Servant Leadership in a Catholic school: A Study in the Western Australian Context

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Over the past two decades faith-based schools have expanded in number, grown in diversity, and become an important part of education systems worldwide. As a result, a rich research agenda in the field has emerged. One aspect of this agenda relates to school leadership. What is particularly neglected is research on the impact of leadership theory on school leaders in faith-based schools. While large scale surveys are to be welcomed in this regard, these should be complemented by a large number of case studies. This paper, which arose from a study on a Catholic school in Western Australia, illustrates one direction which such case study work could take. It portrays how leadership theory has found its way into the cognitive frameworks used by leaders in the school to guide their work and the nature of the particular leadership theory they have assimilated within these frameworks. In particular, it indicates how one model of school leadership, namely, that of 'servant leadership', has been embraced as an overarching guide within the cognitive frameworks used by the school's leaders to guide their work and that it is an approach that is seen as being appropriate for a Catholic school.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, there has been a marked shift in various national governments' support for faith-based schools (Campbell Proctor and Sherington 2009; Johnson 2005). Such schools have expanded in number, grown in diversity, and become an important part of education systems worldwide (Grace 2003; Lawton and Cairns 2005; Shah 2006; Symes and Gulson 2005). This is in spite of an accompanying complex, and at times, vocal, public debate

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which has focused on a number of issues, including whether or not faith-based schools should receive national government support, the type of education they should provide, and the possibility that they promote divisiveness in society (Grace 2003; Jackson 2003; Johnson 2005; Short 2002).

As a result of the increase in faith-based schools and the increased attention they receive a rich research agenda has emerged (Lawton and Cairns 2005; Striepe and Clarke 2009). One aspect of this agenda relates to school leadership (Lawton and Cairns 2005). About twenty years ago, in a field previously dominated by studies of educational organization, administration and management, leadership studies in education began to move centre stage (Grace 1993). Since then, a rich body of knowledge has grown which is extremely valuable by way of developing our understanding of school leadership (Bottery 2006; MacBeath and Dempster 2009). It includes the results of research undertaken in a variety of school settings, including small, remote schools (Clarke and Wildy 2004), multi-ethnic schools (Walker 2004), faith schools (Sullivan 2006), and schools "that encounter a multiplicity of economic, emotional and social challenges" (Harris and Thomson 2006 p. 1).

Such work needs to be complemented by studies on the impact of leadership theory on school leaders, a relatively under-researched field to date. Such projects should be undertaken across a wide range of schools and in a range of countries. Furthermore, while large scale surveys are to be welcomed, these should be complemented by numerous case studies aimed at portraying the intricacies of the various situations in this regard.

The following paper is offered by way of illustrating one direction in which such case study work could take within the context of faith-based schools. It reports the findings of one case study from a project on three different faith-based schools located in the state of Western Australia. The focus is on a Catholic school. The specific case portrays how leadership theory has found its way into the cognitive frameworks used by leaders in this Catholic school to guide their work and the nature of the particular leadership theory they have assimilated within these frameworks. In particular, it indicates one

model of school leadership, namely, that of 'servant leadership', has been embraced as an overarching guide within the cognitive frameworks used by the school's leaders to guide their work and as an approach that is seen as being appropriate for a Catholic school.

The paper is in three parts. First, the broad context in relation to faith-based schools, particularly in Australia, is briefly outlined. Secondly, a general overview on research on leadership in faith-based schools is presented. Thirdly, the results of the particular case study are then presented.

The Broad Context in Relation to Faith-Based Schools in Australia

Faith-based schools were amongst the first schools to appear in Australia, having been established by religious missionaries (Striepe and Clarke 2009). Over the past 150 years, and particularly in those years following World War II, these schools, as part of the nation's non-government school sector, have increased significantly both in overall numbers and in type. In particular, there has been a growth in schools with Catholic, Islamic, and Greek Orthodox affiliation (Campbell Proctor and Sherington 2009; Symes and Gulson 2008).

In 1970, non-government schools accounted for 22 % of the total number of schools in Australia. By August 1998 this had grown to 29 % (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1971 2009) and currently 35 % of all full-time students in the nation are in non-government schools (ABS 2012; ISCA 2012). This is noteworthy for present considerations, given that the majority of non-government schools are faith-affiliated (Independent Schools Council of Australia 2012). Thus, as Striepe and Clarke (2009 p. 108) argue, faith-based schools play a "crucial role" in Australia's education system.

