A review of instructional leadership to inform the role of the principal in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia.

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(1) The purpose of this review is to highlight key aspects in the development of the concept of instructional leadership, to provide a critical overview of instructional leadership as a model for the leadership of Catholic primary schools in WA, and to highlight considerations relevant to the development of a position paper on instructional leadership. After a brief historical overview some definitions and models for instructional leadership are presented, as well as factors identified as impacting on the enactment of instructional leadership. Other factors specific to the context of Catholic primary schools in Western Australia are considered leading to a suggestion of an appropriate definition and model of effective instructional leadership for Catholic primary schools in Western Australia for further discussion.

Historical Overview

(2) The concept of instructional leadership can be traced back to the 19th century and the beginning of modern school systems (Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford, 2009). At that time the word instruction was equated to teaching and, therefore, the fact that leadership took place in a school made it instructional leadership.

(3) Although most literature on the topic states that the concept of instructional leadership developed during the 1980s, it is noteworthy that in 1967 Bridges wrote about the extensive amount of literature already existing on the topic of instructional leadership. At the time, Bridges was promoting his view of instructional leadership as 'experimenter' (Bridges, 1967, p. 145) which anticipates the later connection of instructional leadership with innovation and school improvement (Gupton, 2010).

(4) In the 1970s instructional leadership was focussed on teacher supervision and evaluation (Gorton, 1976; Neagley & Evans, 1976), a focus which continues in the United States (Stronge et al, 2008). Aligned with this focus was the highlighting of curriculum improvement. The 1980s is considered the distillation period of the concept of instructional leadership arising from the school effectiveness movement in the United States (De Bevoise, 1984). The school effectiveness movement promoted the idea that effective leaders were 'strong, directive' leaders focused on curriculum and instruction (Hallinger, 2003) and that these characteristics could be developed. This understanding of leadership therefore had a great influence on the principal leadership training academies in the USA.

(5) Dinham et al (2011, p. 140-141) point out that beginning in the 1980s in Australia there has been an increasing decentralisation of management responsibilities from system to local school level, although this has been more in the government schools than in the Catholic and Independent sectors. This requirement for school principals to take on greater management roles at school level contributed to a focus on business models of corporate administration which, in some cases, took the attention of principals away from the educational or instructional emphasis of their work. The focus has now returned to academic concerns partly due to government policy on funding and accountability requirements.

(6) The 1990s brought a spotlight on identifying high and low achieving schools through standardised tests. In Australia this began at State level but became centralised at a national level with the introduction of NAPLAN. There was also an international reaction against the idea of the principal as 'the centre of expertise, power and authority' (Hallinger, 2003) and a move to notions of distributed leadership.

(7) In the last 20 years the use of the term instructional leadership has had varying levels of emphasis in the midst of a number of other 'adjectival' leaderships, the most prominent being transformational, distributed or shared – although there are tens if not hundreds of others. The concept of instructional leadership has become strongly connected with the movement towards measurement of improved student outcomes and the instructional leadership actions that contribute to that improvement.

(8) In the 2000s performance standards became equated with measurable student outcomes, usually restricted to literacy and numeracy, and an emphasis on data as a means of informing practice became commonplace (Hattie, 2008). In the last few years terms such as 'leadership for learning', 'learning centred leadership', 'student-centred leadership' and 'leadership of learning' (Dempster, 2012; Hallinger, 2010; Robertson and Timperley, 2011) have entered the vocabulary. Recent concepts of leadership tend to include an articulation of moral purpose connected to vision and values that goes beyond a conception of the principal as solely an instructional leader but as someone involved in developing human potential (Fullan, 2002). These models have been described as subsuming the features of instructional leadership, transformational leadership and shared leadership (Hallinger, 2010b). It has been stated that the term educational leadership is generally used in the Australian context to refer to what would be called instructional leadership overseas (Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford, 2010, p. 302) however, because of the current use of the term 'instructional leadership' in the context of Catholic primary schools in WA, that term will be used in this paper rather than a term such as 'leadership for learning'. Nevertheless, the varied scope of meanings assigned to instructional leadership make it clear that aspects of shared and transformational leadership can also be included.

