

How do Headteachers establish, articulate and maintain an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith? An international comparative study of Christian leadership in schools.

by

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Abstract

This research looks at examples of leadership in Christian international schools in the Global South and how headteachers in these schools establish, articulate and maintain an ethos that provides a compelling vision of the Christian faith. There is no shortage of literature on the Christian leadership of schools in Western countries or indeed on the leadership of church schools in England. However, there is a paucity of literature that examines the leadership of Christian international schools in the Global South alongside leadership practice in church schools in England. This research asks what can be learned from international colleagues there.

This study has two related aims. Firstly, it focuses on leadership examples in a Christian international school context. The research is based on interviews with nine headteachers located in eight countries across Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. It explores the approach of these leaders, in terms of the day-to-day running of the school, their actions, language, and understanding of their role and of workplace relationships. Furthermore, it investigates how personal faith, sense of vocation, mission and calling inform their leadership behaviour.

The second part of this research is a documentary analysis of forty church school inspection reports, evaluating the Church of England and the Catholic leadership of these schools as described by the inspectorate. It situates that understanding alongside Christian leadership in Christian international schools. This gives recognition to Christian leadership in an

international setting, alongside church school leadership approaches. It identifies the differing leadership practices within those settings, yet highlights commonalities and offers considerations for future practice, specifically what headteachers of church schools in the Global North can learn from colleagues in the Global South. Building on the wealth of knowledge, experience and understanding of the leadership of church schools in England, this thesis concludes that international colleagues in Christian education offer an engaging perspective of Christian leadership in schools.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with how headteachers establish, articulate and maintain an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith. It is an international comparative study of Christian leadership of schools. This study examines leadership approaches in Christian international schools and in Catholic and Church of England schools in England and considers how this comparison might inform future leadership policy and practice. The research emerges from my own experiences of teaching and senior leadership roles in a Catholic school context in England and then as a founding principal at a Christian international school in East Africa. All of these experiences have motivated me to carry out this research.

There are two strands to this study. The first strand focuses on a small sample of nine headteachers of Christian international schools located in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, and considers their perspectives in leading such schools. To examine how leaders of international schools understand and express their leadership a small-scale, in-depth study was undertaken with headteachers. This thesis explores their accounts of their leadership and considers the practical ways they sought to establish, articulate and maintain a Christian ethos through their capacity as school leader. It seeks to ascertain the attitudes and experiences of the nine Christian international school headteachers with the intention of examining their values, ethos and ideas that underpin their behaviour. The actions of these leaders and the micro details of those actions are important in appreciating how they

establish and curate a Christian ethos that offers a compelling, credible and persuasive vision of Christian education. Of the nine headteachers, three headteachers were visited as part of a more ethnographic approach in seeking to understand their leadership practices. The second strand of this research situates that understanding of Christian international school leadership alongside how church school inspection interprets school leadership in an in-depth investigation of forty church school inspection reports. Twenty Church of England inspection reports and twenty Catholic school inspection reports are examined to consider examples of leadership practice.

This study was designed to investigate a small sample of Christian international school leaders and also considers leaders of church schools through the lens of the church school inspectorate. The research design was adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was based on nine semi-structured online video interviews with current headteachers of Christian international schools. In addition to the online video interviews, when travel restrictions were lifted, of these nine, I visited three headteachers to carry out further interviews and observe them in their school. These visits allowed me to conduct an additional layer of research by carrying out teacher-focus group discussions in each school. This immersion in the life of the school provided further insight and accumulated a greater understanding of the school leadership.

In exploring approaches to leading in Christian and church schools, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge concerned with Christian leadership in international schools. An exploration of the literature reveals a gap in this field. The thesis

explores what can be understood from colleagues overseas in terms of leadership of Christian international schools, specifically what practical knowledge can be gleaned from their leadership practice. Additionally, it situates their practice alongside church school leadership in England. Three important facets underpin the rationale headteachers of Christian international schools in their leading. The first is having a personal faith; a belief in Christ and an understanding of the role that faith plays in education. The second is communicating the Christian vision of the school; articulating the vision and values, the Christian identity of the school through their language. The third is living out through their leadership their sense of vocation, mission and sense of calling to the role. This includes being active in modelling gospel-inspired leadership. For some, what is enacted is leadership which is an outworking of personal beliefs. The motivation, commitment drive and actions of these headteachers preserve and keep alive the Christian faith in schools; they maintain it. The study explores leadership thinking and actions that are central to building school culture: micro-actions, language, tacit knowledge and workplace relationships.

The thesis builds on the work of Grace (2002, 2009, 2016) to consider the value of a leader's spiritual capital. Grace's research develops the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1986) who identified social, economic and cultural capital as a personal resource. Grace's (2002, 2009) research is primarily concerned with the concept of a headteacher's spiritual capital in a Catholic school environment and their capacity to draw on a known and lived value system, language and experiences all of which shape their leading. This research extends that thinking to explore an understanding of spiritual capital across Christian international schools. While Grace's study focused on Catholic leaders in three cities in England, this

thesis investigates spiritual capital of leaders in Christian international schools outside of the United Kingdom. It considers the impact of spiritual capital in terms of personal faith, charisma, and vocation in enacting Christian leadership. It further considers how for these leaders their theological understanding shapes their language (Jelfs, 2010), which in turn provides agency and means in establishing a Christian culture, unity and ethos.

Christian international schools are a distinct group within the international school system. They often offer Anglo-American schooling (Hayden and Thompson, 2008), but with a distinctly Christian ethos and approach to teaching and learning (Hiltibran, 2020; Linton, 2015). Like international schools, they are a popular choice with national and expatriate families, and with Christian and non-Christian families who choose to access this type of schooling. They are staffed by Christian teachers (Linton, 2015) and Christian international schools were often set up to fill a gap in the international schools' market (Hiltibran, 2020). These schools are fee-paying schools and, as such, considered to be for the privileged who can afford to access them (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021; Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), a Christian school accrediting organisation defines Christian international schools as ones that 'serve the expatriate community and often, a portion of the host country population' and 'use curricular programs originating outside their host country, employ internationally educated faculty, and specifically develop programs that prepare students for tertiary education outside the host country' (ACSI, 2023). ACSI suggests that Christian international schools are in 'more than 77 countries' (ACSI, 2023). For many reasons Christian international schools can be challenging places to lead as they are complex, multi-faceted and diverse. The high turnover

of staff, (Hiltibran, 2020) challenges with school boards and leading a school in a country with political unrest is part of that. Moreover, the makeup and purpose of these schools is undergoing a process of change in a postcolonial, post-secular world. The findings of this thesis therefore reveal new challenges faced by headteachers in Christian international schools and the particular skill-set needed to meet such challenges.

While there is research on international schools, little research has been done on Christian international schools in the Global South, or on comparing the leadership practice in these schools with that of leadership practice in church schools in England. The Christian international schools in this study are all located in the Global South. The term 'Global South' refers to continents and countries in the main located in the southern hemisphere and identified as less developed economically, identified by the Brandt line (Lees, 2021). Although the term Global South is used to reference countries that were developing countries in the southern hemisphere and often refers to countries that were subject to colonialism (Dados and Connell, 2012, p.13).

The literature related to church school leadership is usually concerned with either Catholic Church school leadership or the Church of England's school leadership. Furthermore, there is a gap in international studies of Christian leadership as they rarely examine Christian international school leadership outside of Western countries. This study extends the previous literature on denominational school establishments by focusing on the Church of England and Catholic leadership alongside Christian international school leadership. The thesis considers leadership practices captured by the inspectorate in both Catholic and

Anglican schools and positions that thinking to critique leadership in Christian international schools. This qualitative study looks beyond practice in England to appraise how nine headteachers in Christian international schools offer an engaging view of Christian leadership.

This introductory chapter begins by discussing my own personal interest in this field of study and my position as a researcher. It goes on to examine the understanding of leadership in Christian and church school education and defines leadership models and approaches. The chapter then offers a background to understand the expectations of church school leaders in England.

1.1 My academic journey

My journey to academia has been informed by my teaching career of twenty-eight years, much of which has been spent working in a faith school. I spent more than a decade working in an inner London Catholic secondary school, in the latter years undertaking a senior leadership role there. I then left England to be the founding principal at a Christian international school in East Africa. The combination of these experiences provided the impetus for this study. The breadth of the research is shaped by my own experiences. Not only does this impact how I arrived at this research, moreover it also shaped the process, as I could not be disassociated from my role as a senior school principal in East Africa. In undertaking that role, I was on a trajectory to examine and truly understand how, as a headteacher, one can articulate a vision for Christian education. It brought about reflection concerning how the Christian distinctiveness of a school is understood by oneself as a

headteacher. I considered, as a leader, how one develops a rationale of understanding that reinforces the school's Christian mission and vision, and ultimately how that mission and vision is conveyed. The scope of this study emerges from the challenges and triumphs I encountered. I undertook the role as a founding senior school principal and in doing so, I was forced to confront some questions about my own leadership and my identity as a white European woman. What kind of leader did I want to be? What are the truths by which I should lead? How should I live out those values on a daily basis? How should I model, articulate and exhibit Christian values? I was mindful of my own actions and behaviour in the formation of the school, its culture and values. The research seeks to explore what I see as valuable and important in faith education.

My background and experiences in the field of Christian leadership in education provide some credibility to this research. In addition, my own Christian faith is foundational to the research and is impossible to avoid as a factor in my positionality. The research would not have been possible without my Christian faith, as without it I would not have been granted access to the schools and school leaders. I was appointed as senior school principal of a Christian international school because of my Christian faith. Indeed, the research and desire to see a strengthening of leadership in church and Christian international schools emerge from my faith background. The implications of researching as a Christian with experience as a headteacher, are discussed in Chapter three, as I examine the methodological approach to this study.