In regard to funding, financial government support for faith-based schools in Australia has increased dramatically over the last forty years (Furtado 2009; Striepe and Clarke 2009). This has been enabled, in part, by Australia's Constitution, which does not have a specific article separating Church and State (Striepe and Clarke 2009). In return for providing financial support, the State requires that non-government schools, including those that are faith-based,

operate under education requirements, including curriculum requirements, set by federal and state/territory government authorities (ISCA 2012).

The national picture portrayed so far is mirrored within the specific context of the State of Western Australia. Here, in 1970, there were 196 non-government schools (ABS 1971). By 1998 this figure had increased to 264 (ABS 2009). Since that time, the faith-based sector has flourished, and by 2012 it stood at 301 (ABS 2009 2012). As a result, non-government schools are now responsible for educating approximately a third of Western Australia's students and account for nearly a third of all Western Australia's schools (ABS 2009 2012). The vast majority of them have a religious affiliation, ranging, from Anglican and Catholic, to Jewish, Islamic, Baptist, and Greek Orthodox schools (Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia 2012). Currently, there are 159 Catholic schools in Western Australia out of a total school population of 770 across the state (ABS 2012).

The study reported in this paper, as already indicated, relates to one Catholic school within Western Australia. Throughout all of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, Catholic schools across the nation were run by members of religious orders - priests, religious brothers, and nuns - who also constituted the vast majority of the teaching force. From about the middle of the 1960s, the demise of these personnel meant that they had to be replaced by lay people. However, it is not just personnel who changed; the traditional cognitive frameworks used by Catholic school leaders to guide their work also came under new influences. During the heyday of the religious orders the view of the Catholic school was one of being primarily the inculcator of divinely revealed moral virtues, "fortifying the will through the exclusion of negative influences and strengthening motives for good conduct through positive training and instruction". Leadership with such ends in mind was along authoritarian lines. Following the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), Catholic schools were encouraged to take a less dogmatic approach in their mission statements and embrace less restrictive leadership approaches.

A General Overview of Research on Leadership in Faith-Based Schools

The contexts of faith-based schools are complex as a result of their "dual identity" (Sullivan 2006 p. 937) and "dual missions" (Grace 2009 p. 490). Australia in general, and Western Australia in particular, including in relation to Catholic schooling, are no exceptions to this general trend. Here, as elsewhere, the situation results from, on the one hand, a competitive market and accountability forces created by government policies and, on the other hand, from reforms and influences within the schools' religious community and local governing agencies which oversee them. As Grace (2009) has aptly stated, faith-based schools serve both "God and Caesar" (p. 490).

The complex nature of faith-based schools is also derived from their "distinctive non-common educational aims" and "restricted non-common educational environments" (Halstead and McLaughlin 2005 p. 63). The aims of faith-based schools are made distinct because of the ways in which they are related to, and influenced by, the purposes, characteristics, and ethos of a school's particular faith and its religious traditions (McGettrick 2005; Sacks 2004). Equally, the environments are made distinct because of the processes they use both to select students to benefit from the institution's faith and curriculum (Halstead and McLaughlin 2005; McGettrick 2005) and to hire staff who support that faith and curriculum (McGettrick 2005). Notwithstanding such matters, however, faith-based schools tend to be on the periphery of attempts to understand critical issues within the field of education (Grace 2003; Lawson and Cairns 2005) and are rarely seen as a focus of educational leadership research (Grace 2003 2009). As a result it has been argued that research on these organisations is "remarkably underdeveloped" (Grace 2003 p. 150) and constitutes "uncharted" territory (Lawton and Cairns 2005 p. 245).

One of the main causes of the neglect is that the various faith communities have not promoted research into faith-based schools (Grace 2003 2009). There is also a traditional perception that research into faith-based schools is an "exotic" undertaking, which

holds little interest for those involved in discussions and research of education (Grace 2003 p. 150). Gallagher (1997) has described this as a marginalisation by the media and academics which have allowed secular culture to dominate discussion.

