthermore, he discovered that some recognised that this challenge to nurture future leaders is exacerbated in smaller primary schools – perhaps due to the lack of leadership opportunities to gain experience or fewer leaders to share their expertise.

Another potential challenge in recruiting Head Teachers is noted by Fincham (2010) where he points out that the Catholic Education service (CES) expects Catholic school leaders

> ...should not only be practising Catholics but they should also be conversant with the Catholic principles of education. (Fincham, 2010:67)

Obviously, in a Catholic school the Head, Deputy and RE leader need to have a working understanding of the mission of the school but they are also required to be not only sympathetic to the Catholic faith, but actively live it out in their own personal and professional lives. As Marcus Stock notes they must be:

> someone who has been sacramentally initiated into the Catholic Church and who adheres to those substantive life choices which do not impair them for receiving the sacraments of the Church and which will not be in any way detrimental or prejudicial to the religious ethos and character of the school (Stock 2009:6)

This poses its own challenges for the recruitment of Head Teachers as it can significantly narrow the field of applicants or raise the question of compromise and prioritising one aspect of Headship over another. In some areas of the country, it has also lead to new leadership structures and school partnerships being considered.

2.6 Potential barriers and challenges in recruiting Head Teachers

To address the issues of leadership succession, it is important to explore some of the potential challenges and barriers that may prevent candidates coming forward to offer themselves in service as a Head Teacher in a Catholic school.

The role of Head Teacher in a Catholic school could be seen as extremely overwhelming with all the roles, responsibilities, skills, experiences and qualities that are required. One of the major barriers in recruiting Head Teachers is the fear of work overload and the perception of a Head having to lose any work/life balance that they had. No doubt the roles and responsibility are huge, but with careful consideration of leadership style and distributing responsibility, potential Heads could find a way to manage the load.

A further concern may be the enormity of the task; senior leaders could be forgiven for believing that it is a role that is beyond them both in terms of the responsibility and the requirement to be a living witness. Sullivan (2002) recognises this in his paper Living Logos, but offers a reminder that God will be walking alongside those who take up the challenge and that with Him all things are possible.

> To live up to the expectation that in our leadership we should operate as living logos is very daunting, for we know in our hearts that we are all vulnerable, fallible, incomplete and wounded. But we are not alone. Grace is all around us and, if only we could see them, there are guardian angels, in all kinds of shapes, sizes (and disguises), who hover all the time by our side, ready to help us carry the load. It is in God's sea that we swim; and God will not let us drown. (Sullivan, 2002:10-11)

Another potential challenge for those considering the role of Head Teacher in a Catholic school is the idea of being the spiritual leader and 'witness' since this may be

perceived as being able to always get it right and being whiter than white in both personal and professional decisions, behaviours and beliefs. Grace (1995) points out that this has been exacerbated with the paradigm shift post Vatican II and the increasing tensions between the church's moral code and society's belief in what is acceptable.

> Post Vatican II Catholicism has resulted in greater realizations of ambiguity and paradox in moral codes. Leadership in Catholic schools has therefore involved headteachers in a continuing struggle with these ambiguities. (Grace, 1995:166)

Perhaps some potential Head Teachers are concerned about their own lifestyle or beliefs and some may struggle themselves with the teachings of the Church and therefore feel unable to consider Headship in a Catholic school. Factors such as this can add to the difficulty in recruiting for Catholic education.

Despite these challenges, Head Teachers are able to be successful and effective with courage and support. Headship requires a high level of knowledge and skill alongside a personal commitment to ride the storms, face the struggles and stand up for what is right – all of are possible with the strength of Christ. This is aptly noted in a handbook produced for Head Teachers by Birmingham Diocese that provides information, questions and reflections to support those new to Headship.

> You will find a headteacher needs substantial commitment, energy, perseverance and resilience. The role is always rewarding but at times it can be challenging too. It is at those times as leader of a Catholic school you can cite confidence in God as well as self-confidence, and can draw strength from a belief that your headship is a vocation, a form of ministry, a calling to do God's work, and not 'a job' in worldly terms. (Archdiocese of Birmingham, 2009:31)

Although the Head Teacher's role is widely believed to be challenging, it is also recognised as a rewarding role that brings fulfilment in building relationships, seeing children (and adults) reach their potential and really making a difference to the lives of others.

2.7 Summary

Having examined a sample of the current literature for this study, I am able to draw out the points which are relevant to my research. In terms of preparation and training for Headship, there should be a mix of formal and informal opportunities to develop as a leader, as an individual and as a follower of Christ. These opportunities are vital to ensure an individual is knowledgeable about the role that are undertaking, skilled to perform the role and spiritually ready to be a public witness to the faith. Part of this preparation may be to understand leadership styles and develop a style that reflects the teaching of Christ, allowing others to come to know Him through one's work.

In order to successfully recruit Head Teachers to Catholic schools, the potential challenges and barriers must also be considered and potential candidates helped to see the rewards as well as these challenges. The role is a huge responsibility and can be all encompassing, but potential Head Teachers can also be assured that as a vocation, it is God's work and can be effectively managed with trust and faith in Him.

Methodology– Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

In order to explore the aims of this dissertation and evaluate how well potential Head Teachers are trained and prepared for their role, I have undertaken a small scale research project. This allowed me to collect and analyse information from current practitioners whose experiences, observations and opinions were then analysed in the light of the principles drawn out in the Literature Review.

As Bell (2010) points out, research in education is often concerned with the practical applications of the outcomes of research and the desire to improve practice. Indeed many educational researchers not only find themselves developing and reflecting as professionals, but able to improve current practice.

> Your research-based enquiry is meant to lead to professional reflection and, where appropriate, a commitment to change. The hope is that all concerned with your enquiry will be helped by it. (Johnson, 1994: Preface)

Despite being a small scale project, it is my intention that through examining how well Catholic school leaders are currently prepared for the role of Head Teacher, I shall be able to make some helpful, if limited, recommendations for those engaged in the process of preparing potential Head Teachers for their role and perhaps also for those wishing to pursue this career path.

3.2 Research methods

Before beginning to explore research methods, it is important to be clear about what research is and how it is defined. Bassey (1999) shares Bell's understanding of it being a means to build on that which is known, but adds the dimension of a planned and evaluative process.

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

It is important therefore that any research project is well planned, continuously evaluated and designed with a clear purpose or set of aims. The researcher has a responsibility to monitor their own work, welcome scrutiny and work within a carefully considered code of practice.

There are numerous approaches to educational research and many projects will include elements of several different styles.

> Classifying an approach as quantitative or qualitative, ethno graphic, survey, action research or whatever, does not mean that once an approach has been selected, the researcher may not move from the methods normally associated with that style. (Bell, 2010:6)

However, it is important at the outset to have a clear idea of what approach will be the driving force behind the research. This will ensure, particularly in a small scale project, that the data collected is valid, relevant and manageable. It will also ensure that the researcher has given due thought and consideration to the limitations of their chosen approach and understands the limitations that this may lead to in their conclusions.

The three main approaches which I felt were worth exploring prior to undertaking this project were i) action research ii) case study and iii) survey. Each approach would have allowed me to study the particular aspect of Catholic school leadership that I was interested in and, as a current member of staff in a Catholic school I had access to participants and situations that could be used to inform my research. However, on reflection I ruled out the case study approach as I felt that it would have given me too narrow a field of participants; in one school there may be at most 4 possible candidates at the appropriate stage in their careers to have given me the information I was seeking. This would limit the validity of my findings. I also ruled out the action research approach as I intended to examine qualifications, experiences and opportunities that had influenced a career path rather than explore the results of a particular intervention or initiative. I felt that the survey approach was most appropriate as it would allow me to examine the current situation for potential Head Teachers through the information provided by a small group of senior leaders from several Catholic primary schools.

Typically survey research is carried out through questionnaires and interviews. Specific information is sought that can be elicited from the participant through carefully designed questions.

> In surveys, all respondents will be asked the same questions in, as far as possible, the same circumstances. (Bell, 2010:12)

The questions themselves may seek quantitative data such as facts and numerical data which can be compared and generalised, but may also have an element of qualitative research by asking questions that 'are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world.' (Bell, 2010: 5) This, I felt, would suit the nature of my study as I could explore the facts behind the preparation for Headship such as particular academic preparation and experience, whilst also gaining an insight into the perceptions of preparation and the potential barriers to Headship.