My academic journey through teaching in a Catholic school and leading a Christian international school taught me to appreciate the value of faith in education not through the teaching of the faith *per se* but in the school culture that imbued it. Through this thesis, I wanted to explore how that is achieved.

1.2 The research approach

Three research questions provided a focus for this study. Firstly, *how do headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith?* This question was not intended to pursue a line of inquiry associated with policy but to reflect on a headteacher's individual practice. From a Christian perspective, *ethos* has biblical roots referring to the behaviour, manner, practices and customs of others. This research examines how ethos is achieved, through relationships and actions (Allder, 1993). It considers how ethos is shaped by a leader's sense of purpose (Donnelly, 2000). The idea of intrinsic motivation and asking 'Why do you do what you do?' was key in understanding the practice of school leaders and responses are explored in Chapter four. Ethos in this research is concerned with the inherent and lived values of schools that emerge as a result of actions, attitudes and behaviour of those within these organisations. How ethos is achieved in a school organisation is complex. Ethos consists of the principles of an educational institution or its spiritual foundation and the culture is the outworking of that or day-to-day actions.

The research focuses specifically on the importance placed on relationships to build a school community. I wanted to know the customs, habits and routines of these school leaders. To understand what and why these headteachers were leading in the way that they were, their

chosen practices, habits and routines and further to understand their reasoning. Based on the first research question, I wanted to establish which features of leadership these Christian international school leaders thought were pertinent to their leadership.

The second research question was '*What does future leadership of church and Christian international schools look like? Why is it important?*'. Findings in response to this question are discussed in Chapter eight. The final research question was designed to assimilate the research of both Christian international schools and church schools in England to consider the future of leadership praxis: '*How does the evidence from these examples inform the debate on future leadership policy and practice?*' This final research question sought to highlight the central considerations for leaders in these educational contexts and to understand how this might shape leadership pedagogy. Building on the findings from across this thesis, this is addressed in Chapters eight and nine.

Of the nine headteachers interviewed, some were heads of school and some were school principals. Their designation and responsibilities vary according to their school, (Keller, 2015). Some participants used the term 'director' or 'superintendent' interchangeably with 'head of school'. A director, or superintendent or head of school role differs slightly from that of the principal depending on the school and the individual job description. The directors, superintendents and heads of school had complete oversight and responsibility for the day-to-day running of the whole school, administrative matters, financial, legal responsibility as well as educational responsibility. The principals had responsibility for an educational phase, such as primary, middle or high school. Their responsibilities were more

concerned with the educational provision, the quality of teaching and learning, timetable and curriculum offering. In this study, principals and heads of school will be referred to as headteachers as a generic term.

The second strand of the research involved an exploration of Section 48 reports. As part of this research, I looked at a sample of forty church school inspection reports- twenty Catholic and twenty Church of England school reports carried out between 2011-2020. In that sample, I coded each report by looking at the language used to describe the leadership of the school and specifically the actions and behaviour of the headteacher. The intention of this strand of the research was to understand, through the lens of the church school inspectorate, what inspectors acknowledged and identified as being pertinent to leadership behaviour. The leadership approaches of headteachers identified in the sample of Section 48 inspection reports of church schools in England are discussed further in Chapter seven.

This study draws meaning from interviews with nine headteachers in eight countries in the Global South alongside church school inspection reports in England. It seeks to understand how headteachers establish and articulate a compelling vision for education in their leadership practices.

1.3 International schools and postcolonialism

This study offers a discourse on the Christian leadership of schools and reflects on the changing landscape of international education. International schools are not an affordable

education option for many local families and as such opponents of these schools see them as elitist (Bunnell, 2022) or for the wealthier and more privileged in society (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). While these schools were often set up to provide an education for the children of expatriate and missionary families, they are being increasingly accessed by more affluent national families (Bunnell, 2014; Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Keller (2015, p.902) suggests that 80% of children at international schools are from national families. Gardner-McTaggart's (2021) research suggests that the curriculum used is often Western, the staff are often expatriates and many operate as Western schools, meaning they are rooted in Anglo-American values and beliefs and the education system employed is based on that taught in England, Europe and the United States. Gardner-McTaggart (2021) suggests that they are not international at all but Western and indeed perpetuate colonialism.

This research will not negate the neo-colonial associations and heritage of international schools (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021) but will consider how these schools are continuing to evolve to meet the demands of stakeholders (Bunnell, 2022; Hayden and Thompson, 2010). With the increasing demographic of such schools altering, international schools remain in a state of flux. Most international schools are businesses or run by business owners and some use a franchise model. Many Christian schools are run as trusts and are run on a not-for-profit basis (Keller, 2015) which can lead to leadership frustrations in their governance. Often Christian international schools demonstrate their educational gravitas with governments and parents by seeking accreditation with international school accrediting bodies such as Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), Middle States

Association (MSA) and Council of International Schools (CIS). This enhances their credibility and status.

The leadership complexities and layers of challenge are addressed by Keller (2015) who suggests that leaders in international schools face complicated dualities and that the role of headteacher is a challenge, having to navigate a duality of expectations in many aspects of school life. Benson (2011) highlights the challenges for school leaders including the high turnover of staff and that the tenure of a head of school which is on average 3.7 years (Benson, 2011, p.93). This research will not explicitly examine whether the schooling, curriculum or staffing in these Christian international schools has a Western bias but will concentrate on leadership approaches, practices and considerations and explore how these shape and impact the ethos of the school.

1.4 Christian leadership practice

This study seeks to identify and discuss practical examples of Christian leadership in Christian international schools. It explores pertinent leadership practices and these form the basis of the thesis. The research considers how leading relationally practically impacts relationships, interactions and school culture.

In African culture, relationships within the workplace are highly valued (Du Toit, 2005; Msila, 2008). The onus to work together, collectively, shapes thinking. Through relational leading, a workplace culture is established (Setlhodi, 2019). Interconnectedness is also highlighted as a valued way of leading in schools. Swaner and Wolfe (2021) suggest a prioritising of

relationships within a school environment to achieve flourishing. Cooling et al (2016) also identify the idea of promoting relational flourishing within a school community. Another leadership model enacted in these schools is the servant leadership model (Cooling et al, 2016; Drov Dahl and Jones, 2020, Ford and Wolfe, 2020), which is pursued as an optimum approach to leading. Such ways of approaching leading emerge in this study as headteachers tell of their calling and vocation (Grace 2002, 2016; Schuttloffel, 2019) in undertaking the role.

The challenge for headteachers has to be the importance of the development of the whole person (Greenleef, 1977), as well as being concerned with educational standards. Grace (2016) concurs, suggesting that 'Schools are not scientific laboratories. They are crucially, person forming and society forming' (p. 26). The headteacher is the lead practitioner who is at the heart of establishing school culture; setting the Christian ethos of a school that prioritises people over productivity. Grace (2016) suggests that there is an approach in schools that is too heavily weighted on exam output and attainment. Grace (2002) identifies a culture of increasing demand concerning what constitutes an effective school within an already competitive market. Leaders reconcile that with their sense of mission. This research focuses on examples of Christian leadership, including those that prioritise and hold as paramount the Christian values and well-being of those within their care and consider how those values sit alongside academic priorities.

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI, 2020) sets out expectations for headteachers of Christian international schools in its accreditation rubric which states that

headteachers should 'provide spiritual leadership to the staff, students and other stakeholders' (ACSI, 2020, p. 7). This includes fostering a culture in which 'staff members exemplify a passion for Christ' (p. 19). Priority is placed on Christian 'character development' in schools, with the intention of building and establishing a culture of faith: 'The entire organisational ethos has a Christlike attitude which is apparent in the lives of the board, faculty, staff and students' (p.49). It is exacting in its expectations: 'Christlike character and values is seen in instructional and non-instructional activities' (p. 49). This study set out to understand how leaders curate a Christian culture according to such expectations and, beyond that, how it is sustained by headteachers.

For some headteachers personal faith is central to their leadership practice and in turn impacts organisational culture, (Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010). Unlike the findings of Buchanan (2020) whose study of Christian educators found a reluctance to express their personal faith, headteachers in this study expressed how they strived to live out their faith publicly in their leadership. This was exhibited in their actions and also in their language. ACSI, as part of their accreditation of international schools, also requires all teachers to write an essay about their philosophy for Christian education. This reflection encourages a personal response and rationale concerning the purpose of education, specifically Christian education. This study asked leaders about their own philosophy for Christian education. The purpose of asking this question was to understand what headteachers think is important (Newby, 2010). Ultimately what did they believe education (or indeed Christian education) should be about? This question was asked to try to understand whether headteachers believed education to be solely about academic equipping, or if it was something more than

that. If so, what do they hold as central to the role of education? Additionally, how as a leader they communicated that to stakeholders? Understanding the thinking and rationale of headteachers helped me to have an insight into what they saw Christian education to be ultimately about and their role in that. Their personal philosophy for Christian education emerges in their leadership practices.

For headteachers, having a clear understanding about a Christian philosophy for education informs their language (Noghiu, 2020), with which they articulate the faith life of the school. The language of spirituality, both personal and corporate, can be a challenge for school leaders to articulate. This study gives consideration to leaders who draw on their own beliefs, values and experiences in leading others. Leaders in this study demonstrate a language of theology and spirituality. They have a spiritual capital (Grace, 2002; Grace, 2016; Wilkin, 2014) a value system, and a language, drawing on their own faith experiences that equip them to lead.