The limited amount of empirical research that does focus on faith-based schools has tended to concentrate on Catholic schools (Arthur 2005; Grace 2002 2003). The emphasis has been on "religious, moral and social formation and attitudes" and "school effectiveness and academic outcomes" (Grace 2003 pp. 152-155). By contrast, research on other types of faith-based schools is particularly sparse and has tended to consist of policy studies or descriptive analyses, rather than empirically based work. Notable exceptions are the work of Hewer (2001), who has described the social context of Muslim schools in England, and that of Merry and Driessen (2005), who have compared policies relating to education funding, parental choice, and school accreditation of Muslim schools in the United States, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Also, Warnet and Klein (1997) have investigated how a religious-based education affected Jewish schoolteachers' attitudes toward school management and Walford (2001) studied the process of policy borrowing and how it has affected the establishment and funding of English Christian schools.

To note that the body of work on faith-based schooling has been small is not to ignore the existence of some research on educational leadership in the field. One example is the report by the National College of School Leadership (2005) (later renamed the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Service) which was based on a series of seminars conducted with faith-based school leaders. This report identified three key themes for future research, including: "leadership of faith schools, leadership and spirituality, and the development of leadership in faith schools" (2005 n. p.). In addition, Shah (2006) has conceptualized the idea of educational leadership through an Islamic perspective. Her work is significant as it highlights the ways in which Islamic religious texts and teachings can influence how educational leadership is understood and practised within Islamic schools. Similar work was undertaken by Lawson's (2005) on Islamic school leaders and by Grace (2002) on English Catholic school principals.

The study presented in the next section of this paper arose out of recognition that hardly any research has been conducted to date on faith-based school leaders' understandings and practices of educational leadership and the contextual factors which can impact on such perspectives. As has already been pointed out, it was part of a larger project in which three different faith-based schools were studied.

The Study

The study was undertaken at a school which has been given the title of Caring College to protect its identity. It was founded by an order of nuns approximately 40 years ago. Its history is one of continuous expansion, developing from a small single sex school which educated students in years eight to ten, to a large co-educational K-12 school that now consists of three sub-schools and a pre-primary program. The College is located in a neighbourhood populated by families with a variety of cultural backgrounds who, in general, are economically disadvantaged.

The values and beliefs of the Catholic Church and its connection with the tradition of the nuns who established it, drives the mission and aims of the school. They also have a major influence on its numerous community service programs, the names of the College's buildings, and the production of a weekly newsletter. It is managed a school board, led by a management team, and overseen by the local Catholic Education Office under the authority of the State's Catholic Education Commission. The role of the latter is to manage the school on behalf of the Catholic community, to generate policy for all Catholic schools and to assist the Bishops in providing direction in education within their diocese (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia 2008 p. 4). The curriculum that is taught is that mandated in eight learning areas by the Western Australia Ministry of Education for all schools in the State, along with Religious Education as prescribed by the Catholic Education Office (Religious Education Committee of National Catholic Education Commission 2008). All teachers in the school are required to "preserve the Catholic ethos of the College" and to "the promotion of the religious instruction and formation of pupils in accordance with the directives

and requirements of the Catholic Education Commission and the Bishop of the Diocese" (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia 2006 p. 24). The school maintains the Catholic ethos by restricting the number of non-Catholic students in attendance (School Document C 2008 para. 2) and by requiring that all students who attend "support the philosophy of the College" (School Document C 2008 para. 2).

The central research question that guided the study, as with the studies on the other two schools in the larger project, was as follows: How do the members of management teams in a faith-based school understand and practise educational leadership? A case study design (Cohen Manion and Morrison 2007; Yin 1994) was adopted to facilitate the investigation. The decision to study the particular Catholic school chosen was influenced by its potential to facilitate "thick description" (Geertz 1973). It was identified through purposeful sampling (Patton 2002). Its statement of aims indicates clearly that it was strongly guided by its affiliation with the Catholic faith. Furthermore, participants for this study comprised all members of the school's management team. This included the Principal, the Dean of Curriculum, the three Leaders of the Sub-schools along with the Bursar and the Director of Mission. All participants indicated that they were committed practising Catholics.

The adoption of a qualitative case-study approach determined that qualitative data collection methods would be used. This included the use of semi-structured interviews where participants were asked questions in regards to four inquiry areas. These four areas were as follows:

- understandings of educational leadership;
- practices of educational leadership;
- connections between understandings and practices of educational leadership; and
- contextual factors influencing understandings and practices of educational leadership.

Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory approach was adopted for data analysis. Open coding was used to break down the data into named concepts and then grouped to form named categories by asking questions and making comparisons between the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 63). Axial coding was then used to further develop the categories by making new connections between the categories and by identifying their specifying features (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The key insights that were generated from this process are now outlined.

