

**THE STAFF'S VISION OF A CATHOLIC SCHOOL:  
A CASE STUDY OF AN INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC SCHOOL  
IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**A Research Paper**

**presented to**

**St Augustine College of South Africa**

**In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Philosophy**

**In Culture and Education**

**(in the field of Educational Leadership)**


**By**

**Pauline Anne Rosseau**

**2001/03**

**July 2006**

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The collection of data was carried out with the permission of the Principal of The School who gave me free access to gather the information I needed.

Signed: *P. Rosseau*

at *Durban*

on *31 July 2006*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help of the following people and thank them for everything they did to help me complete this research paper:

Doctor Gisela Winkler, my supervisor, whose wisdom and compassion sparked my interest in the vision and ethos of Catholic schools, and whose understanding and guidance enabled me to complete this paper. Her patience with my erratic work schedule was much appreciated.

Morrell Rosseau, my husband, whose belief in me was the source of my motivation in times of doubt and despair. His endless love and patience allowed me the space to learn and grow.

Chantal Cox, my daughter, who put her need for a supportive mother aside for a time, and carried the family during this period, and Margaret Farrell, my mother, for her nurturing love at all times.

Doctor Paul Hobden, whose generosity with his time and knowledge, helped guide me in the direction of a case study, and Sally Hobden, my friend, for introducing me to the wonders of the SPSS programme.

The Principal of The School, for her permission to conduct this case study, and my colleagues, the teachers, who were willing to participate in my study. Their interest and cooperation made my task so much easier.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental aspects of my work as Religious Education Coordinator of an Independent Catholic School in South Africa is to ensure that the vision and distinctive character of the school in which I work is aligned to the vision for Catholic Schools as described by Church documents and other leading authors on the subject. Every member of the teaching staff employed by the Independent Catholic School (The School), has to sign a contract in which is included the sentence: "The Teacher has an obligation to respect, promote and support the Catholic Ethos and the special character of the School". This obligation is based on the assumption that the daily practice of teachers is a critical element contributing to the ethos of The School.

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, in its document *The Catholic School* (1977), states that: "By their witness and their behaviour teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic Schools" (#78).

More recently, Mc Laughlin states: "Every teacher, it has been argued, can and should make some sort of contribution to this distinctiveness [of the school] and this contribution should feature in their formal appraisal" (Mc Laughlin 1999: 73).

My concern is that the teacher employed by The School is assumed to have an adequate understanding of the vision and distinctive character of a Catholic School, but, short of each teacher reading all the Church documents relating to Catholic education, I question how this knowledge, which gives rise to understanding, comes about. Quillinan writes:

Research and experience would suggest that many of our teachers, be they Catholic or from other faiths, have diminishing experience of the institutional Church. Not only does this mean that an increasing number have little experience of the rituals of the Church, but this can often mean that these teachers may have limited understanding of the

religious language and symbols so long taken for granted" (Quillinan 2001: 4; see also Catholic Educator's Resource Centre 2001, Cornwall 2004, and Mc Laughlin T 1999).

That most teachers do not have an adequate understanding of the vision of a Catholic School was reinforced for me at the National Catholic Schools Congress held in Gauteng in September 2004. In the small group discussions and report backs, delegates repeatedly stressed the need for on-going formation in the vision, ethos and distinctive character of a Catholic School. Two of the ten direction statements that emerged from the Congress described the need for schools to make this formation a priority.

This concern motivated me to research the relevant literature in order to describe the essential elements of the vision and character of a Catholic School in South Africa. I believe that this research is necessary at this time as the academic staff in The School is no longer made up of Religious Sisters or Brothers, who, by the nature of their training, might have had a good knowledge and understanding of the vision and distinctive character of a Catholic School. For the last 18 years the academic staff has comprised Catholic, Protestant and Hindu women, as well as women of no particular religious persuasion. For this reason, it is essential that The School's staff development programme educates the staff in the key elements of what is expected of each staff member who has undertaken to respect, promote and support the Catholic ethos and the special character of The School.

In addition to researching the relevant literature, I also decided to undertake a survey of a sample of the academic staff of The School, using a questionnaire to ascertain what the staff believe to be the vision of a Catholic School, and in what aspects this vision differs from that described by Church documents and other leading authors. My hope was that this research would give me a more focused direction for the ongoing formation for which I am responsible. I also hoped to gain greater insight and clarity on the vision of a Catholic School in order to highlight areas which I have neglected to promote in both my roles as Head of the Religious Education Department and as a teacher in a Catholic School.

## **1.2. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

There are two parts to my research problem. The first part entails a review of the relevant literature in order to develop a benchmark describing the vision of a Catholic school against which I can measure the staff's vision of The School. The second part of my research involves the development and application of a tool with which I can investigate and evaluate the staff's knowledge and practice of the Church's vision for Catholic Education.

## **1.3. THE AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH PAPER**

The aims of this research paper are, thus, the following:

- To research and describe the vision and distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school as outlined in Church documents and in the commentaries and discussions written by leading authors on the subject.
- To investigate, by means of a questionnaire, the degree to which the Academic Staff of The School share and commit to a common vision of a Catholic school.
- To analyse the results of the questionnaire in order to compare the Staff's vision of a Catholic school with the vision described in the Literature Review.
- To draw conclusions that highlight aspects of the vision of a Catholic school that need to be addressed in The School's staff development programme.

## **1.4. DEFINITION AND ANALYSIS OF TERMS**

The key concepts pertaining to my study which require definition and analysis are the terms 'vision', 'an Independent Catholic School' and 'the South African context' in which The School is placed.

### 1.4.1 Vision

Vision is described as “the spirit behind an organisation.... the energising principle because it defines the desired future state which motivates a group, calling them to action” (Sofield1995: 68). Sultmann (2000) discusses Jesus’ central message about the Kingdom of God in terms of Jesus’ vision or dream for humanity. Both these descriptions imply that the vision is something to be achieved in the future. It is a goal for all within an organisation to work towards; the vision unites people in action towards a common ideal. Groome (1998) proposes that a vision is “more a hope than a claim, more a promise than a report, more a vision than a story of what has ever been achieved in the educating by any Catholic Christian community, or indeed by any educating community at all. As a vision, it is an ideal never realized completely by any school” (Groome 1998: 23).

The vision of a Catholic school describes the distinctive direction among many, with which the school chooses to align itself. It sets the boundaries for, and guides, the behaviours, attitudes, words, actions and plans of those within the Catholic school. Since the Catholic school is a “genuine and proper instrument of the Church” (The Congregation for Catholic Education 1988: #33), its vision must coincide with that of the Church, which in turn must remain faithful to Jesus’ vision - that of the coming Kingdom of God. McLaughlin argues that to set off in the direction of God’s Kingdom is to begin by radically realigning one’s values “reflected (imperfectly) in personal, social and ecological living based on the pursuit of right relationships, culminating in the aspiration of authentic human development. It has a present and a future component” (McLaughlin D 2000b: 20).

In referring in my study to the vision of a Catholic school, I am using the term as described above by McLaughlin who describes the vision in terms of an ideal to be strived towards but also as a description of the present practice of the school as it strives to live as Jesus’ body in society. The vision of a Catholic school is centred on the person of Jesus Christ. It is about bearing witness to the life and values of Jesus, a spiritual reality that already exists, because the people who believe in Jesus strive to embody his presence. In living as his body, in his memory, the vision of a Catholic school is a present reality, the future component is also a

reality because to live as Jesus did is an ideal, strived towards but never perfectly achieved.

#### **1.4.2. Independent Catholic Schools**

In 1996, the South African Schools Act recognised two categories of schools: Public and Independent. Independent schools in South Africa have the right to follow their own distinctive mission, and implement and live their own distinctive ethos, faith or philosophy. Independent schools are distinct from Public schools in the areas of admissions, staffing and curriculum options (Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa 2005). Thus, the implications of the references to Independent Schools in the 1996 South African Schools Act are, among others, that an Independent Catholic school has the right to:

- select Staff members who commit to supporting and promoting the Catholic ethos of the particular school.
- determine its own pupil admissions policy selecting those pupils who appreciate and share in the educational aims and ethos of the Catholic School.
- include Religious Education in the school's curriculum.
- include Catholic forms of liturgical worship in the daily school programme.
- determine its own governance.

Some Independent schools are partially subsidised by the Government while others are self-supporting and self-sustaining. Catholic Independent Schools in South Africa have hoped to receive substantial Government funding but Christie argues that this is not realistic.

There is every indication that Catholic schools will continue to battle for the funding they need to provide the quality of education they have striven to achieve, and this situation is unlikely to be alleviated under current global conditions. Realistically, the Catholic system will need to work under conditions where redressing historical apartheid imbalances will be difficult. Wealthier middle class Catholic schools are in direct competition in the market with private schools, and if they are to survive, they need to offer educational opportunities comparable in market terms to elite private schools (Christie 2000: 44).

My motivation for emphasising the financial implications surrounding Independent Catholic schools is that this very factor limits the degree to which Independent Catholic Schools in South Africa can strive towards the vision of the Church for her schools. Fee-paying schools, by their nature, exclude those who have little material resources. Thus, Independent Catholic Schools in South Africa, are unable to be schools for all, especially the poor, but rather cater for those who have the means to pay the fees. Christie acknowledges this fact and suggests a compromise:

It is particularly important for Catholic schools in South Africa to nurture a vision of social justice, even if it cannot be achieved. As mentioned earlier, wealthier Catholic schools are competing in the marketplace alongside other private schools, and this places very real pressures upon them. But it should not fill their consciousness to the extent that a Catholic vision is squeezed out by material, market-related concerns. Ideally, Catholic schools need to build moral and social justice concerns into their market niches. And poorer Catholic schools need to be able to draw on the solidarity of a system which values the poorest of the poor, even if it is not able to provide alleviation of their immediate social and material conditions. It is important for Catholic educators to be aware of inequalities and to work within them, rather than neglect or deny them (Christie 2000: 46).

Thus, Independent Catholic Schools in South Africa are schools which may define and live by a particular vision, ethos and faith. This allows for autonomy in governance, selection of staff and pupils, and the setting of the curriculum. However, the independent status also introduces economic factors that could easily undermine some key elements of this vision. For example, in striving towards the vision of the Church for her schools, Independent Catholic Schools are unable to offer themselves unconditionally as schools for all. Not all Catholic schools in South Africa are Independent schools. A large number of Catholic schools are Public Schools on Private Property. While staff salaries in these schools are paid by the Government, enabling the schools to be truly open to all, the autonomy of Public Schools on Private Property is compromised.

#### **1.4.3. Catholic Schools in South Africa**

In 1991, the first South African Catholic Schools' Congress was held. This Congress focussed on the theme "People of God: Educating towards a new vision". Politically, the country was still in the apartheid era, but Catholic schools

were open to children of all races and had been since 1976. Kelly (2001) describes the Vision of Catholic schools determined at this Congress as including the following goals:

- To make a positive contribution to the transformation of South African society.
- To be a community serving humanity in solidarity with the Pastoral Plan of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference.
- To create an environment of healing and reconciliation.
- To provide a firm spiritual and moral grounding for young people.
- To provide a curriculum that acknowledged cultural, racial and religious plurality.
- To ensure just wages for the staff of Catholic Schools.

Heated debate took place in the months after the Congress around the vision of Catholic schools. Kelly (2001) describes one such response from Owen Cardinal Mc Cann, who felt that the Vision Statement did not adequately address the teaching of the Catholic faith. While the statement did address the issues which, in the preceding decades, had catapulted some Catholic schools into crisis, Cardinal Mc Cann's point was valid and was addressed in the Second Catholic Schools' Congress. The Vision in 1991 sought to read the signs of the times and address political and social injustices. There was a heavy emphasis on the financial aspects of maintaining Catholic Schools. A great concern centred around the need to source funding for Catholic schools generally, but especially for those facing closure.

In September 2004, The Second National Catholic Schools' Congress convened under the title *One Vision, One Future, One Voice*. Here the vision which emerged was one concerned with a call to justice, to sharing of resources, to service, to solidarity with the poor, to nurturing the development of the whole person and to ensuring that the whole school family is educated in the vision and ethos of the school (Catholic Institute of Education 2004). Underpinning each aspect of the vision was the call to the planning and implementation of a pastoral care programme which endeavours to address the concerns of the Congress.

Having participated in both National Congresses, I was impressed at how each one sought to read the signs of the times, and at the shift from addressing political and financial concerns at the first Congress, to the focus at the Second Congress on the need to reclaim the vision of the Church to build God's Kingdom in the midst of the social ills besetting our country, with the emphasis on Pastoral Care. Cardinal Mc Cann's reservations about the lack of focus on Catholic teaching in the First National Congress were vindicated as the emphasis of the Second National Catholic Schools' Congress called for resolutions on the definition and reclaiming of the vision and ethos of a Catholic school in South Africa. His reservations and the resolutions of the Second National Congress echo my research problem as to whether the vision and distinctive character of a Catholic school are known and lived by the staff of The School.

Thus, in the context of the beginning of the Third Millennium in South Africa, the Second National Catholic Schools' Congress defined a vision for a Catholic school in South Africa that must take into account the despair in society brought about by poverty and social pressures, the decline of family life, the HIV / AIDS pandemic and the need to address the disparity between the wealthy and poorer Catholic schools.

## **1.5. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

'Delimitations' are those restrictions deliberately imposed by the researcher. It is a statement of what the researcher is not going to do or include (Leedy 2005). I have had to impose a restriction on the number of teachers I include in my survey because the Academic Staff of The School numbers 54 people. It would be too time-consuming to interview each member of the staff. Thus, for the purpose of this project, I have restricted my sample to 22 members of the academic staff. I have selected the staff members according to the following variables:

- Phases: 3 teachers from each of the Foundation and Intermediate Phases of The School and 6 teachers from each of the Senior and F.E.T. Phases (18 teachers)
- Management: 4 members of the Management Team.



- Length of service: In each of the above-mentioned categories I have chosen at least one long-serving member of staff (more than 9 years) and a relatively new member of staff (less than 3 years).

## **1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

This research paper consists of five chapters. In Chapter One I introduced the topic of my research. This chapter described the background to the research question and the aims of this paper. I defined and analysed the terms used in the title of my research paper, and stated the delimitations of this study.

Chapter Two reviews the Church documents and works of Thomas Groome and other contemporary writers who define, describe and discuss the distinctive characteristics and vision of a Catholic school. Critiques of the Church documents and Thomas Groome's distinctive characteristics are reviewed and the chapter concludes with a list of the ten distinctive characteristics that describe the vision of an Independent Catholic school in South Africa.

Chapter Three provides a description and explanation of the research methodology used as well as the model and techniques used to research the staff's vision of a Catholic school.

In Chapter Four I describe my data collection in the form of the results of the questionnaire. As I present the data, I give my analysis and, drawing on my observations of the lived practice and experience of The School, interpret the data. I have chosen to present my analysis at this point as the graphs lend themselves to an immediate description of the findings and analysis. After summarising my findings, I will address a letter to the members of staff who participated in my study describing my findings and asking them to verify or correct my interpretation of the data collected.

In Chapter Five I present my conclusion and recommendations related to the staff's vision of a Catholic school derived from a case study of an Independent Catholic School in South Africa.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“Where there is no vision the people get out of hand”.

Proverbs 29:18

In reviewing the literature which discusses the vision and distinctive character of a Catholic School, I have found that what is distinctive about Catholic education is the Catholic vision from which it takes its purpose, aims and role. This vision is based on Jesus' dream for a world transformed by Gospel values, where each person is formed as a unique individual in a community which celebrates God's presence and gifts, and reaches out to those who are less fortunate while working for the betterment of the society in which they live.

The vision is a lived reality as the Staff of a Catholic school strives to witness to the Spirit and values of Jesus Christ, the foundation and cornerstone of our schools. But there is also a future component to this vision as it can only ever be lived incompletely in the present as human persons are always in the process of becoming more like Christ. The formation of the human person involves life-long learning and as Principals, Managements and Staff become more aware of the nature of this vision it is appropriated and lived to a greater degree.

This chapter firstly aims to review the Church documents relating to Catholic Education since the Second Vatican Council, then the literature which describes key elements of a Catholic vision for education and some critiques of both the Church documents and other leading authors before concluding with a list and short description of the characteristics relevant to the context of the subject of my case study – an Independent Catholic School in South Africa.

*good map*

## **2.2. A REVIEW OF CHURCH DOCUMENTATION**

The logical starting place for a review of the literature which discusses the vision and distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school is the Catholic Church itself. This study has found that the vision of the Church for her schools has deepened and broadened with subsequent documents.

### **2.2.1. *Declaration on Christian Education (1965)***

*Declaration on Christian Education (1965)* describes the aim of Catholic Education – the formation of the whole person in preparation for the person's final end and for the good of the society to which that person belongs (#1). The document touches on the need for this education to take place in a community environment (#8), and strongly stresses the need for Catholic Educational institutions to cooperate and collaborate for the good of education (#12).

### **2.2.2. *The Catholic School (1977)***

*The Catholic School (1977)* builds on the 1965 document reaffirming that education is about the formation of the whole person (#8) and must include the teaching of morals and values (#11). Jesus Christ is the foundation and cornerstone of the entire work of a Catholic school (#34). Authentic education based on Gospel values must synthesise culture and faith, and faith and life (#37), and must keep in mind that the "aim of Catholic education is not merely the attainment of knowledge but the acquisition of values and the discovery of truth" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977: #16). The need to teach critical thinking arises out of the search for truth and should give rise to a critique of society and the pursuit of justice and freedom for all (#48, #56 and #58).

The focus of this document is more the holistic formation of the human person within community than the role of the school in relation to other centres of education and so collaboration is barely touched upon. Thus, community is defined in a very narrow sense and it is only in the later documents described below that the concept of community is broadened.

