STIRRING *the* SOUL *of* CATHOLIC EDUCATION
Formation for Mission

By
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CONTENTS

PART C
MINING THE WISDOM: ADULT SPIRITUALITY, EDUCATIONAL CULTURE AND THE FAITH TRADITION

PART F
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS
Introduction to Part F   282

PROLOGUE

'Traditions, traditions!' says Tevye ... 'Without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as ... as ... as a fiddler on the roof!'[1] Yet, as Tevye finds out in the great unfolding story of the *Fiddler on the Roof*, neither tradition nor identity are static things, passed down fixed and unchanging from generation to generation. A living tradition – an authentic identity – is an adaptive thing that can continue to speak meaning to culture.

The Christian tradition has always been shaped by a dialogue between faith and culture. Christianity has only ever continued to be relevant in as much as it has offered meaning within the context in which it lives. When either faith or culture becomes deaf to the other, both lose relevance. Something dies in each, something of rich meaning-making is lost unless a new dynamic emerges, one that is less like a fiddler trying to keep balance on a roof and more like a dancer inviting partners onto the floor.
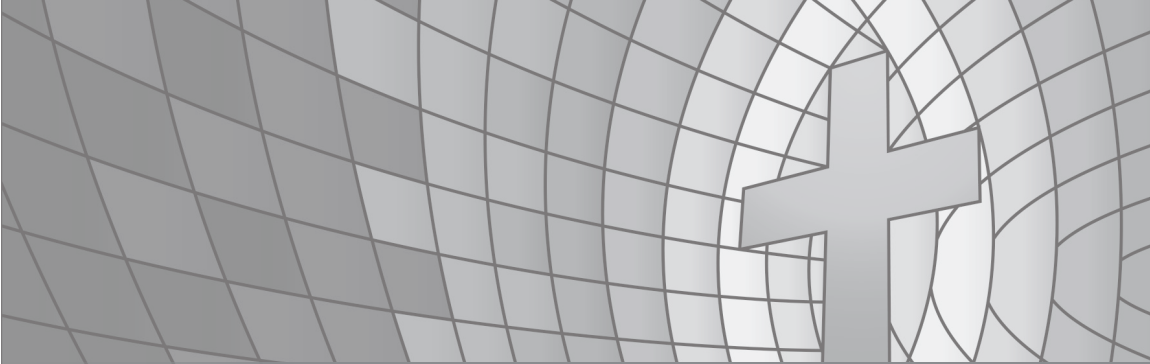
The challenge of teacher and leader formation in Catholic education in Australia stands at the nexus of just such an emergent time – a liminal time – a time in which the provision of formation that opens the individual to the rich horizon of the Christian worldview is only as relevant as it makes profound meaning in the cultural context in which people live.

In this book we grapple with the question of how to frame a re-imagined understanding of formation for the Catholic educator and leader. In doing so, we mine the learnings of the great thinking and engagement in this area, and explore a new model of formation for Catholic educators, a model responsive to our time and place.

As you are introduced to the many writers and thinkers included within the pages of this book, I invite you to see them as colleagues and friends who, with you, grapple with the questions of purpose and faith, of role and soul, of teaching and leading, of being and calling.

Always remember, you are in very good company!

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1   N. Jewison et al. 2006, *Fiddler on the Roof*, (movie).

Part A
THE CHALLENGE OF FORMATION IN CONTEXT

My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an 'extra' or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing. All around us we begin to see nurses with soul, teachers with soul, politicians with soul, people who have chosen deep down to be with others and for others.

Pope Francis, 2013,
Evangelli Gaudium Notes,
133–134 and 273.

INTRODUCTION TO PART A: 'WE ARE!'

The year is 2016.

The place: The Convention and Exhibition Centre, Perth, Australia.

The event: A national broadcast hosted by Australian media presenter Tony Jones for the quinquennial National Catholic Education Conference.

The moment: Tony Jones poses the question to the esteemed panel following a short discussion about the diminishing numbers in religious orders: 'And so who is going to carry the torch in the place of these religious brothers and sisters [while] only 19 per cent of teachers in Catholic schools are practicing Catholics?'

The proclamation: 1600 voices in the darkness erupt spontaneously as one in response: '*We are!*'

This was a powerful moment for all those present. The media host was taken aback as the unseen audience suddenly 'stole the oxygen'. The panel too, though less surprised, were drawn from their own pool of light on stage to the vocal sea of darkness before them. The audience itself, 1600 teachers and leaders of Catholic schools and systems from across the country, surprised itself with its own united and strong voice. What followed in the moment was clapping and laughing from that audience, surprised at their own audacity and impassioned eruption.

So now, what does this mean – *We are!*

This book opens up the vibrancy and opportunity reflected in that remarkable moment and the challenge inherent in that multi-dimensional question.

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SETTING THE SCENE

The growth of Catholic education in Australia and the role of Catholic educators has been an extraordinary tale. Catholic schools today cater for 1 in 5 Australian students and span the country.[2] Catholic education is currently Australia's largest non-government employer. Even amidst the continuing devastation of the child abuse crisis that has ruptured the church globally and locally,[3] Australian catholic schools remain well supported by parents and enjoy strong credibility in the wider community. The provision of Catholic education in Australia today is characterised by a sophisticated national and diocesan organisational structure, significant government funding, as well as strong academic patronage through the Australian Catholic University and other Catholic higher education providers. Added to this, Catholic education in Australia has had a unique history amid the unfolding of the years since Vatican II. This history offers a distinctive lived reality that has much to celebrate and build upon for future Catholic education in this country. The proclamation, 'We are!' gives expression to the goodwill, the energy and the enormous commitment of Catholic education staff to the ministry of Catholic education.