(9) Historically, most discussions of instructional leadership assume that the principal takes the primary role of instructional leadership in a school. In most cases, that understanding still predominates, although the work of Hattie (2009; 2011) is an example of a strong focus on the teacher in the classroom as instructional leader.

Definitions of Instructional Leadership

(10) The brief historical overview above makes clear that instructional leadership can be understood in different ways. Towards one end of a continuum its meaning can include everything that happens in schools. Towards the other end of a continuum it can be defined as being specifically connected to student learning, to the extent that principals can only be described as instructional leaders if teaching in a classroom is part of their role.

(11) The wider view is represented by Murphy (Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford, 2010, p. 301) who proposed a framework for viewing instructional leadership which included four major dimensions and was situated within the role of the principal:

- Developing mission and goals: school goals, vision, shared purpose.

- Managing the educational production function: supervision and evaluation of instruction, promoting quality instruction, protecting instructional time, involvement in curriculum, active monitoring of student progress.

- Promoting an academic learning climate: expectations and standards, visibility in the classroom, incentives, encouraging professional development.

- Developing a supportive work environment: safe and orderly, collaboration with and involvement of all the school community, shared decision making, securing resources.

(12) The following definition put forward by Hattie initially seems to represent a narrower definition of instructional leadership:

> Principals who have their major focus on creating a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives, and high teacher expectations for teachers and students. (2012, p. 84).

(13) However, if we consider what is involved in 'creating a learning climate free of disruption' it can be argued that Hattie's definition may be, in practice, not very different from that of Murphy.

(14) Viviane Robinson's work (2007) on student-centred leadership is well-known. Hallinger (2010, p. 12) credits Robinson with the 'startling finding' that the only clearly identifiable practice in the instructional leader's repertoire that impacts positively on student outcomes is for the principal to be closely involved with the professional learning of the staff. However, Robinson has recently developed her thinking further to make clear that no one thing by itself makes the difference in improving student learning outcomes, and she argues that it is the interrelationships between a number of factors that are important (2010). Robinson's identification of the capabilities required for effective instructional leadership returns us to the wider view of instructional leadership articulated by Murphy, as can be seen in the following list:

- Establishing goals and expectations
- Strategic resourcing
- Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum
- Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
- Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. (Robinson, 2010)

(15) Robinson's more recent work does not seem to have achieved the same publicity as her earlier discussions, perhaps because it returns to a more complex view of instructional leadership grounded in vision, values and relationships rather than presenting a simplistic list of what does and does not work in terms of achieving improved student outcomes. Robinson stresses the need for shared and distributed leadership (2010, p. 4), the importance of integrating 'appropriate cognitive and emotional resources in context-sensitive and goal-relevant ways' (p. 24) as opposed to 'mastering a long list of capabilities' and the need for 'creating the appropriate institutional and external conditions so that relevant capabilities can be exercised and developed' (2010, p. 3).

(16) David Hopkins has been a significant voice in the international leadership discussion through his work with the National College for School Leadership in England as well as with the Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (Moorman et al, 2008). He sets out the tasks of an instructional leader that are clearly learning focused beginning with the articulation of values and vision through to the organisation of structures and processes to support student learning. However, he also acknowledges that organisational skill, positive relationships and trust are essential to enable the required school environment to exist (Hopkins, nd)

(17) With all the attention given to leadership in schools, it is important to acknowledge that the influence of the principal, even as an instructional leader, is indirect (Hallinger and Heck,

2011, pp. 57-58) and that there are a number of other variables, most significantly the family, that have been established as having a greater impact on student learning (Leithwood, 2011, p. 44). To strengthen the leadership influence on student learning, Leithwood suggests that leadership practices focus on four paths described as rational, emotions, organization and family (2011, 00. 43-44):

- Rational: developing staff knowledge about curriculum, teaching and learning.
- Emotions: accept the strong connection between emotions and the ability to learn and therefore focus on the development of the leaders' social appraisal skills and emotional intelligence.
- Organization: provide structures, culture, policies and standard operation procedures, both within the school and at system level, that contribute to positive working conditions.
- Family: address the three variables that the school can influence – home environment, parent involvement in school life, and school contact with the home.