### **2.2.3. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982)**

*Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982) is first document to place Catholic Education in a broader social context. It again highlights and deepens the Church's understanding of the aim of the Catholic school as being the integral formation of the human person (#17). The following extract from the document summarises the role of a Catholic school:

The school must give constant and careful attention to cultivating in students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person; to develop in them sound judgement and the correct application of will and affectivity; to promote in them a sense of values; to encourage just attitudes and prudent behaviour; to introduce them to the cultural patrimony handed down from previous generations; to prepare them for professional life, and to encourage the friendly interchange among students who differ in character and social background that will lead to mutual understanding (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982: #12).

The document reinforces the need for education to take place in a community in which teachers witness to the values of Jesus and develop in their students a social conscience (#19), and the ability to synthesise culture, faith and life (#20, #29 and #31). For the first time the discussion on values education introduces the term counter-values, an important point for this study as it suggests that included in the vision of a Catholic school is the calling to be counter-cultural in its teaching and witness.

*Lay Catholics in Schools* also reminds Catholic schools of the need to collaborate within the school, "with others in the educational community, and with the entire human community" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982: #34). This, too, is an important call and another concept which this study believes should form part of the vision of an Independent Catholic School in South Africa to counter the competitive nature of an Independent School in South Africa.

### **2.2.4. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1998)**

This document reiterates the theme of education being the integral formation of the human person (#4), the need for the synthesis of faith, culture and life (#14), and that reason and faith give rise to an education that emphasises "[...] there is

no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring notions and growing in wisdom. The various school subjects do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered” (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1998: #14). Clarity is given to Catholic schools in that they are schools for students of all religious and social backgrounds, but especially for the poor – the materially poor, spiritually poor and those lacking in love and values (#15 and #16). The need for authentic community is again emphasised in this document.

### **2.2.5. A Summary of the Recurring Themes in the Church Documents**

The themes which are common to the four documents reviewed above, and which form part of the Church's vision for her schools are the following:

- Authentic education is about the integral formation of the human person.
- The authentic education of the person can only take place in a community which lives and teaches right relationships.
- Jesus Christ is at the centre of the Catholic school and is the model for values and behaviour.
- There is no separation between secular and religious subjects but rather a synthesis of culture, faith, reason and life through the teaching of critical thinking.
- Catholic schools must promote a social conscience and social justice.

Themes which emerge from the documents that are not as obviously emphasised but are important to the vision of a Catholic school in the current context of South African education are:

- The need for Catholic schools to collaborate with other educational institutions.
- The call for Catholic schools to teach and witness to counter-cultural values.

### **2.2.6. Critiques of Church Documentation relating to Education**

Among leading authors who have critiqued the Church documents relating to Catholic schools and education are Denis McLaughlin and Gerald Grace.

McLaughlin's critiques were written with the South African context in mind while Grace wrote from a perspective of Catholic schools in England. McLaughlin (2000c) argues that the earlier documents give evidence of dualism while *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* is more realistic and optimistic. His conclusion, however, is that "the problem is not so much in the Church's teaching but with its practice: If Catholic performance does not match Catholic promise, then truly we have failed" (McLaughlin 2000c: 26).

Grace (2002), on the other hand, in discussing *Lay Catholics in Schools* warns that the ideals described in the Church documents might overpower a sense of realism, creating "[u]nduly high expectations for the role of Catholic school leaders and teachers [that] may have a counter-productive effect on actual recruitment and succession patterns" (Grace 2002: 20).

While acknowledging the warnings issued by both McLaughlin and Grace, this study takes the view, argued in Chapter One of this paper, that the vision of the Church for her schools is both an ideal, strived towards but never fully achieved, yet lived, albeit fallibly, in the present by those in Catholic schools who strive to follow Jesus Christ. The Vatican documents, in their common themes, lay the foundations for the vision of the Church for her schools. In the next section of this chapter, this study will review the work of Thomas Groome, whose contribution to the subject, in the words of McLaughlin (2000 a), is "intellectually satisfying in that principles are persuasively argued. His thesis is a significant contribution to the literature" (McLaughlin 2000a: 110).

### **2.3. A REVIEW OF THOMAS GROOME'S DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

In *Educating for Life* (1998), Groome identifies five theological characteristics of Catholic Education and three cardinal characteristics. He quotes Richard Mc Brien who suggests that while Catholicism shares its various characteristics with one or another Christian Church or tradition, a case can be made that: "Nowhere else except in the Catholic Church are all of Catholicism's characteristics present in the precise configuration in which they are found in Catholicism" (Groome 1998: 57).

Groome also looks outside of the Church to the work of Langdon Gilkey, an American Baptist, for a description of the distinguishing features whose unique configuration is decidedly 'Catholic'. From Gilkey, Groome (1998) describes Catholicism's:

- Positive anthropology
- Sacramental view of life
- Communal experience of human and Christian existence
- Commitment to tradition
- Appreciation of rationality and learning

Because these features are grounded in Catholicism's understanding of God and of human existence, Groome calls them the 'theological' characteristics. The three cardinal characteristics he identifies with ontological, sociological and universal concerns.

- Catholicism views anthropology as more than an abstract view of the person. It commits the Church to the personhood of humans – to who they become as ethical human beings.
- Sociologically the Church is committed to the bringing about of basic justice in society, and not merely to an ideal of justice.
- In committing to catholicity, its universal concern, the Church commits to the common good.

What makes these characteristics distinctive is the combination of all three elements – all three must simultaneously be present for them to describe aspects of a Catholic vision.

### **2.3.1. A Critique of Groome's Distinctive Characteristics of a Catholic School**

Groome's distinctive characteristics are a systematic treatise of the recurring aspects of Catholic education described in Church documents. In the following section this study will undertake a brief analysis of the writings of leading authors in relation to Groome's thesis.

### **2.3.1.1. Positive Anthropology**

Groome (1998) bases his vision for Catholic schools' holistic education on the Church's theological understanding of the human person as made in the image and likeness of God. Human nature is capable of sin, yet is graced and capable of living in right relationship with God, others and the world. Treston (2001a) describes this Catholic anthropology as positive and hopeful, and Groome (1998) as realistic optimism. Students must be given every opportunity to develop, affirm and celebrate their individual gifts, but the right to these opportunities must always be balanced in a school with a corresponding emphasis on responsibilities.

Thomas Carey (2001) argues in the same way as Groome by quoting Thomas Aquinas as follows:

Aquinas proposed that we have the capacity to know and the capacity to choose. It is, therefore, important that education should address not only intellectual and physical faculties but also moral and spiritual ones if the whole person is to be developed" (Carey 2001: 2).

In reviewing the literature on the Catholicism's positive anthropology, the overwhelming consensus (Brick 1999; Carey 2001; Duminuco 1999; Freund 2001; Mc Laughlin D 2000b; McClelland 1996; Quillinan 2002; Sullivan 2000; Sultmann 2000) is that this is one aspect which distinguishes Catholic schools from their public counterparts. "One central difference between these two kinds of school is that Catholic schools, in contrast to 'common' schools, can base their educational influence on a specific and detailed vision of the meaning of human life and of existence as a whole" (Mc Laughlin T. 1999:67).

Human persons, created in the image of God, are social beings, made for community. The literature relating to this aspect of Groome's vision of Catholic Schools will be reviewed below.

### **2.3.1.2. Communal experience of human and Christian existence**

The premise upon which Groome bases his discussion on the Catholic school as community, is that made in the image and likeness of God, "[W]e find our identity and true selves in relationship with others" (Groome 1996: 114; see also Brick



1999; Hypher 1996; Quillinan 2001; Sultmann 2000). He goes on to describe a Catholic school community as a place of welcome and hospitality (see also Henning 2000; Nouwen 1994; Sullivan 2000), where right relationships are realized.

As a public community a Catholic school must educate “its pupils in social responsibility, informing and forming them to contribute to the ‘common good’” (Groome 1996: 116; see also Bryk 1996; Catholic Institute of Education 1998; Grace 2000; McLaughlin D. 2000b; McClelland 1996; Quillinan 2001; Sullivan 2000). As an ecclesial community, “every Catholic and religiously sponsored school should have a vibrant worship life, with ample opportunities for student liturgies, times of prayer and reflection (e.g., retreats), and be suffused with religious symbols that nurture the faith identity of students” (Groome 1998: 209; see also Cornwall 2004; Quillinan 2001).

To sum up the overwhelming degree of agreement with Groome’s premise as to the importance of community in Catholic schools, McGregor writes in relation to the South African context:

One of the most intriguing issues arising from the scholastic outcomes debate is the suggestion that certain private schools, especially the Catholic ones, have a resource that is increasingly in short supply in other kinds of schools. That resource can be called *communitas*, the capacity of a community, principally via the active parents or adults, to offer nurturant support to its youth (Mc Gregor 1992: 347).

### **2.3.1.3. A Sacramental Consciousness**

While Groome’s other distinctive characteristics resonate with the sentiments expressed in the Vatican documents reviewed in section 2.2 above, his arguments for a sacramental cosmology are drawn from the reflections of Karl Rahner (Sultmann 2000:69). He summarizes a sacramental cosmology as “the attitude that the world is gracious, meaningful and worthwhile” (Groome 1998: 130), and argues that the gift of life is to be celebrated. Teachers can foster this attitude by encouraging imagination, contemplation and critical reflection.

Duminuco agrees with Groome's perspective and argues that "education, the very process of helping young people to come to know and explore the material creation and its developments in culture and language, in science and social studies, is really a way of helping them to find God in all things; to find God in and through God's creation" (Duminuco 1999: 137; see also Treston 2001a).

The degree of support by other leading authors for this characteristic as described by Groome is not obvious. Many authors agree that Catholic Schools should be communities which celebrate the sacraments but the theology of a sacramental consciousness is not, on the whole, developed beyond this in relation to the vision of a Catholic school.

#### **2.3.1.4. Commitment to Tradition**

Groome links his proposal that a commitment to tradition should inform the curriculum in a Catholic school with the Church documents' emphasis on the need to synthesise culture and faith and faith and life. Quillinan argues that: "The very purpose of education is this synthesis of faith and culture. [...] A comprehensive Religious Education programme will help young people become fully informed about their Catholic faith tradition and about the importance of religion and religious issues generally in their search for meaning in life" (Quillinan 2002: 5; see also McLaughlin T 1996; Purnell 1985; Sullivan 2000).

McClelland (1996) identifies tradition in a Catholic school context as related to the extended family of the communion of saints, but O'Keefe (1996) supports an aspect of Groome's interpretation of tradition when he says that: "Education is the passing of sacred stories from one generation to the next" (O'Keefe 1996: 25; see also Catholic Institute of Education 1998; Sultmann 2000). Cook (2004) argues that "Academic excellence is a reflection of the Catholic intellectual tradition. It is very much a part of our identity" (Cook 2004:11).

While the communion of saints and the need to strive for academic excellence are aspects of the Catholic tradition, the passing of sacred stories from one generation to the next is the tool for teaching the tradition of the Church. However, if lay Catholic teachers, as well as teachers of other denominations and faiths, have a

superficial knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith, the living of the Catholic tradition will be seriously compromised. This reinforces the point made in the statement of my research problem that the vision of a Catholic school needs to be defined and described in order for it to be practiced.

#### **2.3.1.5. Appreciation of Rationality and Learning**

The fifth distinctive characteristic of Catholic education proposed by Groome is “the concept of rationality which includes the notion of faith seeking understanding” (Sultmann 2000: 70; see also Cornwell 2004). In *Educating for Life*, Groome approaches the concept of rationality from the perspective of educating in wisdom for life-long learning (see also Catholic Institute of Education 1998; Hastings 1996; Cornwall 2004). Duminuco (1999) emphasises that understanding is a freeing process enabling young people to make informed choices. Sullivan supports Duminuco by quoting St Bernard of Clairvaux:

There are many who seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge: that is curiosity. There are others that desire to know in order that they may themselves be known: that is vanity. Others seek knowledge in order to sell it: that is dishonourable. But there are those who seek knowledge in order to edify others: that is love (St Bernard of Clairvaux in Sullivan 2000: 206)

Thus rationality, learning and critical thinking form one concept that is a distinctive feature of the vision of Catholic Education.

#### **2.3.1.6. A Commitment to Personhood**

“Catholic education intends to inform and form the very ‘being’ of its students, to mould their identity and agency – who they are and how they live” (Groome 1996: 121). Duminuco (1999) supports this perspective by saying that: “[T]he entire effort and vision of Catholic education is centred on the person of Jesus Christ [...]. For the ultimate purpose, the very reason for the existence of Catholic schools is to form men and women for others in imitation of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, the Man for Others *par excellence*” (Duminuco 1999: 141). Ntibagirirwa (2000) calls this aspect of Catholic education ‘virtue ethics’.

Virtue Ethics is concerned with the moral reconstruction of a person; [...] By definition, Virtue Ethics is an ethic that is rooted in the agent who acts – it is an agent-based ethics. Accordingly, the aim of Virtue Ethics is to teach people not so much what to do and how to do it [...], but rather what kind of person one is called to be (Ntibagirirwa 2000: 88).

In *Educating for Life* Groome (1998) (see also Mc Laughlin 2000b) develops the concept of personhood to mean persons are spiritual beings and that Catholic schools should ensure that formation in spirituality is an integral part of its curriculum.

### **2.3.1.7. A Commitment to Social Justice**

Groome bases his argument for a commitment to social justice on “the biblical mandate of justice with a distinctive accent, namely, a dual commitment to the *dignity of the person* and to the *common good* of all” (Groome 1996: 122; see also Brick 1999; McLaughlin D. 2000c; Murray 1996). Haldane (1996), however, does not see a commitment to social justice, *per se*, as a distinguishing characteristic of a vision for Catholic schools. He argues that those of other denominations and faiths also commit to developing a social conscience. He concludes by saying that the Catholic perspective is only distinctive when it draws on theological ethics.

Sullivan and other contemporary writers understand a commitment to social justice as a commitment to the common good. “Central to Catholic social teaching is a particular interpretation of the common good. This is a term that can be better understood in the light of two other terms: solidarity and subsidiarity” (Sullivan 2000: 141; see also Grace 2000; Grace 2002; McLaughlin 2000b; Quillinan 2002; Treston 2001a).

In the South African context Christie (2000) states: “It is particularly important for Catholic schools in South Africa to nurture a vision of social justice, even if it cannot be achieved. [...] Ideally, Catholic schools need to build moral and social justice concerns into their market niches” (Christie 2000: 46). Thus, a commitment to social justice is an important distinctive characteristic of a Catholic school in South Africa.

### 2.3.1.8. A Commitment to Catholicity

Groome (1996) describes the origins of the word 'catholic' as meaning 'embracing the whole' or including everyone. He argues that, in respecting the dignity of each person, Catholic schools must be places of welcome for all, where diversity is embraced and where a curriculum is as wide and deep as possible to cater for the diverse gifts and talents of the students (Groome 1998). Questions around the validity of the suggestion that catholicity, as described by Groome, should be a distinctive characteristic of a Catholic school have given rise to lively debate. Grace (2002) describes James Arthur's research findings as arguing against total inclusion because for him, the increasing numbers of pupils from other faiths and cultures, has led to the culture of Catholic schools being almost indistinguishable from that of Public schools in England.

Barnes (1996) draws on Catholic theology in providing an argument for inclusion.

What the Church knows in faith to be true is the good news that in Christ the promise of salvation is made to all people. [...] There is firstly the principle of dialogue: an engagement with the other who is yet a neighbour. Secondly, there is the conscious conviction of bearing a message which challenges and enlightens all people, both inside and outside the Church" ((Barnes 1996: 236; see also Catholic Institute of Education 1998; Hastings 1996).

Mc Laughlin (2000b), in support of 'catholicity', quotes the late pontiff in reminding Catholic schools that "It is true that the Church is not an end unto herself, since she is ordered toward the Kingdom of God" (Groome 2000b: 21). In the South African context Kelly (2001) quotes from the South African Catholic Bishops Conference's 1998 Pastoral Letter and Directives:

Catholic education is not just about the education of Catholics. Even in the early days, many of our schools welcomed children who were not Catholic. Today we see this openness as an expression of our Church's desire to be 'a Community Serving Humanity' (Kelly 2001:5).

In Chapter One I argued that Independent Catholic schools in South Africa were unable to unconditionally live the vision of the Church for her schools as, without Government funding, Independent schools were obliged to be fee-paying schools. The Catholic International Education Office (1994) speaks to this point when it

says that these wealthier, fee-paying schools still have a role to play within Catholic education:

When we speak of education for all, we also have in mind certain Catholic education centres attended by children of well-to-do families. The question arising in this case concerns the content of that education and the role that those who graduate from those schools would play in the urgent task of creating a society where the poor would no longer be marginalised and excluded, as now, but take their place worthily at the table of the children of God. The greatest challenge which these centres have to take up is the formation of professionals endowed with a conscience and a sense of social commitment. (The Catholic International Education Office 1994: 108)

I support the views expressed above in support of catholicity as a distinctive characteristic of a Catholic school and concludes this point with a quote from Cornwall (2004):

For indeed whoever seeks to save his life will lose it but whoever gives away his life for the sake of the gospel will find it. And these are no mere words – they point to what the Lord did. The centurion will acclaim the identity of this man as Son of God in the place of Calvary where the identity is most radically risked. That is the way the vision is kept safe. So the question which hangs over us is not 'How can we protect our communities of faith?' but 'How can these communities of faith serve a broken needy world?' (Cornwell 2004: 18).

### **2.3.2. Summary**

In this section I have analysed Groome's eight distinctive characteristics which underpin the vision of a Catholic school. While there are some writers who argue that Groome's characteristics support dualism rather than a traditional Catholic approach to education, the vast majority give support to, and reinforce the key elements that Groome describes as the ideal vision for a Catholic school. However, in reviewing the literature of contemporary writers as well as the Church documents on Catholic education, this study found two other trends which emerged from the review, namely the call of Catholic schools to be counter-cultural and to collaborate with other Catholic schools, as well as with public schools, in order to contribute to, and enrich, the education process for all.