As with all research methods, it is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each. Surveys are relatively easy to administer and, with the right questions, are straightforward to analyse. They provide relevant information to the researcher and ensure that all participants are asked the same questions using the same wording. Possibly the biggest advantage is that the questionnaire can be sent out to a large number of participants and can be completed anonymously in their own time.

However, researchers often find that the return rate of questionnaires can be a problem as participants may have no incentive to return them on time – or at all. It must be remembered that participants may find the questionnaires an extra burden in terms of time or a threat if they don't fully understand the nature of the research.

> The questionnaire will always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent, be it in terms of time taken to complete the instrument, the level of threat or sensitivity of the questions or the possible invasion of privacy. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:317)

It can also be difficult to get the wording right so that the questions are clear and will elicit the kind of responses that are being sought.

> It is harder to produce a good questionnaire than might be imagined. They are fiendishly difficult to design and should never be considered by anyone who believes that 'anyone who can write plain English and has a modicum of common sense can produce a good questionnaire. (Oppenheim, 1992:1 quoted in Bell, 2010:140)

However, running a pilot of the questionnaire will eliminate some of the problems and help to ensure that the questions are as clear as possible to elicit relevant responses.

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used to follow up surveys as they allow the researcher to maintain the focus on the subject in hand whilst also allowing the participant a certain amount of freedom to share their own views. In this method, the researcher must have a number of starting questions to provide direction during the interview but will also allow for opportunities for relevant and useful information to be shared by the participant.

> Like fishing, interviewing is an activity requiring careful preparation, much patience and considerable practice if the eventual reward is to be a worthwhile catch. (Cohen, 1976: 82)

Semi-structured interviews can often elicit interesting additional insights that may not be possible in a questionnaire and, when following up a survey, may allow the researcher to explore interesting responses in further detail. Bell (2010) suggests the researcher has a set of key questions with a code to use during the interview to record responses to key questions. This enables the interviewer to have immediate information to analyse on the main focus before examining the finer detail in the transcript of the interview. With a clear focus and some prompts on hand, the researcher should be able to collect useful information that is relatively easy to analyse.

> If you are using a structured or semi-structured format which enables you to tick or circle responses on your previously prepared schedule, you should be able to leave the interview with a set of responses that can be fairly easily recorded, summarised and analysed. (Bell, 2010:162)

The interviewer must bear in mind the time they will allow to the interview since a short focused meeting will be much easier to transcribe and analyse than a longer,

rambling one. In addition, the researcher must be disciplined in their approach to the interview to avoid straying into areas that are irrelevant to the research however interesting they may be to either the interviewer or the participant. Bias is another factor to consider as the interviewer must be careful, as far as possible, to ask questions without bias whilst remembering during the analysis that the participant may well be biased in their own responses. A further consideration is the possibility of the participant being reluctant to give honest responses – or only giving the responses they think that they are expected to give. Questions can be worded carefully to avoid this and a little probing can often elicit a more truthful response.

3.3 Ethics and Integrity

Judith Bell (2010) has a chapter dedicated to ethics and integrity in research in which she stresses the importance of following ethical guidelines and carrying out research within a well-developed code of practice.

Ethical considerations must be considered throughout the entire project, from ensuring that the project itself is ethical in nature through to ensuring the data is used with integrity and that the participants are treated with dignity and respect. (Cohen et al, 2000)

It is important to remember that research involves people, and as such they must be protected from exploitation and care must be taken to avoid potential risk or harm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) offer a reminder of this when warning about the possible impact of questionnaires on respondents.

> Questionnaire respondents are not passive data providers for researchers; they are subjects not objects of research. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:317)

It is important then, that participants are fully informed about the precise purpose of the research. How their responses are to be used should be carefully explained in order for them to give their informed consent.

> All researchers will be aiming at the principle of 'informed consent', which requires careful preparation involving explanation and consultation before any data collecting begins (Oliver, 2003:28-30 quoted in Bell, 2010:46)

Ethics committees and workplace guidelines are key factors in ensuring that all research is ethical. Projects under the guidance of most institutions are expected to apply for ethical approval and seek permission from all involved to ensure that no project is going to lead to harm or risk. Alongside This, Bell (2010) stresses the need to consider one's own ethical principles.

> Even if you are not obliged to conform to required codes of practice nor to the demands of ethics or research committees, you will need to satisfy yourself that you have done everything possible to ensure that your research is conducted in a way which complies with your own ethical principles. (Bell, 2010:53)

3.4 Research design

Every researcher has to make an informed decision about the most appropriate method and tools to use for their particular project. Having carefully considered the approaches and tools available to me, I decided upon a survey approach with an element of both quantitative and qualitative data collection. This ensured that I was able to ask the questions that would help me evaluate how well potential Head Teachers are prepared for their role, collect a manageable selection of data and work within the confines of a small scale project.

The design details of the research were driven both by the aims of the project and the outcomes of the Literature Review. I also recognised the importance of triangulating the data in order to validate and improve the accuracy of the findings. A process which Laws (2003) in Bell (2010) described as

> To see the same thing from different perspectives and thus able to confirm or challenge the findings of one method with those of another. (Laws, 2003:281 quoted in Bell, 2010: 118)

This desire to check information led me to decide to produce and administer short questionnaires followed by face to face semi-structured interviews for a selection of participants.

This research was planned and designed to ensure that it was carried out ethically and with integrity. Ethical approval was sought from, and granted by, St Mary's University, Twickenham and permission from the four Catholic primary schools described in Chapter 1. The questionnaires were introduced with a short letter of explanation of the research so that each participant understood how and why their responses would be treated. To double check that each participant fully understood the nature of the research and that they were free to withhold any information or withdraw from the research, I also restated the information at the top of each questionnaire and read the same statement before each individual interview. Finally, each participant was required to sign their interview statement so that written permission was obtained and I could be sure that they were giving 'informed consent.'

Surveys

The questionnaires (a copy of which can be found in the appendix) were developed to be easy to complete within an estimated 15 minutes. I decided that I needed two slightly different versions – one for current Head Teachers and one for potential Head Teachers since I needed to draw on the experience of the Head Teachers and allow them to look back at their preparation whilst the potential Head Teachers were asked to draw on their current experience.

The initial questions were simple and factual. They included category type questions where participants were required to select from a list in order for me to build a profile of the sample. The second set were based on the Likert scale with participants being asked to rank their responses to a number of statements. This allowed me to analyse their responses against information I had obtained from the Literature Review in order to draw out a comparison between current principles and practice. The Likert scale is a useful tool as it requires a simple response to grade strength of feeling without respondents feeling that they have to look for their own answers or feel anxious about their responses (Oppenheim, 1996: 50) However, as with all research tools, there are

disadvantages with the Likert scale and the most significant of these is that there is no way of gauging the intensity of feelings between the points on the scale. (cf. Coleman and Briggs, 2002). Another drawback worth noting is that participants will often avoid selecting extremes and tend to go for moderate choices so this needs to be considered in the analysis of results. Coleman and Briggs (2007) noted a further problem with this scale which is that there is no check on the honesty of participants as well as no option to add additional comments that could prove useful to the research.

The final set of questions were more open and designed to allow the participants to share their personal experience or opinions.

Semi-structured interviews

Following this, the semi-structured interview was designed with a number of factual questions to begin the interview and establish more about the participant's background in Catholic education and their career path. This then was followed by a series of prompts drawn from responses to the questionnaire as well as specific questions should they be needed if the interview was to dry up or go off track. A major weaknesses of the interview can be participants wanting to talk about their own issues and moving away from the areas that are being researched so I decided to use semi-structured interviews, as it allowed me to maintain focus on the areas that I wanted to cover, whilst providing the participants with the opportunities to reflect on their views of the areas under consideration.

3.5 Context

This research project has been completed as part of the MA in Catholic School Leadership and as such is concerned with the principles and practice of leading a Catholic school. I have therefore sought to ensure that the nature of the project, the sample of participants and the analysis of the data collected are relevant to the development and understanding of Catholic school leadership.

Since the aims of this project are concerned with the leadership of Catholic primary schools, I approached four Catholic primary schools to participate in the research. The

schools belong to a local cluster within a city in the south of England, are medium sized and have similar leadership structures.

These particular schools were chosen since I have professional connections with them and therefore hoped that I would be able to ensure a good return response to the questionnaires. I also believed them to be fairly typical of many Catholic primary schools in terms of size and structure. This then would improve the validity of my research and the potential application of any findings.