(18) Despite using a different framework and language, Leithwood's description of instructional leadership has obvious connections with the wider definition of instructional leadership. His major contribution to the definition is to broaden the focus beyond the school and the system to the family, a connection that should prove comfortable for a Catholic school context.

Models for Instructional Leadership

(19) It is clear that instructional leadership consists of more than being 'student-centred' or focused on learning. The complexity of what is entailed in practice is consistently described by researchers. There are many models of leadership but few that are named specifically as models of instructional leadership.

(20) Robinson argues that the distinction between instructional leadership and effective instructional leadership has not been the subject of enough discussion (2010). She puts forward the following model for effective instructional leadership as illustrated in Figure 1.

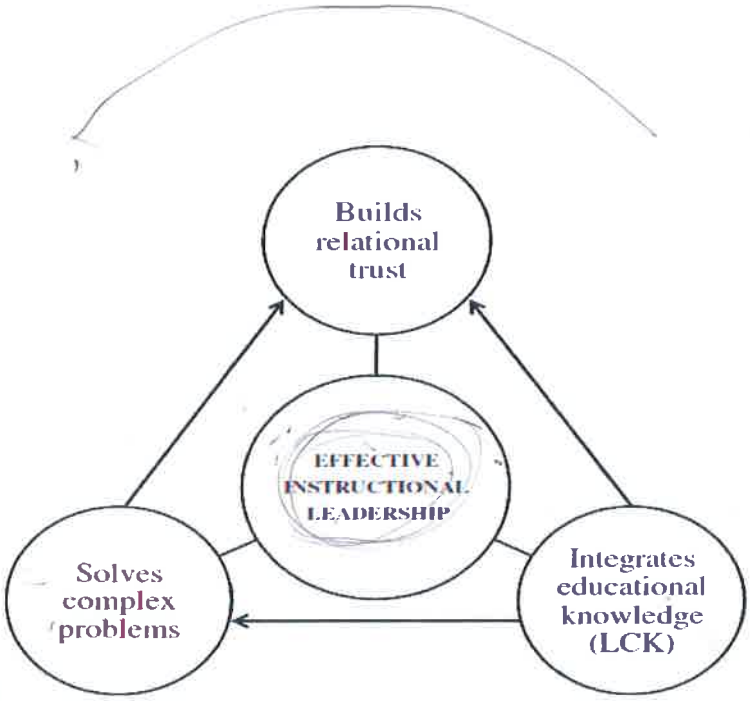

Figure 1. Robinson's model of effective instructional leadership (2010, p. 21).

Robinson sets out in her model three capabilities identified from the research literature as contributing to effective instructional leadership:

(21) Leadership Content Knowledge (LCK): this refers to the leaders' knowledge of teaching and learning in relation to their leadership skill. In other words, a leader needs to understand the content and pedagogy required for the learning areas, how to assess the current effectiveness of the teaching and learning in relation to student outcomes, and how to provide feedback that leads to teacher and curriculum development. This is obviously beyond the scope of just the principal in any given school and requires shared leadership.

(22) Solving complex problems: This is closely linked to LCK because it involves having a strong knowledge base integrated with the ability to relate the problem to school goals and values and use appropriate strategies to resolve the issue. These strategies require both knowledge and relationship skills and the opportunity for leaders to 'develop practical expertise through multiple opportunities to enrich, organize and apply their knowledge' (Robinson, 2010, p. 22) rather than simply be provided with the declarative knowledge that makes up many leadership programmes.

(23) Building relational trust: The importance of relationships is highlighted by Robinson who describes leadership as both a social process and a relationship of influence, as opposed to coercion or manipulation. This concept is expanded by Robertson and Timperley in their discussions bringing together the importance of relationships, distributed leadership and improving teaching and learning:

> ... emerging and strengthening evidence indicates that leadership that is relational, and is an influence process focused on successful learning relationships that are reciprocal, collaborative and empowering for all parties, have an impact on student engagement, achievement and well-being (Robertson and Timperley, 2011, p. 7-8).

(24) Relational trust is defined by Robinson as involving the 'confidence that others in a role ... will fulfil obligations and expectations relevant to the shared task of educating children' (2010, p. 18). Relational trust is built by:

- Interpersonal respect : e.g. listening, inclusive processes.
- Personal regard for others: e.g. caring
- Role competence: e.g. doing own job well and addressing incompletence where found

- Personal integrity: e.g. clear communication, walk the talk.