At the same time, Australian Catholic education shares the significant international challenges of secularisation, de-institutionalisation, pluralisation and ecclesial fracture. There is no doubt we are in a liminal time[4] where a continuing anxiety and sense of uncertainty is appreciable among all stakeholders around the nature, purpose and future of Catholic schools. Of particular concern, among many factors, is the erosion of

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2   NCEC, 2015.

3   The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has uncovered widespread criminal behaviour and a tragic past in the administration and practices within the Australian Church. This is causing unimaginable harm to thousands of Catholics and their families and friends. The result has been enormous hostility by both Catholics and the broader community towards the Church and its hierarchy, with the reputation of the Church and its institutions seriously diminished.

4   See D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2013, pp. 2-4 for a description of phases and the convergent factors in the current liminal time.

confidence in Church authority, the 'unbundling'[5] among the parent body and the emerging generation of school staff and leaders about what it means to be Catholic, and changing aspirations of parents and teachers with respect to outcomes of Catholic schooling. These shifts are exacerbated by mega-trends in education including escalation of accountability provisions for educational outcomes, an increased corporatisation of system processes including staff development, and the emergence of neo-liberal ideology in publicly funded education.[6] And so, the proclamation 'We are!' also begs the questions: what does it mean now to 'carry the torch,' and what is needed for our educators and leaders to sustain the fire into the future?

Theologically, I write this book from my own inner perspective as a Catholic Christian, who from my own tradition reflects upon the Christian faith in dialogue within the current context. I write from the perspective that the need for meaning-making in the midst of this liminal landscape is both an enormous challenge and a critical opportunity. In particular, the need to make meaning of 'mission' in the context of Catholic education demands not only radical re-thinking in terms of what mission is as it applies to Catholic educators, but also a concomitant re-imagining of formation for educators and leaders.

Our exploration unfolds within a complex and layered setting. It is a setting to which both you and I bring our own particular experience, and our own eyes and mind and heart. To engage in this journey together I offer that we do so within the master-narrative of Luke 24 – *The Road to Emmaus*. This story, at once familiar and foreign, provides for us both a window and a mirror to the mysterious dynamic of dialogue, encounter and new meaning-making in which any company of strangers comes to understand Jesus in their midst. At some time in our lives, we all flee our Jerusalems, die with our own spent dreams. And yet there remains something in us that has the capacity to turn heart to home; to be called into a deeper reality. It requires its own courage. But the simple shift is transformative. And cannot be undone. This is the essence of what the formative process is about – a turning to the deep down, an understanding of being in the world that is compelling, sustaining, enlivening. And in our tradition, it happens only in and through each other 'on the way'.

We might also frame this in missiological terms. Noel Connolly in reference to Pope Francis's missiology summarises three challenges for the broader church:

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5   This is a term coined by Charles Taylor to describe the unravelling of forms of belonging, and of spiritual and other activities previously gathered under the Church.
6   For a useful account of the impact of the neo-liberal agenda in Catholic education, see Gleeson, 2015.

> *The first challenge is for the church and we as individuals to return to the Gospels, to encounter Jesus. The second challenge is a reform of the church, not just the individual. The third challenge is to surpass the one-directional perspective and enter into reciprocity and dialogue.*[7]

Let us bear both the invitations and challenges of our own hearts, our own minds and our own experience, to the journey here together. And see what happens – on the way!

THE CONNECTIONS: MISSION, FORMATION AND CATHOLIC EDUCATION

In recent decades, an understanding of mission that reflects the broadening consensus of engaged leaders across the globe has been developed within the magisterial documents of the Catholic Church.[8] That understanding is grounded in a missional theology which befriends culture and human experience and the living religious tradition. In Catholic education, this requires an orientation of the heart that can hold the tensions of those three dimensions, and where each of us and the community as a whole follow the tracks of the Divine in a very fluid world context.

The lens of 'mission thinking'[9] in Catholic education today is very much focused on those Who and Why questions: *Who are we? Why are we? Who are we with? Why are we doing what we're doing?* These questions involve the intersection of the lives of Catholic educators and leaders, the culture in which they live, and the faith tradition in which stands Catholic education. Crucially, it is a lens that recognises that God is already working, and has been working within all cultures, revealing Godself.[10] This in turn implies that spirituality is not 'an additional dimension of mission to be considered when all the doctrinal and practical apparatus is already in place. Rather, the spiritual dimension is the first thing around which everything else ought to revolve'.[11] God is the primary agent of mission and works through the power of the Holy Spirit. Openness to the Spirit – *joining in with the Spirit* – is therefore what mission is about. Hence, it is more authentic to say

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7   Connolly, 2016, p. 7. Taken originally from a reference by Enzo Biemmi in a paper, 'For a truly "new" evangelisation: A re-reading of the Synod' given at the 2013 Conference of SEDOS in Rome.

8   For an interpretive summary of the development of official church teaching on mission and evangelisation, see Jim and Therese D'Orsa, 'Securing Mission at the Heart of the Australian Church', in Neil Ormerod, Ormond Rush, David Pascoe, Clare Johnson, and Joel Hodge (eds), *Vatican II Reception and Implementation in the Australian Church* (Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2012), 240–57.

9   D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 1997, p. 269.

10   Balia and Kim, *Witnessing to Christ Today*, (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 241.

11   Ma and Ross, *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship,* p. 9.

'the mission has a church', rather than 'the church has a mission'.[12] The missiologist is concerned that the message of the Gospel permeates human cultures by engaging with and enriching what is already there. The spiritual formation specialist is concerned that the heart of God and the wisdom of the tradition enkindle a transformative dynamic within the individual and the community that changes both. For both the missiologist and the formation specialist, mission and formation must be context specific by definition.