## 2.4. GENERAL TRENDS NOT EMPHASISED BY GROOME

In the literature reviewed, the 'common good' is a theme that is developed by many writers in relation to one or other of the eight characteristics discussed above. However, the trends relating to the call to collaboration and to be counter-cultural are also mentioned by many writers either in terms of the common good or as stand alone aims of a Catholic school. This study believes that these two points are sufficiently important in the context of an Independent Catholic School in South Africa, as well as in the global context, to warrant the emphasis as concepts defining the vision of a Catholic school.

### 2.4.1. The Call to be Counter-cultural

Mc Laughlin (2000b) draws on the work of Diarmuid O'Murchu to make a case for Catholic schools pursuing the aims of the Kingdom of God rather than those of the world. The way to do this, he argues, is through a transformation of relationships and values. While he does not intentionally use the word counter-cultural in relation to his theme, he juxtaposes the values of the earthly kingdom with those of the Kingdom Jesus preached, as well as the values lived by the Church in opposition to those promoted by the Kingdom of God. In each case the Catholic school, in promoting the common good, is called to live the values of God's Kingdom and, in doing so, is called to be counter-cultural.

Grace argues in the same vein as McLaughlin and says that "an important mission for Catholic schools everywhere is to try to act as a counter-cultural force to strengthen spiritual and moral culture in society, to keep alive notions of the common good and of social justice and to inspire young people to defend Gospel values in an age in which they are under threat" (Grace 2000: 13; see also Groome 1996).

Sullivan (2000) goes one step further when he claims that "Catholic schools will *challenge* those prevailing values and priorities of society that compete for our allegiance, for example success and self-expression, materialism and hedonism, individualism and managerialism, sexism and racism. A Catholic education will

witness to alternative values and demonstrate the possibility of a different lifestyle from those being adopted in the wider society. (Sullivan 2000: 14. *My italics*).

South African education has, historically, been strongly influenced by Calvinism. In this context, Catholic schools are challenged to be counter-cultural and promote Catholic values such as inclusion and respect for the dignity of all persons.

#### **2.4.2. The Call To Collaboration**

For a Catholic school to achieve excellence at the expense of other schools, or work in isolation while other Catholic schools are poorly managed or struggling to provide good education, is counter to the values of God's Kingdom and the call of the SACBC to be a 'Community Serving Humanity'. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1965: #12) calls on Catholic schools to cooperate and collaborate for the good of common good.

The SACBC writing for Catholic schools in South Africa wrote that "[i]t would be wrong for our schools to look down on schools that are not working properly, instead we must look for ways to help" (SACBC 1997: 60).

Duminuco (1996) writes in the same vein as the SACBC when he reminds Catholic schools that collaboration is not an end in itself. "It exists precisely so that we can offer more effective service to those who need us" (Duminuco 1996: 154).

Finally, the Catholic Institute of Education, at the Second National Catholic Schools Congress, issued a vision statement in which Catholic schools in South Africa are exhorted to "[s]hare what we have been given, pointing prophetically to the need for justice, solidarity and the affirmation of the dignity of all, especially the 'little ones'" (Catholic Institute of Education 2004: 52).

#### **2.5. CONCLUSION**

The aim of this chapter was to report, discuss and analyse the Church documents and writings of contemporary authors concerning the nature or vision of a Catholic



school. I found there to be much agreement in the discussion on the key elements I identified, with some dissention arising in the area of the openness of Catholic schools to children of all denominations and faiths. However, the Church documents shed clarity by describing Catholic schools as schools for all, especially the disenfranchised of the world.

Thus, the trends that have been identified in the literature can be summarised into ten distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school. The first eight characteristics have been identified and described by Thomas Groome, while, after synthesising the literature and applying it to the South African context, I have added the last two as essential elements in the vision of an Independent Catholic school in South Africa. These characteristics are:

- A **positive anthropology** that challenges those involved in Catholic education to guard the dignity of each person and ensure that the entire educative process is one which forms the whole person in their growth towards the fullness of life in God's heavenly Kingdom, while contributing to the common good on earth.
- A **communal experience** of human experience, where each person recognises that, made in the image of our Trinitarian God, identity can only be formed in right relationship with others.
- A **sacramental consciousness** that fosters a consciousness of God's presence and will, and encourages a reverence of creation as God's gift to humankind.
- A commitment to Catholic **tradition** whereby meaning is found in the passing on of sacred stories and rituals, as well as in an appreciation of Catholicism's rich liturgical and spiritual heritage.
- An appreciation of **rationality** and learning as the route to wisdom and a developed individual and social conscience.
- A commitment to **personhood** as the formation of persons who not only know but live the values of Jesus and his Kingdom in a life-giving spirituality.
- A commitment to **social justice** whereby the Catholic school orientates students towards the achievement of the common good.

- A commitment to **catholicity** in welcoming persons from all cultures, races and religions, while acknowledging that this openness is limited or restricted by financial restraints.
- A call to be **counter-cultural** where the values of God's Kingdom are consciously lived and supported rather than those of the present day society.
- A Call to **collaboration** with other Catholic schools, especially those lacking in resources, as well as with other schools for the good of education.

These distinctive characteristics form the standards by which governance, management, behaviour and practice can be measured in the daily life of a Catholic school. They also give direction for the Staff, Parents and Governing Body, by providing the vision of Jesus for a world transformed by Gospel values.

In Chapter Three of this paper, I discuss the theoretical framework for my research around the question as to The Staff's vision of a Catholic school in relation to the vision held by the Church for her schools.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. SELECTED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY – QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In Chapter Two I reviewed the Church documents and writings of contemporary authors relating to the vision and distinctive character of a Catholic school and concluded with a summary of ten distinctive characteristics which describe the vision of an Independent Catholic school in South Africa. In this chapter I will describe the research methodology I employed for the second part of my research, that of formulating my research question and selecting and analysing the relevant data.

In meeting the aims of this study, to determine whether the Academic Staff of The School have an adequate vision of a Catholic school, I selected a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one, but with a mixed-method design. "In fact, researchers often combine elements of both approaches in what is sometimes called a **mixed-method design**. For example it is not unusual for researchers to *count* (and therefore quantify) certain kinds of data in what is, for all intents and purposes, a qualitative investigation" (Leedy 2005: 97).

I will not be measuring variables with the purpose of predicting or controlling phenomena as in quantitative research, but rather seeking a better understanding of the nature of a phenomenon – The Staff's vision of a Catholic school – that cannot be quantified but only described tentatively. Leedy (2005) describes qualitative research as "typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant's point of view" (Leedy 2005: 94).

The vision of a Catholic school and the way that this vision is lived out by The Staff is a complex issue. It cannot be reduced to quantifiable elements but rather described in its wholeness after the collection of data, in this case primarily from the response to a questionnaire. However, the responses to items on the

questionnaire will be coded and analysed statistically in order to show the degree to which the staff agree with the vision of the Church for Catholic schools.

Bassey (1999), believes that qualitative methodology is difficult to define as it means different things in different contexts, but he refers, as his starting point, to a generic description of qualitative research compiled by Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2):

[Q]ualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials ... that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand" (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:2 in Bassey 1999).

While my methodology is mainly aligned to qualitative research methodology, I have employed some elements of quantitative research such as the use of the SPSS programme to statistically analyse the data collected according to different variables. Leedy (2005) argues that while there is a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research, the two methods are not mutually exclusive. Thus, in employing qualitative research methodology, I will be studying the Staff's vision of the Catholic school in the natural setting of The School. I am attempting to interpret those distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school that the Staff has identified as elements of a vision of a Catholic school in the light of the description which emerged from the literature review. I have collected the data needed for interpretation using a number of techniques, namely a questionnaire, personal observation of the practice and lived experience of The School, and verification of the data by the staff by means of a letter summarising the findings for their correction or approval. I used statistical measurement from the quantitative research method in order to analyse the data collected from the questionnaires. The qualitative research model I selected is the case study method which I will discuss in the section below.

### 3.2. SELECTION OF A RESEARCH MODEL – THE CASE STUDY

It is difficult to find agreement as to a definition of the case study model. There is also disagreement as to the credibility of the case study as a scientific model of research. Yin (1994) acknowledged that “within the academic community there is opposition to the idea of case study on the grounds of a ‘lack of rigor’ and ‘little basis for scientific generalization’” (Yin 1994:9 in Bassey 1999: 34). He, however, argues that a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, takes account of many variables through the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence, and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin 1994 in Bassey 1999).

There are many definitions of the case study model but two descriptions that are most suited to the context of this study are from Clough (2002) and Leedy (2005). Clough argues that “Case studies [...] are often seen as prime examples of qualitative research – which adopts an interpretive approach to data, studies ‘things’ within their context and considers the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation” (Clough 2002: 17).

Leedy defines the case study method as “A type of qualitative research in which in-depth data are gathered relative to a single individual, program, or event, for the purpose of learning more about an unknown or poorly understood situation” (Leedy 2005:108).

I chose the case study approach for this research paper as I am studying the Staff’s vision of The School within the context of their experience of the vision lived within The School. The Staff’s vision has previously not been defined or clarified and could, therefore, be said to be poorly understood. I have gathered in-depth data (the Staff’s beliefs relating to the vision of The School), for the purpose of defining the Staff’s vision and comparing it to that of the Church for her schools. By doing so, I hope to gain insight into the areas of agreement and disagreement between the Church’s views and those of the Staff in order to address the discrepancies in the Staff Development programme.

There are different styles of case studies within the field of education research. Bassey (1999) makes reference to Stenhouse (1985:49) who describes three styles in the following terms:

- Evaluative case study where a case is studied in depth in order to allow stakeholders to assess the status of policies or programmes. This study is an evaluative case study in that it is researching the lived vision of The School and detailing aspects which differ from the vision of the Church for her schools.
- Educational case study researchers are concerned with enriching the thinking and discourse of the staff of an institution by developing or refining educational theories by providing reflective documents of evidence. This study intends deepening the understanding of the Staff of The School as to the vision which gives energy to the life of The School as well as direction for the future.
- Case Study in action research intends contributing to the development of the aspect of the institution under study in order to guide or revise the action or practice of the institution. This study will provide the guidelines needed to give direction for the Staff development programme whereby staff members are formed in the vision and ethos of The School.

(Bassey 1999)

Thus, the research into the Staff's vision of The School intends to incorporate all three styles of case study research in order to evaluate the lived vision of the Staff, enrich the thinking of the Staff around the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school and thirdly to provide guidelines for further action.

One of the criticisms of the case study method mentioned earlier is the rejection of generalisation. The criticism is based on the notion that the results add nothing to the body of knowledge if they apply only in one situation (Bassey 1999). Bassey, however, believes that some generalisation can occur and he calls this 'fuzzy generalisation'. Unlike scientific generalisation where there are no exceptions, fuzzy generalisations allow for an element of uncertainty as researchers report on possibilities of the findings being similar in another institution. Experience can never be generalised, but a rich description can 'ring true' beyond the individual context.

In concluding this section on case study research I use the words of Sharan Merriam (1988):

Naturalistic inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Humans are best suited to this task – and best when using methods that make use of human sensibilities such as interviewing, observing, and analyzing (Merriam 1988: 3).

Merriam makes reference to data collection methods and I will review the techniques applied in case studies in the following section.

### **3.3. RESEARCH TECHNIQUES**

In discussing research techniques, Bassey (1999) claims that in case study research, there are no specific methods of data collection. The researcher may choose whatever methods are the most practical and relevant. Merriam (1988) agrees and says that “[t]he opportunity to use multiple methods of data collection is a major strength of case study research” (Merriam 1988: 69). Merriam continues by making an argument for triangulation of the data. “Methodological triangulation combines dissimilar methods such as interviews, observations, and physical evidence to study the same unit” (*ibid*).

I selected three research techniques for this study in order to access data from three different perspectives and then triangulate the data. The research techniques used were:

- A questionnaire given to a sample of teachers from each of the four phases in the school as well as to a sample from the Management.
- Personal observations made over time based on my position as a member of the Senior Management of The School.
- A summary of the findings will be given to the staff who participated in the research so that each one can verify, or not, that the findings are accurate and true to their responses.

My intention in using these three techniques was to ensure as great a validity as possible of the data collected regarding the Staff's vision of a Catholic school and

how that vision related to the Church's vision, as well as to ensure that I remained as objective as possible.

### **3.3.1. The Questionnaire**

Leedy (2005) claims that survey research "involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people – perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences – by asking them questions and tabulating their answers. The ultimate goal is to learn about a large population by surveying a sample of that population; thus, we might call this approach a *descriptive survey* or *normative survey*" (Leedy 2005: 183). The survey techniques he identifies are the face-to-face and telephone interviews and the questionnaire.

I chose to approach my data collection first in the form of a questionnaire, in order to survey as many of the academic staff as possible.

#### **3.3.1.1. Development of the Questionnaire**

In developing the questionnaire to be used in this research study, I wanted to discover what the staff believed to be distinctive about The School – the essence of The School that made it different to other schools, whether they are public schools or religious based schools of other denominations or faiths. I also needed to ask questions pertaining to the beliefs of each staff member about the Church's vision for a Catholic school and whether they saw evidence of this aspect of the vision lived and practiced in The School. These aims were to firstly establish how the staff would describe the distinctive characteristics of The School in order to describe the staff's vision of a Catholic school, and secondly to ascertain to what degree the staff agree with the vision of the Church for Catholic schools.

The questionnaire allowed me to collect data from a range of participants representing the Academic Staff of the School. While reading the literary texts related to my literature review, I wrote down key points and statements relating to the ten points I identified as being the distinctive characteristics of an Independent Catholic school in South Africa. I drew up a table with ten headings corresponding to the ten distinctive characteristics. I then grouped the key points, questions I had



formulated, and statements under these headings, but in three categories: statements describing aspects of The Church’s vision for her schools; questions relating to the teacher’s personal practice in implementing the vision; and statements describing The School’s lived expression of the vision.

In designing the questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix A, I decided to begin with an open-ended question allowing the teachers to write their own thoughts on the essence or distinctive characteristics of The School, rather than be led to answer with words from the statements in the following three parts of the questionnaire. This was Part 1 of the Questionnaire.

Part 2 consisted of 30 statements I selected from the table I had drawn up. In selecting I chose the three most relevant questions or statements for each of the ten characteristics in each of the three categories described above. These statements were an attempt to discover if the Staff strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or were not sure whether the particular aspect of a distinctive characteristic of the vision of a Catholic school was practiced in The School or not. The design of Part 2 is illustrated in Table 1.

<b>Distinctive Characteristic</b>	<b>Question Numbers</b>		
Positive Anthropology	1	11	21
Commitment to Community	2	12	22
Sacramental Consciousness	3	13	23
Commitment to Tradition	4	14	24
Rationality	5	15	25
Personhood	6	16	26
Catholicity	7	17	27
Social Justice	8	18	28
Counter-cultural	9	19	29
Collaboration	10	20	30

Table 1. The themes and question numbers of Part 2.

Part 3 attempted to survey the beliefs and practices of the participants in order to ascertain to what degree the staff believes they are living and practicing the vision of a Catholic school. In designing this part of the questionnaire, I selected from my

table of questions, statements and key points, three questions for each distinctive characteristic. The design of Part 3 is described in Table 2.

Part 4 of the questionnaire comprised a list of statements relating to the Church's vision for Catholic schools. The participants were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. I asked them to place a second X in the last column if they agreed that the characteristic described by the particular statement was evident as practice in The School. The design of Part 4 is described in Table 3.

Distinctive Characteristic	Question Numbers		
	Positive Anthropology	31	41
Commitment to Community	32	42	52
Sacramental Consciousness	33	43	53
Commitment to Tradition	34	44	54
Rationality	35	45	55
Personhood	36	46	56
Catholicity	37	47	57
Social Justice	38	48	58
Counter-cultural	39	49	59
Collaboration	40	50	60

Table 2. The themes and question numbers of Part 3.

Distinctive Characteristic	Question Numbers		
	Positive Anthropology	61	71
Commitment to Community	62	72	82
Sacramental Consciousness	63	73	83
Commitment to Tradition	64	74	84
Rationality	65	75	85
Personhood	66	76	86
Catholicity	67	77	87
Social Justice	68	78	88
Counter-cultural	69	79	89
Collaboration	70	80	90

Table 3. The themes and question numbers of Part 4.

In designing the questionnaire, I planned Parts 2, 3 and 4 to evaluate whether what the teacher agreed were the Church's teaching related to her vision for Catholic schools (Part 4) were in fact seen by the teachers to be The School's practice (Part 2) as implemented by the teachers themselves (Part 3). The rationale behind my design was an understanding from the literature review that the vision is not only an ideal giving direction, but also a description of the community's lived experience as they make Christ's Kingdom more visible within The School. Thus, the purpose was to obtain representative and generalised findings related to the Staff's vision of a Catholic school and if that vision is lived within The School.

The last section on my questionnaire requested information about each participant. In placing this section at the end I followed a suggestion made by Cox (1996) who writes:

I recommend that a section at the end of the questionnaire be used to identify categories of respondents. My reason is that I prefer that the content of the questionnaire be completed before the respondent places himself or herself into particular categories. Care should be taken not to overload this section. Include only those variables that are deemed significant (Cox 1996: 24).

Thus, I only asked the respondent to fill in her name, her religious affiliation and her length of service at The School. In the next section I will describe the process I used in order to select the sample for my survey.

### **3.3.1.2. Selection of the Sample**

After designing the questionnaire I selected a stratified random sample of the Academic Staff of The School to complete the questionnaire. Leedy (2005) proposes that in stratified random sampling, "the researcher samples equally from each one of the layers in the overall population" (Leedy 2005: 202). He gives as an advantage of random sampling the "guaranteeing [of] equal representation of each of the identified strata" (*ibid*: 202).

I identified the Management as one strata or group of individuals, and then teachers from each of the Foundation Phase, the Intermediate Phase, the Senior

Phase and the F.E.T. Phase as the other four strata. Within each of the four phases I selected at least one teacher who has taught for less than three years at The School, and at least one who has taught for more than 9 years. The teachers' names from each phase were put into a box and I drew three names from each of the Foundation and Intermediate Phases and six from each of the Senior and F.E.T. Phases. Thus, my stratified random sample did not conform to Leedy's description of sampling equally from each strata, but, because the Senior and F.E.T. Phases require specialist teachers and also have three classes per grade rather than the two classes in the Intermediate and Foundation Phases, there are almost twice as many teachers in the last two phases of The School as in the first two phases. My sample, therefore, numbered eighteen teachers and four members of the Management. This sample represents 40% of the total academic staff.