The consequences of relational trust in relation to a range of student outcomes are significant and Robinson's summary chart is included in Appendix One.

(25) Wildy and Clarke (2011) identify two models of leadership that are familiar to Western Australian Catholic schools as models of instructional leadership. The RAISe model that was implemented in nearly all Catholic schools in Western Australia during the 2000s has a strong focus on teacher leadership. However, this emphasis on teacher leadership sits within the context of shared leadership in which the principal as instructional leader plays a key role by being part of the professional learning and also providing the environment in which the RAISe model could successfully be implemented.

(26) The IDEAS model is familiar to some Catholic schools in WA and to many other schools throughout Australia. In this model, which is based on parallel leadership, the principal as instructional leader again plays a key role as 'metastrategic' leader.

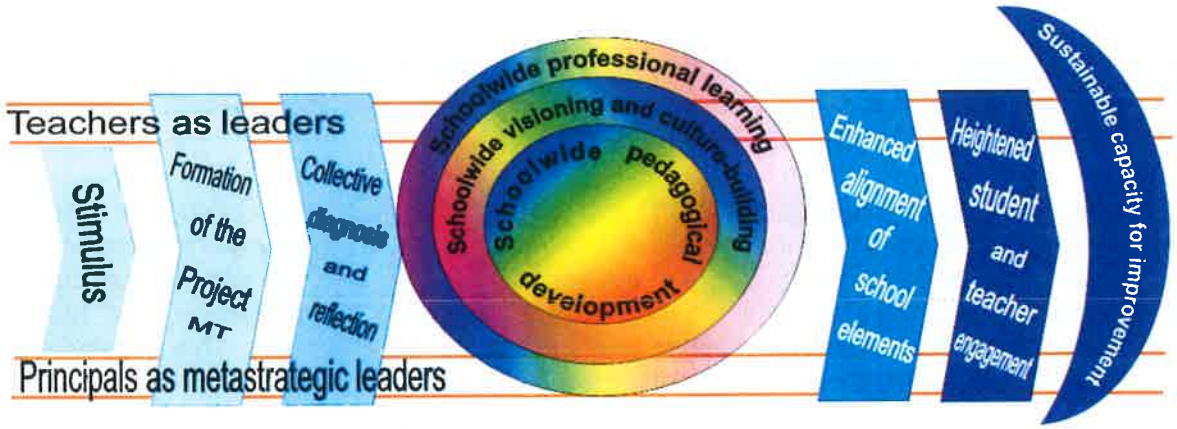

Figure 2. Parallel leadership (Crowther, nd)

(27) Parallel leadership has been described as 'a process whereby teacher leaders and their principal engage in collective action to build school capacity. It embodies three distinct qualities – mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression' (Crowther et al, 2002, p.38). The role of principal also includes aligning organisational elements, articulating shared direction and values, networking beyond the school, and building leadership capacity within the professional community (Lewis and Andrews, 2009).

(28) Although the following model in not named as a model for instructional leadership, the move to national accreditation and standards for teachers and principals makes it necessary to consider the AITSL National Professional Standard for Principals as visually represented in the Integrated Model in Figure 3.