Spiritual formation in the Catholic Christian tradition is a dynamic process of growth in following the way of Jesus in becoming one with God. 'Formation' generally refers to a set of experiences designed to prepare a person or group for a particular purpose. In preference to a word like 'training', 'formation' is most often used in the context of spiritual development and conjures images of a deep learning that involves attitudes, values, commitment to particular life directions, as well as knowledge and skills. It is the 'who' and the 'why' that informs the 'what' and the 'how' questions of our particular work in the great enterprise that is Catholic education.

The word 'formation' itself comes from the Latin *formare*, meaning 'to shape' or 'to mould'. We are all constantly being shaped and moulded by our circumstances and our surroundings, whether we are aware of it or not. When we talk of spiritual formation, we are talking about choosing what will shape and mould us, and to what we give our deepest energies!

Yet formation is also a contested term. For some, it carries negative connotations as a control word in an overly parental church busy in conforming leaders and teachers to a particular mould. For others, it carries a sense of re-creating tight community boundaries and routine practices as the way to develop mature followers of Christ. Gerald Arbuckle offers a helpful image for our time, an image of spread-out communities which live in the world, rather than in the cloister, and which inculturate the Gospel creatively and imaginatively beyond the edges of Church. This kind of formation requires flexibility and adaptability.[13]

To engage in spiritual formation then is to practice seeing the reality beneath the reality of things! In this process, grounded in that reality, occurs the integration of learning how to integrate this meaning-making of one's values and beliefs with one's behaviour in daily life – both personally and professionally. Catholic spiritual formation is about all these things in response to Jesus Christ who is seen as the Way, the Truth and the Life, and the Holy Spirit acting through the community of Christ's disciples

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12 This phrase has been identified with Stephen Bevans who has written extensively on missiology as contextual theology. His work is explored in a later section of the book.

13 Gerald Arbuckle, 1996, p. 245.

(the Church) in the context of the mission of Catholic education, and the Catholic school in particular.

Engagement in formation means to be concerned with the ongoing transformation of individuals and their communities. Christian spiritual formation is deeply personal and radically communal in its vision and praxis. While the shape of a spiritual life is, in the end, a matter of unique mystery between God and the individual person, spirituality in the Christian tradition is developed in the company of others.

There is no such thing as a private Christian. Formation in the context of Catholic education is personal and communal. Every individual working in any capacity in Catholic school communities presents with their own personal story, their own personal spirituality and their own community (school/office). This presenting context is the starting point for all formation. Thus we approach the individual's reality with two key assumptions:

- Every person is a lifelong learner.
- God is real, present and at work at the heart of each person and in their lives.

There is also a strong relationship between vision and formation. Vision proclaims what we believe ourselves to be about. In both Greek and Latin, the root meaning of 'to believe' is 'to give one's heart to'. So, a vision expresses what a community 'gives its heart to.' It calls us and reminds us of our centre and brings us back to our centre. The sacred work of the Church as the people of God, including the ministry of Catholic education within it, is to nurture the deep water horizon of mystery in our own lives and in our shared lives. To look toward this horizon is to believe as Daniel O'Leary says, that 'as rivers flow and the winds blow, so too the human heart with its imagination, affections, and creativity, will never be – cannot ever be – other than God-bound'.[14]

Over the last ten years, the *assumptions* about formation provision for mission at a school and system level have turned into an *awareness* of the need for appropriate and effective formation, and this has translated into considerable energy being given to ways of *meeting* that need. More than ever now, the distinct questions emerging about mission and formation impel us to be attentive to those 'who' and 'why' questions of Catholic education. That, I believe, is a very good thing!

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14 O'Leary, 2004, p. 13.

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The Catholic school educator encounters a range of expectations for their role, both personally and professionally. Teaching as a vocation is well described as a deep and personal calling: 'Teaching is a vocation. It is as sacred as priesthood, as innate as desire, as inseparable as the genius which compels the artist.'[15] Within the Catholic school context however, it is a role that carries specific aspirations in which the construction of teaching as a vocation or calling includes an additional lens that situates vocation in mission.

The foundational Post–Vatican II document on the identity of Catholic schools, *The Catholic School* (1977), is clear that the Catholic educator is concerned to help students integrate life, culture and faith in developing the worldview which they bring to the challenges and problems that shape their lives (*The Catholic School,* 1977, n. 37).[16] The 1988 document *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* further elaborates:

> *The Catholic educator must be a source of spiritual inspiration ... The Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to all the different persons related to the educational community.*[17]

This understanding is reiterated in more recent Vatican documents, (*Educating Together in Catholic Schools,* 2007 and *Educating Today and Tomorrow, A Renewing Passion,* 2014) where the Catholic school itself is described as '... a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation, directed at creating a synthesis between faith, culture and life'. [18]

The perceived magnitude of this responsibility for the Catholic school educator was explicitly articulated at the Second Vatican Council (1961–1965).

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15   Pearl S Buck, cited in Gleeson, 2003, p. 80.
16   Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School,* 1977.
17   Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, n. 24.
18   Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007, p. 3.