In selecting the participants in such a random manner, I hoped to eliminate sample bias. But Leedy (2005) points out that “[I]n the research environment, the researcher cannot avoid having data contaminated by bias of one sort or another. What is unprofessional, however, is for the researcher to fail to acknowledge the likelihood of biased data or fail to recognise the possibility of bias in the study” (Leedy 2005: 210). The possible bias that could have influenced the sample of teachers who participated in this study are:

- Two members of the Management team, the Principal and the Deputy, are non-teaching members and I eliminated them from the sample as the questions related to classroom practice, among other concepts. One member of Management was on long-leave and only to return after the conclusion of this study, and another Head of Department was leaving on The School overseas tour and would not have been available for a follow-up interview. Thus the four members of Management who were surveyed were the only four that were available to participate in the study.
- I excluded the Computer teacher from the possible sample. She was responsible for designing The School's report cards according to the demands of the new curriculum. She worked until long into each evening for the last three weeks of the term and to ask her to complete a questionnaire would have been unkind and insensitive, given her work load and responsibility.

- Two teachers from the Intermediate Phase were on long-leave as was one teacher from the F.E.T. Phase. These teachers were excluded from the possible sample.
- I had to make a decision as to which Phase to allocate 8 teachers who teach across two phases. If they were a class teacher in a particular phase, I included them in that phase's sample. However, if they were subject specialists who were not class teachers, I allocated them to the Phase in which they spent the majority of their teaching time.

### **3.3.2. Observations**

Leedy (2005) describes the use of observations in qualitative research in the following way:

The qualitative researcher may make observations either as a relative outsider or, especially in the case of an ethnography, as a participant observer. Unlike observations conducted in quantitative studies, observations in a qualitative study are intentionally unstructured and free-flowing [...]. The primary advantage of conducting observations in this manner is flexibility: The researcher can take advantage of unforeseen data sources as they surface (Leedy 2005: 145).

In making observations I drew on my knowledge of the practice of The School in living out the Church's vision for Catholic schools as well as on observations I made at staff meetings and times of formation. I used observations as an auxiliary to the questionnaire and as an aid to inform my interpretation of the data.

### **3.3.3. A Summary of the Findings for the Participants**

In order to triangulate my findings, I wrote a summary of the results of the questionnaires, and gave a copy to each participant to verify or correct my interpretation and reporting of their responses (See Appendix B). I did this before writing the conclusion and recommendations at the end of this research paper.

### 3.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Leedy (2005) reminds researchers that whenever human beings are the focus of investigation, the ethical implications must be closely reviewed. Most ethical issues in research fall into four categories: protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy, and honesty with professional colleagues (*ibid*: 101)

#### 3.4.1. Protection from Harm

Researchers should not expose participants to any undue harm, whether it be physical, emotional or in relationships. In guaranteeing confidentiality, the participants in my study are protected from any harm that might have affected them had their opinions and beliefs become known by other members of The School community. On receipt of each questionnaire a coded number was allocated so that the results of the questionnaire are reported as a code and not a name. I did not guarantee anonymity and asked the participants to write their names and some relevant information concerning their religious affiliation and length of service on their questionnaire. I did this to facilitate a follow-up interview should I need to seek clarity on any response. However, at no time will the participant's name appear in this research paper or report, or be divulged along with the response to any particular question.

#### 3.4.2. Informed Consent

Leedy (2005) offers an important suggestion to researchers: "One common practice [...] is to present an **informed consent form** that describes the nature of the research project, as well as the nature of one's participation in it" (*ibid*: 101; see also Cox 1996). Before distributing the questionnaire, I wrote a letter to each teacher and member of the Management who formed a part of my sample. I included the following information in the letter (see Appendix C):

- A brief description of the nature of my research paper.
- A description of what participation will involve, in terms of activities and duration.
- A statement indicating that participation is voluntary and can be terminated at any time.

- The guarantee that the responses will remain confidential and be reported anonymously.
- An authorisation form requiring the participant to agree to participate, with a signature and the date.

### **3.4.3. The Right To Privacy**

Leehy (2005) suggests that the researcher gives each participant a code number and then label any other relevant documents with the participant's code and not the name. In my communication with the teachers I guaranteed them privacy. However, the privacy of The School in my report is equally important, thus the reason for the name, The School, rather than anything more revealing.

As a teacher's questionnaire was returned, I put a sequential number on the top right hand corner. I then put her coded number into the code book I used to code my data (see Appendix E). Thus, at no other point in this research paper does a name of a participant appear.

## **3.5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

In implementing the questionnaire and possible follow-up interviews, I first addressed a letter to each member of the sample. The contents of the letter are discussed in section 3.4.2. Attached to the letter was an authorisation slip (Appendix D) which I asked respondents to return to me if they were willing to participate in my research. I then addressed the questionnaires to the individual participants with a return date and place to hand in the completed questionnaires.

As the date for returning the questionnaires coincided with the last week of term with the accompanying administration involved in examination marking and reports, I had to accept that some teachers might be too busy to complete the survey. However, while 19 questionnaires were returned by the due date, the other three were handed in two days later at the close of the school term.

### **3.6. DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of one's data. (Merriam 1988) identifies two categories of analysis. The first type of analysis is what occurs throughout the process of data collection. Information is collected and analytical decisions have to be made regarding, for example, how much more data is needed and how many more interviews should take place. The second type of analysis Merriam describes as intensive analysis and this takes place once the data collection is complete.

The beginning stages of intensive data analysis involve the coding or categorising of the raw data. Merriam (1998) states that "[i]n the process of analysis, data are consolidated, reduced, and to some extent, interpreted. The goal of data analysis [...], is to come up with reasonable conclusions and generalisations based on a preponderance of the data" (Merriam 1988:128).

The SPSS computer programme was used to categorise the data collected for the purposes of this research paper. The data entered and coded in this programme was used for cross-analysis, thus allowing for some interpretation of the raw data. I wanted to know whether the religious affiliation of the teacher influenced her knowledge and understanding of the vision of a Catholic school, or whether there was a deeper understanding of the vision by the teachers who had served at The School for longer than 9 years. The teachers were also categorised according to the phase in which they teach, as I wanted to investigate whether the teachers in a particular phase emphasised the same distinctive characteristics as the teachers of the other phases or not.

### **3.7. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have described how I have approached my study using a qualitative research methodology. I have incorporated some statistical tools from the quantitative method, thus moving towards a mixed-method design. I have adopted the case study model as the appropriate model to research the staff's vision of a Catholic school, focussing on the staff of one particular school as the



case study. I have employed the techniques of surveying the staff by means of a questionnaire, observations and a writing of a summary of findings for verification by the participants.

In the following chapter I will discuss the findings and analysis of the data collection before writing my recommendations and conclusion in Chapter Five.

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# CHAPTER FOUR

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

All the academic staff members who were approached to complete the questionnaire, did, in fact, do so. The answers to the open question were grouped into themes related to the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school outlined in the literature review. Two new categories were added to accommodate three responses that did not fit comfortably under any of the distinctive characteristics. The responses to Parts 2, 3 and 4, were coded and analysed on a SPSS programme.

### 4.2. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The twenty two respondents were women as there are no male teachers on the staff of The School. Table 4 compares the personal data collected from the participants relating to religion, phase and length of service.

PHASE	LENGTH OF SERVICE	TOTAL STAFF	RELIGION	TOTAL STAFF
Management	> 9 years	4	Catholic	1
			Protestant	2
			Pentecostal	1
F.E.T.	> 9 years	3	Catholic	1
	4 – 9 years	1	Protestant	4
	< 3 years	2	Non Christian	1
Senior	> 9 years	1	Catholic	5
	< 3 years	5	Pentecostal	1
Intermediate	> 9 years	1	Catholic	1
	< 3 years	2	Protestant	1
			Pentecostal	1
Foundation	> 9 years	1	Catholic	1
	4 – 9 years	1	Protestant	2
	< 3 years	1	Pentecostal	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>22</b>		<b>22</b>

Table 4. The Staff Demographics

### 4.3. DATA COLLECTION

When the completed questionnaires were returned, I began with recording the data collected in Part 1 of the questionnaire.

#### 4.3.1. Part 1 of the Questionnaire

Part 1 required the participants to respond to an open question. Some aspects of one response were similar to that of another teacher's response. Some included a point not raised by another participant. In recording the responses I identified themes and report these responses in table format for comparison purposes (see Table 5).

RESPONSES	TOTAL	THEME
Caring, nurturing, compassionate, developing the whole child, uniqueness of each person, dignity of each person	13	Positive Anthropology
Warm family environment Caring community Sense of belonging to a family	9	Commitment to Community
Being aware of God's presence in assemblies and Masses. Aesthetically pleasing A calm, peaceful presence	4	Sacramental Consciousness
Adherence to Catholic Feast Days, Masses, Chapel services, community worship	5	Commitment to Tradition
Upholding Godly values, Gospel values, Christian values, moral values, Christ-centred, fostering of spiritual development, space for prayer & reflection, Religion lessons	14	Personhood
Tolerance of differences Accepting all Teachers help the weaker pupils	6	Catholicity
Driven to help those in need Charity work Meaningful outreach to needy	5	Social Justice
Emphasis on the Bible	1	Fundamentalism

Table 5. Distinctive themes identified by the Staff of The School

Figure 1 visually demonstrates the relationship between each of the distinctive characteristics identified by the Staff of The School. Most teachers agree that commitment to the formation of personhood, as well as a positive anthropology, are characteristics that form part of the vision of The School. In looking at the importance of tradition (which includes the concern of this paper, namely providing a knowledge base) it is clear that the staff's understanding of tradition is superficial. They understand tradition only as the assemblies, chapel services and Masses, rather than the passing on of faith stories in order to help the pupils synthesise their faith, culture and life. There are three distinctive characteristics identified and listed in the literature review which the Staff did not believe to be sufficiently distinctive or obvious. These are the commitment to rationality and learning, the call to be counter-cultural and the call to collaboration. One staff member who belongs to a Pentecostal church identified an emphasis on the Bible as a Catholic characteristic. In normal circumstances I would include her description under the heading of tradition, but my observations have led me to describe the feature as fundamentalism rather than tradition. Fundamentalism is not a Catholic characteristic.

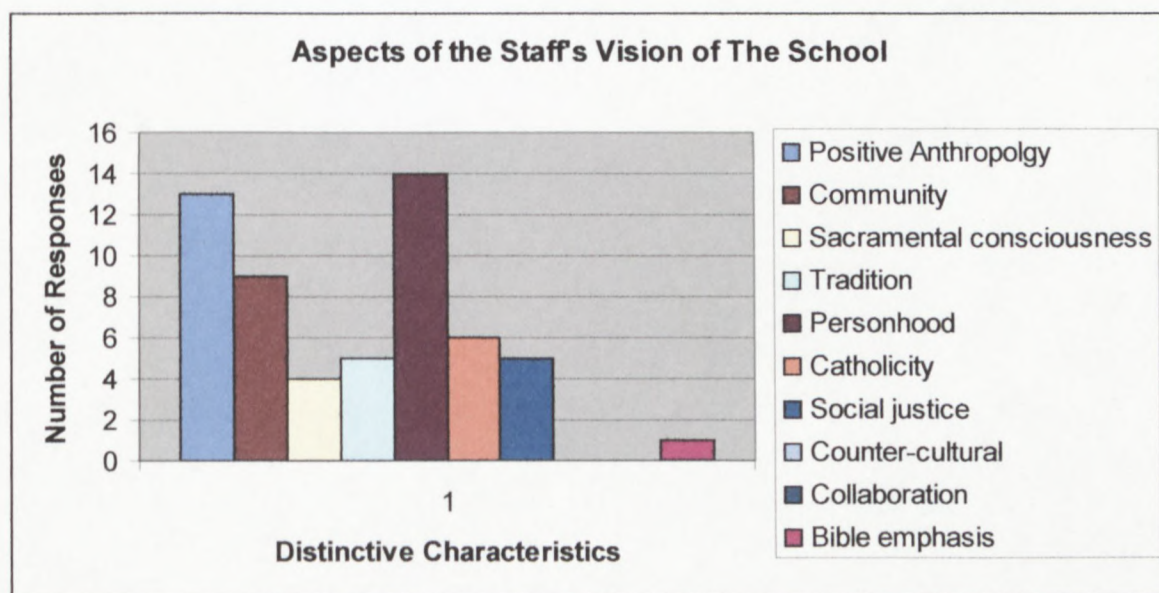


Figure 1. Aspects of the Staff's Vision of The School

#### 4.3.2. Introduction to Parts 2, 3 and 4

A coding system was used to record the responses in Parts 2, 3 and 4. The code book describing the codes can be found in Appendix D. Working on an Excel

spreadsheet, I entered the code numbers of the participants along the vertical margin and horizontally I entered the relevant code for each participant's length of service, phase and religion. I then continued horizontally with the coded responses to the 90 questions.

The coded data was entered into an SPSS programme and the results are presented and described below.

#### **4.3.3. Part 2 of the Questionnaire**

Part 2 consisted of 30 statements, three relevant statements for each of the ten distinctive characteristics described in the literature review. These statements were an attempt to discover if the Staff strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or were not sure whether the particular aspect of a distinctive characteristic of the vision of a Catholic school was practiced in The School or not. Figure 2 is a graph illustrating the mean for each statement. Where 4 on the scale indicates agreement and 3 those who are uncertain, the bars under 4 show less agreement and more uncertainty or disagreement.

##### **4.3.3.1. Analysis and Interpretation of Part 2 of the Questionnaire**

The statements with which there is more than a slight disagreement or uncertainty are the following:

*Statement 5: The School gives students the skills to question social axioms rather than simply to comply with them.*

32% of the respondents were uncertain or disagreed with this statement relating to The School's commitment to rationality and learning.

*Statement 19: The School discourages consumerism and promotes a sense of responsibility towards the utilisation of resources.*

23 % of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement relating to The School's lived response to countering the value society places on consumerism.

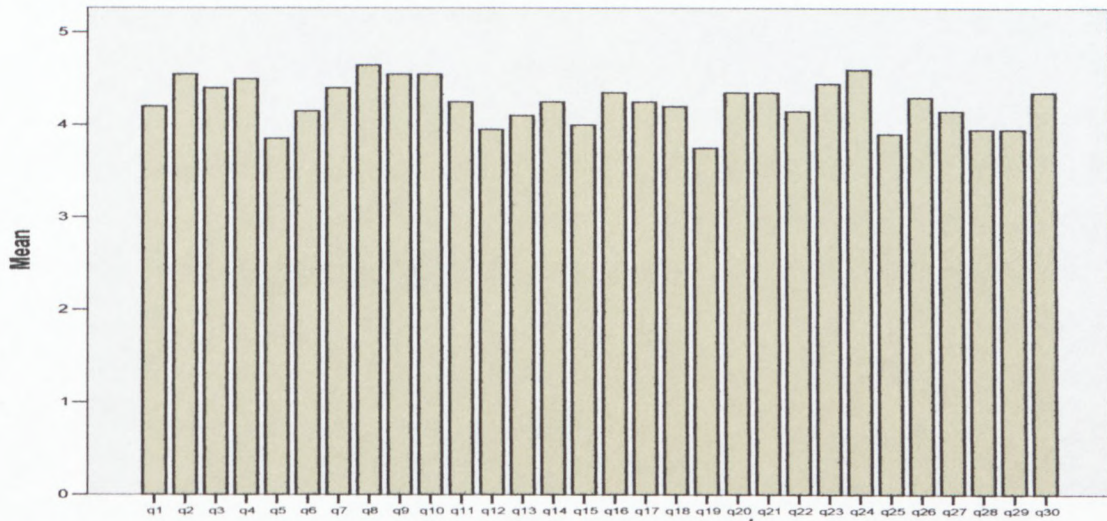


Figure 2. The mean score of the responses for Questions 1 - 30

An analysis of Part 2 of the questionnaire, standing alone, and not part of the global questionnaire, indicates that the scores do not support the differentiation that is evident in Part 1 above. One reason for the results of Part 2 showing little differentiation compared to the findings of Part 1 could be that when asked to describe, without a stimulus, the distinguishing characteristics of The School, the staff recalled those aspects of The School which were important in their experience, but when faced with statements, in Part 2, describing a Catholic school, they also recognised some aspects of the statement that described The School with which they could agree or strongly agree.

However, the two questions described above, which gave rise to some disagreement, did relate to two characteristics of a Catholic school identified in the Literature review which were not captured in any way by the staff when asked, in Part 1, to describe the essence of The School. These two themes were *critical thinking* and the call to be *counter-cultural*. Thus this result is consistent with perceptions created in part 1.

#### 4.3.4. Part 3 of the Questionnaire

The questions 31 to 60 in Part 3 asked the teachers to reply yes, no or unsure to each question in relation to their personal practice of the distinctive characteristic.

Figure 3 indicates the mean score for each question. The codes for this section were: Yes: 5 Not sure: 3 No: 1

#### 4.3.4.1. Analysis and Interpretation of Part 3 of the Questionnaire

While the bars in Figure 3 appear to indicate greater differentiation than in Figure 2, only one question scored below 3 in this section. However, five questions scored between not sure and agreement. Question 59 was the question to which most staff responded not sure or disagree and the mean response to questions 40, 42, 49 and 58 fell between agree and not sure.

Question 59: *Do you allow time for your students to explore their local culture?*

This question related to the need for teachers to sensitise the students to the values and social mores promoted by the local culture and to encourage counter-cultural values where society’s values contradict those of the Gospel. 63% of the respondents replied no or not sure to this item.