Outcomes of the Study

Caring College's affiliation with the Catholic faith is a pervasive influence on the leadership perspectives of the school leaders. Furthermore, they link the College's faith affiliation to their knowledge of educational leadership theory and the College's Catholic mission. In doing so, they regularly comment that their understanding and practice of leadership are founded on a "servant leadership model" which, as they see it, is intimately connected to their Catholic faith, since both, as one participant put it, hold that one is "called to serve others and make society better for all".

The particular notion of servant leadership articulated by the participants corresponds closely to that of Greenleaf (1991), who sees it as being concerned with helping others to grow as people, allowing them to become self-managing, and enabling their autonomy. As a result, servant leaders are characterized as those with a "natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first" (Greenleaf 1991 p. 13). This focus on the needs of others, in his view, should be given the "highest priority" and servant leaders should strive to ensure that all stakeholders have "adequate power" in order to fulfil their role (Greenleaf 1991 pp. 13 170). In order to do this, Greenleaf holds, leaders need to be able to listen, understand, accept, and be empathetic in order to develop a grounded understanding of issues which are affecting staff and the schools enabling leaders to gain "intuitive insight" (1991 p. 42).

The participants in the study being reported here relate this notion of servant leadership to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and to their understandings of him as a "teacher", a "doer", and a "servant who

was called to lead". This identifying of Jesus Christ as a guide in leadership was exemplified by one participant as follows: "I look at the person of Jesus in the Gospels and I see someone who came to serve and he often said I have come not to be served but to serve". The adoption of such a perspective by all members of the leadership team in the school was attributed by them not only to the expectation which exits of them by virtue of the official mission of the school, but also to, as one of them put it , "my own strong faith which I got from my parents and which influences my every-day thoughts and actions with staff and students." It is reasonable to assume, of course, that this situation has not come about accidentally. Rather as previously described, the school's authorities ensure it employs personnel with such a mindset through the recruitment practices they adopt.

The use of 'servant leadership' as a central cognitive framework used by the leaders in the school to accommodate their Catholic faith and provide them with directions for practice can be viewed as consisting of three inter-related lenses.These can be entitled 'being called to serve', 'leading as a community', and 'building the capacity to serve'. Each of these major categories will now be addressed in turn by examining each of the categories' corresponding properties.

Being called to serve

The first lens, 'being called to serve', relates to the leaders consistent use of the concept 'serve' to describe their understandings of leadership. Common refrains are: "I think leaders are called to serve first and foremost" and "we are called to serve others before ourselves". This reflects an altruistic understanding of educational leadership, one that involves placing the needs of others - students, staff, the school community, and the system of which the school is a part - before individual needs. As one participant summed it up: "what we do impacts on others … you are a part of a system … it's not just about us going out on our way". Three properties were identified in this regard: 'serving students', 'serving staff'', and 'serving the community'.

Serving students. The leaders hold that educational leadership involves providing for students' various needs, and not only in

regard to their academic achievement, but in regard to personal development. As one participant put it: "leadership is to recognize that is it not all about the grades kids get … the emotional education of kids, the social education is important to me" . On this, another stated: "student achievement is more than just academic, I would see it as building up their leadership, instilling confidence their resilience, their team skills, their interpersonal relationships".

This, however, is not to say that they discount the academic. The general view is that 'serving students' involves "supporting and helping students' learning" by ensuring that: "everything revolves around enabling them to achieve their personal best". The overall view is that it is important to help "students to find out who they are provide them with the skills to "gain access to the things that will lead them to a healthy, fulfilled, and satisfied life"

Coupled with this is the view that serving students means developing their communication and interpersonal skills, their self-esteem, and their personal faith. One participant stated:

> My leadership is such that I want to develop children who are able to communicate, are in tune with their own feelings, have good relationships with others, have a sense of fulfilment, have a sense that there is a God out there looking out for them, taking care of them, and is there with them on a journey.

In similar vein, the leaders view recognise the importance of 'pastoral care' to support students' academic, personal, and spiritual needs. Again, it is viewed in terms of 'serving students' in a manner related to the school's Catholic tradition, by, as one put it, "incorporating the traditions of the founding Sisters".