> *Teachers must remember that it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose (Gravissimum Educationis, 1965, n. 8).*

> *Teachers must bear testimony by their lives and by their teaching to the one Teacher, who is Christ (Gravissimum Educationis, 1965, n. 8).*

That personal responsibility has lost none of its gravitas in the intervening sixty years:

> *If modern women and men listen to teachers at all, they listen to them because they are witnesses (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975, n. 41).*

The work of the Catholic educator is in fact the work of helping to form human beings:

> *The teacher under discussion here is not simply a professional person who systematically transmits a body of knowledge in the context of a school; 'teacher' is to be understood as 'educator' – one who helps to form human persons. The task of a teacher goes well beyond the transmission of knowledge (CCE, 1982, n. 16).*

And further to this, the role has individual and communal dimensions:

> *A significant responsibility for creating the unique climate of a Christian school rests with the staff as both individual and in community, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material but on the very spirit of human beings (CCE, 1982, n. 19).*

Finally, the Catholic educator has their eye on a larger horizon: not only should the teachers be personally and professionally committed, but they should also be '... sensitive to finding opportunities for allowing their students to see beyond the limited horizon of human reality'. [19]

Distinct recurring themes emerge that contribute to a 'model' of the *ideal* Catholic school educator as one who is committed to:

- community building
- lifelong spiritual growth
- lifelong professional development
- students' spiritual formation
- students' human development. [20]

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19   Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, n. 51.
20   Shimabukuro, 1998.

This ideal model of the Catholic educator, formulated in the language of vocation and mission, reflects a role that incorporates significant ecclesial responsibility and enormous expectation. Concomitantly, the need for 'formation' in bearing this vocational responsibility of teaching and leading in a Catholic school has been increasingly acknowledged: 'Formation, therefore, must be a part of and complement the professional formation of the Catholic school teacher.'[21]

It is apparent that both the distinctiveness of the role of the Catholic educator and the need for support in this role has developed as a priority identified in the Post–Vatican II ecclesial literature. The influence of Catholic educators is recognised and the expectations placed on them have become prominent. However, while the reality of a predominantly lay teaching staff has been noted demographically, and acknowledged by ecclesial and governance authorities, the research regarding the experience of what it means to be a teacher in an Australian Catholic school is not extensive. Yet, it is here, in the experience of the role, that the complex external world of Catholic school education intersects with the internal and deeply personal world of Catholic school educators.

THE PROFILE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS

Research about staff in Catholic schools has provided insight into the complexity of the area by drawing attention to both the striking changes in the religious/lay staffing of Catholic schools and the perspectives of the various categories of Catholic teachers. The staff demographic has changed over the last 50 years from predominantly vowed religious with a culturally homogeneous profile, to a predominantly lay staff with a culturally heterogeneous profile. Given this, and the expectations outlined above, the research exploring the values and experience of lay teachers is particularly relevant for our discussion.[22] Between the responsibility of vocation and the provision of formation lies the current reality of a staff demographic where evidence identifies increasing distance from the ecclesial Church. [23]

There are two areas which highlight particular characteristics in the profile of contemporary Catholic school educators:

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21   Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, n. 65.

22   Key Australian research in this area includes D'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Downey, 2006; Fisher, 2001; McLaughlin, 1997, 2002, 2005.

23   'The vast majority of them [Catholic educators] have reservations about the contemporary Catholic Church and, like the general Catholic population, are not practising.' McLaughlin, 2002, p. 12. Note that this 2002 research was undertaken before the abuse crisis. No extensive research is yet available on shifts in attitude and practice, but one would not expect it has reversed its trajectory.

- the generational meaning-making of staff
- the system–world and life–world of staff.

Each of these will be considered in turn.

GENERATIONAL MEANING-MAKING

Across Australian Catholic schools, Generation X includes young teachers and educational leaders, and Generation Y incorporates those in teacher education preparation or those beginning teaching. Baby boomers carry the major leadership responsibilities in Catholic education. Many of these are former religious brothers and sisters or those who have had extensive early Church enculturation.[24] We will not see the like of this Catholic educator profile again, and we have not yet fully realised nor acknowledged their unique role in the unfolding story of Catholic education. Within the broader generational change, their particular personal, professional and spiritual journey and witness in the transition of staff from religious to lay, and their legacy in maintaining such strong and deep traction in the ethos of Catholic schools, is a contribution for which we owe more than can be measured. This also reflects the general situation in Europe, America, Canada and England.[25]

One of the fundamental shifts within the global Church has been the willingness of the Catholic laity baby boomers to challenge and/or reject elements of Church teaching whilst at the same time continuing to remain active members of the Church.[26] In contrast, Gen X and Y teachers are less likely to offer such loyalty. These generations trust their own experience, distrust received 'truth', know the plurality of experience and accept the validity in the individual's perspective.[27] For them, there is a longing for a personal discovery of trustworthy certainties.[28] They are a generation of seekers, and while institutions may not have their loyalty, they value authentic behaviour and conduct.

> *If they agree with the Church on an issue, it is because the Church position makes sense to them and they actively decide to agree. If a Church teaching does not make sense to them, they will refuse to agree, no matter how often or how clearly or how authoritatively the Church has spoken on it.*[29]

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24 It was the changing reality experienced by religious which attracted early interest as their presence in schools diminished: see Burley, 1997, 2001. The experience of ex-religious in our schools invites further work.
25 Grace & O'Keefe, 2007.
26 Dixon, 2005; Mulligan, 1994.
27 BRC, 2003.
28 Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007.
29 McLaughlin, 2002, p. 12.

Research undertaken with Australian Catholic University undergraduate students[30] has been substantiated by more extensive Australian research[31] confirming the identified slippage of Gen X and Y from any sense of ecclesial loyalty.[32] In addition, the figures from this broader sample group and longer study indicate a strong drift away from Christianity among Gen Y; before they reach the age of 25, 'about 18% of those who used to belong to a Christian Church are already ex-members'.[33] The implications of these findings for Catholic education staff suggest that graduates coming into the Catholic education system, and graduate teachers entering Catholic schools, appear to have little sense of a Church connection or parish culture and even less sense of allegiance to Church teaching or the ecclesial dimension of their role.