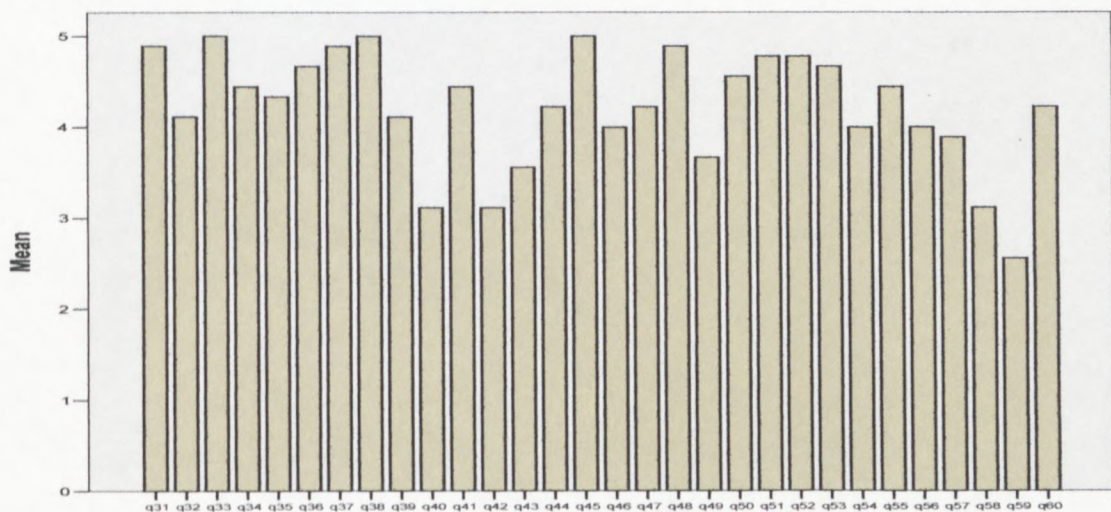


Figure 3. The mean scores of the responses for Questions 31 to 60

Question 40: *Do you share resources and work you have prepared with teachers from under-resourced schools?*

This question was linked to collaboration as a distinctive characteristic. 45% of the participants replied no or not sure to this item.

Question 42: *Do you create space and time for class prayer to foster community in your group?*



This question probed one aspect of the teachers' practice of creating a Christian community together with her students. 43% replied no or not sure.

Question 49: *Does your educational space model the 'three R's' of recycle, reuse and reduce?*

As in question 59 discussed above, this questions the teacher's practice in modelling Christian values, even if society in general is practicing something else. 50% of the participants were not sure or said no to this question.

Question 58: *Do you nurture creative imagination in your students about what can be done in the public arena?*

This question relates to the topic of social justice. It questions whether students are equipped to make a difference in society. 55% of the respondents replied no or not sure.

Two of the above statements giving rise to some significant disagreement or uncertainty related to the call to be *counter-cultural* as described in the Literature review, and one statement described the need for teachers in Catholic schools to *collaborate* with other teachers. As in Part 2, these characteristics of a Catholic school were ones not identified in Part 1 by the staff. One interpretation of this finding is that the staff who are predominantly white, middle class women, teach in a school that is traditional and which caters for pupils from predominantly wealthy backgrounds. On the one hand, it might not occur to most teachers that consumerism, for example, is a value lived in contradiction of Gospel values, and on the other hand, issues that are counter-cultural to the values of society are rejected by many of the pupils who attend The School, and it is, thus, easier and more comfortable to tacitly support the status quo rather than raise issues which are controversial. Treston (2001b) describes the dilemma in the following way:

A problem can and does emerge when people (and children) driven by such motives are confronted with the explicit religious identity and counter-cultural values of the school. They can resent the perceived imposition of religious education, religious practices of the school and value systems that are not theirs (Treston 2001b: 19).

Observations have led me to believe that there is a lack of critical thinking among the teachers. The critical outcomes of the Revised National Curriculum Statements

demand that critical thinking be intentionally taught, but the reaction to this requirement has been a negative one, especially among the older, longer-serving members of the staff. Thus, in order to encourage teachers to intentionally teach and promote counter-cultural values, education and formation of the parent body as well as of the staff of The School in the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school needs to take place.

While the staff strongly supported the notion of a positive anthropology and community, the caring is predominantly about the school family and not the wider community. Thus, collaboration with teachers of other Independent schools does take place, but very little sharing with those in under-resourced schools. This point supports my concern that the vision of Catholic Education is not widely known or understood.

While there is slightly more differentiation in Part 3 relating to the teachers' beliefs and practices compared to the degree of differentiation illustrated in Part 2, the degree of disagreement or uncertainty in 85% of the questions is minimal. The value found in the responses to Part 3 lies in the fact that questions which give rise to the greatest disagreement are those that support the results of Part 1 which indicate that the teachers do not identify the call to be *counter-cultural* or to *collaboration* as important characteristics of a Catholic school.

The significance of some of the areas of agreement in Part 3, is that the teachers strongly agree with the statements relating, for example, to a sacramental consciousness and critical thinking, while disagreeing in Part 2 that the same characteristics are practised by The School. This finding leads me to conclude that most of the teachers know the right answers in relation to aspects of the vision of Catholic Education, but not necessarily how to live them.

The most significant findings result from the data collected in Part 4 of the questionnaire and these findings are presented in the following section.

### 4.3.5. Data Collected from Part 4a of the Questionnaire

Part 4 has two sections. The first section (Part 4a) relates to statements 61 to 90 which are statements taken from Church documents or the writings of leading authors in the area of the vision of a Catholic school. The Staff were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each statement. Figure 4 represents the mean score of the responses to these questions.

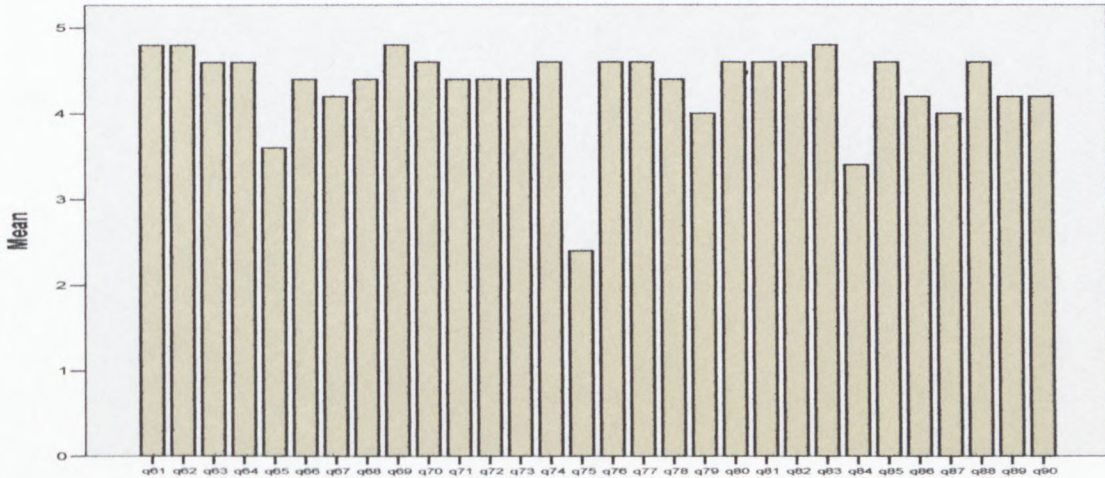


Figure 4. The mean scores of the responses for Questions 61 to 90

#### 4.3.5.1. Analysis and Interpretation of Part 4a of the Questionnaire

The statement which caused the greatest degree of disagreement was number 75.

*Question 75: Mathematics is deeply theological being almost the language for the description and understanding of creation.*

93% of the participants strongly disagreed, disagreed, or were uncertain about this statement. This statement explores the deeper levels of the nature of knowledge and truth in relation to God.

Other statements in Part 4 with which there was some uncertainty or disagreement were numbers 65 and 85.

*Question 65: Academic excellence is a reflection of the Catholic intellectual tradition and is part of the Catholic identity.*

Question 85: *Students should be taught to use their whole minds: reason, intuition, logic and critical thinking, memory and imagination.*

The three statements described above were designed to interrogate the teacher's response to the Church's stand point on rationality and learning or *critical thinking*. The lack of agreement with these three statements reinforces the findings of Part 1 where not one response describing the staff's vision of The School related to rationality. The result is also consistent with the impression of a lack of criticality in Part 2 and 3.

#### **4.3.6 The Data Collected from Part 4b.**

The data for q61e to q90e were also entered into the SPSS programme to give more specific information on the staff's beliefs about the school's lived experience of the vision of a Catholic school by phases, religion and length of service. The most significant results were achieved from the data collected from this section of the questionnaire.

For the purposes of this study, I collated the data for length of service, religion and phase into the ten categories identified in the literature review as being the ten distinctive characteristics of an Independent Catholic school in South Africa.

##### **4.3.6.1. Analysis of the Data Collected by Denomination for Part 4b.**

Figures 5, 6 and 7 represent the mean scores of teachers by denomination in response to Part 4b. The profiles of the graphs indicate some difference of opinion as to the agreement by teachers that a particular characteristic is evident within the life of The School. The analysis and interpretation of this section follows the three graphs.

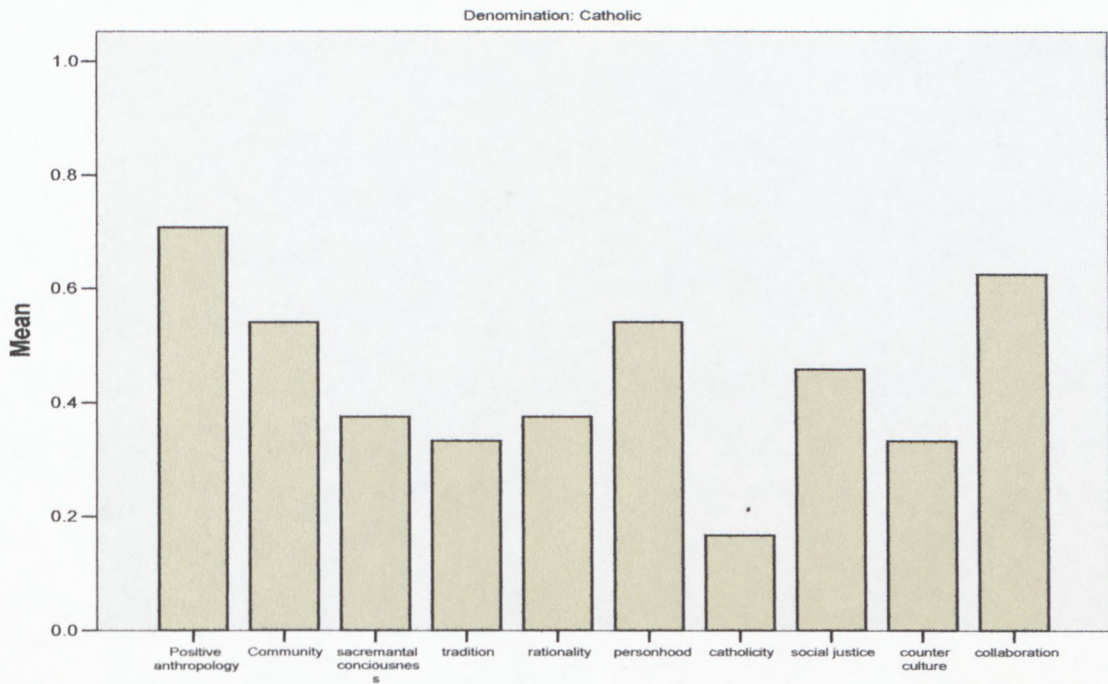


Figure 5. The mean scores of the Catholic responses to Statements q61e to q90e

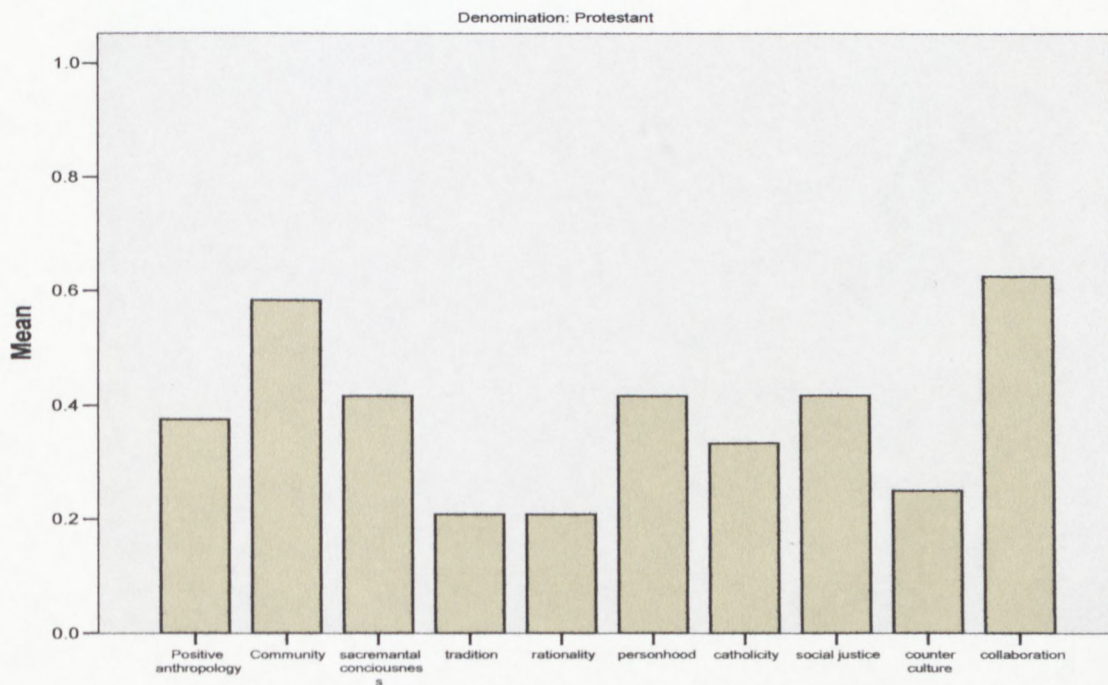


Figure 6. The mean scores of the Protestant responses to q61e to q90e

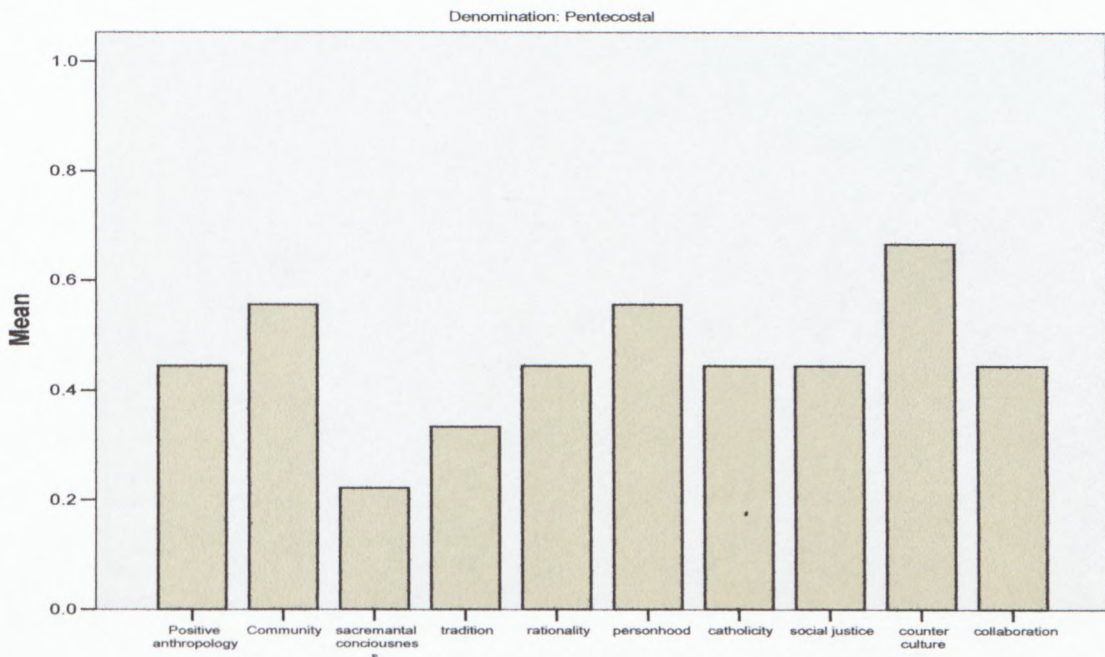


Figure 7. The mean scores of the Pentecostal responses to q61e to q90e

- i. Positive Anthropology: The first bar represents the responses to the statements relating to the practice of a positive anthropology in The School. 0.7 of the Catholic teachers' responses were in agreement with the three statements while 0.4 of those of the Protestant and Pentecostal teachers agreed that a positive anthropology was evidently practiced in The School.
- ii. Community: There was little difference in the response of each denomination to the statements relating to evidence of authentic community being lived at The School. More than half of each group agreed with the statements.
- iii. Sacramental Consciousness: The mean score for each denomination in response to this category was low. 0.4 of the Catholic and Protestant responses indicated evidence of this characteristic practised in The School, while only 0.2 of the Pentecostal responses agreed.
- iv. Tradition: Here again the responses from each denomination showed little agreement that tradition, as described in the literature review, was an important characteristic lived in The School.
- v. Rationality: 0.4 of the Catholic and Pentecostal responses agreed that rationality and critical thinking were intentionally taught in The School, while only 0.2 of the Protestant responses were in agreement.

- vi. Personhood: Just more than half of the responses of the Catholic and Pentecostal teachers saw some evidence that The School tried to influence or educate the very being of the pupils and not just their intellects. 0.2 of the Protestant responses agreed that there was some evidence.
- vii. Catholicity: The Catholic responses were lowest in this category with just over 0.1 of the responses agreeing while 0.4 of the Pentecostal responses were in agreement that The School showed evidence of inclusivity.
- viii. Social Justice: The responses to this category were similar with 0.5 of the Catholic responses in agreement and 0.4 of the Protestant and Pentecostal teachers agreeing that aspects of social justice were practised in The School.
- ix. Counter-cultural: The strongest agreement that The School attempts to be counter-cultural was from the Pentecostal teachers who had 0.6 responses in agreement while the Catholic and Protestant teachers saw little evidence of this characteristic in The School.
- x. Collaboration: There was a stronger sense of agreement among the Catholic and Protestant teachers that there was evidence of collaboration practised in and by The School with 0.6 of their responses agreeing and 0.4 of the Pentecostal teachers seeing evidence in The School.