1.5 Church school leadership

In considering international approaches to the leadership of schools, the future of church school leadership in England for both Catholic and Church of England schools will be discussed. In this research 'church schools' is a term that specifically refers to schools that are either Church of England schools in England, or Catholic schools in England. The church schools included in the sample are voluntary aided schools, voluntary controlled schools and academies. It does not refer to church schools in other jurisdictions in the United Kingdom: Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The current climate for church school leaders is a challenging one, as there is a sense that there needs to be prudence in how overtly Christian the school is. The recent Bloom review (2023) reported that a third of schools and academies in the United Kingdom are faith-based (Bloom, 2023, p.74). With more than 20,000 respondents in the United Kingdom it found that 58% of those surveyed believed that faith schools are good for society, 17% had a neutral position and 25% saw no value in faith schools (p. 74). Headteachers of church schools in England are walking a fine balance between being inclusive and welcoming and not wanting to be 'too Christian', and therefore inaccessible.

In the Catholic leadership of schools, the central premise continues to be that Catholic schools are core to the Catholic Church's mission and that Catholic schools are preservers of the Catholic faith (Catholic Schools Inspectorate, Inspection Handbook, 2023). The Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education states the idea that in schools 'God is found in the work and the human relationships of each day' (1988, p.33) and that a school's culture is a central part of that (p.78). It suggests teachers themselves should realise their role in the educational process whereby 'Their words, their witness, their encouragement and help, their advice and friendly correction are all important' (p.84). Workplace relationships and interactions in a Catholic school establish and create a faith community. Previous research revealed that for Catholic headteachers, faith is central to the life of the school and plays a large role in the life of the school (Johnson, McCreery and Castelli, 2000). Understanding of Catholic faith brings clarity to the mission of the Catholic school which influences the school ethos and culture.

The Church of England's 'Vision for education', articulates that it is 'deeply Christian serving the common good' (Church of England, 2016, p.1). Central to that is the premise that education is about "'Life in all its fullness"- John 10:10' (Church of England, 2016, p.9). The thinking is Christian, yet inclusive of those of other faiths as well as those of none. The idea of teaching Christian values, while acknowledging a plural society is an important stance in the thinking of the Church of England to promote Christian values alongside tolerance of the beliefs of others.

Church of England schools have moved on from a language of describing themselves as distinctively Christian (Archbishop's Council, 2001) seeking to be more inclusive in their approach to the Christian faith. There has been criticism that this approach is confusing (Street, 2007). More recently James (2023) has suggested that Church of England schools should have a 'theologically rooted Christian vision' (p.17) that is 'contextually responsive' (James, 2023, p.3). This allows leaders to shape the Christian vision of the school while being sensitive to the values and beliefs of the local community, pupils and parents. Specifically, this perspective frees schools to adopt an individual approach, allowing leaders to curate a Christian identity for the school. While being rooted in Christian belief, it has a less explicit conviction to instil Christian faith within the school community it serves. The priority for Church of England schools is to seek to be inclusive (James, 2023) and serve the community within which they are situated, (Chapter seven examines church school approaches to leadership).

1.6 The church school inspectorate

This thesis highlights examples of church school leadership mentioned by the inspectorate and discusses the value of leadership practice. The Education Act 2005, Section 48 (The National Archives Education Act, 2005) states that during inspections of schools with a religious character, inspectors should highlight the quality of the education and report on the collective worship within that educational establishment and ‘on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school’ (S48: 4). The remit of the Section 48 inspector is to provide validation, or otherwise, of current practice in a school with a religious character. Headteachers of faith schools must demonstrate high standards in the quality of education and academic attainment of the school for the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Service and Skills (Ofsted), and meet the standards set out by the Section 48 inspectorate. While academic achievement, skills and competency are requirements for all schools, for church schools establishing and nurturing a Christian culture is also central to their formation. The ongoing challenge for headteachers is whether faith and the mission of the church can remain central to their function.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter two (the literature review) discusses the literature relating to international schools and Christian international schools. It examines Christian leadership models, including servant leadership and relational leading in schools. It summarises the literature relating to Christian leadership in schools and how the personal faith of a headteacher is enacted in the workplace. It focuses on literature concerning

leadership practice in Catholic schools and in Church of England schools. Chapter three documents the methodology and methods used to answer the research questions. It details the decisions made at the different stages of the research process and of collecting and interpreting the data. It also addresses my position as a researcher, an outsider as a white European woman and yet with some insider knowledge having lived and worked as the principal of a school in East Africa.

Chapter four discusses headteachers and their philosophy for Christian education. It shows that headteachers saw their role as a vocation (Grace, 2016). Their leadership was not just about leadership capability, but a commitment driven by an unerring sense of vocation and mission. Headteachers' personal faith drove their commitment to school values. For some, this was about moving beyond a clear sense of moral purpose and a desire to make a significant difference. It was a 'calling'; a spiritual capability that is coupled with gifting that is God given.

Chapter five focuses on headteachers' actions and behaviour in Christian international school leadership. It unpicks their accounts of their actions in leading a school and the reasons for their actions. It discusses their self-reflections as they recount practical approaches of investing in and seeking to be intentional in building capacity through leading relationally. The actions associated with this compassionate leading: inspiring, nurturing and mentoring middle leaders, students and others is found to be at the core of their practice. The headteacher is the lead practitioner who is at the heart of nurturing the human person. All interactions within a school are significant in establishing and maintaining a culture of

cohesion (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010). This chapter considers the reflections of headteachers as they consider how their personal faith impacts their professional sphere in a practical way, and how it informs their actions (Holmes and Pratt Adams, 2021; Shaw, 2017).

Chapter six examines servant leadership by telling Bruce's story. Bruce was a headteacher of a Christian international school and has been in post for nine years. This chapter documents his reports about his approach to leadership, his actions, attitudes and behaviour, and acknowledges the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on his leadership style. This chapter explores Bruce's leadership approach and is useful because it offers a more detailed discussion of one Christian international school leader and his reflections on his practice. In the online interviews, Bruce offered detailed accounts of his leadership and considered and cogent reasoning as to why he approached leadership in the way that he did. In part, this was because of the understanding, knowledge and insight that his own experiences of Christian school leadership afforded him. It was for this reason that I chose to visit Bruce in his school and to interview him further. During the face-to-face interviews and shadowing of Bruce, his leadership evoked my interest because it was an engaging approach to leading the school. Furthermore, his personal faith in Christ was such a driving force in his leadership. It was important to share this with a wider audience through this thesis because it is exactly this detailed account of personal leadership through Christ that is not often fully captured in church school inspection reports. The chapter explores Servant leadership (Cooling et al, 2016; Greenleaf, 1977) as an aspirational model (Ford and Wolfe, 2020). Through Bruce, this relational way of leading is expressed in a school context. Bruce's

detailed account demonstrates how school culture is established and lived out (Cerit, 2009). It finds that in times of considerable challenge, (for example the COVID-19 pandemic) some Christian school leaders endeavoured to pursue a servant leader model, seeking to serve others in times of crisis. The personal challenges of enacting a servant leadership approach (Branson, Marra and Buchanan, 2019) are also identified in this chapter.

Chapter seven examines church school literature, church school leadership and the church school inspectorate. It reflects on the findings of church school leadership of forty schools through the lens of the Section 48 inspectorate. It considers examples of headteachers leadership in Catholic secondary schools and in Church of England secondary schools that have been awarded a Section 48 inspection judgement of 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. The chapter focuses on leadership actions and behaviour of headteachers that have been identified in those reports.

Chapter eight offers a discussion of the leadership of Christian international schools and church schools in England and the future concerns for the leadership of these schools. It acknowledges issues relating to leading these schools, including the idea that personal faith can be harnessed in leading (Grace, 2012). This chapter discusses a headteacher's understanding and their personal philosophy for Christian education. It notes the value of a rationale informing their language and behaviour. It also identifies the idea of 'living out' a calling or vocation as part of leadership practice and the implications of this leadership approach. This chapter also considers the postcolonial landscape of Christian international schooling. The conclusion of this study provides suggestions for future leadership of church

and Christian international schools and acknowledges why understanding these concerns is valuable for the future of these schools.

1.8 Conclusion

There is limited research examining the leadership of Christian international schools in the Global South alongside that of Catholic and Church of England school leadership in England. This thesis provides an addition to this body of work. Its value is that it looks across the leadership of Christian international schools and church schools in England and identifies commonalities and recognises important aspects of leadership practice. The accounts of headteachers from Christian international schools, while being personal reflections of their own leadership, provide a narrative of personal leadership experience. For those in the field of Christian education it is useful to look beyond what we know, to consider leaders in different contexts and what we can learn from them. The next chapter offers a review of the literature concerning international schools, Christian leadership of schools and church school leadership.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

There are three strands to this literature review. Literature concerning international schools; the literature on leadership behaviour and practices in church and Christian schools; and literature focused on the leadership of church schools in England. The intention is to acknowledge the complexity of Christian leadership practices in Christian international schools and the issues related to those schools that shape their leadership. This chapter outlines the literature about leadership within both Christian and church school contexts. While church schools are under the jurisdiction of the church, Christian international schools are often stand-alone schools. This chapter provides a discussion about Christian and church schools. While it is a challenge to offer a robust chronology of the vast sections of literature written about these areas, it does provide discussion around the complexities and nuances in the leadership of these schools.

There is a paucity of research concerned with the leadership of Christian international schools in the Global South. The literature that exists is often concerned with why international schools are considered anachronistic by some, for example, the very existence of these schools is seen as a continuation of colonisation (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). International schools have historically been populated by Anglo-American children whose families have sought a Western education, wanting to replicate schooling similar to that in their home country. While international schools vary considerably, the growth of

international schools suggests that there is a continued demand for this provision. There are currently 13,614 international schools with 6.7 million students attending worldwide (ISC, 2023, np).