3.6 The sample

In order to research, one must first identify the population – the entire group of those who one is interested in. It would be a larger scale research project to survey all of those in the population and so a sample must be identified. Burgess (2001) describes a sample as those who will be representative of the group in its entirety.

> A sample is a sub-set of the population that is usually chosen because to access all members of the population is prohibitive in time, money and other resources. (Burgess, 2001:4)

In this project, the population consists of all those who have previously, or are currently preparing for the role of Head Teacher in a Catholic school. To survey each of these individuals would be beyond the realms of this project and so a sample using the SLT from the four previously mentioned Catholic primary schools have been selected. Each of the four Catholic primary schools is led by a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which consists of the Head Teacher, Deputy and other senior leaders, although the exact titles vary from school to school. Every member of each school's SLT was invited to participate in the research to ensure that the sample was large enough to draw useful conclusions and that there was a range of experiences and backgrounds with which to explore the aims of the project.

For the purpose of this research, I am considering all members of SLT of these particular schools to be potential Head Teachers since they are in positions of senior leadership and likely to be within one or two career moves of Headship. The Head

Teacher's surveys were designed to be slightly different to those presented to the rest of the SLT as they were asked to look back at how they felt they were prepared for their Headship, as well as being asked to comment on how well they felt potential Head Teachers are currently prepared.

The limitations of this sample include the potential lack of diversity as all four schools are in the same diocese and therefore the respondents are likely to have been exposed to the same, or similar formal training opportunities. Being in the same city, the schools are also likely to be in receipt of a very similar CPD budget and targeted by the same companies and institutions which provide training and development opportunities.

3.7 Summary

In order to collect useful and reliable data, I have decided to use both surveys and semi-structured interviews. The surveys consist of a variety of question types designed to be clear, concise and elicit responses relevant to the key areas of the study. The semi-structured interviews are designed to triangulate the data by maintaining the focus on the key areas whilst allowing the participants opportunities to share information in more detail.

Having set out and explained my approach to the research project, I am now able to share the information collected and most importantly offer an analysis of my findings.

The presentation of the data collected is set out in Chapter 4 and followed by an analysis of it in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 – Analysis: Classification and Comparison

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter classifies and compares the data collected from the research in order to be able to analyse and interpret it in chapter 5. Consequently I will be able to use it to evaluate how well senior leaders are prepared for the role of Head Teacher in a Catholic primary school.

The information obtained from the questionnaires will be given first followed by the information gained through the semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Classification and Comparison of Surveys

Surveys were sent to the all the SLT members of the four Catholic primary schools selected. They were made aware of the subject of my research, that participation was optional and that their responses would remain anonymous. The respondents were given two weeks to complete the questionnaires and return them either anonymously or with e-mail addresses attached if they were happy to take part in a follow-up interview.

The actual number of returned surveys was a little disappointing as I had been expecting 80-90% of them to be returned but in reality received nearer to 60%. As I had explained in Chapter 3, this is one of the difficulties in using the survey approach to research. However, as Table 4a shows, I still feel that I have collected a reasonable number to use as a sample since I received 10/17 responses which included at least one Head Teacher, one Deputy Head Teacher as well as Assistant Head Teachers and a variety of other senior leadership roles.

Table 4a

Comparison between the roles in the sample and those in the population of the four schools		
	Sample	**Population**
Total SLT members	10	17
Head Teachers	1	3
Deputy Head Teachers including School Leaders	1	4
Assistant Head Teachers	3	5
Other roles within SLT	5	5

Questions 1-5

The initial questions in the survey were designed to identify the teaching and faith profiles of the respondents. They revealed that the sample contained a diverse range of roles as already seen in table 4a, including Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, Assistant Head Teachers, SENCOs and Key Stage Leaders. Question 2 asked participants about the formal qualifications that they held and gave them a number of options. Table 4b, below, illustrates the responses to this question. 50% of those who responded held the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) and one held a Bachelor's degree in Theology as well as the CCRS. Those that held the CCRS were the same 50% who had attended Catholic schools themselves and described themselves as either practising or non-practising Catholics.

Table 4b

Qualifications held by respondents					
	CCRS	BA Theology	NPQH	MA CSL	MA Theology
Number from sample	5	1			
Attended Catholic school	5	1			
Catholic (including non-practising)	5	1			

Since the sample were selected to be members of SLT, it was no surprise that the majority were experienced teachers, with half of them having been in Catholic education for between eleven and fifteen years as illustrated in Table 4c below. The two longest serving members were also the two with the most senior roles − Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher.

Table 4c

Number of years that the respondents have been involved as professionals in Catholic education				
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
	3	5		2

Questions 6 and 6a

These questions simply established if the respondents had any intention of applying for Headship either in the short or long term and if they had been involved in preparing for this role. 70% (7/10) indicated that they had no intention of applying for this role with two of these adding further comments that they were not Catholic and so would

not be eligible to apply. 20% (2/10) suggested that they may consider it within the next five years and the additional respondent is already a serving Head Teacher.

Of those who are currently not Head Teachers themselves, only one indicated that they had recently (within the last 5 years) received any training that would be beneficial to those wishing to apply for Headship and this was described as Local Authority training on data and an update on implementing the 2014 National Curriculum to school staff.

Questions 7-12

Respondents were then asked to reflect on a number of statements using the Likert scale to gauge their strength of feeling towards each one. The scale ranged from strongly disagree through disagree to agree and strongly agree with an additional opportunity to record 'don't know'. The following table presents these findings, with both agree and strongly agree collated and disagree and strongly disagree collated to reflect the overall feeling towards each statement.

It illustrates that all respondents indicated that there were confident in articulating what is distinctive about Catholic education and interestingly this was the only statement that received 100% agreement.

Asked about their awareness of the preparation and training available for potential Head Teachers of Catholic schools, 80% (8/10) disagreed that they knew what was available indicating that only 20% feel they know what is on offer to prepare potential Head Teachers.

The majority of respondents (90%) felt that they had been actively encouraged by their Head Teachers to develop leadership skills although slightly less (70%) felt that their own leadership style had been influenced by those who had led them.

Table 4d

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
I am aware of what preparation and training is available to aspiring Head Teachers of Catholic primary schools	8		2
I have been actively encouraged by my current/previous Head Teachers to develop my leadership skills for Catholic education	1		9
It is more important for the Head Teacher s of Catholic primary schools to have the necessary personal qualities to be effective leaders than for them to have embarked on specific NPQH or MA training courses	1		9
The role models of Catholic school leadership that I have experienced have influenced my own leadership style	1	2	7
I feel confident in being able to articulate what is distinctive about Catholic education			10
The Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school needs to be a personal witness to the Catholic faith.	2		8

Question 13

In order to gather information on what are considered important qualities in a Head Teacher of a Catholic school, question 13 required respondents to identify three key qualities. These have been summarised and ordered according to the frequency with which they were mentioned.

Being a witness to the Catholic faith was the quality most often identified as key for the Head Teacher of a Catholic school, with 7/10 respondents identifying it as a key quality. The next two most popular qualities identified were a shared vision and strong leadership skills which were both identified by 5 respondents.

All of the qualities identified in the surveys were identified by at least 2 respondents, although they may have been worded slightly differently by each. There were no respondents who left this question blank.

Table 4e

Quality identified as one of the three most important qualities of an effective Head Teacher of a Catholic primary schools	Number of respondents who identified this quality in their response
Witness to Catholic faith	7
Commitment to a shared vision	5
Strong leadership skills	5
High expectations	3
Effective communication	3
Empathy/care/compassion	3
Honest/just	2
Knowledge of and commitment to education	2

Question 14

This question asked respondents to identify why Catholic primary schools might sometimes find it hard to recruit Head Teachers. This was answered on all ten of the surveys and the responses can be divided in to two main themes – the enormity of the role and the lack of suitable Catholic candidates. Although the majority of responses cited the pressures of being a Head Teacher as a reason for difficulty in recruiting with 70% (7/10) mentioning this in their answer, many also mentioned the shortage of Catholics putting themselves. Some respondents mentioned the strict eligibility criteria set out by the Church as a deterrent or even a block to potential Head Teachers. The following table seeks to compare the responses to the question of the difficulty in recruiting between those who indicated themselves to be Catholic and those who put themselves into one of the other three categories.