Serving staff. The leaders also state that their 'call to serve' involves being 'called to serve staff'. In particular, they argue, they need to regularly consider how they can enhance the intellectual and professional capacity of the staff and improve their working conditions. As one participant commented:

> I always felt that my role as a teacher was to serve the students I taught … now the target of the group of people I am serving is more the staff than the students but it is the same orientation. So if I can do a timetable that will assist the teachers to do their

particular teaching job better then I think I have made a contribution.

Also, as another participant put it, it involves valuing and appreciating staff: "we have to affirm staff … tell them they are doing a good job … say we value you as a staff member". Amongst the ways suggested by the participants that this can find practical expression is through making staff meetings more collaborative and enabling the staff to set agendas for these meetings. Such an approach, as one offered, can help staff "feel valued" and thus incorporate "an element of service that is part of the whole Catholic tradition".

Finally, the leaders consider that 'serving staff' involves supporting them with their personal and professional issues. At the very least, it should "give staff members an opportunity to talk". This, one leader held, places a responsibility on the leadership team to "set up structures so that there are people available to whom staff can go and talk to", whether it is about "personal matters, about information technology, or about curriculum" .

Serving the community. The leaders hold that they are also called to 'serve the community' In this they are referring to the Caring College's parents, its neighbourhood, and society at large. In relation to students and the community, they hold that "we are preparing students to become citizens of the world" and by "serving others, hopefully, we are making society a better place for all". They also hold that it is important they provide parents with a broad range of experiences, including parent nights, multi-cultural festivals and musical activities, to help them to engage with both the school's staff and the students. They also draw on the expertise of parents and business people in providing advice on leading the school.

A commitment to 'serving the community', it is held, also requires that the school's leaders be involved in serving disadvantaged groups, including Aboriginal and children with special needs. Again, this notion of 'serving' was directly related to the principles of the Catholic position on which the school is established. One participant summed up this association succinctly: "Catholic schools are called

to social justice. So that means getting up there and making it better for the marginalized".

In similar vein, it is held, serving disadvantaged groups requires of the school's leaders that they be involved in supporting community charities and services. Again, this is related back to the stated belief that leadership involves giving back to the community. Examples offered of putting this belief into practice are that of a social project at the College in which the leadership team is involved, and the team's encouragement of, and support for, staff members who contribute their own time to working with Red Cross Soup Patrols.

Leading as a community

The second lens within the central cognitive framework of 'servant leadership' used by the leaders in the school to accommodate their Catholic faith and provide them with directions for practice is that of 'leading as a community'. Again, this, as exemplified by the following comment by one member of the leadership team, is intimately bound with the Catholic mission of the school:

The religious aspect of the school is about the sense of community and the kinds of justice that are very important in dealing on a day-to-day basis with students and teachers. The Gospel's values and the religious aspect of the school to me enhance the leadership style because there is nothing in the Gospel to me that is autocratic.

An outcome of this perspective is that there is frequent use of the term 'community' by the school's leadership team to describe itself, the staff, and the College as a whole. Also, the word 'we' is constantly used by them when describing how leadership is understood and practised within the school. Three properties were identified in this regard: 'establishing and maintaining relationships', 'establishing teamwork' and 'establishing a common vision'.

Establishing and maintaining relationships. Relationships, as indicated by the following comments, represent a crucial part of the leadership team members' understanding of leadership: "schools are based on relationships"; "relationships are at the foundation of everything else that happens"; "relationships are crucial, they are crucial in the classroom, they are crucial in the staff room". This

perspective guides members of the leadership team in adopting certain practices aimed at establishing and maintaining positive relationships between themselves and the school's students and staff. On this, for example, one participant stated:

> Every day, a few times a day, I walk around the school, just making sure that things are going smoothly in class … I also talk with the students. We have a very friendly college community and the students do love to talk … they want to talk to you and share their concerns. It all about building up rapport.

For another member of the team, having an 'establishing and maintaining relationships' perspective prompts him to regularly go to the staff room to "just talk to people" and "get to "know them and their families" out of a "pastoral view" which he defined as "your interpersonal relationships and your ability to understand the way others think so that you have some comprehension and some empathy for their position".

The benefits of adopting an 'establishing and maintaining relationships' perspective is seen as extending in various directions. It includes a view that it benefits the academic success of students. One member of the leadership team put it thus:

> If you haven't got that connection with students you have not got them in the palm of your hand, you have got no chance of getting them over the line. It's extremely difficult to get them to excel in their subject area if they do not feel connected to you and the school. Whereas, if you've got that connection it makes all the difference.