Some of this literature considers the headteacher's leadership practice in Christian international schools and church schools and demonstrates how leadership behaviour, personal faith and intrinsic motivation help leaders enact a considered philosophy for Christian education. While this strand of literature does not seek to fully explore multiple leadership theories, it does examine research relating to the leadership of headteachers and how they convey the religiosity of their schools. Leadership for some is an outward demonstration of their faith. Some headteachers are enacting a response to a calling on their lives, their leading is a sense of mission. For some headteachers, their leadership is about moving beyond a moral imperative to something beyond one's own success and achievement as a headteacher, to ensuring that all decision-making is about enhancing the faith life of the school to achieve the best for everyone.

The literature associated with the leadership of church schools in England, in both Catholic and Church of England schools is extensive. It is mostly separated into literature written by the Catholic community concerning Catholic education and that written by the Church of England concerning church school education. This review provides an understanding of expectations placed upon church school leaders and the leadership issues for both Catholic schools and Church of England schools in England. The literature concerning the inspection of these schools is further explored in Chapter seven.

2.1 International schools

International schools are varied and complex. They are fee-paying schools that have historically been established to meet the needs of international communities, specifically the children of expatriate workers, those working in diplomatic roles and in international development. Hayden and Thompson (2008) suggest that one of the earliest international schools was set up in Lesotho in 1890, serving expatriate and missionary families (p.19). International schools serve a wealthy, often professional and transient market, with high numbers of expatriate children attending. Their primary purpose is to offer alternative educational provision that differs from that of the host country. Keller (2015) in his robust appraisal of leadership challenges in international schools identifies the breadth of differences and difficulties in the provision of schooling. His research focuses on an international school in Turkey yet acknowledges that international schools differ considerably. Keller suggests that there is a whole cross-section of international schools which, 'vary in terms of size, location, student demographics, curriculum, government oversight, ownership, admissions criteria' (p.901). This idea is important in that it is often difficult to make broad assumptions about international schools as they can be vastly different varying in size, scope, staffing, financial means and resources to name a few. Keller (2015, p.905) suggests that there is a dualism that faces international schools. Such dualism is part of the very nature of these schools as they are multifarious and, in turn, present several complex tensions and challenges for international school leaders. He highlights the conflicting values of an international school agenda that prioritises educational process and practices and the development of the whole child. Alongside that is a Globalist agenda that has emphasis on economic priorities, admissions and attainment. Keller (2015) also

recognises the conflict between the local and the global demand and expectations placed on the school leadership. Such strains add to the complexity of the school leader's role.

Critics of international schooling disapprove of the educational offering. Lessons are taught in English using Western curricula, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB), International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Cambridge (GCSE and A-level) or the U.S Advanced Placement and high school diploma. Rather than offering an international education, provision is fundamentally Anglo-American and arguably not sensitive to the international cohort of the pupils on roll (Hayden and Thompson, 2008).

Teaching staff in international schools are made up of national staff and ex-patriot staff. They are often dominated by Anglo-American expatriate staff, who are a transient international community whose tenure can be short (Benson, 2011). Linton's (2015) small-scale research of Christian international school experience suggests that 'long-term teachers' (p.199) in Christian international schools are ones who are in post for two years or longer, equally acknowledging that 'short-term' tenure can be one to two months (Linton, 2015, p.199). This brevity of term of office can result in a lack of stability for international schools, as leaders continually face the challenge of retaining staff (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Undoubtedly this provides an ongoing issue for the leadership of a school, as high staff turnover contributes to an unstable educational trajectory. Additionally, international schools are not always thriving international communities. They are complex organisations with differing cultural expectations and values about education. Caffyn, (2010) in his study of the micro-politics of two international schools suggests that the expatriate community in international schools themselves can be closed off and insular. This is important because it

identifies a claustrophobic nature within which misunderstandings across cultures, conflicts and segregation of cultures can occur. He sees such turbulence as having a notable impact on the culture of a school. Specifically, he acknowledges the pressure and strain in schools between the local and expatriate communities (p.336). Thus Caffyn (2010), highlights a valid perception about international schools and their micropolitics which can impede the day to day running of a school. Benson (2011) in his research of the tenure of 165 heads of schools or chief administrators of international schools, puts forward the idea that conflict with the school board was a notable factor for heads of school leaving their positions. In African international schools headteachers' average tenure is 1.9 years (Benson 2011, p.99). In his findings he identifies the reasons which include feeling micromanaged and conflict with stakeholders in navigating the strategic direction of the school. This research, although not very recent, sums up the landscape associated with leadership tenure of international school headteachers.

As establishments of international education, perhaps one would expect a melting pot of the best international educational ideas, that encapsulate an educational offering reflecting its international demographic, but this is rarely the case. More recently, Gardner-McTaggart (2021) observed many international schools pay lip service to their international contexts. He suggests that what underlies them is a leadership, curriculum and an operational framework that is not international, but one which exerts a white bias (2021, p.2). Rather than embracing what a truly international education might look like, he considers such schools usually have a legacy of 'whiteness' and a white heritage perpetuated through curriculum and staff amongst other things. In his criticism of them, he suggests international schools offer up an international education but in reality, they promote Western cultural

hegemony that utilises and replicates Western curriculum. He is critical of a highly valued white power that exists in such schools. Even if it is unintentional, the leadership, curriculum, policies and practices of these schools exist as a sustained product of their own Western bias.

Those who oppose international schooling suggest that the very existence of international schools exacerbates privilege, segregating society according to those who have the means to access such institutions and those who do not. Gardner-McTaggart (2021) in his research of thirteen Anglo-white, international school directors in Western Europe and is critical of their 'blindness to whiteness' (p.17). He ultimately discerns two types of international schools: 'White International Schools' (p.16) which may pay lip service to being diverse but in actual fact are rooted in assumptions and bias of 'whiteness', and 'Global Schools' (p.16). The latter he sees as more eclectic and part of the future of international schools; a future he suggests should be informed by a truly international appointment of staff and a curriculum that reflects an international cohort. This is a complicated area for discussion and arguably more complex than categorising schools 'white' or 'global' schools as Gardner-McTaggart (2021) has done, however, his point is significant. He identifies the colonial underpinnings of these schools which 'white' schools (p.16) continue to perpetuate in many regards such as through staffing, curriculum and examinations. 'Global schools' he notes 'seek more balance in cultural origin,' (p.16). Although still being international, these schools seek to embrace their international identity and in part recognising their context, choosing to pay homage to diversity. In their research, Gibson and Bailey (2023) suggest international schools are perpetuating colonialism through 'marketing Britishness' (p.410). They are disapproving because they consider international schools to be endorsing and

promoting a style of schooling that is seen as elite. Rather than responding to the local context, schools are replicating a Western-style schooling experience with a British curriculum, British staffing, British school systems and structures (Gibson and Bailey, 2023). The international school scene is constantly evolving. Assumptions and underlying heritage of whiteness in international schools should not be ignored. Yet the unique nature and complexity of these schools means it is not easy to categorise them.

Further criticism has been levelled at international schools as they can operate as individual educational entities without rigorous accountability (Gardner-McTaggart, 2019; Walker, 2002). While international school accrediting organisations exist, such as the Council for International Schools (CIS) and the Council of British Independent Schools (COBIS), accreditation is often not essential. It is however, more commonplace for international schools to gain accreditation with the aforementioned accrediting bodies and to undergo regular inspection to demonstrate their compliance with national and international regulations (Garton, 2002), and show they reflect current educational thinking and approaches (Hayden 2002; Holderness, 2002).

2.1.1 Postcolonialism and international schools

More recent debates regarding international schools suggest that the cohort of pupils is shifting. No longer are these schools populated heavily with expatriate students, they are becoming increasingly favoured by national parents in the host country within which these schools are situated (Keller, 2015). Hayden and Thompson (2008) in their detailed appraisal of international education development, note that there is an evolving international school

scene. They identify growing numbers of wealthier national families having a preference for such schools:

The increasing demand for international schools in developing countries, whose aspirational middle class seek an internationally recognised education for their children. (Hayden and Thompson, 2008, p.78)

This is a change to the international school clientele, having been previously dominated by expatriate and missionary families. Instead, Hayden and Thompson, suggest the idea that national families want this type of schooling as they consider it will enhance their children's future possibilities (Hayden and Thompson, 2008, 2010). Bunnell (2022) attributes this rapid growth and demand for international schooling to a 'Global Middle Class' (p.42); an international clientele of internationally-minded national parents who seek international education rather than national schooling, (Bunnell, 2022, p.42). Interestingly Bunnell's (2022) research highlights the Middle East as being a key area of growth for international schools. Bunnell (2014) also suggests the previous trend of international schools being dominated by expatriate families is unsustainable. International schools appeal to wealthy national families in part, because they were the preserve of wealthy white colonisers. They are seen as aspirational and elite. As such they are chosen because of the perceived opportunity they provide for a 'host country national' (Hayden and Thompson, 2008, p.43).

National parents want to buy what they deem as a better option for their child, seeking to access more favourable educational opportunities through it. The Western curriculum (of International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, A-levels and IGCSEs) is appealing. Such qualifications offer what families consider to be a more advantageous path to university.

Bunnell (2022) suggests that due to the change in clientele from Anglo-American students to an increasing number of national families, there is a shift in parental expectations of educational provision in these international schools. He argues that national families are:

Increasingly and deliberately choosing the International Schooling pathway for a multitude of advantageous economic and social reasons, linked to distinction and networking, and for reasons that have little to do with the philosophical roots or mission statements of the schooling models, or pragmatic reasons of overseas employment. (p.46)

This stakeholder shift is important because it alters the demand, provision and trajectory of these schools in response to parent-voice. In turn it also has an impact on national schools whose student population is destabilised by students enrolling at international schools (Bunnell, 2022, p.47). Caffyn (2010) acknowledges that the clientele of international schools is a powerful and holding influence. This variation of the voice of national parents as notable stakeholders means that increasingly national voices are potentially becoming more prominent and heard in shaping the future of international schools.