Table 4f

Responses to the difficulty in recruiting Head Teachers to Catholic primary schools			
	Focus of the response		
	Pressures of the role	**Need to be practising Catholic**	**Other**
Number of times mentioned by All respondents	7	5	3
Number of times mentioned by Catholics (including non-practising)	5	1	2
Number of times mentioned by Those not declared as Catholics	2	4	1

Questions 15 and 16

The final two questions were seeking to establish what the respondents felt were areas that were missed in the current training and preparation for Headship and asked for any particular training needs that the respondent felt would benefit them if they chose to apply for Headship. 60% (6/10) of the respondents left these two sections blank or wrote a comment such as 'I am unaware of what training is available or relevant.' Of those that were completed, ideas ranged from specific leadership courses run by the diocese and theology input to general training in business, finance and legal matters.

4.3 Classification and Comparison of Follow-up Interviews

In order to triangulate the results, follow-up interviews were held with 2 of the survey respondents. These interviewees were selected based on the detail that they were able to give in their surveys, their offer to be interviewed and their eligibility to be considered for Catholic school Headships. The interviews were semi-structured and

conducted around 5 key themes: how the interviewee came to be leading in a Catholic school; what they considered the key roles and responsibilities of the Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school; what they knew about how potential Head Teachers are currently prepared for the role; what further preparation might be beneficial to those contemplating applying to be the Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school and what potential barriers might prevent suitable candidates applying for these roles.

Theme 1: *How did you come to be leading in a Catholic school?*
Each interview began with the interviewee being asked to talk through how they came to be working and leading in a Catholic school. Both interviewees could trace their choice back to their early experiences – either as a child in a Catholic school or as a newly qualified teacher (NQT) in a Catholic school. They both spoke of how they felt being part of a Catholic community.

Both interviewees felt that their journey to leadership was influenced by those who had led them 'you look at people you have worked alongside or worked for and you sort of see things in them that you obviously aspire to.' (Transcript 1) They felt that both positive and negative experiences of leadership had both influenced them as leaders ' I worked for a very interesting head…who…had taught me an awful lot about being a pastoral leader…although he wasn't the most strategic of leads…' (Transcript 2) Both indicated that their journey included elements of choice and seeking out positions in Catholic schools as well as sometimes being found in positions that through no choice of their own had challenged and extended their leadership skills.

Theme 2: *What do you consider the key roles and responsibilities of the Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school?*
The second theme that was explored was the interviewees understanding of the key roles and responsibilities of the Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school. The central idea that emerged in these discussions was the Head's role as witness and 'being Christ to all' (Transcript 2) Both indicated their understanding of the role being far more than a Monday to Friday job with the Head Teacher being expected to be active in the parish and the community. They also, both noted this as being an extra burden on the

individual and for interviewee 1, a reason 'probably why Headship is not for me.' (Transcript 1)

Theme 3: *What do you know about how potential Head Teachers are currently prepared for the role?*

The current preparation and training opportunities for potential Head Teachers of Catholic primary schools is the next theme to be considered. During the interviews, when asked about the current provision and how potential candidates are prepared, both indicated a lack of provision, with one saying 'How are they prepared? I think the answer is probably badly.' (Transcript 2) and the other said 'Well to be honest, there's nothing.' (Transcript 2) Although both also indicated that their responses were in relation to their own particular diocese and that it might be different in other geographical areas. They also both suggested that despite not being aware of formal training and preparation, they had experienced in-school support, encouragement and informal opportunities to learn from others.

Theme 4: *What further preparation might be beneficial to those contemplating applying to be the Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school?*

Another theme covered in the interviews was how potential Head Teachers of Catholic primary schools could be better prepared. This was the area that tended to dominate the discussion and produce the greatest amount of information. Both interviewees were able to give detailed suggestions about how to improve the current process and could give examples of how it might help to ensure potential candidates are fully prepared, ready and skilled to take on the role.

The suggestions ranged from practical legal and financial training to understanding the nature of Catholic schools and personal, faith reflection. Both interviewees suggested that opportunities to shadow others and 'dip that toe in the water' (Transcript 2) would allow potential candidates to seriously consider whether they are ready for the move and discover whether they have the necessary skills and qualities to take on the role.

The role of the diocese in engaging with future leaders was seen by both as crucial. They suggested that the diocese should have some kind of strategic plan and vision for

the development of new leaders, including actively seeking out potential in the diocesan schools. One described this as 'talent spotting' and the other suggested 'you should be sought out'.

Theme 5: *What potential barriers might prevent suitable candidates applying for these roles?*

The final theme explored during the interviews were the possible or perceived barriers and burdens that might prevent potential candidates from applying for the role of Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school.

One of the major burdens which was identified was that Headship requires a total commitment to being a witness to the faith and this involves a huge time commitment alongside the responsibility to personally live out and be seen to live out the faith.

4.4 Summary

The data presented illustrates that the sample included a variety of roles within SLTs. The majority of questions on the surveys were answered fully although the final two questions seeking suggestions on how to better prepare potential Head Teachers were the most often left blank. A consensus of opinion was expressed by all participants expressing their confidence in being able to articulate what is distinctive about Catholic education.

Now that the information collected has been illustrated in its basic form, it can be further explored and analysed. This will allow me to evaluate any performance gaps between the current practice in preparing potential Head Teachers for Catholic primary schools and the ideal as explored in the Literature Review.

Chapter 5 – Analysis: Discussion and Interpretation

5.1 Introduction

Following a factual illustration of the results of my research in the previous chapter, I now move on to an analytical discussion and interpretation of the findings.

In this chapter, I shall analyse my findings using the theories examined in the Literature Review in order to apply the theoretical concepts and models to the practices uncovered in my research. I shall discuss these under the headings identified in Chapter 1.

- The preparation and training currently available
- The role of the Head Teacher of a Catholic school
- The leadership styles of Head Teachers
- The recruitment of Head Teachers
- The potential barriers, challenges in recruiting Head Teachers

5.2 The Preparation and Training currently available to those pursuing Headship

In the Literature Review, Chapter 2, I explored the importance of school leaders being lifelong learners who require 'the personal motivation and desire to develop as a leader.' (West-Burnham 2001:5) The results from my research suggest that the majority of members of the Senior Leadership Teams in the schools studied, although already in positions of leadership, did not have the desire to be Head Teachers of Catholic schools – or at least did not feel that they were eligible since they were not practising Catholics. Perhaps because of them having discounted themselves as potential Head Teachers most had not pursued formal leadership training. Those that held qualifications that could be considered appropriate for potential Head Teachers such as the CCRS qualification and the BA in Theology were all Catholics, although only one felt that they had had recent training that would be useful to those applying for Headship positions. Perhaps they had received other training relevant to their roles, but their lack of awareness of what was available alongside the suggestion that they

had not received much formal training suggests that this is an area that could be improved to ensure potential Head Teachers are lead learners as well as lead leaders.

The evidence from my research suggests that the majority of potential Head Teachers feel that it is more important for Head Teachers to have the necessary personal qualities required of the role rather than specific, formal qualifications although most were unaware of the training available so perhaps were unable to make the comparison.

As well as more formal training and preparation for Headship, Hughan et al (2012) suggest that informal role-modelling and witness are also vital in developing potential Head Teachers. Suggesting that

> Serving headteachers can help cultivate and foster personal motivation for leadership, particularly through work related experiences. (Hughan, Sanders, West-Burnham, 2012:28)

This is supported by my own research in which the interviewees spoke of their journeys to leadership positions being influenced by those they had worked for or worked alongside. This idea of good leaders inspiring others was also explored through the surveys in which the majority of respondents, 70%, felt that their leadership style had been inspired by their own leaders and 90% felt that their own leaders had actively encouraged them to develop leadership skills. It is clear then, that in this sample, serving Head Teachers are very influential in developing and motivating potential school leaders.

Holman (2002) described teaching as 'a ministry founded upon a vocation from God…' and therefore to lead in a Catholic school requires more than both formal and informal experience and training. It requires an understanding of this vocation and an understanding of what it means to be a leader in a Catholic school. Grace (2002) warns that

> Many candidates for the headship of Catholic schools in England can now talk confidently about achievements in test scores and examinations, business planning and budgets, marketing and public relations, but are relatively

> inarticulate about the spiritual purposes of Catholic schooling. (Grace, 2002:237-238)

Despite a large percentage of the respondents not being Catholic, all indicated that they were confident in articulating what is distinctive about Catholic education. This was the strongest response in terms of numbers and can be interpreted as a genuine strength of these SLTs. They were obviously passionate enough about Catholic education to be able to talk about it and ensure that they could share it with others. Although it must be considered that being confident in articulating does not necessarily mean articulating it well.