Integrated Model

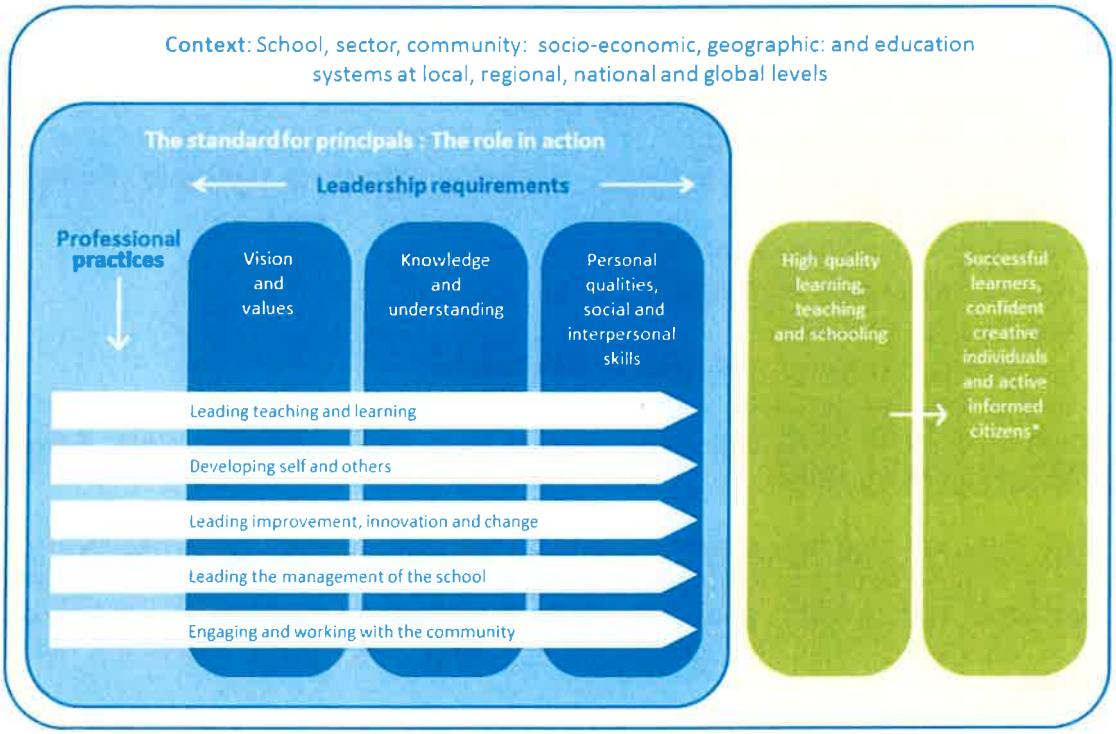

Figure 3. Model of leadership from National Professional Standards for Principals. (AITSL, 2011).

(29) The AITSL model pays attention to the importance of context as a factor that cannot be ignored in the enactment of leadership. It differentiates between the requirements for leadership and the professional practices required. Its focus on the importance of the principal as a leader of teaching and learning, as well as the outcomes of high quality learning and successful student learning, allows the model to be seen as belonging to the wider view of instructional leadership. Values and vision, knowledge, and the ability to relate well to others, are named as the fundamental requirements for effective leadership.

(30) The models in this section have been presented to highlight the common features relating to effective leadership that sometimes get overlooked in discussions about instructional leadership. The commonalities reinforce that, although a focus on student learning is key to instructional leadership, this does not happen in a vacuum and many other considerations must be allowed for both within the school and beyond. An involvement with professional learning is essential but, at the same time, the vision and values of the school must be articulated and communicated. Pedagogical skill and knowledge of the needs of the students is paramount, but management of resources and the building and maintenance of positive relationships with all in the community cannot be neglected. In other words, effective instructional leadership cannot be oversimplified and narrowed to one or two practices or attributes as many researchers, including Mulford, remind us:

> Successful leaders adapt and adopt their leadership practice to meet the changing needs of circumstances in which they find themselves. ... Any single one-size-fits-all or adjectival approach to leadership, or checklists of leadership attributes, is superficially attractive but will limit, restrict and distort leadership behaviour in ways not conducive to school development and improvement (Mulford, 2008, p. 48).

Factors impacting on effective instructional leadership

(31) Research has identified that there are a number of factors that affect student attainment in schools no matter what leadership practices are employed. Some of these factors are:

- School size (small, large).
- School location (rural, remote, SES).
- Type of school – primary, secondary; sector.
- School organizational culture.
- Teacher quality, quality of teaching – related to difficulty of staffing in rural/remote/ 'difficult' schools.
- Teaching / Admin role of principal.
- Relationships within the school.
- Experience of principal.
- Leadership preparation and succession practices.
- Family educational culture.

(Anderson et al 2010; Chapman, 2008; Dinham et al, 2011; Hallinger, 2003; Kvalsund, 2009; Wildy and Clarke, 2005).

(32) While some of these factors are unable to be changed, addressing the negative impact that may be caused by some of them is achievable. Most of them are within the province of the educational system within which the school is situated, or could be addressed by the system in partnership with the government and other educational institutions such as universities.