#### **4.3.6.2. Interpretation of the Data Collected by Denomination**

The data collated, using the category describing the denomination of the teacher, is significant in that it reinforces the findings reported by Quillinan in the introduction to Chapter One of this study.

Research and experience would suggest that many of our teachers, be they Catholic or from other faiths, have diminishing experience of the institutional Church. Not only does this mean that an increasing number have little experience of the rituals of the Church, but this can often mean that these teachers may have limited understanding of the religious language and symbols so long taken for granted" (Quillinan 2001: 4).

The Catholic teachers' mean scores for items related to, for example, a sacramental consciousness are no higher than those of the Protestant teachers and, in the case of catholicity, are in fact lower than the responses from the other two denominations.

Thus, the significance of the findings of this section lies in the fact that there is little differentiation between the responses from Catholic teachers and from those of other denominations.

#### 4.3.6.3. Analysis of the Data Collected by Length of Service for Part 4b.

In this category ten teachers have been on the staff for longer than 9 years, and ten for less than 3 years. Only two members of the sample have been on the staff between 4 and 9 years. Thus, the most accurate comparisons will take place in the analysis of Figures 8 and 10, with Figure 9 giving less reliable data.

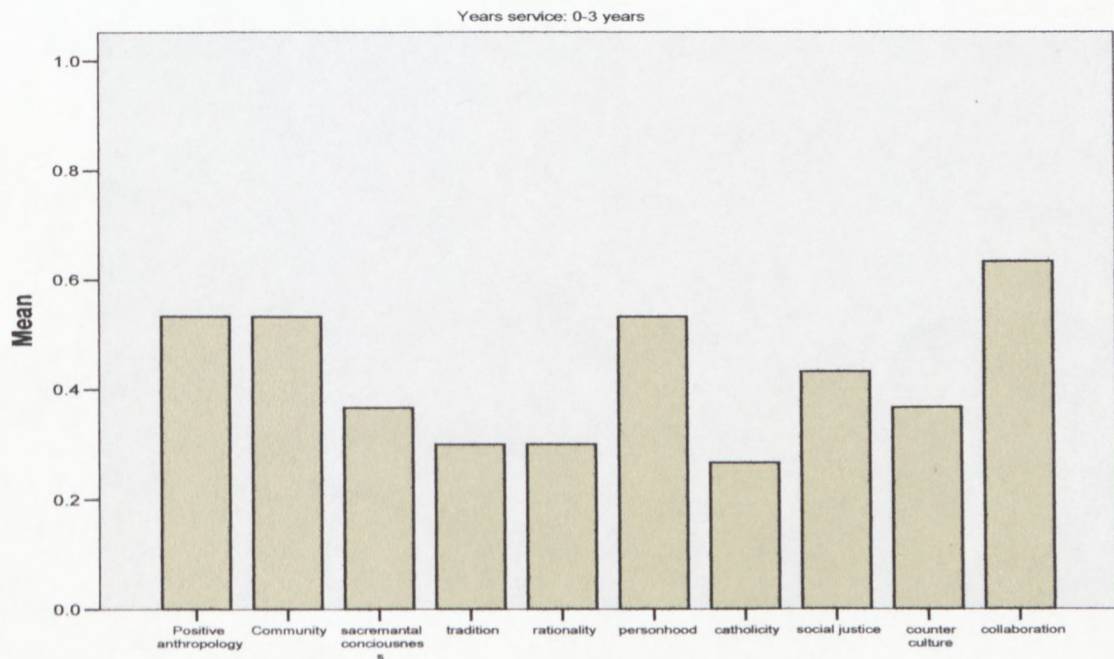


Figure 8. The mean scores of teachers with 0 – 3 years service to q61e to q90e



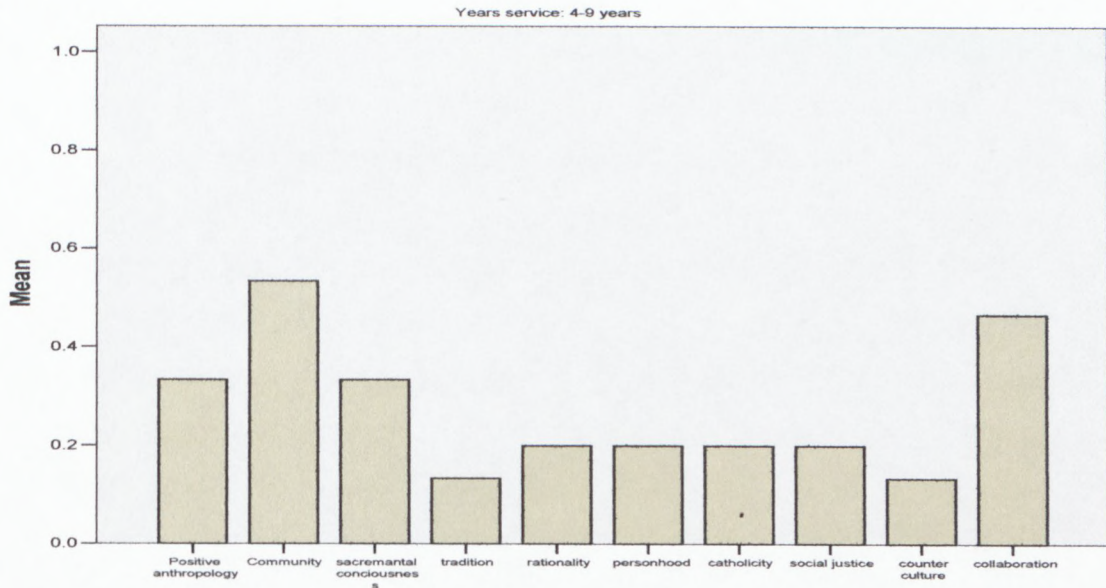


Figure 9. The mean scores of teachers with 4 - 9 years service to q61e to q90e

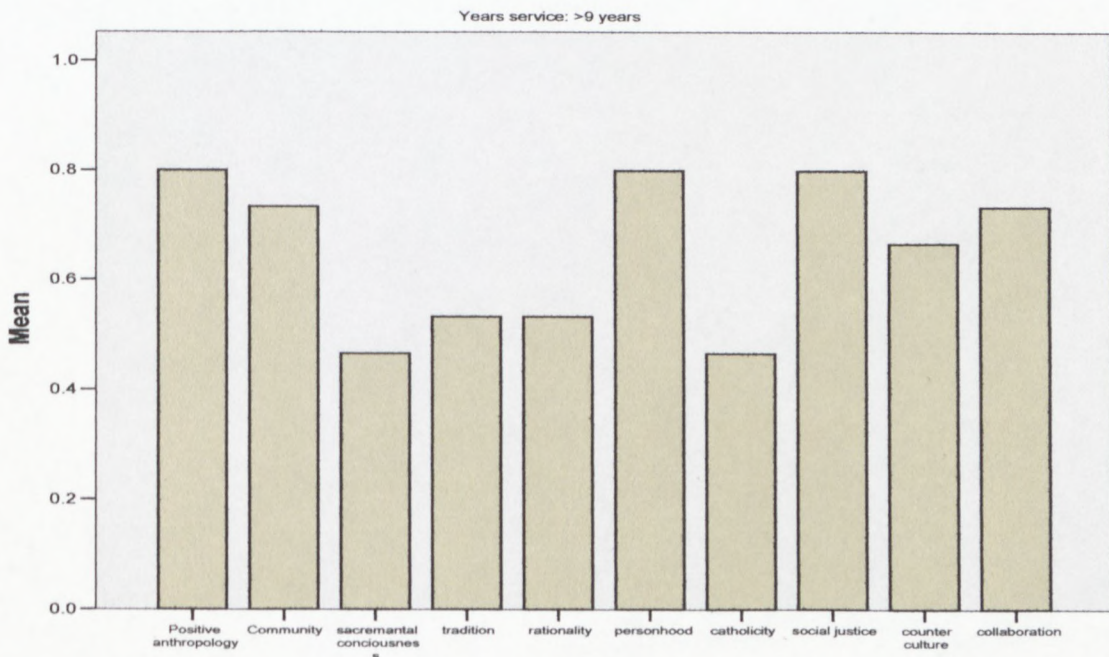


Figure 9. The mean scores of teachers with > 9 years service to q61e to q90e

The most significant findings in the responses by the teachers who have served less than 3 or more than 9 years on the staff of The School are the following:

- The characteristics which the longer serving staff identified as most evident in The School were also agreed upon by the new members of staff. These characteristics were a *positive anthropology*, commitment to *community*, *personhood*, *social justice*, the call to live *counter-cultural* values and *collaboration*. The results of the previous parts of the questionnaire

indicated that the staff did not agree that the call to live counter-culturally was a feature of a Catholic vision, and yet in this section the teachers recognise substantial evidence in The School of counter-cultural values. I will comment on possible reasons for this anomaly in the section following my findings.

- The characteristics which the longer serving staff agreed were only evident to a small degree were similarly agreed upon by the newer staff members. These characteristics were a *sacramental consciousness, tradition, rationality and catholicity*.
- The degree to which the longer serving staff saw evidence in The School was, in most cases, twice that to which the newer members recognised evidence.
- The two characteristics that both groups of staff members found most evidence of *in the practice of The School* were a *positive anthropology and personhood*. Significantly, these same two characteristics achieved the highest scores when the staff was asked, in Part 1, to describe the essence of The School.
- *Community*, as a characteristic of The School, was listed in part 1 by nine staff members and the response in this section, Part 4b, also found significant evidence of authentic community lived in The School.
- The two characteristics that scored lowest when the staff described the essence of The School in Part 1 were a *sacramental consciousness* and *tradition*. These were also among the lowest scores in Part 4b.
- *Collaboration* and the call to live *counter-cultural* values were not described as part of the essence of The School in Part 1, yet the staff saw much evidence of these two characteristics practised in the life of The School. I suggest some reasons explaining this finding in the following section outlining my interpretation of the findings.

#### **4.3.6.4. Interpretation of the Data Collected by Length of Service**

While the newer and longer serving members of staff identified the same characteristics as elements of The School's lived vision, the length of service made a significant difference to the degree to which the staff recognised these characteristics as lived in The School. One reason might be that these

characteristics have been repeatedly brought to the attention of the staff by the Principal or Senior Management, and over time, they become second nature to a person working in The School. Statements that draw attention to the dignity and giftedness of each person, the holistic education of each person in order to reach full potential and the nurturing of family and community are written into The School's Vision and Ethos statements. The Principal reinforces adherence to these aspects of The School's during assembly times, staff meetings and parent evenings. Newer staff members are gently reminded of the need to respect the uniqueness of each individual and collaboration at all levels is strongly encouraged.

Another reason why both groups of teachers identified the same characteristics as evident in The School might be that these are the characteristics which, standing alone, might describe the behaviour of a good person or teacher in most schools. Most good teachers would respect the dignity of each person, encourage the giftedness of each one, create a supportive, hospitable environment in her classroom and collaborate with others on the staff and in other schools. Groome (1998) explains that "although Catholicism shares particular features to varying degrees with other Christian traditions, their configuration and level of emphasis within Catholic Christianity make up its distinctiveness" (Groome 1998: 57). The mean scores of each group, however, indicate that the longer the teacher serves at The School, the greater her awareness of these essential characteristics within the life of The School.

One reason for the interesting anomaly created by the strong agreement in Part 4b, that The School practises counter-cultural values, while in Parts 1 to 3 the teachers disagreed with this characteristic describing a Catholic vision for education, might be that the Senior Management of The School has a good understanding of this aspect of the vision of Catholic schools. They constantly reinforce the need to live counter-culturally as a school. The Grade 12 dance is one such example. Despite the teacher in charge wanting to raise as much money as possible to provide as opulent a dance as possible, the Principal lays down very strict guidelines as to how much is reasonable without being excessive. The reasons for her decisions are explained so that the staff and pupils understand The School's stance on consumerism and excessive spending. The Senior

Management strives to lead The School to make counter-cultural choices and it is encouraging that this fact is recognised by the teachers, despite them disagreeing with the need, as a Catholic school, to live counter-culturally.

Those characteristics that are more specifically 'Catholic' such as catholicity, tradition, rationality and a sacramental consciousness, are not well perceived by the staff as forming an essential part of the vision of The School. They neither intentionally support these characteristics in their actions, nor identify them as lived within The School. However, once again there is a greater degree of awareness of these characteristics among the longer serving staff members than the most recently employed.

A general conclusion I can draw from the data collected by length of service, is that the characteristics which most relate to aspects of The School's vision and ethos statements are imbibed over time by the staff, but those which are more intellectual or theological than personal, such as tradition, rationality, catholicity and a sacramental consciousness, are not seen as essential elements to be lived in The School.

#### **4.3.6.5. Analysis of the Data Collected by Phase for Part 4b.**

In the category relating to the various Phases, 4 staff members comprised the Management group, 6 represented the F.E.T. phase and 6 the Senior Phase, while the Intermediate and Foundation Phases were represented by 3 teachers each. To facilitate comparison, the scores shown on each of the following five graphs have been tabulated in Table 6.