In his study into the theological disposition of Head Teachers, Richardson (2014) expressed a need for Catholic leaders to be provided with catechesis and ongoing adult formation. This too was indicated in my research as an area that school leaders felt was an essential part of the preparation for Headship.

My findings indicate that the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) is a popular qualification for members of SLT to hold and is likely to ensure that they have a basic knowledge in Catholic education and Catholic Religious Education.

However, the findings from the survey indicate that the majority of SLT members are unaware of the preparation and training available to potential Head Teachers. Respondents specifically answered a question on how aware they were of what was available, but also seemed to suggest a lack of knowledge when unable to suggest gaps in current provision.

> There is a need for the Catholic community, under the guidance of their bishops, to provide clearer catechesis (Richardson 2014)

This was echoed in my research in which it was said that continuous formation should be 'a whole diocesan…philosophy…policy.' (Transcript 2) I discovered that currently in the diocese where these four schools are located there is NQT training for those working in Catholic schools to discover what it means to teach in Catholic schools,

but little ongoing catechesis after that. One interviewee suggested that it should continue, at cluster or diocesan level so that

…after three years in to teaching…people are brought together for constant opportunity to think about leadership opportunities but also to think about what it means to be a teacher, a leader within a Catholic school and how that differs…from any other part of the maintained sector. (Transcript 2)

This lack of awareness of what training and opportunities are available would suggest that the current provision is not effective or at least is not being effectively advertised or accessed.

5.3 The role of the Head Teacher of a Catholic Primary School

Being the Head Teacher of a Catholic school requires exceptional educational leadership, effective communication skills and a desire to bring Christ to others. It is this spiritual and personal relationship with Christ that makes being the Head Teacher of a Catholic school distinctive. O'Malley (2007) described the role as being priest, prophet and king and this seems to be echoed in my research in which I found the qualities of a Head Teacher of a Catholic school were described in terms that can reflect the essence of these roles: Priest - 'witness to the Catholic faith', Prophet – 'effective communication' and King – 'Strong leadership skills'

Sullivan (2002) described Head Teachers as icons and as 'Living Logos'. He identified nine, distinct characteristics which encapsulate the role of the Head Teacher of a Catholic school. Nearly all of these nine characteristics can be drawn out of the findings of my research, particularly from the responses to questions about the qualities of a Head Teacher. Sullivan spoke of leadership being rooted in the ways of Christ and my research found that this was clearly a key quality for my sample who spoke of Head Teachers being 'witnesses' and 'being Christ to all'. He also offered two leadership styles which are distinctively Christian – collaborative and invitational. My research also suggests that these are important leadership styles for Catholic leaders since the majority of respondents felt they had been nurtured and developed by their own Head Teachers and many felt that a commitment to a shared vision was a key quality of a Head Teacher.

Sergiovanni described leadership as 'not a right, but a responsibility.' (2001:14) and this idea of responsibility is one that was prominent in the findings of my own research. My findings indicate that potential Head Teachers are very aware of this responsibility and in some instances found it to be overwhelming. The interviews captured feelings that the responsibility was all encompassing with comments such as '…they have to be a witness to the faith and they have to live, breathe and be a positive role model in that.' They also described the roles and responsibilities of a Head Teacher as being '…just about anything and everything.' and 'being a witness to Christ to all to ensure they reach their full potential in whatever shape or form …that takes.' For many, this responsibility is one of the reasons cited for the difficulty in recruiting Head Teachers for Catholic schools – perhaps, for some, also an indication of their own reason for a reluctance in pursuing the role.

Being able to articulate what is distinctive about Catholic education is an important aspect of Catholic Headship as Head Teachers must be able to clearly communicate their vision, justify and champion Catholic education. Sullivan (2002) describes this as being a 'moral communicator' and explains,

> This work includes articulating the central values of the school, inspiring others to pursue these values, promoting and explain them with all partners and constituencies, defending them from undermining influences from within and without, securing their permeation throughout the life and work of the school, and, above all, reconciling those who interpret them differently. (Sullivan, 2002:8)

All of this requires individuals who are able to articulate what is distinctive about Catholic education and understand what it means to be an educator in a Catholic school. My research suggests that this is an area in which potential Head Teachers feel prepared since 100% (10/10) of respondents indicated that they felt confident in articulating what is distinctive about Catholic education. This included the group who are not Catholic themselves and those who have no formal or higher education qualifications in theology or religious studies. This could be due to a number of reasons including; the length of service that the individuals had done in a Catholic school, in-school training or perhaps the old adage that 'you don't know what you don't know.'

It would be interesting to find out how they would respond to being asked to actually articulate it rather than simply indicate whether they could.

The key finding in my research was that the Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school was a witness to Christ in all that they do. This was evident in the responses to the survey and in the interviews. The majority of respondents felt that this was a key quality of a Head Teacher, a possible reason for a shortage in candidates – which indicates that the respondents see it again as a key requirement. This was also referred to several times in the interviews. It seems that the majority of potential Head Teachers in the sample understood this as the most important role of a Head Teacher in a Catholic primary school.

5.4 The leadership styles of Head Teachers

The findings from my research indicated that the influence and role modelling of Head Teachers is influential in determining the styles and choices of potential leaders, this is backed up by what I discovered in the Literature Review. It is crucial then that potential leaders are exposed to effective, Christian leadership styles.

Servant leadership, introduced as a concept by Robert Greenleaf is evident in those who put their team and their organisation above themselves. A clear example was Christ himself who declared that he 'did not come to be served, but to serve.' (Matthew 20:28) Head Teachers who adopt this style will be witnessed truly serving their communities and prepared to do whatever job is necessary. One of the interviewees, although not specifically speaking of servant leadership, gave an example that expressed this leadership style when she spoke of her role as Head Teacher.

> Sometimes that might be collecting children to make sure they actually get to school, for some it's pointing out the error of their ways and…for some it's about being there at Church on Sunday to be that secure person they're going to meet if they're in a tentative relationship with Christ themselves. (Transcript 2)

This illustrates the Head Teacher as servant – one who has come to serve those they lead and part of that service is also in recognising and nurturing the talent in others.

Again, the surveys indicated that this too was common practice in the sample studied with 90% of respondents agreeing that they had had their leadership skills developed and nurtured by those who had led them.

It was also clearly indicated by the majority of respondents that being a witness to the faith was an essential element of being the Head Teacher of a Catholic school. Since being a witness always involves living out a belief being a witness in both what is said and in what is done, in terms of servant leadership, this can be interpreted as understanding that Head Teachers must be able to live as Christ lived and serve those they lead; be an example of servant leadership.

Another indication that these potential Head Teachers recognised servant leadership as an appropriate style for the Head Teachers of Catholic schools was there response to questions about the qualities of a Head Teacher. None of them suggested any autocratic or dictatorial qualities, they all identified qualities that would be typical of a servant leader such as empathy, compassion, commitment to a shared vision. This is all a long way from the pre-Vatican styles of a leader with complete power over others; it demonstrated an understanding of leading from within a team or community.

Marshall (1991) believes that is a leadership style that comes from within, it is not taught or adopted, but likely to be the inherent qualities of the individual. Perhaps this is why my research indicates that potential Head Teachers did not feel that qualifications or training were as important for Head Teachers as the qualities that they possess. It may be that some aspects of leading a Catholic school cannot be taught, but are part of an individual's personality.

The second leadership style that I explored in my Literature Review was transformational leadership in which leaders inspire and enthuse their teams to be effective and committed. HayMcber (2000) wrote of 'setting a personal example.' This idea of role-modelling and being a witness to others came out from my research very strongly, particularly in the area of faith. 70% of respondents felt that it was key for Head Teachers of Catholic schools to be a witness to the faith and the interviewees also spoke of the influence of personal example on their own journeys to leadership.

Transformational leaders develop a strong sense of community with shared values and a shared vision for the school. My research indicated that this sense of a shared vision was seen as key by potential Head Teachers with 50% mentioning it as a quality required by Head Teachers in Catholic schools. Perhaps the fact that 100% of those surveyed felt that were able to articulate the distinctiveness of Catholic education might also indicate that the bigger picture and the wider vision is clearly shared in the schools studied.

However, since very few respondents indicated that they are willing or intending to apply for Headship roles in Catholic schools, it could be argued that transformational leadership is not entirely effective in these schools. 90% of these potential Head Teachers, for whatever reason, do not feel inspired enough at present to commit to Headship and it would be interesting to look in more depth at the reasons for this.