The reasons for the diminishing decline in Church affiliation are endemic and deep-seated, suggesting issues of fundamental meaning-making. For some time now, researchers have identified this as the source of crisis in the institutional Church. This …

> is far more profound than simply falling attendance at Mass, increased practice of artificial birth control, an aging clergy and a decreasing number of vocations, and the unfortunate longevity of some anachronistic customs of clerical control that simply refuse to die. These are but symptoms of the more fundamental nature of the crisis. There is today a different way of understanding reality.[34]

While each major era or stage in the human lifespan is marked by its own way of meaning-making, the recalibration demanded in building community with a 'different way of understanding reality' is compounded by a cultural insularity in contemporary society. Charles Taylor calls this 'buffering.' In other words, the insularity or buffering caused by the fragmented and individualistic culture that currently prevails obstructs the development of almost any broader community or organisational commitment.[35] Yet capturing the commitment of older staff and the engagement of younger teachers appears to require an operative community dynamic.

In trying to identify what is needed to nurture young adults (Gen Y/Millennials and iGens) to develop 'a mature commitment in a tentative world',[36] American research has identified critical factors in the

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30   McLaughlin, 1997; 2002.
31   Hughes, 2007.
32   This was defined through weekly attendance at Mass, and belief in key teachings including divorce, contraception and pre-marital sex.
33   Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007, pp. 301–2.
34   Mulligan, 1994, p. 99.
35   Senge, Scharmer, Jaworsk & Flowers, 2005.
36   Daloz-Parks, 2000, p. 171.

first three decades of life that predispose young adults to living a life of commitment to a larger whole. The elements that seem to operate favourably towards such a commitment, and in a variety of combinations, include contact with: 'community adults who model commitment; service opportunities; mentors and critical experiences in college or graduate school.'[37] In addition, the research identified 'habits of mind' nurtured in a healthy community dynamic that characterise this development. They are:

- dialogue
- interpersonal perspective taking
- critical systemic thought
- holistic thought.[38]

Within this dynamic, older mentors and the wider community have a unique role. The findings demonstrated that for the 17–30 year olds (those preparing for teaching or in their early teaching years), strategic mentorship is influential. Moreover, young adults are influenced not only by individual mentors but also by mentoring environments, with older adults having a powerful responsibility in this. Furthermore, the findings confirmed that the broader culture as a whole plays a mentoring influence in the formation of each new generation of young adults, shaping the future of the culture itself. This has important micro implications in the community structure of the Catholic school and its young staff for cultural renewal and meaning-making. In such a scenario, the pressure on school leaders for spiritual and faith leadership is a real and immediate challenge in creating authentic communities of witness.

Reflecting on the challenge of creating an authentic shared reality for the mission of Catholic education, practitioners in the field of teacher formation advocate for a new language that speaks to the hearts and souls of people today, 'a re-inflaming of the romantic imagination'.[39] In this endeavour, these practitioners appear to draw on the language of the mystic rather than ecclesial tradition. Indeed, the search for characteristics of a new vocabulary to engage people was one of the outcomes of an international series of symposia between 2002 and 2004 that investigated the nature of mission in contemporary secular culture.[40]

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37   Daloz-Parks, 2000, p. 6.
38   Daloz, Keen, Keen & Daloz-Parks, 2000, p. 173.
39   Rolheiser, 2006, p. 21.
40   Oblate Communications, 2004.

THE SYSTEM-WORLD AND LIFE-WORLD INTERFACE

The second area which highlights particular characteristics in the profile of contemporary Catholic school educators concerns life-world. The terms *life-world* and *systems-world* were coined by Jürgen Habermas to describe 'two mutually exclusive yet ideally interdependent domains.'[41] Research in Australia, Canada and the United States identifies the changing patterns and pressures in the life-world of teachers and principals in particular. Findings indicate the complexity and responsibility of contemporary family life, in addition to identified work intensification issues, heightening stress, fatigue, and professional and personal upheaval.[42] A brief overview of the key factors here is helpful in framing our later discussion.

The rise of economic rationalism on a global scale has influenced educational systems worldwide in a sweeping process of restructure and reforms.[43] In Australia, this is reflected in a thrust for greater accountability to and influence from the community; the justification and national monitoring of curriculum; individual public rating of schools; and institutionalised scrutiny of teacher performance. The impact of market-driven values on the policy of schools is an attendant concern for Catholic schools striving to maintain a values base that is countercultural to elitist and materially aspirational drivers.[44]

Adding to these wider changes exacting pressure on the 'system-world' of the Catholic educator are the 'life-world' issues and personal pressures of postmodern society. The juggling of family, community and work commitments in an individualist, materialist culture contributes to a level of busyness that has become endemic. Constant 'over busyness' is linked to burn out, with sleep deprivation a common lifestyle concern.[45]

Thus, in the midst of technological, gender, cultural and economic revolutions,[46] the current generation of Catholic school educators face the difficulty of increasing pressures in their life-world and the juggling of conflicting ideology in their system-world. There are 'few other occupations where lifestyle and work are so closely linked and where lifestyle options can so strongly affect career possibilities.'[47] As these worlds collide, there is increasing difficulty in attracting staff to engage in Catholic school leadership.[48]

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41   Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 5.
42   This has been documented in a range of studies: Branson, 2004; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan & Neidhart, 2003; Downey, 2006; Hargreaves, 1994; McMahon, 2003.
43   Hughes, 2000; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998.
44   Grace, 1996, 2002; McLaughlin, 2002.
45   Downey, 2006; McMahon, 2003.
46   Mackay, 2008.
47   Tinsey, 1998, p. 36.
48   Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick, 2006; Flintham, 2007.