2.1.2 Christian international schools

Christian international schools exist as a subset of international schools. They are also fee-paying. These schools fill a gap in the international schools' market and were often initially set up by parents to provide an education for their own children (Pollock and Van Reken, 2001), the children from missionary families (Hiltibran, 2020) and /or those working in the development and charity sector. The aim of these schools is to offer a distinctly Christian

ethos along with an international education. Rather than being exclusively for expatriate children, like international schools, they offer an education for the international community, (both Christian and non-Christian) and often use a Western curriculum.

The complexity of these schools includes issues relating to ownership. Christian international schools are often run on a not-for-profit basis which differs from some international schools which are privately owned and run as businesses or franchises. Christian international schools are usually run by trustees and or a school board of governance made up of parents and mission agencies. This involvement means that parents and mission agencies can become overly involved in the day-to-day running of the school. Hayden and Thompson (2010) acknowledge the potential for conflict that can arise between the school Board and the Head of School. In some circumstances this is understandable as boards seek to mitigate against tumultuous times, and as such leverage their role to control and harness stability. Yet, the personal affiliation of parents and mission agencies on such boards can seek to exert operational control that is beyond their remit.

The staffing of Christian international schools is often different from international schools. All staff are expected to share the school's Christian faith and, as such would be expected to sign a statement of faith, which many Christian schools use to state their belief (see Appendix 2). In effect, all staff are signing the statement along with their contract that says that they will uphold and in no way undermine the school's Christian values. Failure to adhere to the statement of faith would usually end in the staff member's contract being terminated.

Linton's (2015) research explores pupil experiences at Christian international schools uncovering what alumni saw as important in their school experience. He noted that of particular importance were staff who were 'personally invested' and who 'demonstrate levels of care' alongside 'strong relational or relationship-building skills' (pp.196-199). Linton acknowledges that students most valued staff who were authentically living out their personal Christian values in a professional context. Moreover, the research by Linton suggests that students at Christian international schools were expectant that staff would not only demonstrate their own faith but that the personal faith of staff would influence and shape student beliefs. Pupils expected staff to be:

Culturally sensitive and demonstrate value for the multiple cultures they engage in starting with the national country of the school's location and extending beyond to the multiple cultures represented within the school's staff and student body

(Linton, 2015, p.205).

This idea is also addressed by Hayden and Thompson (2010) who suggest that careful consideration of 'intercultural awareness' (p.93) is a vital part of teaching in such schools. Having a cultural sensitivity and an appreciation of what that necessitates is fundamental for teachers in these schools.

2.1.3 The leadership of Christian international schools

There is a recognition among those in leadership positions in international schools of the multiple, complex and ongoing differing challenges of leading in these settings (Benson 2011; Keller 2015; Richards, 2002). Bailey and Gibson's (2020) research of twelve principals

working in Malaysian international schools identifies six areas of challenge facing leaders: loneliness, transience, cultural differences, governance, business elements and managing the school's composition (pp. 1015-1020). They acknowledge the impact and complexity of the role which they see as substantial. Hiltibran's (2020) research also supports that of Bailey and Gibson (2020) acknowledging the high turnover of staff, navigation of potential conflicts with the school board and managing different parental expectations as common areas of concern for school leaders. Expatriate headteachers may even find themselves leading a school in a country, in which they have to endure turbulent political times or civil war. Further leadership pressures include the necessity of having an understanding of the host country and its political context; as well as the cultures represented among staff, students and parents within the school community (Dugan, 2021).

Isolation in leadership is also an exacerbated issue associated with being a headteacher in an international school, as the schools themselves are often stand-alone entities. Rather than working in partnership with neighbouring international schools, there is often competition with other international schools in the vicinity. The loneliness of leading in this context without support networks (Caffyn, 2011), or specific training as a prerequisite, along with working in a potentially isolating and transient community cannot be over-looked. Bailey and Gibson (2020) note the importance of bolstering one's support as a leader, the need for a network, from whom a leader can seek support, including from other principals. These are not necessarily established groups but ones these leaders need to find or establish for themselves to aid them in their leadership (Bailey and Gibson, 2020).

Staffing and retaining a high calibre of teaching staff is a leadership burden for headteachers in international schools. In her research of Christian international schools (Dugan, 2021) notes these leadership challenges appear to be exacerbated compared to other schools and suggests that poor staff retention is central to leadership difficulties. The recruitment of staff in an international school can be itself a cause for conflict. Hayden and Thompson (2010) explain the complexities of staffing an international school, which includes 'host-country nationals, local hire expatriates, [and] overseas hire[s]' (p.85). Employing staff from overseas can be complicated for a variety of reasons. There can be a discrepancy between the employment contract of expatriates compared to that of national employees (Hayden and Thompson, 2010). Expatriate staff may be offered better pay and conditions. Such imbalance can strain relationships if not well managed, resulting in a 'them and us' culture, a duality noted by Keller (2015, p.912). Leading in an international school context presents numerous staffing challenges for headteachers. These challenges are ongoing and all require sensitivity, skill and thoughtfulness when navigating them.

With high staff turnover and an international teaching community, the professional development of staff is a perpetual concern (Hayden and Thompson, 2010). In diverse educational contexts, such as international schools, teaching staff have varied educational backgrounds and different understandings of approaches to teaching and learning. Hayden and Thompson (2010) state that offering staff a foundational understanding of good pedagogy is essential. Moreover, unifying teachers' understanding of pedagogy and establishing consistency across classrooms is of paramount importance (Hayden and Thompson, 2010, p.94). Equipping teachers and developing their expertise to teach in an

international context is often overlooked (Hayden, 2002). In an international Christian school context, teaching demands a careful and sensitive approach, an awareness of the diversity of Christian thinking and an understanding of the variety of cultural expectations associated with learning itself. This is a distinct area of teacher professional development that is central to the leadership of these schools.

Bailey and Gibson (2020) contend that some school leaders, learn on the job, rather than undertaking any specific focused professional qualification or cross-cultural training. For headteachers of Christian international schools, there is not one route to headship (Bailey and Gibson, 2020) or a qualification to equip them to carry out the role. What principals and heads of international schools do have in common is a very varied background and a range of qualifications and experiences. Indeed, Bailey and Gibson (2020) suggest that leadership qualifications do not necessarily adequately equip a head of school with the necessary nuanced skills required to lead an international school. For headteachers of international schools, being aware of and being willing to adapt to leading in an international context necessitates different skills and capabilities. Articulating a vision, setting a standard and taking staff on that journey, despite contextual challenges necessitates a deliberate approach.

2.2 Leadership behaviour and practices in church and Christian Schools

This section of the literature review addresses wider Christian and church school leadership theory and practices of headteachers. It is not specific to Christian international schools but examines literature related to different leadership approaches, alongside the theory and

motivation for those in a Christian or church school leadership context. While some leadership styles are more generic and not specific to Christian leadership, other leadership theory and practice pertain more to the Christian faith. Leadership styles shape leadership actions which in turn shapes school culture. School priorities, values and ethos emerge from a leadership culture and impact workplace relationships and interactions. The importance placed on relationships as a valued way of leading is central to much of the literature. This strand of the literature review examines theory, motivation and priorities in leading Christian international schools and church schools. It considers literature concerning the personal faith of a principal and how this is communicated in what is an outward-facing role. The sense of vocation and calling to a role is a personal matter for leaders, this influences the emphasis placed on relationships by the school leader. This section examines literature related to a number of factors that shape school leadership. They are: ethos, leadership and personal faith, leadership and spiritual capital, leading and articulating a philosophy for education, leadership models in Christian education, servant leadership, leading and Ubuntu, and leading to achieve flourishing.

2.2.1 Ethos

In an educational context, Christian ethos is associated with values and beliefs within a school organisation. Christian and church schools have differing understandings and approaches to what this means and how it shapes the school experience. From classical Greek origins, the idea of ethos is to:

Distinguish those particular customs, institutions and interests which tend to realise the ideal of each constitution since men choose their means with reference to their ends (Aristotle 1991, 1366a).

It is through speech and action that ethos is established and developed. From a biblical perspective ethos derives from the Greek word 'etho' and has a meaning associated with custom, habit and practice. An example of this is highlighted in Luke 4:16:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as was *His custom*, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read (Marshall, 1993, p.174).

It is referenced as being habitual or part of Christ's usual behaviour. Again, in Hebrews 10:24-25 it is referenced as the writer expresses a frustration at the practice and ethos of the church community that they are not meeting regularly, which he considers to be unhealthy:

And let us consider one another to incitement of love and of good works not forsaking the coming together of ourselves as *custom* with some, but exhorting, and by so much more as ye see drawing near the day (Marshall, 1993, p.645).

In the bible, ethos relates to behaviour. In terms of education there have been a wide variety of definitions of school ethos, but there is agreement that it is a challenging concept. In a school context, McLaughlin (2005) sees ethos as being something that is 'experienced' (p.312) and 'a discernible influence within the "atmosphere" and climate' (p.313). Allder (1993) identifies the complexity and multifaceted way of thinking about and defining school ethos. She recognises that while it 'can be described as spirit' (p.62) she sees ethos being

evident not simply about beliefs but through the actions and practices of those who work in the school and the repercussions of that. She suggests that school ethos is achieved in the doing. Alder, concludes that ethos operates on an 'experiential rather than a cognitive level' (p.69). Her research concludes that ethos is realised through relationships and actions.

Donnelly, (2000) acknowledges the complexity of the term ethos in schools yet attributes it to something beyond policy and values, to being something lived out by a school community. In her research, Donnelly identifies an ethos of 'documentation' (p.143) and 'formal goals' (p.150) of the school. Yet she distinguishes this as different from the ethos emerging from human interactions. It is more than organisational beliefs and thinking but something enacted. Donnelly sees ethos as emerging as a product of an organisation's social exchanges and human relations (p.136). She argues that ethos is multi-layered and that it lies in the actions and attitudes (p.150) of those in the school community.