Both servant leadership and transformational leadership are styles that develop community, build positive relationships and grow future leaders. They are also styles which can relieve the burden of leadership through shared responsibility and the drawing out of talents of all. My research suggests that these are the values and qualities experienced and valued by the potential Head Teachers that I surveyed. On the whole they felt positive about the influence of personal example on their own leadership, they recognised the importance of being witnesses and they identified a shared vision as key. Despite this, many still felt that Headship of a Catholic school was an excessive responsibility and the majority were not currently considering Headship themselves.

5.5 The recruitment of Head Teachers

There has been concern for some time that schools of a religious nature are finding it difficult to recruit and nurture leaders, so much so that in 2008 the NCSL noted that faith schools are 'disproportionately represented amongst so called 'hard-to-recruit' headships.' Catholic schools recognise this challenge with both Gallagher (2007) and Richardson (2011) expressing concerns for the future if this challenge of leadership succession is not addressed.

One of the reasons for this may be the additional expectation that the candidate is a practising Catholic which naturally narrows the field. This was in fact reflected in my research by the number of SLT members, who were being considered potential Head Teachers, but who were not Catholic and therefore not eligible to take on the role (50% or 5/10). If this was typical of other SLTs, then it would imply that recruitment could be a problem due to the lack of suitable candidates; those with leadership experience who are also practising Catholics.

During one of the interviews, after concluding that there was definitely a problem recruiting Head Teachers for Catholic primary schools, the interviewee suggested that this might not be a problem that can easily be overcome, but might require a 'different sort of leadership' such as 'amalgamating schools' This perhaps indicates the size of the problem as this individual sees it – that the candidates are simply not there and so an alternative leadership structure needs to be contemplated.

The majority of respondents to my surveys recognised that they had been nurtured by their own Head Teachers, but just as Richardson in his 2011 study discovered, it seems that this is more difficult in smaller primary schools. During one of my interviews I asked if there was one thing that might help prepare potential Head Teachers for the role of Headship and the interviewee suggested shadowing but outlined the difficulty in organising this in a primary setting.

> I think that's easier to do in the secondary sector than it is in primary because…nine times out of ten our future leaders are classroom teachers and nobody actually wants to take them out the classroom. (Transcript 2)

It may be that this lack of opportunity to experience being out of the classroom and taking on leadership roles in a more comprehensive way is what is preventing potential Head Teachers from believing that they could do the role or are prepared for it. It would have been interesting to explore what proportion of my sample were classroom based and whether this was at all linked to their response to questions about whether they intended to apply for Headship.

Head Teachers for Catholic primary schools need to be trained, prepared and willing to take on the role. My research suggests that the recruitment and preparation process needs to begin earlier in the career of potential Head Teachers. One respondent suggested a talent spotting programme and ongoing preparation from NQT though to middle leader and senior leaders so that candidates are fully aware and prepared for the role. It seems that at the moment in the sample schools, potential candidates are not aware of what is available to them, do not seemed to have accessed any specific training and, perhaps because of this, are not currently interested in applying for Headship positions.

5.6 The Potential Barriers and Challenges in Recruiting Head Teachers

During the research, when asked whether they intended to apply for Headship, 70% (7/10) of respondents indicated that they had no intention of applying. This may be down to the fact that 50% of those completing the research were not Catholic and so may have ruled themselves out for this reason. Also, however, later in the survey they were asked to suggest why there may be difficulties in recruiting Head Teachers to Catholic primary schools and the findings of this may help to go some way to explain any reluctance to apply themselves for the role. The most popular response to this question was the level of responsibility and overwhelming pressures of the role which was cited by 7/10 respondents, including all of those who were Catholic. This fear of the role and one's ability to take on the responsibility is recognised by Sullivan (2002). He describes it as 'very daunting' and understands that as humans we may feel week and fallible. However, he believes that it is completely possible with faith in God who 'will not let us drown.' (Sullivan, 2002:10-11) Perhaps this is something that could be shared and explored with potential Head Teachers so that they don't feel that the role will leave them vulnerable and exposed and may therefore be more inclined to consider Headship.

Two practising Catholics who were interviewed, also expressed concern that the responsibility of the role and in particular, the seven day a week personal commitment may deter potential candidates from pursuing this as a career choice. They spoke of the importance of being at Mass on Sundays, supporting community events and

being part of the parish, part of the school…part of the parish community, being a figure head…that is extra, that's on top. (Transcript 1)

This expectation that Head Teachers of Catholic schools must publically live out their faith and be living witnesses was also found to be a challenge to potential Head Teachers. The following comment from one of the interviews illustrates this.

…I do think, which is probably why Headship wouldn't be for me…that actually you have to live out…be a witness to the faith and they have to live, breathe and be a positive role model in that. (Transcript 1)

During this interview the senior leader clearly felt that as well as being a huge responsibility, Headship of a Catholic school also demanded something more than she felt that she could give. Again this may be an individual's understanding of the role or a feeling that, as Punnachet (2009) noted, a belief that the role is only for those who are perfect as Jesus was. This may also be a factor in the difficulty of recruiting, since Headship of a Catholic school may seem only suitable for someone 'perfect' rather than simply someone responding to God's call.

One of the major themes that came out from my research is the eligibility of senior leaders to apply for Headship. 50% (5/10) of the respondents, who are all currently members of the SLT of a Catholic primary school, indicated that they were not Catholic. They therefore would not be considered eligible since the CES expects that school leaders in Catholic schools

…should not only be practising Catholics but they should also be conversant with the Catholic principles of education. (Fincham 2010:67)

Some may question whether those who are not practising Catholics should be on Senior Leadership Teams, particularly in such large proportions since this is traditionally the pool from which Head Teachers are grown. However, perhaps there is also difficulty in recruiting practising Catholics at this level too or perhaps those that appointed them were looking for the strongest candidate rather than following the CES directive.

For those who are practising Catholics and on the Senior Leadership Teams of Catholic schools, my research indicates that there is much concern over the responsibility of the role and the barriers to recruitment, but little was mentioned of the rewards and benefits of Headship. This may be because the questions asked didn't allow for this or because potential candidates are not as aware of the rewards as of the challenges. However, as the handbook for Head Teachers produced by Birmingham Diocese (2009) points out 'The role is always rewarding…is a vocation…a calling to do God's work.'

5.7 Summary

The analysis of the findings of my research have been explored alongside some of what has been written previously on the subject of leadership succession. This has allowed me to explore the objectives that I set out at the beginning of the project and to begin to draw conclusions based on my findings and the current literature available.

The analysis suggests that the potential Head Teachers in the sample did not feel that they were currently prepared or willing to take on the role of Head Teacher in a Catholic primary school. They felt they were able to articulate what was distinctive about Catholic education – an important feature of Catholic Head Teachers, but were concerned about having to be a personal witness to the faith. There was evidence of distinctively Christian leadership styles and the influence of leaders on their team but again the responsibility of Headship was often cited as being too overwhelming for most to consider the role for themselves.

The following chapter will set out the conclusions that I have drawn from my research alongside the limitations of my work and how my research reflects – or not – the current literature and research on leadership succession.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Following the analysis of my findings, I am now able to draw some conclusions based on the sample I explored. I shall also offer a number of recommendations for these schools as a result of the research and outline some of the limitations of my research in order to put the findings in to context and offer some suggestions for further work.

6.2 Summary of findings

In the previous chapters, I analysed and explored the findings of my research. The summary of these findings are as follows:

- The preparation and training currently available – The majority of those surveyed did not feel that they had had the opportunity for any specific preparation or training for Headship. The research suggests that although many of the potential Head Teachers had the CCRS qualification, they had not received any recent training to prepare for taking on the role of Head Teacher of a Catholic school such as the NPQH or postgraduate studies. On the whole they felt that the personal qualities of those wishing to pursue Headship was more important than any formal training. The vast majority were unaware of any training or preparation programmes available and did not feel that they would be likely to apply for the Headship of a Catholic school in the near future.

- The role of the Head Teacher of a Catholic school – The overwhelming response to questions about the role of the Head Teacher of a Catholic school was that they should be a witness to the faith. The research suggests that potential Head Teachers are aware of the need to be able to articulate the distinctiveness of Catholic education and all felt confident to do this. The study revealed the potential Head Teachers' understanding of the enormity of the role of Head Teacher in a Catholic school and most felt that this responsibility was overwhelming and perhaps a factor in the recruitment challenge.