As this complex dynamic continues, it has become more and more apparent that much of the Church's outreach into the community is through Catholic schools.[49] For the majority of Australian Catholics – parents and students – the Catholic school is the only experience of Catholicism they choose to have.[50] Indeed, research conducted for the Queensland dioceses as far back as 2001 indicated that one third of the families associated with Catholic schools were involved with a parish or diocesan Church community; for the remaining two thirds, the Catholic school was 'the face and place of the Church'. [51]

In consequence, the pressure of responsibility on the Catholic school educator has increased. Catholic school staff have become the face of the Church, asked to be its best advocates, integrating professional, spiritual and communal qualities and commitment in their ministry. Increasingly, principals are expected to engage in more Church leadership initiatives. This expectation is heavily reinforced by ecclesial authorities. Compounding this pressured situation is the perception that ecclesial authorities, while requesting a high level of commitment and authentic witness from teachers, have viewed the role of the laity as 'an apostolate of the second string'.[52] Overlaying this system-world is a life-world for contemporary Catholic school educators which carries its own increasing pressure. In this complex dynamic, traditional approaches in the delivery of spiritual formation for Catholic educators appear inappropriate.

THE BROADER CULTURAL CONTEXT IN AUSTRALIA

The 'Life-world' issues have further nuance in the Australian cultural landscape.

The Australian Constitution precludes the Commonwealth from declaring an official religion or establishing a state church. As a result, Australian society is characterised by practical pluralism rather than strict secularism.[53]

The decision of the Australian Bureau of Statistics to list 'no religion' in the first place among options on the 2016 census implied the Bureau, for the very first time, expected that option to attract the majority of respondents that year. In his latest book, *Beyond Belief*, Hugh Mackay describes an Australia

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49   McLaughlin, 2000b.

50   This was first noted 20 years ago in Australia (Quillinan, 1997, and McLaughlin, 2000c) and has become more and more accepted as the prevailing and continuing reality.

51   Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2001, p. 3.

52   Lakeland, 2003, p. 98.

53   See the work of Tom Frame, 2007, for further discussion on this: https://www.cis.org.au/commentary/articles/do-secular-societies-provoke-religious-extremism

that 'has lost its appetite for conventional religion'.[54] He and other observers however do not equate the loss of support for conventional religion with an absence of value for the spiritual life in general nor a dismissal of the value carried for the cultural heritage of Christianity in particular.

> *What is clear is that few Australians with little religion or spirituality have totally and explicitly rejected it. The major problem is not necessarily a philosophical one ... (rather) the day to day world does not require that they engage with religion or spirituality. They are 'practical' secularists, rather than ideological secularists.*[55]

Rather, the onus is on the churches to respond to new expectations:

> *Christian faith communities of all persuasions will do well to hear and respond to the cry for honesty, dialogue, relevance and an authentic participatory approach. Whether that cry comes from a middle-aged journalist, a year 10 student or a 20-something arts graduate.*[56]

Australian Bishop Greg O'Kelly referring to Fr Michael Paul Gallagher's reflections, underlines the new reality by suggesting that those whose starting point (in mission) is to arrest the decline of Church practice and find ways of inviting people back to Church, will adopt a different starting point from those who wish rather to approach the process in reawakening the question of God as a personal hunger.[57] Gallagher coins the term 'longing without belonging' to describe many of the seekers of today who are not touched by present Church life and language. Consequently, the impetus for seeking after God or the numinous, comes more often through cultural and spiritual wounds from which people might suffer: the wounds in memory, belonging and imagination.[58] The collective impact of these wounds is an absence of roots with any meaning, a lack of affective belonging in community and

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54 Mackay, 2016, p. 2. Previous to this, 61% of Australia have ticked Christian, 15% attend church once a month, 8% weekly. 22% ticked no religion (p. 7), 2.5% Buddhist, 2.2% Muslim, 1.3% Hinduism (pp. 7-8).

55 Kaldor, Hughes & Black, 2010, p. 57. Six years later, Mackay, 2016, p. 49, affirms this: 'Even in a determinedly secular society like Australia, all those non-churchgoing people who still choose to identify themselves as "Christian" are presumably saying something about the values they still aspire to, the kind of cultural heritage they still respect, and possibly the kind of intuitions they still want to preserve.'

56 Daughtry, 2002, p. 5.

57 Gallagher quotes Grace Davie who has described the phenomenon of 'believing without belonging' as a description of many of this age. Others, says Gallagher, have turned that around, pointing to the frequency of inactive, passive Church membership as 'belonging without believing.'

58 Bishop Greg O'Kelly, quoting Gallagher, 2015. French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger has written a major study of religion as memory, where she argues that the decline of faith today is due to a collapse of collective memory much more than to any critiques from Enlightenment rationality.

a wounded imagination that locks us into a new kind of social imaginary centred on the self and self-gratification.[59]

This is the mission field and a new way of being is needed to be authentic within it.

THE BROADER ECCLESIAL CONTEXT IN AUSTRALIA

The general trends for Australian Catholic school communities include the following:

- a lay administration
- a lay staff
- the enrolment of children of other faiths
- an increased percentage of non–Catholic, or non–practising Catholic, teachers and pupils
- an ageing population of practising Catholics
- an identifiable secular influence in the community culture and lifestyle
- a priest who is not from the local Archdiocesan area.[60]

While these trends have had a prolonged influence on Catholic education, the last trend is a new phenomenon. As priestly numbers sharply decline in Australia, Australian Bishops are negotiating with Bishops in third–world countries to supply priests to minister in Australian parishes. This initiative reflects a noticeable shift in the global composition of the Catholic Church.[61] This intersection between post–Christian West and non–western Christianity will be a 'defining ecumenical characteristic' of the 21st century.[62]

The importance of other changes over the last 35 years has not escaped the attention of those ultimately responsible for Australian Catholic education, namely the Catholic Bishops. They have continued to advocate

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59 Gallagher, 2004, quoting Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, states: we live in a 'soft relativism', where a 'new expressivist self-awareness brings to the fore a different kind of social imaginary.'