Scott and McNeish, (2012) suggest there is a lack of understanding about what Christian ethos is in schools. Lydon (2021) identifies that a school's documents often express ethos and offer 'an articulation of' belief (p.69). Yet he suggests that the preservation and continuation of the Catholicity of schools lies in the living out of an ethos, and in harnessing the theological literacy of Catholic headteachers (p.77). Also writing specifically about Catholic schooling, Morris (2008) discusses the role of such schools in providing experientially 'nourishing and teaching their faith but also with arousing it' (p.85). He sees this as being achieved not just through teaching but through what they encounter in school, 'Children should experience learning and living within a Catholic atmosphere' (p.88). Healy

and Lydon (2021), put forward the idea that this is achieved when all staff exhibit Christ-like behaviour. Literature concerning the Catholic ethos in schools is united around the idea of ethos not simply being theoretical but distinctive because of what is experienced and practiced within the school organisation. The Catholicity of a school, while being something innate, requires actions and language to sustain it (Lydon, 2021; Morris 2008).

Green and Cooling (2009) in their review of Christian and church school education examining the research of the distinctiveness of schools in the U.K., Europe, Australia and America acknowledge that the provision for Christian ethos is varied. They put forward the idea that there is a lack of understanding of Christian ethos and the impact of it in schools:

Studies that investigate the relationships between the desired Christian ethos, and the school's processes and structures and their impact on pupils, are less common (p.79).

They attribute this to the differing provision and understanding of Christian distinctiveness across the breadth of Christian schools. As a result, there is not a unified understanding of how ethos is achieved or the impact that a Christian ethos has on a school experience. Yet there is an agreed idea that ethos is experienced through human interactions. This thesis is concerned with those interactions and specifically how headteachers through their actions, language, behaviour, and interrelationships achieve a Christian school ethos in their schools.

2.2.2. Personal faith

While ethos shapes school distinctiveness, the personal faith of a school leader cannot always be easily separated from this. This section explores the personal faith of headteachers in schools with a Christian ethos. Historically the personal faith of those from religious orders such as priests in positions of school leadership have been important in underpinning the church school foundation and in shaping the Christian trajectory of the school. This is discussed later in this chapter in section 2.2.3. In the United States it is not uncommon for school leaders of Christian schools (both Catholic and Protestant) to have undertaken theological training at a seminary. While some leaders of Church and Christian schools publicly express their faith, other educational contexts seem to make it less permissible.

Today, in the U.K. as a more plural and secular society, the sharing of a personal faith and expressing a sense of spirituality in a professional context is not readily done (Bloom 2023). It feels counter-cultural, alien and the opposite of what a professional is. Donnelly (2000), identifies that when ethos is shaped by a personal faith conviction, then the resultant actions that emerge as a consequence, are hard to separate from it. The personal faith convictions of headteachers, she argues, are publicly central to their personal motivation, impacting their behaviour and in turn shaping ethos. She puts forward the idea that personal faith impacts ethos. This idea is a valuable one, that one's belief and rationale influence behaviour.

Middlebrooks and Noghiu (2010) suggest that personal faith impacts leadership practice by shaping thinking, priorities and motivation. Although personal faith is not always articulated, it may well be at the forefront of and drive a leader's actions. Baig's (2010) comparative case study on the impact of personal beliefs of headteachers leading in Pakistan suggests a strong correlation between the personal beliefs of the school leader and the impact on the 'beliefs and actions of the principal' (p.7). As part of their personal faith, all headteachers in my research articulated a belief in spiritual equipping and enabling by God; a charism. They saw this as allowing them to more successfully lead, viewing it as a Holy Spirit-inspired calling and provision for them in their leadership.

Grace (2016) an eminent academic in Catholic education in the U.K context, sees charism as 'the holy spirit given gifts and abilities, given to those in leadership' (p.10). Grace (2012) puts forward the idea of charism being a spiritual equipping, of headteachers' resilience, enabling them 'drawing on the spiritual and religious resources which empowered them' (p.8). Indeed, charism emerges as a result of personal faith, a resourcing by the Holy Spirit to do good works (Grace, 2012; Grace, 2016; Lydon, 2009; Pang 2022). For some leaders the idea of calling and spiritual enabling means that their intrinsic beliefs have an impact on their leadership practice, in turn shaping school ethos. Friel (2018, p.85) makes the point of that personal faith of headteachers can provide them with a source of strength, an equipping in their leading. His findings, and reflections on his own practice, develop those of Grace, arguing that Catholic headteachers see themselves as 'ministers of the Gospel' (p.92). While they are active in their faith, they do not necessarily possess a developed knowledge of 'Catholic doctrine' (p.92). Friel's research sees that while headteachers may

have a strong personal faith and enact that faith, the deficiency is in their grasp of theology and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Buchanan's (2020) research, writing about an Australian context identifies the challenge for teachers in Christian education to be 'witnesses' (p.98) when it comes to personal faith. He recognises that there is much less attachment to faith in Australian culture and society and as a consequence a reluctance to openly discuss faith (p.98). He states:

Traditionally, the Australian way of life has not been imbued with a cultural identity where one publicly expresses their religious identity or comfortably and consciously witnesses to their faith in social or work-related settings. Therefore, it is not surprising that populations of Christian educators staffing Catholic schools are also reserved in their willingness to publicly witness to their faith (p.98).

Buchanan (2020) suggests that there is a generation of teachers who are inhibited in expressing faith. With presumably a fear of reprisals, or accusations of religious coercion, even in a Christian school setting. Although school leaders may have personal faith, this may be implicit in their actions and decision-making as leaders, but not always expressed. There is an assumption that personal faith is considered to be an aspect of the personal that should remain in a private domain. Yet Buchanan argues that we should bring it to the fore in Christian education. Moreover, he states that this should be part of the teacher training process. Personal faith in church and Christian schools is a resource for leaders. It provides them with a personal sense of equipping to carry out the role, because of their faith in Christ and belief in the Holy Spirit's enabling. What is less clear are the ways in which headteachers feel able or willing to express their personal faith in a professional sphere in

different school contexts. While personal faith provides headteachers with a spiritual capital for their leadership, it does not mean that they have the necessary understanding of Christian theology; beliefs and teachings necessary for the leadership of Christian and church schools. While the education landscape continues to change, it remains highly relevant that having an understanding of theology and doctrine is essential for those in church school and Christian education if they are to lead it.

2.2.3 Leadership and spiritual capital

Alongside personal faith, this thesis explores the idea of spiritual capital used and headteachers in their leadership. Spiritual capital is concerned with experiences, beliefs and values that leaders draw on in an organisational context. It is concerned with language, understanding and actions, that form part of a leader's spiritual identity. Bourdieu's (1977) social theory of habitus, is concerned with an individual's embodied value system as capital and as an individual, human social resource (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986). His sociological framework of thinking addressed various forms of capital, including religious capital, which has been subject to scrutiny. The concern has been with Bourdieu's idea of religious capital being limited to those within the church and those in ordained ministry. Verter (2003), is critical of Bourdieu's discussion of religious capital as a narrow, consideration of religion in which 'agency is limited to religious professionals' (p. 156). Casson (2013) also identifies the limitations of religious capital as one 'that stems from and forms connections with the religious tradition in its institutional form' (p.206). Both Verter (2003) and Casson (2013) acknowledge that Bourdieu's framework of thinking concerning religious capital holds the

church as a hierarchical agency over lay persons. The criticism of Bourdieu's assertion of religious capital is that it is dismissive of the 'agency of ordinary people' (Dillon, 2001, p.412) as recipients of the power of the church. This is significant as it renders the 'ordinary people' being subject to religious capital rather than being a communal part of it or ones that can deploy such capital for themselves. Religious capital is achieved through various means including 'membership of the Catholic Church and/or Catholic rituals such as Mass, beliefs and doctrines or access to sacred spaces' (Casson, 2013, p.206). As such religious capital is exclusive and not necessarily accessible to the lay community.

Importantly, spiritual capital has emerged from Bourdieu's assertion of religious capital. Unlike religious capital which is concerned with the institution of the church, spiritual capital 'grants an agency to the lay person' (Verter, 2003, p170). It does not belong to the clergy in the church, but spiritual capital is 'embedded locally within faith groups, but also expressed in the lives of individuals' (Baker and Miles Watson, 2008, pp.32-33). Spiritual capital is part of communal activity and interaction, but also part of the personal. The notion of spiritual capital has evolved and emerged as a wider understanding of Bourdieu's religious capital.

Grace's (2002) research on spiritual capital has been and continues to be dominant in the field of Catholic education. This is because his observations about Catholic school leadership, while they are dated in terms of when they were written and are specific to the Catholic schooling context, continue to resonate. Firstly, Grace (2002) provided a robust foundational understanding about the practice of Catholic school leaders in Catholic schools in England and the value of spiritual capital. Secondly, he has written extensively about a

headteacher's personal spiritual capital and their resilience being driven by utilising such spiritual resources. Grace suggests that spiritual capital derives from one's own spiritual and faith experiences, that are both equipping and empowering. In terms of understanding the value of spiritual capital in education, the work of Grace remains relevant. This is because the idea of spiritual capital is central to understanding how the faith of individual leaders equips them informing their language, interactions and patterns of behaviour.