The Catholic Education Dimension

(33) General definitions of effective instructional leadership have been considered but, given the importance of the context that has been identified, it is important to consider the specific context of Catholic primary schools in Western Australia.

(34) The CEOWA has developed a Leadership Framework to guide understandings and practices of leadership in Catholic schools in WA. According to the Leadership Framework domain of Education, Catholic school leaders are expected to:

- build a culture of enquiry amongst staff and students whilst modelling a love of learning
- promote professional learning communities amongst teachers
- support learning at the level of the school and wider system
- Instil Gospel values through the curriculum (Catholic Education Office, 2013, p. 67).

(35) These brief principles take instructional leadership beyond the narrow definition of focusing on student academic outcomes and align with an understanding of instructional leadership that includes a values focus, love of learning beyond attainment in limited curriculum areas, collaboration and shared leadership, and partnership with the wider system.

The Catholic Faith Dimension

(36) The models of effective instructional leadership identified in this paper highlight the importance of vision. Catholic schools in WA are collectively committed to a vision developed at system level in consultation with the wider community. This is incorporated in a document named 'Living the Vision' in which it is stated:

> The Catholic school ... differs in a fundamental way from those of other education traditions. What makes it distinctive is its vision of the 'fully integrated' human being:

The Catholic school differs from all others which limit themselves to forming men and women. Its task is to form Christian men and women, and, by its witness and teaching, to show non-Christians something of the mystery of Christ, who surpasses all understanding (CEOWA, 2013b, p. 13).

(37) There are many quotes that could be taken from the Mandate and Living the Vision documents to support the argument that a wider definition of instructional leadership is needed in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia. The notion of developing the 'fully integrated' human being aligns directly with the widely accepted moral purpose of schooling in the Western world, but it is extended to the task of forming faith-filled people who carry the message of Christ to the wider world.

A suggested model and definition of effective instructional leadership for Catholic primary schools in WA

(38) Taking into account the features that have been identified as essential to effective instructional leadership, and including the Vision for Catholic schools and education in Western Australia, the following diagram is put forward as a way of summarising the essential factors that have been identified:

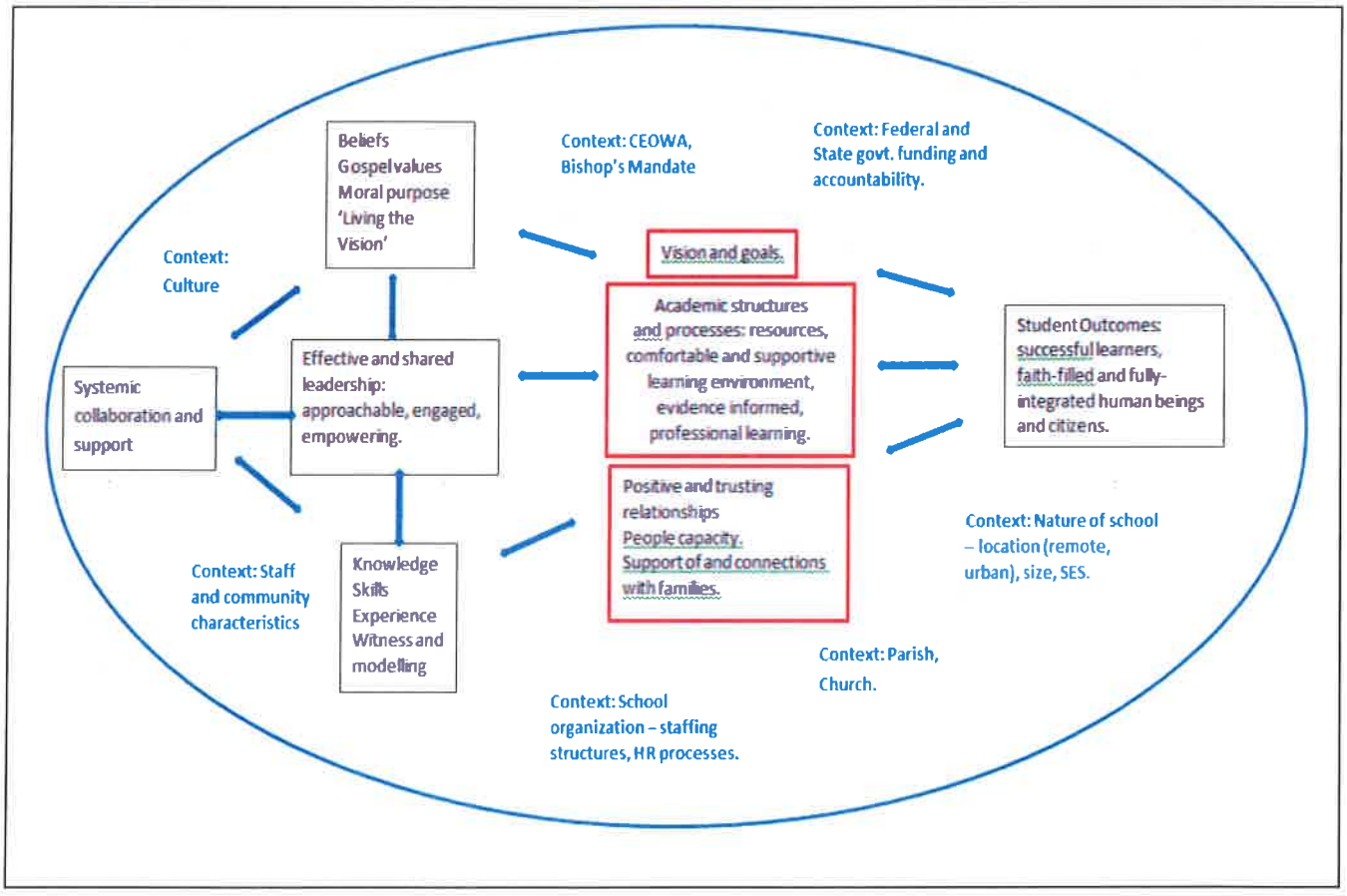

Figure 4 : A suggested model of effective instructional leadership for Catholic primary schools in Western Australia.

(39) The model presented in Figure 4 is based on a model developed by Hallinger (2010, p. 127) but has been modified to address the specifics required for effective instructional leadership for Catholic primary schools in Western Australia.

The model attempts to represent the most significant elements of the context of the school in which the leadership is taking place. Research continually highlights over many decades that leadership is contingent on context (Hallinger, 2007) which includes not only the immediate

culture but the system to which the school belongs. The context for a Catholic primary school in WA has to include the system in which it exists, and therefore the policies and structures of the CEOWA need to be incorporated.
The model also allows for the fact the each school will have a staff and community with different characteristics in terms of such features as personalities and the ability to co-operate.

(40) School organisation refers to the structures in the school including the way in which leadership is, or is not, shared or distributed. The inclusion of Human Resource (HR) processes is to highlight the fact that, just as there is clear evidence that involvement in professional learning is a feature of effective instructional leadership, there is also evidence that strong organizational management, including personnel practices and resource allocation practices, is also a feature of schools achieving improvement in student outcomes (Horng and Loeb, 2010).

(41) Leadership in the model is informed by knowledge and experience as well as values and beliefs and the model can be classified as a values-based model. Hallinger (2010, p. 128) identifies the 'terminal values' of ideas such as learning growth and academic achievement, but also social development , virtue , community service, equity, and, as a Catholic institution, might be added 'faith'. The other values identified by Hallinger are the 'instrumental values' that underlie the way that the goals are achieved e.g. through self-discipline, integrity, caring.

(42) An important feature of this model that has been taken from Hallinger (2010, p. 127), is the use of the two-way arrows. This is to represent that leadership does not drive achievement but that leadership is a process of mutual influence – effective instructional leadership is adaptive and responsive to the changing conditions of the school over time. The two way arrows also allow for the role of the principal as instructional leader and 'mediating agent' between external demands and the priorities of the school community (Louis and Robinson, 2012).

(43) The first of the core aspects fundamental to the model, and framed in the red boxes, is 'vision and goals'. Both contribute to the inspiration and direction of the school with vision providing the big picture and goals being more specific.

(44) The second core aspect of 'academic structures and processes' refers to the engagement of the principal with the teaching and learning aspects of school life as well as providing the environment allowing for learning.