60 Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick, 2006; McLaughlin, 2000b.

61 A hundred years ago, only two percent of all Christians lived in Africa. Today, nearly one in four Christians in the world is African and the 'statistical centre' of Christianity is to be found in Mali.
    Christianity has also seeing dramatic growth in Asia in the past century where it has increased at twice the rate of overall population growth. Further, much of the growth of Christianity has been in Charismatic, Pentecostal, Evangelical and non-denominational forms of expression, while mainstream denominations that were the bedrock of the 20th-century ecumenical movement are being eclipsed.

62 *Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population* (New York: Pew Research Center, 2012), 67-69.

enthusiastically for the mission of Catholic education and the role of the educator and leader in the Catholic school through key documents and research.[63] Causal factors are acknowledged whereby 'changes in enrolment patterns and in our educational and cultural context have radically affected the composition and roles of the Catholic school in recent years'.[64] In response, the Bishops offer some prescription with regard to staffing in Catholic schools: 'People whose lives give witness to Christian values and who are committed to engage in the Church's mission of evangelisation will staff Catholic schools.'[65] Thus, a key element in the ecclesial response to the impact of changing cultural and ecclesial contexts on the school environment has been to emphasise more strongly the expectations that teachers and leaders cultivate and embody Gospel-based beliefs, values and witness.

In turning attention to implied formation needs, policy and research at the national Catholic education level of governance have progressively positioned a positive anthropology of humanity and a connection to a loving God as central to both student formation and teacher formation. This has been an important element of the National Catholic Education Commission's (NCEC) documentation as it has responded to challenges in Catholic education first identified twenty years ago. The NCEC policy also highlighted a specific need 'to provide better quality programs for the professional development of religious educators, and for the faith development of all teachers'. In particular:

> *The co-ordinated development of adult education around a coherent and systematic curriculum, its resourcing and the training of its teachers and leaders, are large issues confronting us immediately.*[66]

Almost ten years later, in a major report following a national forum for Directors and Heads of Religious Education in Catholic School Systems (NCEC, 2005), a number of key issues were named as challenging matters demanding a response. These included 'parish–school relationships and expectations', 'parent expectations and engagement', and 'Catholic school identity and mission'. However, echoing the urgency of a much earlier paper (*Top Ten Challenges*, 1996) the leading issue for all stakeholders was now 'teacher spirituality and formation': 'The readiness of teachers to take

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63 Three key documents emanate from: 1. The Bishops of Queensland (QCEC: The Queensland Bishops Project – *Catholic Schools for the 21ˢᵗ Century,* 2001). 2. The Bishops of New South Wales and the ACT (*Catholic Schools at the Crossroads*, 2007) and 3. The Australian Catholic Bishop*s* Conference *(Bishop Holohan: Re-visioning Catholic Schools in an Education Revolution*, 2009).

64 Bishops of NSW & the ACT, 2007, p. 2. In addition, one third of the students in Catholic schools are not Catholic. Half of all Catholic students are in government schools.

65 Bishops of NSW & the ACT, 2007, p. 3.

66 National Catholic Education Commission, 1996, p. 5.

up the challenge of being leaders in the religious domain and the need to design and support high quality formation programs.'[67] Three other research projects are of note: *What Strategies and Models Best Support the Faith Development of Teachers?* (1995); *Spiritual and Faith Formation for Leadership* (2005); and the *Who's Coming to School Today?* survey (2010). All of these highlighted serious challenges.[68]

Cumulatively, these three research projects signalled the need for a different kind of staff preparation for mission, additional to qualifications and professional in-service. Consequently, in the last ten years, in seeking to strengthen the missional dimension of Catholic school staff, Catholic Education policy across Australian dioceses has increasingly identified the importance of formation for both employing authorities and employees,[69] and a strengthening of expectations for employees to engage in formation experiences.[70]

While the policy and research journey of Australian Bishops and Diocesan employing authorities has continued to develop at one level, grounded action has developed apace at another. Established in 2007, a

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67   National Catholic Education Commission, 2005, p. 11.

68   *What Strategies and Models Best Support the Faith Development of Teachers?* (1995) identified the following as formative experiences for teachers: the influence on their lives of significant other people who modelled a relationship with God; the foundational importance of experience over acquiring knowledge; the lifelong and individual nature of the spiritual journey; the role of significant times of pain in being catalysts for seeking spirituality; and the positive experience and influence of being part of a faith community (QCEC, 1995). *Spiritual and Faith Formation for Leadership* (2005) explored the landscape of theory, practice and opportunities in spiritual formation for leadership across the Queensland dioceses. The research identified serious challenges for leadership succession in Catholic education. The report included an overview of formation opportunities for those in leadership positions; a detailed report on current policy, and practice in spiritual and faith formation for leadership in diocesan and Religious Institute schools in Queensland; a preliminary review of the literature in the area; an outline of key learnings; and design principles and strategies for further development. *Who's Coming to School Today?* survey (ACER, 2010) identified the following: 1. Strong endorsement by staff for the importance of religious faith and practice in the life of the schools, with little variance in sub-groups. 2. While parents and students want more emphasis on vocational outcomes and academic success, few staff thought the best thing their school did was to generate good academic results. 3. When stakeholders are asked for the dominant thing that Catholic schools do best, they choose a 'caring community' over academic qualities. However, this co-exists with the finding that most stakeholders 'agreed'/'strongly agreed' that their school provided good academic results.