The leadership attributes that a headteacher brings to such a role is not just about leadership capability and skills, but about a greater capacity of the resources of spirituality, that includes vocation and mission to the role. Grace's (2002) concern is somewhat outdated with his focus being on how spiritual capital can be continued in Catholic schools, with the absence of religious orders in leadership, and the leadership of lay headteachers. His research though addresses the importance of the headteacher in the continuation of spiritual capital. Grace attributes the strength of spiritual capital being a consequence of religious orders in leadership roles, emphasising the significant impact they had in shaping education as 'professionals and witnesses' (2002, p.236). Yet more than two decades on, with an increased focus on standards in education, arguably headteachers need to be equipped with many resources and not just that of spiritual capital. What Grace does acknowledge is that the regeneration of such capital lies not just with the headteacher but with the whole school structure 'school governing bodies, in classroom teachers, in priests and school chaplains, in parents and not least in students themselves' (Grace, 2002, p.238).

While the educational landscape has continued to evolve from Grace's (2002) research, something which he acknowledges, (2012), the understanding of spiritual capital in schools has developed. Catholic headteachers in undertaking their role, seek to embody and live out faith through a sense of responding to their vocation and calling on their lives. In turn, their understanding and knowledge associated with their role is rooted in their spiritual identity, which informs their worldview (Grace, 2002; Grace, 2016; Guest, 2007; Verter, 2003). In his study of Catholic headteachers, Wilkin (2014) sees that headteachers are shaped by their own experiences and Catholic heritage. Their experiences have enabled them and equipped them with a spiritual capital that 'sustains their loyalty to the Church' (p.175). They are 'interpreters' (p.175) of faith within their schools, they are vital conduits in the provision of Catholic education. It is acknowledged that spiritual capital can positively inform the leadership of Catholic schools:

The Catholic school communities of which they are now part are more prayerful, more sincerely spiritual and more thoughtful than the schools in which they were educated. (Wilkin, 2014, p.170)

Spiritual capital shapes leadership practice and can be something that is active and ongoing and involves an ongoing realigning of one's values, thinking and commitment. Verter (2003) points out that this involves an 'incessant recalculation of one's position within a framework of human relations' (p.170). Spiritual capital is not just a leadership resource but an ongoing capability that can be rejuvenated by leading in such a context.

Spiritual capital is more than personal experience, it is a harnessing of resources from the Christian faith tradition which nurtures and shapes, equally it is not dormant. While it may

emerge from personal experiences, the capital is generated and strengthened by relationships and interactions. Casson (2013) suggests that this is achieved in part, through the 'active agency of young people in Catholic schools' (p.213). She acknowledges the value of pupils themselves who through their reciprocity cultivate spiritual capital in Catholic educational contexts. Guest (2010) sees spirituality as an inherently personal way of looking and thinking about the world, states that 'spirituality is shaped by an interactive process, set within a complex network of relationships' (p.2). Importantly he acknowledges it as fluid, it is not dormant, it alters and shifts:

a liquid flow of ideas and values that, while uprooted from their original institutional context, are nevertheless shaped by the traditions out of which they emerged, traditions that still steer their course, mould their practical expression and infuse the language in which they are affirmed, silenced or challenged (Guest, 2016, p.16).

More recently the debate has concentrated on further developing an understanding of the notion of spiritual capital. Friel's (2018) research builds on that of Grace and extends the idea of spiritual capital that Grace espoused. He states that spiritual capital is about leveraging young people to not only have an understanding of the Catholic faith but be mobilised to enact change (p.92). Lydon (2021) in his appraisal of Grace, is somewhat critical. He sees the continuation of spiritual capital in Catholic schools being achieved not just through the headteacher but through the activity of 'a core group of committed teachers' (p.77). He suggests the importance of living out and modelling Catholic spiritual capital as a means of maintaining a distinct Catholic approach to education. Lydon (2021) goes on to acknowledge the value of retired headteachers in drawing on their spiritual capital as an expertise and resource for newer headteachers especially to enhance their

spiritual and theological competency (p.77). (See further discussion regarding Catholic schools in section 2.3.2).

While Catholic academics have dominated the debate concerning spiritual capital in Catholic education, they offer a rich insight as to the value of spiritual capital in schools. They recognise how it can be used to strengthen the provision of faith school education. They identify the value of the headteacher's actions in modelling behaviour and the importance of language, in continually articulating and rearticulating Catholic values.

More broadly, spiritual capital has become more widely embraced as a theoretical framework in non-faith organisations to leverage a commonality and workplace thinking around ethos and developing a shared vision (Baker and Miles-Watson, 2008; Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010). Noghiu (2020) observed the value of such capital in secular contexts, providing language and for leaders to 'unlock spirituality as a key leadership strategy that contributes to personal and organizational success' (p.55). They acknowledge the unifying worth of harnessing belief and purpose. Middlebrooks and Noghiu (2010) suggest that spiritual capital reinforces and establishes organisational culture, identifying characteristics of organisational spiritual capital which are:

(a) Belief in something larger than self, (b) A sense of interconnectedness, (c) Ethical and moral salience, (d) A call or drive to serve, and (e) The capability to transfer the latter conceptualizations into individual and organizational behaviours. (p.75)

Their model, addresses organisational theory and the development of spiritual capital in non-faith-based situations. It is a useful conceptual framework that offers a workplace understanding of the leadership practice of spiritual capital. Their theory, while not faith-based, leverages workplace spirituality. In a school setting specifically, spiritual capital can be used to unify and deploy organisational culture. The model of Middlebrooks and Noghiu (2010) is one that suggests how spiritual capital can be developed to sustain an organisational culture. This is a valuable idea as it acknowledges that spiritual capital while being a personal resource, is also an organisational resource. When such capital is deployed it is unifying, and the collaboration and mutuality of which is a strengthening resource.

Spiritual capital in a school setting is a resource for those leaders who have such capital. It provides a language of leading, a mutual spiritual understanding, and a framework for communicating and for understanding others and being understood. The social theory concerning spiritual capital is important, as the focus of my research is not just Catholic schools. It widens existing research and identifies that spiritual capital is harnessed by headteachers in various church schools and Christian international school contexts to drive their vision of the school forward. It is leveraged by school leaders to influence workplace relations and behaviour.

2.2.4 Leading and articulating a philosophy for Christian education

The literature that is concerned with how headteachers can be equipped to lead a church or Christian school identifies the importance of leaders to have their own rationale and literacy

for faith education. That is to know, understand and be able to articulate a philosophy for Christian education. It is this philosophy that informs headteachers' language and impacts leadership behaviour. The importance of language in leading a church and Christian school and in particular, theological literacy, has been recognised by academics as fundamental. As part of ACSI's (Association of Christian Schools International) school accreditation process for Christian international schools (ACSI, 2020, p.23), there is a requirement that all teachers undertake reading and study in this area of Christian Philosophy and Education. This process encourages staff at the school to reflect on their own thinking and to develop a rationale for their own philosophy of Christian education. For school leaders, having a language with which to articulate faith is essential and is something that those in the field of Christian education recognise as necessary. Greene, (1998) in writing about Christian schools in the U.S. identifies the pitfalls of a lack of clarity and having an unclear philosophy for Christian education in the leadership of schools:

We will seek answers where we can find them, but in other areas we will be subject to secular, non-Christian presuppositions. By doing this, we will ensure our failure to bear witness to the total lordship of Christ, which is our privilege and our duty as Christians (p.77).

He suggests that having a Christian philosophy for education anchors thinking and provides a framework that offers clarity by which the mission and vision can be expressed and understood.

Sullivan (2006), in writing about faith schools in the U.K., outlines the value of 'a confident and articulate theological literacy' (p.79). He sees that this is achieved through an ability to

engage with colleagues and associates. Having a personal spiritual foundation as a leader should not just be an appreciation of faith but an experience, knowledge and understanding that is 'steeped in the faith community' (p.79). Sullivan offers a practical framework for reconciling a comprehension of this approach which suggests leaders need 'a way of thinking', 'a way of behaving', 'a way of belonging' and 'a way of worship' (p.79). Alongside such leadership capabilities, Sullivan sees that an engagement with a deep spiritual insight into and experience of faith is necessary, without which there can be no personal expression or support of that faith. Sullivan suggests this is achieved through 'personal formation' (p.80) for leaders which is an all-encompassing equipping in their understanding and articulation of faith in action. What Sullivan concludes is that leaders must have a true grasp of what it means to lead a faith school:

Effective educational leadership needs to be informed by a coherent, well-founded and inspirational vision, a core of values and a set of practices that connect a worldview to building a character and a community (p.87).

This notion reinforces the idea of a sense of knowing, a thinking through and an assimilation and a pedagogical understanding of leading a Christian school. Whittle (2021) concurs that there is a need for Catholic school headteachers to have a philosophy for Catholic education, to have a thought-through and reasoned understanding in their leading.

Green and Cooling (2009) in their research, examining the literature concerned with the impact of schools with a Christian ethos, acknowledge the challenge. In their appraisal of the research of Church of England, Catholic and other Christian schools (some in an international context) note that 'spirituality, values and distinctiveness are difficult concepts

for schools and headteachers to grapple with' (p.42). To successfully articulate faith clearly very much depends on the individual and what they themselves know and understand. This is important because the onus lies with the headteacher living out and expressing what, in fact, they may not believe. Cooling (2008, pp.7-8) suggests appointing school leaders who are adept in communicating and accomplishing a Christian vision is a challenge for church schools. If the headteacher does not have a language to lead and communicate the faith identity and values of the school, there will be a lack of clarity for the wider school community. A shared language is a unifying way to talk about or use language associated with the religiosity of Christian schooling. Green and Cooling (2009) suggest there is an absence of a 'shared language with which to conceptualise and discuss the nature, purpose and impact of distinctively Christian education' (p.77). This absence is notable and brings with it a 'lack of clarity regarding the concept of spirituality' (p.77). Their concern about language is a relevant and one. A lack of understanding of spirituality means that they are not necessarily equipped to discuss it. This could result in obscurity and confusing ambiguity rather than Christian distinctiveness.