- The leadership styles of Head Teachers – My findings indicate that the personal example set by leaders is crucial in influencing potential leaders. The majority of those involved in the study believed that their own Head Teachers or previous Head Teachers had had an impact on their current leadership style. However, they felt that leadership styles could not necessarily be taught or adopted but had to come from within and be part of the personal qualities of the individual. Both servant leadership and transformational leadership were evidenced in the schools studied with respondents speaking of shared visions and serving individuals within a community.

- The recruitment of Head Teachers – This research reflected the studies which warn of a problem with recruiting Head Teachers to Catholic schools. The majority of those involved in this study indicated that they would not be applying for Headship in the next five years. The reasons ranged from not being eligible, to the excessive workload involved in leading a Catholic primary school.

- The potential barriers and challenges in recruiting Head Teachers - One of the major problems illustrated in this research is the shortage of Catholics on the Senior Leadership Teams of the schools involved – 50% of those surveyed were not Catholics and therefore not eligible to apply. This leaves a shortage of candidates in what could be considered to be the pool of potential Head Teachers. Of those who were eligible, the majority cited a reluctance to take on the excessive workload and the responsibilities that come with being the Head Teacher of a Catholic school. In particular there was a concern that being a witness to the faith would bring additional pressures and responsibilities that most did not feel able to accept.

6.3 Limitations

As with all research, there are things that I would do differently if I were to repeat this project and there are obvious limitations to the research itself and the conclusions that I am able to draw from it.

One of the major limitations of this study is the size of the sample used and in particular the number of surveys returned and interviews conducted. I feel that, although it was large enough for this small scale project, the results would have been more reliable and of greater use if I had been able to collect data from a larger proportion of the population.

Furthermore, I feel that the reliability of the results are limited by the number of practising Catholics that I was able to survey and interview. At the outset I envisaged that the majority of my respondents would be Catholics and therefore eligible for the Headship of a Catholic primary school, however in reality only 50% described themselves as Catholic. This made some of the questions irrelevant to them and resulted in them not actually being the potential candidates for Headship as I had intended when I selected this group.

Being a small scale project, I selected a cluster of four schools for my research. This in itself limits the findings since it could be that this group is not truly representative of the Catholic primary schools as a whole. They may also have had similar experiences and opportunities and therefore have made responses that are not representative of all senior leaders. A larger scale project, with participants from a wider area, would verify results across different regions, different sized schools and different dioceses.

In retrospect, I feel that I should have explored the reasons that these respondents were choosing not to apply for Headship a little further in order to examine whether this was due to the current training and preparation procedures, the pressures of the role or something else. I could have explored this further in the interviews and perhaps made some links with the other areas I had addressed.

Following this project, I would be interested to follow up with some further research on leadership succession, perhaps exploring programmes in other dioceses and finding out from current Head Teachers what they feel would be most beneficial for preparing potential candidates for the role. It has been very interesting examining how well future Heads feel they are prepared for the role, although concerning that many of those I

surveyed do not feel prepared and are not willing to apply for Headship. I would therefore be interested in exploring this further and in greater depth to try and discover how Headship can be made a more attractive career choice. I would hope that future research on leadership succession could ensure that the crisis in recruitment of Head Teachers for Catholic schools could be averted.

6.4 Recommendations

Since my research was on a small scale and based on the responses from members of the Senior Leadership Teams from four schools, my recommendations are for these schools and those associated with them. I have examined the evidence from my research as well as current literature on leadership succession and would like to offer the following recommendations:

- A continuous formation programme is made available to all staff in the schools so that they are able to regularly update their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith as well as opportunities to continue on their own faith journey. This may be through in-school training or more formal diocesan programmes.

- Head Teachers and governors of these Catholic schools should seriously consider the eligibility of those they wish to appoint to Senior Leadership Teams to ensure that they are developing potential Head Teachers for Catholic schools and protecting the distinctiveness of Catholic schools. They need to ensure that they are planning for the future of Catholic education as well as ensuring that the best staff are appointed to their school teams.

- Middle and senior leaders should be made aware of training and preparation programmes for potential Head Teachers. There should be regular opportunities for both formal and informal career development alongside training opportunities specifically for those leading Catholic schools. These could be advertised in schools with staff encouraged to sign up. Staff could also be sponsored to pursue courses such as the MA in Catholic School Leadership and given every encouragement to develop academically, personally and skilfully as Catholic leaders.

- The merits, rewards and benefits of leading a Catholic school as Head Teacher should be more clearly illustrated to staff. Whether this is through better advertising, opportunities to formally visit inspirationally led Catholic schools, shadowing, speaking with Head Teachers, incentives or through the training and preparation programmes, I feel that middle and senior leaders need to be actively sought out and encouraged to consider Headship as a career choice.

These recommendations come directly from the research that I carried out and seem to be the areas that need addressing according to my analysis of the data. At the heart of educational research is the desire to develop and improve existing practice and my findings suggest that these steps would support and develop those who may one day wish to apply for the Headship of a Catholic school.

6.5 Summary

In summary, the findings of this research suggest that the vast majority of potential Head Teachers in this sample felt that they were not prepared or willing to become Head Teachers of Catholic primary schools in the near future. They were largely unaware of what preparation is available although felt that opportunities such as shadowing existing Head Teachers and opportunities to develop their skills informally would be most beneficial to those wishing to pursue Headship. One of the main recommendations is to actively seek out potential Head Teachers and then develop programmes for their continued formation so that can develop the skills and information they require to effectively lead a Catholic school. The programmes should include both formal and informal training and crucially be made attractive, available and accessible to all.

Another issue that arises from the research is the eligibility of SLT members to become Head Teachers of Catholic schools. In the sample, only 50% were Catholics and therefore able to apply for the role. If this were truly representative of all Catholic primary schools, it would suggest that there will be a problem in recruiting Head Teachers to Catholic schools since up to half of those with the necessary skills and experience may not be eligible to become Head Teachers of Catholic schools.

Governors and Head Teachers may wish to examine the criteria for appointments to senior leadership positions.

Research is crucial to the continuing development and progress of Catholic schools and I hope that my small contribution is able to support the leadership of the schools involved in the study and offer some recommendations for the future based on evidence from current practice. Teaching – and leading a Catholic school - is a vocation and those undertaking the role need to be fully prepared both academically and spiritually to ensure the future of Catholic education.

> But let teachers recognise that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the modern world. (Gravissimum Educationis, 1965: n.8)

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

I am currently undertaking a Master's Degree in Catholic School Leadership at St. Mary's University, Twickenham. My dissertation involves a small scale research project. I am exploring leadership succession and in particular the extent to which senior leaders in Catholic schools are trained, prepared and willing to take on headship roles.

I would be very grateful if you could complete my questionnaire by Friday 5th June 2015 and return in the attached envelope. All information provided will be treated with strict confidence and all data collected will be anonymous.

Regards

Laura Diamond

1. **What is your current role within the school?**

2. **Please circle any of the following qualifications that you hold:**

   NPQH   MA in Theology   MA in Catholic School Leadership   CCRS   BA in Theology

3. **Did you attend a Catholic school yourself? (Yes/No)**

4. **As a professional, how long have you been involved in Catholic education?**

5. How would you describe yourself?

A practising Catholic

A non-practising Catholic

A Christian from another tradition

A member of another faith

None of the above

6. Do you think that there is a possibility that you will one day apply for the headship of a Catholic primary school? (Yes/No)

Is this in your career plan for the next five years? (Yes/No)

6a. In the last two years have you had any CPD that you feel would benefit those who wish to pursue the role of Head Teacher in a Catholic primary school? (Yes/No)

If yes, please give details eg course title, provider, and brief details of content

The following questions require you to rank your response to each statement according to the scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. Please circle.

		Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Don't Know 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
7.	I am aware of what preparation and training is available to aspiring Head Teachers of Catholic primary schools.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have been actively encouraged by my current/previous Head Teachers to develop my	1	2	3	4	5

	leadership skills for Catholic education.		75			
9.	It is more important for the Head Teachers of Catholic schools to have the necessary personal qualities to be effective leaders than for them to have embarked on specific NPQH or MA training courses.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The role models of Catholic school leadership that I have experienced have influenced my own leadership style.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I feel confident in being able to articulate what is distinctive about Catholic education.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school needs to be a personal witness to the Catholic faith.	1	2	3	4	5

13. What do you consider are the three most important qualities of an effective Head Teacher of a Catholic primary school?