69   The most recent QCEC policy statement, *Formation for Staff in Catholic Schools in Queensland* (2010), makes explicit the responsibility of the employer: All Catholic school authorities will ensure that all staff members participate in formation experiences to assist them to grow in understanding of their ministry as part of the mission of the Catholic Church (QCEC, 2010, 1, p. 1)

70   The 2010 QCEC policy signaled an increased focus on formation rather than RE qualifications and accreditation activities. Policy for senior leadership positions reflects a similar change. The 2000 QCEC policy statement for senior leaders identified the religious dimension of Catholic leadership as a central principle and introduced some essential criteria. This policy has since been enhanced with more prescriptive religious qualifications and formation expectations required for senior leadership.

national network emerged (FACE: Formation for Australian Catholic Educators), comprising leaders in formation across Australian Catholic education, and it has continued to grow in a vibrant way. The network has provided collaboration among its members (which include religious congregations and independent operators as well as diocesan education leaders) modelling strategic, practical and collegial support. In this way, both the approach and praxis of formation for Australian Catholic educators has advanced significantly. The shared understanding has resulted in the development of a set of Principles of Approach for staff formation.[71] You will have the opportunity to engage with the depth of wisdom and experience of a number of these leaders in Part E of this book (Practice Wisdom). The NCEC is currently developing a productive formal association with this network, providing an NCEC website for resources and additional opportunities to gather and collaborate in formal and informal ways.

A QUESTION INTO THE FUTURE

Gerald Grace suggests the crucial question for the future is: Are the reserves of spiritual capital in the Catholic school system being renewed or is the system in contemporary contexts living on a declining asset?[72] If we understand culture as Pope Francis does, to be 'a dynamic reality which a people constantly recreates'[73], then dialogue between faith and culture must be two-way. In 'befriending' both the wisdom of the faith tradition and the wisdom of the cultural tradition – that is, to engage with them critically, but loyally – there must be a living into and from both the faith tradition and the cultural tradition. Authentic formation for mission has to embrace this.

CONCLUSION TO PART A

Both the context and the challenges invite an opportunity to engage, as never before, in the exploration of formation that makes personal meaning, has system-strategic application and remains ecclesially faithful. The multi-faceted nature of the challenge and the diversity of needs among Catholic educators and leaders does not diminish the responsibility to provide formation that satisfies the meaning-making needed for the contemporary mission space of Catholic education. At the same time, the possibilities for genuine transformative work that changes lives and influences the world has never been as verdant!

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71   These principles were originally presented at the 2010 ACU Leadership Conference and more recently re-published in *Compass*.

72   Grace, *Digital Journal of Lasallian Research* (4), 2012: 07-19, p. 11.

73   Pope Francis, 2013, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 122.

Spiritual formation is a 'sleeping giant' for Catholic education. While it is perceived by many in system leadership as the soft edge of professional development, the reality is that authentic spiritual formation is probably the most confronting and challenging journey leaders and educators can undertake. It calls for courage to own the belief that formation is much more than informational learning, pious spiritual practice or system compliant action – it is professional and personal, individual and communal. The creation of a contemporary approach to spiritual formation that is both faithful to the evangelising mission of the Church and responsive to the personal worlds of individuals calls us to be creative and practical, to re-imagine traditional approaches, and to recover core realities. The challenge here is not only whether such a re-imagination is possible, but how it finds its place in the current ecclesial, cultural and educational landscape.

Pope Francis pulls this challenge back into the Emmaus story in describing his dream for the Church in the world ...

> We need a Church unafraid of going forth into their night. We need a Church capable of meeting them on their way. We need a Church capable of entering into their conversation. We need a Church able to dialogue with those disciples who, having left Jerusalem behind, are wandering aimlessly, alone, with their own disappointment, disillusioned by a Christianity now considered barren, fruitless soil, incapable of generating meaning.'[74]

While we will explore some very complex areas in this book, the under-pinning questions are the same stark and simple questions Pope Francis raises in this dream for the Church.

How do we – you and I – embrace the night-time journey in ourselves and each other? How do we make sense of living and dying and rising to give voice to a bigger, deeper, richer reality? What are we bringing to every encounter with students, with parents, with staff? Into whom and with whom are we growing? From what well of wisdom do you and I dialogue, reflect, live? And how do we honour and nurture the proclamation of those 1600 Australian Catholic educators and leaders: 'We are!'?

This is the heart of the mission formation task: the sacred work of stirring the soul of Catholic educators.

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74 Pope Francis, Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil, Archbishop's House, Rio de Janeiro Saturday, 28/7/ 2013 http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papafrancesco_20130727_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book unfolds into 6 sections.

In Part A we have opened up the challenge of formation for mission in the multi-dimensional context of Catholic education.

In Part B we explore the models of formation available across broad disciplines and seek to mine the learnings from these for the current challenge.

In Part C we explore the three major intersecting areas of thinking and praxis that inform our conversation around formation in the context of the Catholic educator and leader.

Part D brings together the strands of our exploration, extracting rich learnings in order to frame a new model of formation for Catholic school educators, a model which is responsive to the challenge of the mission field in a contemporary Australian Catholic educational context.

Part E gives voice to Practice Wisdom across the Catholic education landscape in Australia.

Part F concludes our journey, suggesting touchstones for policy and practice into the future.