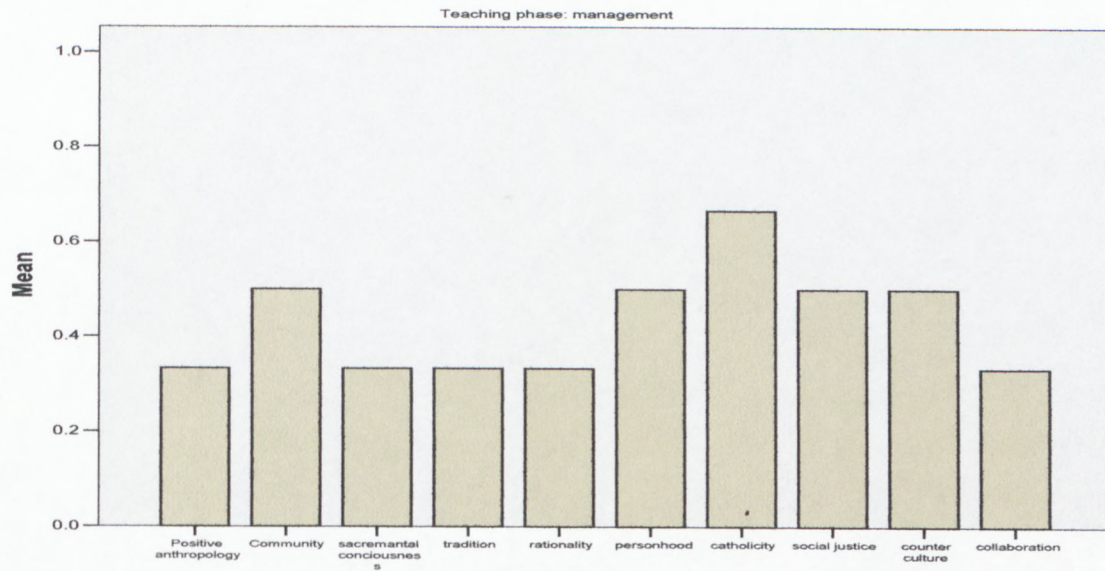


Figure 10. The mean scores of the data collected by Management for q61e to 90e

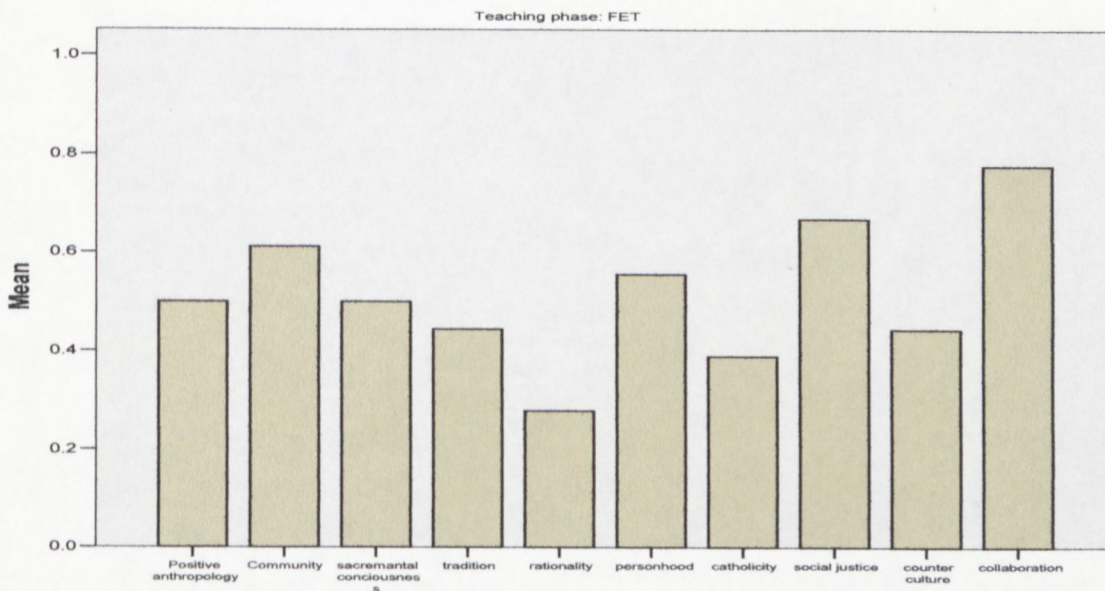


Figure 11. The mean scores of the data collected by F.E.T. Phase for q61e to 90e

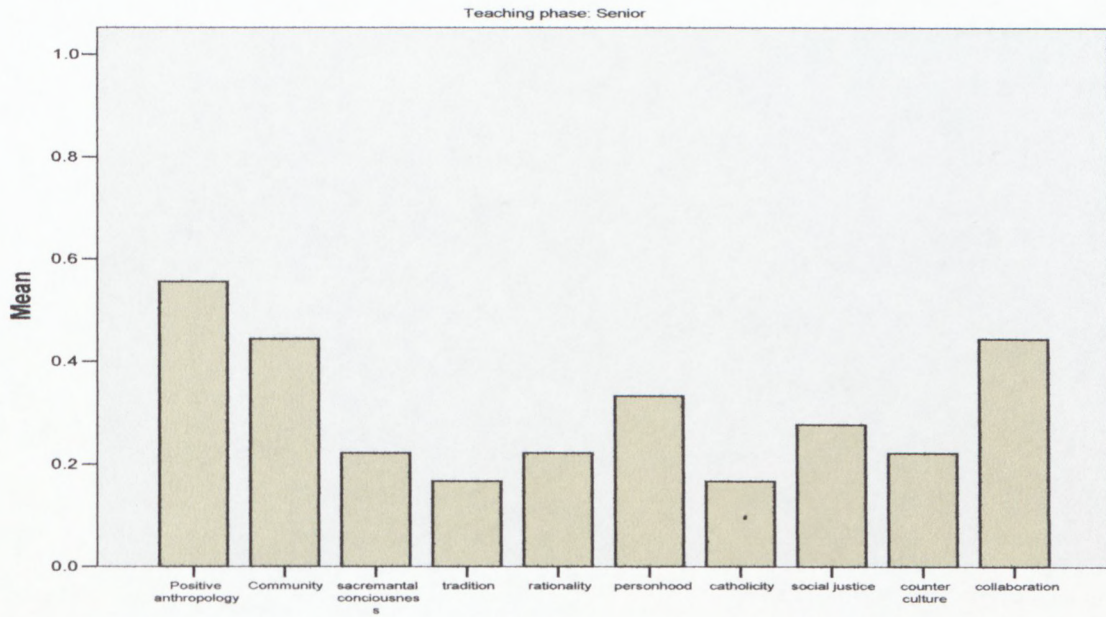


Figure 12. The mean scores of the data collected by Senior Phase for q61e to 90e

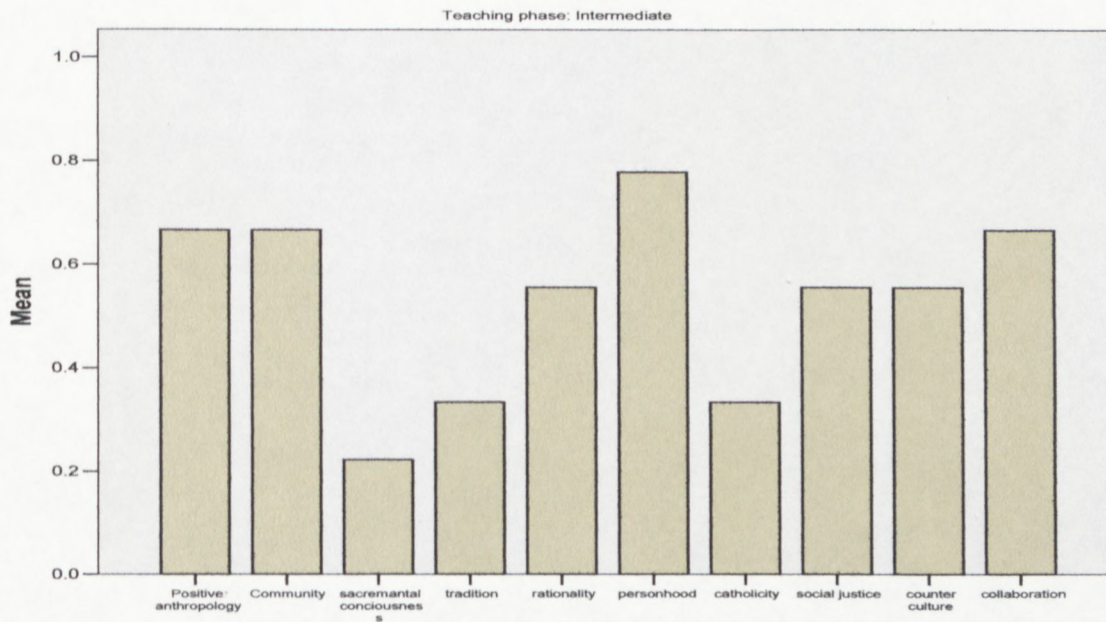


Figure 13. The mean scores of the data collected by Intermediate Phase for q61e to 90e

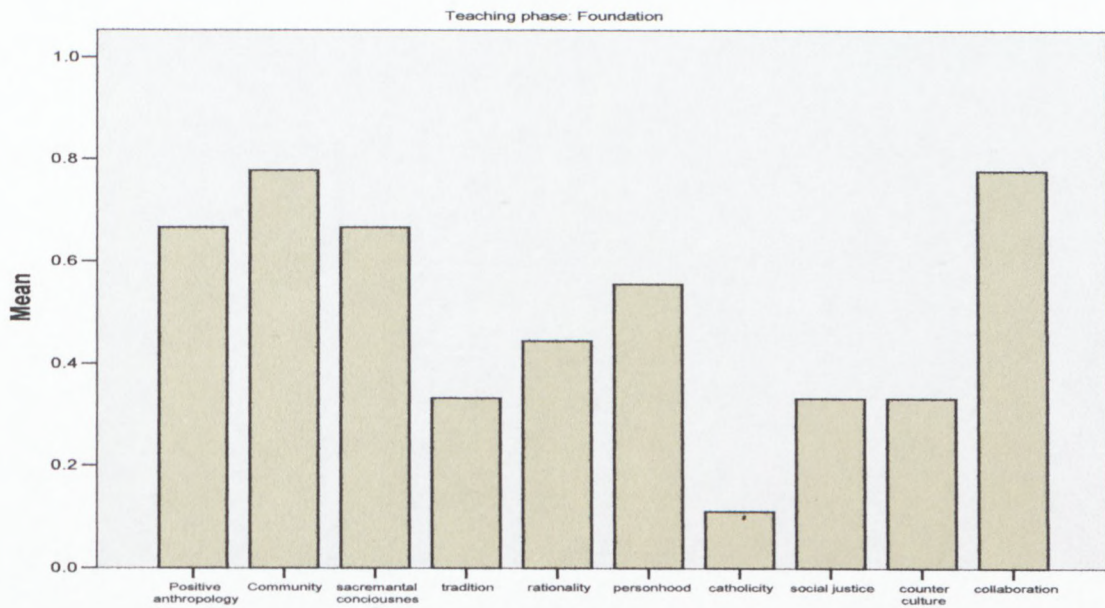


Figure 14. The mean scores of the data collected by Foundation Phase for q61e to 90e

	Management	F.E.T.	Senior	Intermediate	Foundation
Positive anthropology	3	5	6	7	7
Community	5	6	4	7	8
Sacramental Consciousness	3	5	2	2	7
Tradition	3	4	1	3	3
Rationality	3	2	2	5	4
Personhood	5	5	3	8	6
Catholicity	6	4	1	3	1
Social Justice	5	6	3	5	3
Counter-cultural	5	4	2	5	3
Collaboration	3	8	5	7	8

Table 6. A comparison of the approximate mean scores by Phase of q61e to q90e

General findings from the above analysis will yield similar trends to the significant results listed and discussed in section 4.3.6.2. that pertain to the analysis of data collected by length of service. For example, the characteristics which have the highest degree of agreement that there is evidence that The School is living the particular aspect of the vision of a Catholic school are *collaboration, community, a*

*positive anthropology* and *personhood*. Those where the teachers find little evidence in The School are *tradition, catholicity, rationality*, and a *sacramental consciousness*, while *social justice* and *counter-cultural* values have significant support from the teachers.

The data collected by Phases will be interpreted as it pertains to each phase and not used to identify general trends within the staff as a whole.

#### **4.3.6.6. Interpretation of the Data Collected by Phase**

- i. Foundation Phase: The Foundation Phase teachers identified community, collaboration, a positive anthropology and a sacramental consciousness as the distinctive characteristics, identified in the literature review, which are most evidently lived and experienced in The School. The first three of these characteristics have at their core, an emphasis on right relationships, caring and nurturing. The Foundation Phase is concerned with the youngest members of the school family, and the primary needs of these pupils are centred around the need for nurturing, safety and a sense of belonging. Thus, the distinctive characteristics that the Foundation Phase teachers identified as being most evident in The School are those which they, by virtue of their positions, practise, experience and contribute towards on a daily basis.

The teachers in this Phase also saw much evidence of a sacramental consciousness in The School. The mean score for this characteristic was significantly higher than the mean scores of the other phases. One reason could be that there in the innocence of young children, there is a much greater sense of the presence of God in creation and a sense of awe and excitement about life. Foundation Phase teachers nurture this sense of wonder in the way they teach. Another reason for their strong support of this characteristic is that statement q73e refers to the seven sacraments and, based on my observations, while the Foundation teachers are not responsible for the Religious Education of the children in their care, they do attend and are personally involved in the preparation for liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations. In helping prepare the children for a Mass or prayer



service, the teachers in this phase deepen their own understanding of God's presence and grace in our lives demanding a personal response.

In summary, the Foundation Phase teachers appear to have a sense of understanding of how a positive anthropology, community, collaboration and a sacramental consciousness should be lived within a Catholic school. As these characteristics are the ones which underpin the core activities that take place in the Foundation Phase, I would generalise and state that the Foundation Phase teachers have a deeper understanding of the need to practise these characteristics in a Catholic school, than of the theological background as to why these characteristics are non-negotiable elements of the vision of a Catholic school.

- ii. Intermediate Phase: The teachers in the Intermediate Phase, like those of the Foundation Phase, identified a positive anthropology, community and collaboration as three of four characteristics most evident in the life of The School, but the importance of personhood was the most significant characteristic for the Intermediate Phase teachers. The importance of a sacramental consciousness is lost at this point, the mean score of this phase for this characteristic being its lowest score.

One reason why personhood as a characteristic was identified as so strongly evident in The School might be that it is in the Intermediate Phase when the emphasis broadens from the nurturing of a child settling into an environment away from home, to the formation of a child's spiritual and emotional well-being. In forming the being of each pupil Groome (1998) states that teachers should permeate their classrooms with the three R's of *respect, responsibility* and *reverence*. My observation, as a member of the Management team of The School, is that the three R's are intentionally included in the curriculum in the Intermediate Phase of The School, Whether the teachers of this phase understand the theological imperative behind their teaching or recognised the written expression of what they teach in the statements given in Part 4b is something I need to follow up in a formation session with that department.

- iii. Senior Phase: The results of the Senior Phase responses were surprising in that the only characteristic that the teachers identified as showing any significant evidence in The School was a positive anthropology. Collaboration followed with a mean score of 0.5. On reflection, I noted that of the sample of six teachers representing the Senior Phase, five teachers were new to The School and had been on the staff for less than three years. Staff formation in the last two years has had to focus primarily on the changes and demands of the new curriculum, with time given to training and policy making. The new members of the staff would not have been exposed to discussion and workshops on the distinctive characteristics as the longer serving teachers would have been. With the new curriculum's emphasis on an external qualification at the end of the G.E.T. Phase, teachers have had to adopt, not only a new curriculum, but also a new style of teaching. Perhaps, with the new demands made on teachers in the Senior Phase over the last few years, less time and effort has been available for the fostering of the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school.

Another reason for these low mean scores could be that it is in the Senior Phase that teachers specialise and instead of teaching a class of 24 pupils for most of each day, as many as 120 pupils might pass through each teacher's classroom in a day. The large numbers of pupils, coupled with the stresses associated with the new curriculum, could result in teachers focussing on the academic formation of the pupil to the detriment of a holistic education.

Lastly, in my observations, it is in the Senior and F.E.T. Phases where a number of part-time teachers are employed as specialist teachers. These teachers come to school to teach their lessons and then leave. The fostering of an authentic staff community as well as a class and school community becomes much more difficult and this fact might account for the teachers in this phase seeing less evidence of community in The School than the Foundation and Intermediate phases.

The evidence, illustrated by the responses of the teachers in the Senior Phase, leads me to conclude that the teachers in this phase do not have either an adequate awareness or deep understanding of the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school.

- iv. F.E.T. Phase: The situation of the teachers in the F.E.T Phase is very similar to those in the Senior Phase, but here there are more teachers who have served at The School for a longer period, and thus, these teachers have a greater awareness of the vision of a Catholic school than the new teachers would have. The three characteristics which the teachers in the F.E.T. Phase see evidence of in The School are firstly collaboration, then community and social justice.

A reason accounting for the evidence supporting collaboration could be that for a number of years the teachers in the F.E.T. Phase have collaborated as members of user groups and cluster groups for the good of their own particular subject and for education as a whole. However, while the teachers of this and the other phases recognise collaboration occurring within The School, the facts that aspects of this characteristic were absent from the staff's description of the distinguishing essence of The School and that the teachers of Grades 9 and 12 are required by the external examining body to participate and collaborate in cluster groups, lead me to conclude that the teachers recognise that collaboration occurs but not why, and, more importantly how, it forms part of the vision of a Catholic school. Collaboration with teachers from under-resourced schools does not occur indicating a superficial understanding of this distinctive characteristic.

The teachers who have been members of the staff of The School for longer than 9 years have a greater sense of belonging to a community than those who are new to the staff. This reason could account for the difference in the mean scores between the F.E.T. and Senior Phases.

The F.E.T. teachers' strong agreement with the fact that The School makes an option for the poor, in relation to the degree of agreement of the other Phases is realistic. The teachers in the F.E.T. phase are the teachers who

are most involved with the pastoral care of the bursary children. They are also the teachers who give the extra lessons at lunch break and after school to the children who experience difficulties in the academic spheres. The teachers in this phase recognise the efforts of The School to encourage social justice and they make a positive contribution to these efforts.

- v. The Management: In analysing the data by Phases, there is a definite indication that the Management of The School are more fully in agreement that catholicity or inclusivity is lived and practised within The School than the other phases.

My interpretation of this response is that the members of the Management appear to have a broader understanding of The School being a school for all. They have witnessed the growth in children who were initially emotionally damaged, and who, through the compassion and caring interest of a Head of Department or the Guidance or Religious Education teacher, have become more fully human. The Management, by virtue of their pastoral roles, have an understanding of the number of children who would fall into this category.

The mean scores of the other nine characteristics seen as lived in The School by the Management were very low. This came as a surprise to me and has been noted by me for follow-up in the future.

#### **4.4. A Summary of Chapter Four**

In Chapter Four, the data collected from the questionnaire, was analysed and the findings interpreted where possible. The analysis highlights the areas of similarity and those of contradiction and discrepancy between the distinctive characteristics of the staff's vision of a Catholic school as described in sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.4 of this chapter, the characteristics which the staff believe are evidently lived in The School, and the characteristics that are identified as essential elements of the vision of an Independent Catholic school in South Africa.

The analysis found a strong degree of agreement between the staff's vision of The School in relation to the distinctive characteristics of personhood, a positive anthropology and a commitment to community as described in the literature review. Notably absent from the staff's vision were elements of rationality, the call to be counter-cultural and collaboration. However, the staff found evidence that collaboration was definitely practised within the life of The School, as well as social justice but to a lesser degree.

The difference in the 'lived' experience of each phase of The School was interesting and significant. It represents a challenge for the Senior Management who is responsible for ensuring the creation and implementation of a common vision and ethos for The School. In order for the vision of The School to be a unifying, rather than divisive force, ways must be sought to 'inculturate' the one vision into the diverse phases of The School. Some suggestions are made in Chapter Five where I draw my conclusions and make some recommendations as to what planned action should take place in the future.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. CONCLUSION

This study aimed at investigating the staff's vision of a Catholic school and comparing and contrasting the identified vision to the one described in the literature review. This was done by means of a case study of an Independent Catholic School in South Africa.

Of the ten distinctive characteristics identified in the literature review, the teachers of The School were in agreement in relation to the characteristics describing a positive anthropology, community and a commitment to the formation of the personhood of each individual. They identified aspects of these characteristics in response to an open-ended question, and found strong evidence of these characteristics lived within The School. There are aspects of these characteristics described in the literature review that are not yet a part of the practice of The School or the vision of the staff, but Thomas Groome reminds us that there is always a notion of an ideal in a vision, and these deeper aspects that deal with more with the spiritual can develop and become more evident over time and with an intentional staff formation plan in place.

The staff identified collaboration as strongly evident in the life of The School and yet did not recognise this as an essential characteristic of a Catholic school. While not intentionally lived as a Catholic characteristic, and, as in all the distinguishing features having room for growth, collaboration describes an aspect of the lived vision of The School.

The teachers identified aspects of social justice as important in describing the vision of The School. They also found some evidence of this feature lived in The School, but there is a need to deepen the understanding of the demands of this characteristic in the intentional teaching of social justice.

There was a discrepancy between the findings of the literature review and the staff's vision of The School in relation to the distinctive characteristics describing a sacramental consciousness, tradition, catholicity, the call to be counter-cultural and rationality. While one characteristic or another might be evident to teachers in a particular phase, the sense of agreement across the staff is minimal. The staff neither understands these characteristics as essential to a vision of a Catholic school, nor see much evidence of them lived in The School. The call to be counter-cultural is the exception to the latter point as the staff identifies aspects of this characteristic practiced in The School, but neither agree with it as an essential characteristic of a Catholic vision, nor describe it in their vision of The School. These findings are in agreement with authors such as Quillinan and Treston who suggest that lay Catholics as well as staff of other denominations have a decreasing knowledge and understanding of the essential elements of the Catholic faith.

The variables that influence the degree to which the teachers identify aspects of the vision lived in The School are length of service and, to a lesser degree, the phase in which the staff member teaches. The longer a person serves on the staff of The School, the greater the awareness of the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school. Certain characteristics are emphasised more than others by the various phases, but the variable, length of service, gives the more significant trend for the staff in general.