It also includes a view that it has a positive impact on staff performance. This was articulated as follows:

> If I ask someone to do something and there isn't a good sense of trust, they will do the job, probably at the exact level required, but no further. However, if you have established a relationship that is built on trust then staff members are more likely to excel at their given task.

Others hold that by adopting this perspective staff members get to feel that they can take risks without feeling that if they don't succeed they have not wasted their time. Coupled with this is a view that if

members of the leadership team have good relationships with each other and with the staff, then it is easy enough to address mistakes as those who have made them will be able to talk about them "before they become a big issue".

Establishing teamwork. A second property of the lens, 'leading as a community' is that of 'establishing teamwork'. On this, a participant stated: "The first thing I think about is team work, being part of a team". While another member of the team added that "teamwork is obviously essential in moving forward". This view is held partly for practical reasons, which are clearly recognised in the comment that "in a school of this size where you have approximately 1,500 students. You need a real team approach from everybody". The same member added that this means she has to "look after staff, get them on board, respect their decisions, listen to what they are saying. I have to come to a full understanding of what's happening before I act".

It is recognised that for such an approach to be successful every member of the leadership team need to support each other. As one of them put it:

> Being in a leadership team gives me a chance to work with my colleagues. So I am an educational leader, not the educational leader. I am one of the group. So if there is a meeting with the heads of learning areas, or a meeting with the junior school's leadership team, I attend with them and offer my views.

It is also recognised that offering particular support to the principal is vital. On this another member stated:

> I work with a team of five other deputies. Our job is to support the Principal in his role. That's why teamwork is about supporting him. At the end of the day, even though the principal is leading the school, we are all doing it.

Another commented in similar vein that it is crucial that all members of the leadership team support the principal, listening to him, and be honest.

Establishing a common vision. A third property of the lens, 'leading as a community', and one aligned closely with the other two, is that of 'establishing a common vision'. This perspective was summarised succinctly by one member of the leadership team:

> Involved with the cooperation and the teamwork, you need to have a whole school approach. There needs to be vision, planning, all that sort of thing. But it needs to be a whole school approach and it also needs to be shared with the college community.

Indeed, all seem to consider that this may be "the most important" aspect of leadership.

At the same time, there is some variation in understandings relating to what the source of the common vision should be and who should responsible for initially establishing it. Some members of the leadership team believe that it should be grounded in the views of the College's staff, emanating from "knowing the people", "understanding their vision" and "being prepared to learn from what they are telling you, including regarding the needs of the students". Others hold that while the views of all stakeholders should be considered, ultimately the nature of the vision should be driven by the principal. In addition, some take the very practical view that any notion of what the vision should be should be tempered by the realities that there should only be a striving of what is realistic to expect can be achieved within the parameters of the context of the school.

Building the capacity to serve as a community. The third lens within the central cognitive framework of 'servant leadership' used by the leaders in the school to accommodate their Catholic faith and provide them with directions for practice is that of 'building the capacity to serve as a community'. This represents a commonly-held belief amongst the leadership team that leadership capacity is built through empowering, affirming, inspiring, supporting, and entrusting others. It has three properties, namely, 'being present', 'modelling', and 'inspiring and empowering'.

Being present. The first property of the lens, 'building the capacity to serve as a community', is that of 'being present'. This is expressed by comments such as "it is important to take time to be

with people as often as possible", "I want people to know that I am here and I am listening and I am aware of issues that are happening", and "it is essential to be available to staff for discussion". As with 'establishing and maintaining relationships', this also prompts the member of the leadership team to recognise that "there is no point sitting in your office because no one knows you there so you actually need to move around" and, instead, "to be around, in the corridors, in the staff room".

The argument, again, is that moving around the school regularly allows one to "gain an understanding of the needs of the staff members and the students". For some, this leads to the occasional taking on of teaching responsibilities, relieving classroom teachers of non-classroon duties from time-to-time, and visiting classrooms. For others, it means visiting classrooms to give support to the teachers and show students that they are interested in their work.