1	
2	
3	

14. Why do you think it is that Catholic primary schools sometimes find it hard to recruit Head Teachers?

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15. Are there any particular aspects of the Headship of a Catholic Primary School which you feel are overlooked in the current preparation and training programmes?

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16. What further training do you feel would benefit you if you wished to become the Head Teacher of a Catholic School?

Thank-you for your time.

To explore some of these ideas further, I would like to follow-up a sample of these questionnaires with a short interview. They would take place, at your convenience 8th -19th June.

Would you be prepared to participate in a follow-up interview? Yes/No.

If yes, please add your name and e-mail address.

Name: **e-mail:**

Appendix 2

Transcript of Interview 1

LD: *Could you please maybe talk me through how you came to choose to be working and leading in a Catholic primary school?*

Interviewee 1: Well, umm…I started my career in a Catholic school, unintentionally. That was via the Liverpool pool system that existed then…and I spent two years there. And…umm…I think that that influenced my view of Catholic schools and I very much liked the ethos of the, the school. And then I did move on to non-Catholic schools…but umm…certainly felt that they had something missing that other schools couldn't…there was just something that made other schools just not feel the same. So, when I moved to this area, I…I can't say I actively sought a Catholic school, but when I saw that there was a job opportunity, the Catholic bit did interest me. Umm…and then I kind of worked my way through the ranks really. Umm…and umm…by default almost, found myself here. It hasn't been something I actively sought but just by almost umm…well…I suppose by being encouraged and in the right place as the right jobs came along. Well…umm and then I found myself here.

LD: *Were there any things along the way that influenced that decision to take a leadership role? People? Opportunities?*

Interviewee 1: Yes, I think umm…Yes obviously…I think umm…obviously working with the people I've worked with have influenced me and made me want to stay and made me … you look at people you've worked alongside or worked for and you sort of see things in them that you obviously aspire to but also you see things that perhaps you would do slightly differently and you style would be different.. Umm…but I think umm…in the Catholic sense I think just seeing people living out what they are…teaching the children but actually seeing them live it out and being part of a community that lives it out has been quite influential.

LD: *Lovely, thank-you. Now I'd like you to think about the role of a Head Teacher in a Catholic primary school – What do you consider to be some of their key roles and responsibilities.*

Interviewee 1: Ok, well…well I do think, which is probably why Headship wouldn't be for me, umm…that actually you have to live out, you have to…they have to be the most…umm…you know, they have to be a witness to the faith and they have to live, breathe and be a positive role model in that. I think that's vital cos there's no point them being there if they're not that so I think that that's the most important. And I also think then, that living it out in the way that they lead and manage…and develop the school.

LD: *And so, potential heads of Catholic schools – how might they be helped to prepare for these roles and responsibilities that you spoke about. Umm…Do you think that there is any particular training…or experiences or opportunities that might be useful to them?*

Interviewee 1: Well, I think…my personal opinion is that the diocese, well our local diocese, but Im sure every diocese across England, if they don't do something pretty quickly about encouraging and

developing and giving opportunities for development of senior leaders, then actually we're not going to have any.umm…but unfortunately I don't think that they are very good at it. And in some areas it might not be an issue, but certainly from every area I hear about, it's a huge issue.

LD: *And what kind of thing do you think they could…should be doing or umm…providing?*

Interviewee 1: Well, I think that the dioceses should be actively seeking middle, middle and senior leaders. They should be actually and actively umm…giving them the opportunities to work alongside more senior staff in different schools.

LD: *Do you mean some sort of shadowing opportunity?*

Interviewee 1: Yes. Umm… the experience of seeing someone else do the job…umm would be invaluable umm..if you were thinking of applying for Headship. I also think that they should be moving the staff around from school to school depending on what the need is. Umm and then basically giving them incentives to lead Catholic schools. You know, if it's as the Bishop says. He wants the top three people in a school to be in full communion with the Catholic Church, well, they'll going to have to try to actively encourage people to apply for the jobs.

LD: *Are you talking about monetary incentives?*

Interviewee 1: Well.. yes. Don't get me wrong, this job is a vocation and umm nobody would choose to be a Head unless they felt that calling but…umm…it is a massive job and an important one. Umm the Bishops need to show the the umm…the…value of the role, the hours it takes and well, the pressure on a person.

LD: *Do you think then, that there is a problem recruiting Heads to Catholic primary schools?*

Interviewee 1: Well, yes. I would say from what I know about it absolutely. So it may be that they do have to look at how…a different sort of leadership of Catholic schools and you know, I'm not, not. I don't think that it… what the Bishops say should be changed because I think that it's quite right that the, the, you know…the people leading Catholic schools should be Catholic but..they are going to have to look at different ways of leadership across schools I think…or amalgamating schools or whatever. I know, academies but…the model that the diocese has put forward for academies is going to solve leadership issues.

LD: *Why is it, do you think, that people aren't coming forward to apply for Headship roles in Catholic primary schools? Or even that they might want to, but might feel reluctant or hesitant? What could be the things that are putting them off?*

Interviewee 1: umm…Well, I think obviously living out the faith. You know, that is an extra commitment. You know, to be part of the parish, part of the school. You know, part of the parish community, being a figure head…that is extra, that's on top and is…well, that might put them off. Certainly support from the diocese, or sometimes lack of support from the diocese is something that could put you off if you can work for a local authority that's very supportive and offers lots of incentives. In a sense why would you want to take on the extra challenge and pressure? Umm… I think there is something about the…certainly here, that those families that heads would have actively wanted to reach out to and engage, we've lost that

sense of being…you know…being their link to the Church. Umm…something that might have appealed to potential heads and I think that that might…whereas many years ago you felt like you were doing a service…that reaching out, evangelisation, but now I think, because of the, certainly in our school, the dynamics of the community and the application of the admissions policy, children coming in…there isn't that need to…and that might well put people off.

LD: *Thank you. Umm now thinking about current preparation opportunities for potential Head Teachers. Umm.. from you own experiences and maybe what you know of others, what area of Headship might potential applicants feel most prepared for? I'm thinking about middle and senior leaders…what areas might they have been best prepared for as a result of current preparation programmes?*

Interviewee 1: Well to be honest, there's nothing…I've been in my SLT post for quite a long time and I have had…nobody has given me any opportunities to explore going further…of any…of any kind. Yes, I know I could be told that I could have gone and looked…but I don't think that there is anything. I'm not aware of anything. Certainly when you go to SLT cluster or diocesan meetings there is nothing. There is a lot of talk always about senior leaders getting together and building relationships and sharing expertise but nothing has ever materialised. Umm… I suppose the only real opportunities are umm…within your own school and umm watching and learning from those around you…but that will limit you experiences to…to what you already know. Umm… I suppose the biggest challenge is…like being the Head Teacher of any school, that has got challenges but I also think it goes back to that umm…you know..am I prepared to not only lead the school, but to be that, that representative in the parish as well…because you have to kind of put yourself out there as well and umm be very high profile I think..and you know…that's a, a big thing and a big ask of anyone.

LD: *Thank you. Before we finish I just wondered if you had anything else you would like to add about leadership succession in Catholic primary schools or the current system for preparing people for Headship or suggestions for future preparation programmes?*

Interviewee 1: I think, the only thing I would say is it's not Head Teachers not trying to encourage their senior leaders to move on because most Head teachers I know would encourage their staff to take up opportunities and develop themselves. I just think that there is a really big gap of actually who actually should be looking to develop them and umm there just isn't enough preparation and encouragement and expectation for staff to look to leadership. I mean, if you are a deputy of a school, you should be sought out and expected to step up or expected to go and support other schools. And I think if we were given the chance to, it would give us more confidence at actually thinking, well I could do it, but often nobody suggests it and our chance passes. Also I suppose…umm, heads want to keep their good staff…they don't want to send them off and, and maybe lose them.

LD: *Well…umm…that wraps up our interview and so umm thank you so much for sparing me the time to be interviewed. I have really enjoyed listening to your responses and umm…I can assure you that they will be very useful to me. I am happy to share a copy of the transcript when I have typed it and you can of course read a copy of the final dissertation when it is complete. As I said at the beginning of the interview, I will treat your responses in the strictest confidence and will ensure that you cannot be identified though my work. Thank you once again, I really appreciate your time and contributions.*