Thus, in conclusion, the findings of my data collection and analysis are that a positive anthropology, a commitment to community and the formation of the personhood of each individual are the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school, identified in the literature review, which the teachers readily identified as aspects of The School's vision. Social justice was described and evidence was noted. Collaboration, and to a lesser degree, the call to live counter-culturally, were seen as practised in The School, but not theoretically important as characteristics of the vision. Tradition, rationality, a sacramental consciousness and catholicity played little part in the staff's description of The School's vision or in their noting of evidence.

## 5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research paper give direction for a constructive staff formation plan. This plan should incorporate time spent grappling with the practical application of the five characteristics of which there is little evidence in the practice of The School. Some input must be given as to the theological reasons that these characteristics are important and identified as 'Catholic' but this theory must be in a form that is accessible to teachers of all denominations and faiths. There is also a need for critical engagement with the culture of The School in contrast to that of society. The lack of understanding of rationality as a Catholic value and characteristic needs to be addressed, the teachers reassured, and given the tools to help them foster critical thinking in the classroom.

A long term staff formation plan must seek to deepen the understanding of the characteristics that have been identified by the staff as important and lived. The implementation of these characteristics can be broadened.

In fulfilling the recommendations of the Second National Catholic Schools' Congress, a workshop could be planned and facilitated for the staff of a number of Catholic schools in the area surrounding The School. This would imply an exchange of ideas and practice which would be enriching for all schools.

It is imperative that the vision of a Catholic school is known, understood and supported by each member of the school community if the school is to continue the mission of the Church to build the Kingdom of God. This study has given me direction as to the areas of focus for school formation in the vision of an Independent Catholic school in South Africa.



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# APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### The Staff's Vision of a Catholic School

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project by answering this questionnaire. To maintain the anonymity of our school, I refer to it as The School in the relevant statements and questions. Please note that this questionnaire is to ascertain trends in the Staff's knowledge and lived experience of the Catholic vision for our school, and not to evaluate individual teachers. Confidentiality is guaranteed.

**Part 1 Directions:** Please write key words in the block below in answer to the following:

What words would you use to describe the essence of The School that makes it different to other Independent or Government schools? Please be as specific as possible. E.g. If you write 'the Catholic Ethos', what aspects of the ethos are you specifically referring to?

**Part 2 Directions:** Below is a list of statements referring to The School's practice in interpreting and living the vision of the Church for a Catholic school. Please place an **X** in the column which best describes your opinion about each statement.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
1.	Each person in The School is treated with dignity befitting a daughter or son of God.					
2.	The School regularly worships together as a community centred on Jesus Christ.					
3.	The School is a community which embraces life with enthusiasm as a gift from God to be enjoyed, defended, celebrated and affirmed.					
4.	The School celebrates its faith in Jesus Christ and builds up its own Christian spirit through its liturgical and worship celebrations.					
5.	The School gives students the skills to question social axioms rather than simply to comply with them.					
6.	In The School, the person of Jesus Christ and his values are not just taught but also lived and experienced.					
7.	The School teaches explicitly and throughout the curriculum that God loves everyone.					
8.	The School has a broad, active Community Outreach Programme.					

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
9.	The School chooses and upholds Gospel values despite society sometimes dictating otherwise.					
10.	The School intentionally collaborates with other schools for the good of education.					
11.	The abilities and gifts of each student are developed in order to bring each one closer to her potential for the fullness of life.					
12.	The School is a community of consistent care for all its students and staff.					
13.	A spirit of contemplation, becoming aware of the presence of God, is fostered in the life of The School.					
14.	The School exposes students to Catholic culture: literature, history, music and art.					
15.	The School does not tell students what to think but prepares and practices them to think for themselves.					
16.	The School never measures a person's dignity or worth by academic results.					
17.	The School is sensitive to students' social and cultural backgrounds and affirms the richness of this diversity.					
18.	Disciplinary procedures in The School are just and fair.					
19.	The School discourages consumerism and promotes a sense of responsibility towards the utilisation of resources.					
20.	The School involves its personnel and resources in helping other Catholic schools which are struggling.					
21.	The School provides a nurturing and ordered learning environment which is student-centred, challenging and cooperative.					
22.	The School holds regular meetings and other programmes which make the parents conscious of their role and help to establish a partnership with them.					
23.	The School provides an aesthetic and symbolically rich space that nurtures imagination and creativity.					
24.	The School honours Catholicism's intellectual tradition by encouraging academic excellence.					
25.	The School encourages critical reflection on matters concerning faith.					
26.	The School community models reverence for the dignity of each person.					
27.	The School reflects catholicity (inclusion) by employing a variety of teaching methods and appealing to various learning styles.					
28.	Social Justice is explicitly taught in all subjects and not only by the Religious Education Department.					

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
29.	The School rejects notions of elitism and promotes cooperation with other schools.					
30.	The School encourages collaboration with parents in educating the students.					

**Part 3 Directions:** Below is a list of questions relating to your beliefs or practices in relation to the vision of the Church for The School. Please place an **X** in the column which best describes your opinion about each statement.

		Yes	No	Not Sure
31.	Do you experience yourself as treated with respect and dignity by the members of The School community?			
32.	Did you experience a warm welcome and sense of hospitality in your first encounters with The School?			
33.	Do you foster the aesthetic of students by encouraging them to be passionate about life and to bring a sense of celebration to life?			
34.	Do you integrate into each area of the curriculum a Christian values perspective?			
35.	Do you pose moral dilemmas for your students to practise ethical reflection?			
36.	Do you believe that all teachers in Catholic schools should bear witness by their lives and their teaching to Jesus Christ?			
37.	Do you experience The School as an inclusive community which offers hospitality and openness to all?			
38.	Do you incorporate discussion on social justice issues in your teaching?			
39.	Do you challenge your students with alternative values and behaviour practices?			
40.	Do you share resources and work you have prepared with teachers from under-resourced schools?			
41.	Do you employ a variety of instructional methods to honour the uniqueness of each student in your class?			
42.	Do you create space and time for class prayer to foster community in your group?			
43.	Do you encourage ethical discernment in your classroom – not only to see God in all things but to discern God's will for all things?			
44.	Do you believe that all teachers should participate in an appropriate manner in the sacramental and liturgical life of The School?			



		Yes	No	Not Sure
45.	Do you encourage your students to critically reflect on their thinking in order to bring them to the skill of responsible decision making?			
46.	Do you reflect regularly with your students on their habits?			
47.	Do you foster a global consciousness in your teaching?			
48.	Do you promote and support the involvement of The School in the wider community?			
49.	Does your educational space model commitment to the "three Rs" of recycle, reuse and reduce?			
50.	Do you collaborate with teachers from other schools for the good of education?			
51.	Does your classroom environment value excellence and challenge students to excel – not in competition, but according to their own capacities and particular gifts?			
52.	Is your classroom a place of hospitality for all your students? Do they feel safe in your classroom – physically, emotionally and spiritually?			
53.	Do you encourage your students to love the earth and be proactive in promoting earth care?			
54.	Do you have a knowledge and understanding of the stories that form part of the Catholic Christian tradition?			
55.	Do you teach your students about sustainability and a liveable future?			
56.	Are you proactive in nurturing spirituality among your students?			
57.	Do you give time regularly, outside of class time, to coaching the students who experience learning difficulties in your area of expertise?			
58.	Do you nurture creative imagination in your students about what can be done in the public arena?			
59.	Do you allow time for your students to explore their local culture?			
60.	Would you participate in a teacher exchange programme with a teacher from an under resourced school?			

**Part 4 Directions:** Below is a list of statements relating to aspects of the Church's vision for her schools. Please place an **X** in the column which best describes your opinion about each statement. Place a second **X** in the last column if you believe the statement describes the practice in The School.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Evident in The School
61.	All teachers should help prepare their students for gainful employment, to participate effectively in local communities, and contribute to the common good.					
62.	The primary distinguishing characteristic of a Catholic school ought to be the creation of a genuine Christian community.					

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Evident in The School
63.	A sacramental consciousness is an outlook on the world that experiences life as a gift, and sees the more (God's hand) in the midst of the ordinary.					
64.	Tradition is the unfolding of the Christian story of people living their faith in a community guided by the Holy Spirit.					
65.	Academic excellence is a reflection of the Catholic intellectual tradition and is part of the Catholic identity.					
66.	Catholic education aims to influence what a person knows and can do and also the kind of person they become.					
67.	The Catholic school is to be a school for all especially those who have lost all sense of meaning for life.					
68.	Teachers should use teaching styles that encourage critical reflection and questioning of the social and political context.					
69.	It is the responsibility of the entire staff to teach the right values and attitudes needed for life.					
70.	Wealthier Catholic schools need to act in solidarity with poorer, under-resourced Catholic schools.					
71.	Catholic theology argues that persons have an innate gift for goodness and are always able to change for the better.					
72.	The authentic nurturing of human life can only occur within community.					
73.	For Catholic Christians, the 7 sacraments are climactic celebrations of God's presence and grace in our lives, demanding a human response of personal faith.					
74.	Commitment to tradition must pervade the ethos of the Catholic school so that it becomes a community of moral discourse and formation.					
75.	Mathematics is deeply theological being almost the language for the description and understanding of creation.					
76.	Catholic schools must educate the 'very being' of their students, inform, form and transform who they are and how they live with the meaning and ethic of Christian faith.					
77.	Being catholic means an abiding love for all people with commitment to their welfare, rights and justice.					
78.	Catholic schools must be open to students with learning difficulties and behavioural problems, those who are non-conforming, critical or dissenting.					
79.	Catholic education prepares individuals to live in, and contribute to, the culture, and when necessary to be counter-cultural.					
80.	Catholic schools must publicly co-operate with each other, and collaborate with non-Catholic schools by reason of shared responsibility for the common good.					
81.	Catholic education is concerned with the education of the whole person, for the sake of human dignity, and to draw out the God-given potential in everyone.					
82.	The environment of a Catholic school needs to reflect community – not simply as an ideal taught but as a value realized.					

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Evident in The School
83.	A sacramental consciousness sees God in all things. Therefore to see the poor and oppressed is to see God and respond to their needs for their own sakes.					
84.	Education is the passing of sacred stories from one generation to another.					
85.	Students should be taught to use their whole minds: reason, intuition, logic and critical thinking, memory and imagination.					
86.	The test of Catholic education is deeds and not words – what students do with their education is of central importance.					
87.	Catholicism welcomes diversity and rejects fundamentalism in all its forms.					
88.	Teachers must make an option for the poor by having a special care for 'poor' students: physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually poor.					
89.	The function of education is always to offer the counter argument, the other side of the picture.					
90.	Collaboration is not an end in itself. It exists precisely so we can offer more effective service to those who need us.					

**Part 5 Directions:** A space is provided below should you wish to clarify any response you made or comment on the topic.

**Part 6 Directions:** Please complete the following personal information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Service at The School / as a member of the Management: \_\_\_\_\_

If you belong to the Christian faith please indicate the denomination to which you belong:

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time. Please fold the completed questionnaire in half and place it in the box marked  
**QUESTIONNAIRES**  
in my office by 5 p.m. on 21 June.

## APPENDIX B

### A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the research I did for my research paper. Your input was valuable and I have outlined below a summary of my findings for your verification:

Part 1: I grouped the responses to the open-ended question asking for words to describe the essence of The School. I then linked the key words and phrases to the themes I had identified in the literature review. Table 1 describes the summary of Part 1.

RESPONSES	TOTAL	THEME
Caring, nurturing, compassionate, developing the whole child, uniqueness of each person, dignity of each person	13	Positive Anthropology
Warm family environment Caring community Sense of belonging to a family	9	Commitment to Community
Being aware of God's presence in assemblies and Masses. Aesthetically pleasing A calm, peaceful presence	4	Sacramental Consciousness
Adherence to Catholic Feast Days, Masses, Chapel services, community worship	5	Commitment to Tradition
Upholding Godly values, Gospel values, Christian values, moral values, Christ-centred, fostering of spiritual development, space for prayer & reflection, Religion lessons	14	Personhood
Tolerance of differences Accepting all Teachers help the weaker pupils	6	Catholicity
Driven to help those in need Charity work Meaningful outreach to needy	5	Social Justice
Emphasis on the Bible	1	Fundamentalism

Table 1: A summary of the staff's vision of The School

Part 2: There was overwhelming agreement by the teachers that eight of the ten characteristics I had identified as describing the vision of Catholic Education were practised within the life of The School. These characteristics are a positive anthropology, a commitment to community, a sacramental consciousness, tradition, the formation of personhood, catholicity, social justice and collaboration. The two characteristics with which there was disagreement were rationality or critical thinking and the call to be counter-cultural.

Part 3: In Part 3 you were asked to score your own personal practice of the distinctive characteristics of Catholic Education. Here the results reinforced the findings of Part 2 with critical thinking and the

call to be counter-cultural showing the lowest degree of agreement. Collaboration also scored relatively low, especially in relation to collaborating with teachers from under-resourced schools.

Part 4a: Here there was, once again, little agreement that critical thinking and the call to be counter-cultural are distinctive characteristics of Catholic Education.

Part 4b: This section of the questionnaire asked you to indicate if you saw evidence of a particular characteristic lived or practiced in The School. I analysed the data using three variables: denomination, length of service and phase. There was little difference in the responses when analysed by denomination, indicating that the Catholic members of staff do not generally have a greater knowledge or understanding of the vision of The School than do the members of the other denominations.

The teachers who have worked at The School for longer than 9 years identified the same characteristics, as the teachers who have taught at The School for less than 3 years, as evident in the life of The School, but felt more strongly about each characteristic. The features of a Catholic vision identified as most evident in The School were a positive anthropology, community, personhood, social justice, the call to be counter-cultural and collaboration. It was agreed that the other 4 characteristics, a sacramental consciousness, tradition, rationality and catholicity were only evident to a small degree.

When analysed by phases, different characteristics were emphasised by different departments. For example, the Foundation Phase saw strong evidence of community, while the Senior Phase saw little evidence of community lived in The School.

In summary, the teachers were in strong agreement with a positive anthropology, community, personhood, social justice and collaboration as distinctive characteristics lived in the School. It was agreed that the other 4 characteristics, a sacramental consciousness, tradition, rationality and catholicity were only evident to a small degree. Most teachers did not believe that the call to be counter-cultural should be an aspect of a Catholic vision for education.

If you perceive this summary to be an accurate reflection of your knowledge and understanding of the vision of The School, please sign the attached slip. If you want further clarity or to challenge any point, please see me for a follow-up discussion.

Thank you again.

Regards

Pauline Rosseau

## APPENDIX C

3 Sylvania Avenue  
Westville  
3630

15 June 2006

Dear

I am currently engaged in research for my research Project to complete my M. Phil in the field of Education and Culture. The title of my project is *The Academic Staff's Vision of a Catholic School: A Case Study of an Independent Catholic School in South Africa*. My questions are:

- What is the accepted vision of a Catholic School as described by Church documents and leading authors on the subject?
- Does the Academic Staff employed by the School have an adequate understanding of the vision and distinctive character of a Catholic School?
- To what degree does the School implement this vision?

I am hoping that my research will help me understand those aspects of the Vision of a Catholic School that need to be addressed in our Staff Development / Formation programme, thus contributing to the growth of the School.

If you are willing to participate in this research the following will be required:

- You will be asked to complete a questionnaire in which you will rate each statement as to whether you strongly agree, agree, are uncertain, disagree or strongly disagree.
- At the end of the questionnaire I ask you to write down words or phrases which, for you, best describe the essential characteristics of a Catholic School.
- There is also a space for you to clarify a response, and add comments should you wish.
- When I have collated and analysed the data I might need to ask you if I may interview you to gain clarity on particular issues. Alternatively, if your responses seem clear to me, I will write a report of what I understand you to have said, for you to check for accuracy.

The results of the questionnaires and interviews will be kept strictly confidential. You will remain anonymous in any publication of the survey results. There will be no attempt to link your name to an individual response because I am interested in a group response not one representing individuals.

Your participation is voluntary. If at any time during the process you wish to withdraw your participation you are free to do so without prejudice.

Please sign the attached consent form and return it to me by Monday 19 June if you agree to participate in this study.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Rosseau

## APPENDIX D

### AUTHORISATION

I have read the attached letter and understand the nature of this study. I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I may refuse to participate or I may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### Code Book

Reference number	ref	self coding	
Denomination	denom	1 Catholic	
		2 Protestant	
		3 Pentecostal	
		4 Non Christian	
Length of service	service	self coding	
Phase of teaching	phase	1 Management	
		2 FET	
		3 Senior	
		4 Intermediate	
		5 Foundation	
Questions 1 – 30	q1	strongly agree	5
	q2	agree	4
		not sure	3
		disagree	2
		strongly disagree	1
		missing score	9
Questions 31 – 60	q31	yes	5
		not sure	3
		disagree	1
		missing	9
Questions 61 – 90	q61	strongly agree	5
		agree	4
		disagree	2
		strongly disagree	1
		missing	9
Questions 61 – 90	q61e	evident	1
		not evident	0



## APPENDIX F

### Data Collection

Staff Member	Denomination	Length of Service	Phase of Teaching	q1	q2	q3	q4
1	3	10	1	5	5	5	5
2	2	9	1	2	4	4	4
3	1	27	1	5	5	5	5
4	2	10	1	4	5	5	5
5	2	4	2	5	5	4	4
6	2	9	2	5	4	5	4
7	4	14	2	5	5	4	5
8	2	1	2	2	4	4	4
9	1	2	3	2	4	5	4
10	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
11	1	24	3	5	4	4	4
12	1	1	3	4	5	4	4
13	2	1	4	5	5	5	5
14	3	1	4	5	5	5	5
15	1	1	3	4	4	4	4
16	2	9	5	4	5	4	5
17	2	7	5	4	4	4	5
18	1	18	4	4	5	5	5
19	1	0.2	5	4	4	4	5
20	1	20	2	4	4	4	4
21	1	1	3	4	5	4	4
22	2	1	2	5	4	9	5