Modelling. The second property of the lens, 'building the capacity to serve as a community' is that of 'modelling'. What it means to the members of the leadership team is voiced well by one of them:

> Educational leadership requires modelling by example. If I expect, or the leadership team expects, our staff to do something as mundane as a yard duty, then, I think the leaders of the team need to be out there doing yard duty. We expect teachers to be out there on time, we expect them to be alert, we expect them to be on the move, we expect them to challenge kids. The people exercising the leadership also need to be doing that.

There is an accompanying general understanding that leadership capacity can only be built when everyone takes responsible for day-to-day school responsibilities. Thus, the members argue that they should be involved every much as the classroom teachers in accompanying students to the bus, overseeing them during recess periods, and assisting in school fundraising.

Members of the team also argue that while they are leaders, they are also teachers and need model good classroom practices. The principal leads the way in this regard, as highlighted by one member:

> The model we have here is that I take one class, which means approximately five lessons per week. I think that is really

important. Our Principal has done that ever since he was appointed at the school. Thus, he knows what staff are talking about if something comes up at staff meeting.

Members argue that through engaging in this practice they come to a good understanding of the needs of the school, of the staff, and of the students. As one of them put it:

I think you've got to keep abreast of kids and classrooms. Otherwise what you think makes sense maybe two, five, or ten years ago stops making sense. I think you still need to be involved.

They also hold that it gives them greater credibility with their classroom-teacher colleagues, to be seen "as a teacher and not as somebody behind a computer or at a desk".

Inspiring and empowering. The third property of the lens, 'building the capacity to serve as a community' is that of 'inspiring and empowering'. The meaning of this property was best captured by the following team member's comment:

I think that school leaders need to be able to enthuse their staff and get people excited about being on the staff at this College, and wanting to be on the staff. I believe the model needs to be such that from the groundsman right through to senior management feel that they can make a contribution. I would like to think that the leadership model at this school is one where people are open to receive thoughts ideas, and suggestions from staff at all levels in the College.

Others spoke in terms of "guiding others along the way" by "seeing their key attributes, their key strengths, building confidence, and affirming them". They add that it also means not only giving people the freedom and ability and desire to want to do something innovative, but also to assure them "that if something goes wrong you are happy to be there and say that's ok, let's try and solve it".

Conclusion

From the outset, it was claimed in this paper that a rich body of knowledge has grown over the past twenty years which is extremely valuable by way of developing our understanding of school leadership. It was also claimed, however, that, notwithstanding the

concurrent rapid growth of faith-based schools internationally, very little investigation has taken place on school leadership in this education sector. What is particularly neglected is research on the impact of leadership theory on school leaders in faith-based schools. While large scale surveys are to be welcomed in this regard, these should be complemented by a large number of case studies.

This paper, which arose from a study on a Catholic school in Western Australia, illustrates one direction which such case study work could take. It portrays how leadership theory has found its way into the cognitive frameworks used by leaders in the school to guide their work and the nature of the particular leadership theory they have assimilated within these frameworks. In particular, it indicates how one model of school leadership, namely, that of 'servant leadership', has been embraced as an overarching guide within the cognitive frameworks used by the school's leaders to guide their work and that it is an approach that is seen as being appropriate for a Catholic school

The servant leadership position articulated by those investigated in the study is connected to a number of conceptions of leadership, but, most notably, to that of Greenleaf (1991) and Sergiovanni's (1992) notion of it being a spiritual and moral endeavour, and to Gronn (2003) and Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2001 2004) notion of 'distributed leadership'. Thus, the participants indicated how views based on Gospel values, and particularly the values of service, love, and care, can be combined with the relatively radical 'distributed leadership' view articulated in some secular schools and, to some extent, in faith-based schools of other religious denominations, to provide a framework to guide practice in Catholic schools.

It would be wrong to conclude, however, that all Catholic schools are guided by such perspectives. Rather, by outlining the details of this case, it is hoped that readers may be prompted to consider what complementary, or alternative, perspectives may be adopted in other Catholic schools, not only in Australia, but elsewhere. In the fullness of time, if a substantial number of such case studies were conducted across a wide range of contexts it should be possible to construct a

typology of how leadership theory has found its way into the cognitive frameworks used by leaders in Catholic schools to guide their work and the nature of the particular theories they have assimilated within these frameworks. This, in turn, could provide a basis for constructing similar typologies across faith-based schooling more generally, as well as other types of school sectors. In this way, a new and substantial contribution could be made to the existing corpus of work on leadership theory, and particularly to the work of those who hold that leadership can only be understood within the context in which it is exercised.

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