(45) 'People capacity' is the third core aspect and in this model refers not only to the capacity building of the people in the school, but the building of positive relationships and the use of emotional intelligence.

(46) When all of these features of the model are understood and put into practice it leads to improved student outcomes. The two way arrows indicate that the information gained from the evidence of student outcomes feeds back into the model.

(47) The benefits of a diagram rather than a definition are that confining a complex concept to a few words has the potential to narrow understanding. However, a starting place for developing an appropriate definition is required and so the following is suggested as a starting point for discussion:

> 'Instructional leadership in a Catholic primary school in Western Australia is a way of being a leader, and doing the work of leadership, centred on the moral purpose of

> improving student learning and assisting students to become fully-integrated human beings. This requires the principal as instructional leader to provide a supportive working and learning environment in partnership with the CEOWA. It entails the articulation and living out of the vision and values arising from the 'Living the Vision' statement in the particular context of the school, and the development of respectful relationships with all members of the school and parish community. Principals as instructional leaders have a visible presence in the classroom and in professional learning. They include and promote others as instructional leaders in the classroom and act as a resource in supporting the work of teaching.'

Issues and questions arising

(48) Whatever model or definition is adopted, a number of questions still need to be addressed beginning with 'How is instructional leadership evaluated and measured and by whom?'

(49) Hallinger and Heck argue that longitudinal studies are necessary in order to ascertain the impact of leadership on student outcomes and that few of these have been done (2011, p. 61-62). Such studies are particularly important when a reciprocal effects model, such as that presented in Figure 4, recognises the mutual influence between the aspects of the organisation and leadership. Hallinger and Heck also argue that the importance of context in the consideration of effective instructional leadership means that no one leadership style can be applied in every context. In addition to the impact of context on leadership, Hallinger and Heck point out that recent research has identified that different leadership styles are more effective at different stages of the 'school improvement journey' (2011, p. 66). These research-based and well-argued conclusions make it difficult to apply general criteria to the evaluation of instructional leadership in any particular school. Robinson states the importance of:

> Developing assessments that capture the holistic and integrated nature of effective leadership and developing leadership curricula that teach the integrated rather than the discrete components.' (2010, p. 24).

(50) Whatever an external evaluation might say about the effectiveness of the principal as an instructional leadership, a principal needs to know on an ongoing basis in the context of their school whether they are being effective as an instructional leader. How this is achieved would be embedded in the organizational structure in the school and in the relationships developed with staff, students, parish and families.

(51) Certain conditions are required for effective instructional leadership to be enacted. These include a shared understanding of instructional leadership at all levels of the CEOWA and support from the CEOWA to enable effective leadership e.g. limiting administrative demands that take the principal away from their prime role, providing sufficient resources. Other conditions would depend on the specific context of each school.

Conclusion

(52) There is an ongoing temptation when thinking about effective leadership. and the actions of effective leaders, to reduce the definition and capabilities to a simple list with measurable outcomes. However the literature on leadership, and in particular instructional leadership, continually reminds us that leadership is complex and contextual and a narrow definition will not serve the moral purpose of schooling which, although some would argue that there is no one shared idea of this (Coleman, 2011, p. 174), would usually include the idea that the moral purpose of schooling is to support all students in reaching their potential.

(53) In light of the requirements for a definition of effective instructional leadership that is appropriate for Catholic primary schools in Western Australia, it is argued that a narrow definition that focuses solely on instructional tasks and does not incorporate the vision, values and relationship dimensions essential for leadership in a Catholic school would be rejected. Strategies such as instructional coaching may be one way of implementing one aspect of instructional leadership, but they cannot be equated with instructional leadership itself.

(54) While a definition can contribute to a common language and understanding about what is important, and therefore provide direction, none of this can contribute to the improvement of student outcomes in all dimensions of the student's humanity without the collaboration of state, system, region and school community in eliminating barriers to effective instructional leadership.

(55) It is hoped that this paper may contribute to a shared language and understanding about effective instructional leadership in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia, and therefore enable the identification and addressing of supports and barriers for principals and school staff in its implementation.

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Further readings and resources

Appendix One

The antecedents and consequences of relational trust (Robinson, 2010, p. 18).