Spencer and Lucas (2019) in their research of Christian leadership of Church of England schools, suggest that headteachers of Christian and church schools should focus on 'developing a theological and biblical literacy and the ability to recognise and question worldviews' (p.14). Spencer and Lucas recognise the challenge for school leaders in a plural society in navigating a language of spirituality. They suggest that this language should be considerate of those who have a secular worldview and those who have a biblical worldview. They state that headteachers need to adopt an appropriate literacy to express

the Christian faith while acknowledging the complexity of that in upholding the Christian vision of the school and yet being inclusive. The issue around the language of faith and spirituality is significant in ensuring that faith is carefully and clearly expressed so that it is understood across a school community.

2.2.5 Leadership models in Christian education

Various leadership models are identified as being of value in Christian education. Differing approaches have become more popular as school leaders seek to demonstrate ways of being an effective school leader. For those in Christian leadership of schools, prioritising relationships is a biblical model given in the actions of Christ. Leaders emulating Christ seek to exhibit kindness, compassion, gentleness, love and humility. For some, this framework of thinking underpins their understanding of relationships. Sullivan (2003) sees the challenge for school leaders is to demonstrate such behaviour in leading, as a biblical paradigm that is set as a standard. If leaders get this wrong the whole basis of Christian education is weakened.

While useful, labels for leadership models and approaches do not always capture the essence of the practice and it is the micro aspects of leadership behaviour that remain central to this research. In their international research of leadership of schools, Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010) acknowledge these micro aspects of leadership behaviour which characterise 'high-performing principals' (p.7). This includes being visible and present in and around school buildings:

They walk the halls more, spend time coaching teachers, interact more often with parents and external administrators, and spend more time with students. (p.7)

These principals invest in and prioritise building capacity through operating relationally by investing in middle leaders, students and others. Inspiring, nurturing and coaching are all central to their practice. These features are recognised and valued ways of leading and hold the importance of relationships as central to leadership. However, in a faith school setting, arguably these gestures take on a different meaning, as they are underpinned by faith.

The transformative leader approach is described by Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019), as a means to build a fraternity to which, the leader themselves belong. A leader shields, advocates for and shapes the working practice of the staff within the fraternity and drives and articulates that identity within a wider context. Primarily though, (and central to this theory) is the importance of harmonious relationships and the transformative power of them as a result of faith. In essence, the nature of those relationships should emulate Christ. The transformative power that a leader has of influencing relationships within a school and the 'quality of the relationship that the leader has with each and every person' (p.221) is valued. Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019) identify the complexities for leaders in prioritising mutual, communal and relational interactions. These are not surface-level or operational relations but relationships that require a greater interconnectedness. Staff are able to thrive within such environments and the fostering of relationships is central to this approach. Correspondingly, leadership is enhanced and the organisation propelled forward.

A contemplative approach to leadership in Catholic schools is offered by Schuttloffel (2019). She identifies the importance of the character of the school leader and suggests they should adopt a highly reflective leadership style. This necessitates self-reflection and internal reasoning:

An educator's thinking about their own thinking exists within an explicit connection to their own personal Catholic identity as evidenced by their character and their understanding of the vocation of the Catholic educator. (p.13)

Schuttloffel highlights the role of the educator who is intentional in upholding the Catholic faith. She moves beyond the ideas of personal attitude and sense of commitment to address the very practical nature of what this means. Catholic School leaders need to create a culture of faith in the school, a 'faith internship' (p.15), in which a leader creates an environment where not only the knowledge of faith is shared, but also the school culture exhibits faith being enacted, and demonstrates the faith of the school leader. The school leader's faith should not be inferred, but should be explicitly stated. (p.4). Schuttloffel's (2013) international research of Catholic school leaders examines how Catholic identity shapes leadership behaviour. She identifies how personal life stories; vocation and the prioritising of relationships are central to leadership practice. She sets the parameters of contemplative leadership, which requires intentionality in establishing a faith culture. This is achieved by a school leader having an understanding of their own leadership behaviour and language, all of which preserve the Catholic faith. The school leader is responsible for cultivating a Catholic faith culture. Further discussion pertaining to Catholic leadership is addressed later in this chapter.

2.2.6 Servant Leadership in a school context

Servant leadership is rooted in the gospel. The idea of Christ as a model of a servant leader, who led a life of service and sacrifice. This biblical example of Jesus as a servant leader underpins the servant leadership approach. The book of Mark offers a basis for the servant leadership approach 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (New Holy Bible, Mark 10:45,1984). The approach subverts the idea of authority with Christ suggesting that a leader is there to serve. That those in authority should be governed by selflessness, service and sacrifice. Servant leadership is a setting aside of oneself in the service of others. Philippians 2:5-11 is considered a seminal passage in relation to the idea of servant leadership (Lydon, 2011). The letter written by Paul to the church in Philippi, describes Christ who for our needs, set aside his own 'made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant' (Holy Bible New International Version, 1984, Philippians 2:7). Christ's actions were wholly self-sacrificial. His example did not cling to his position 'did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage' (Holy Bible New International Version, 1984, Philippians 2:6) but took the lowest position. Engstrom (1978), a dated but much-cited text, acknowledges the service and sacrifice of Christ as he washed the feet of his disciples, even the feet of Judas who betrayed him. Engstrom's (1978) seminal text acknowledges that Christ gave up his life for the sins of mankind (p.37). Engstrom states that Christ's leadership was, as ultimately leadership should be 'grounded in love which must issue in service' (p.37). Engstrom identifies that this is achieved by a leader's conduct, through attitude and actions.

As a leadership model servant leadership was brought to the fore in the 1970s and developed as a workplace model by Greenleaf (1977). Greenleaf offers a framework of servant leadership in which 'the great leader is seen as servant first' (Greenleaf, 2008 p.2). Although Greenleaf did not frame it as a biblical model. It is nevertheless, one that is exhorted in Christian workplace contexts, and those that are not Christian, as a model of leadership that is worthy of merit. Kimotho, (2019) however, is critical of Greenleaf's model describing it as 'deficient as a Christian theory of leadership' (p.76). He reasons that servant leadership is without substance if the leaders themselves do not root themselves in knowing Christ personally. It is in this relationship that one has with Christ that one's character is changed. From that change, servanthood can be lived.

The servant leadership approach has been adopted by many in Christian education across the world. Greene (1998) writing predominantly for those in American Christian education settings, suggests the need to 'cultivate humility' (p.217) through such a leadership posture. Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson and Jinks (2007) suggest such leaders will also prioritise the professional development of staff and make service to others central to their practice. Thus, highlighting that servant leadership is not simply a caring and prioritising of others but an everyday living and leading by the servant leader philosophy.

Servant leadership has increasingly gained more traction in the U.K. over the last fifteen years with notable authors from both the Catholic context and the Church of England. The headteacher as servant leader and as a shepherd is advocated by Cooling et al (2016):

Leadership which gives attention to nurturing a shared vision and which institutes shared practices that embody that vision is what is required. In particular, attention to the nurture of the teachers' own character is very important. (p.104)

Specifically, it addresses the idea of a leader personifying the vision of the school, a living out of values, that to the leader are innate. Cooling et al (2016) emphasise that values should never be a bolt-on accessory for a school but ingrained with leadership thinking and behaviour, interwoven throughout the school, including staff interactions. Cooling et al assert that servant leadership needs to be modelled and expressed by the school leader; 'leadership needs to be focused on communicating what Christian pedagogy looks like' (Cooling et al, 2016, p.175) equipping and enabling staff in the realisation of that. The Christian ethos of a school should impact staff as much as students and the ultimate responsibility for implementing this lies with the headteacher as they exhibit behaviour they wish to see evident in others.

Cerit (2009) in his research of servant leadership of school principals in Turkey, suggests that servant leadership:

Promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership, for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organisation and those served by the organisation. (p.602)

Cerit, identifies key aspects of behaviour that servant leaders demonstrate, which include developing teachers, authenticity and modelling servant leadership, all of which lead to a

sense of fulfilment for those in the organisation (pp. 616-617). His research identifies the importance of soft skills in servant leadership. He suggests that this is achieved by leaders who are relational and attentive to those around them allowing others to take part 'in decision-making, giving autonomy, respecting them, creating a trustable environment and esteeming teachers' (Cerit, 2009, p.616). Moreover, his research suggests improved teacher job satisfaction and workplace performance as a result of the servant leadership approach in which the school leader values individuals.

In an Australian Catholic School context, Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019) give consideration to servant leadership in schools, suggesting this biblical paradigm is perhaps unobtainable with the administrative burdens that occupy Catholic school leaders. Such gospel-driven leadership may be an ideology that a leader aspires to but is arguably 'beyond their human capacity to achieve' (p.220). While the model of Christ is a helpful one it is also burdensome as it makes any attempt at leadership seem insufficient. Servant leadership in a school context, may demand too much of the leader (Lydon, 2011). Indeed, it may be impossible without the help of God, to live this model out. Further challenges of 'burn-out' as a result of adhering to such a model are also of note. In his research on burnout and clergy Guest (2010) talks of 'three spheres of life' (p.179) namely those of family, work and religion. He sees it as problematic if there is not a clear delineation of and between these, which can ultimately lead to burnout. Burnout can be mitigated by fulfilment from leaders' ministry roles (Francis, Village, Robbins and Wulff, 2011). For headteachers who see their role as ministry, servant leadership raises questions about the longevity of such leadership

behaviour. These issues are unpacked more in Chapter six on servant leadership in an international school context.

Lydon (2011) addresses the significance of Philippians 2:5-11 in the context of teacher behaviour and in emptying oneself in the service of colleagues and students. Lydon (2011) writing about Catholic education addresses the importance of 'emulation' of the behaviour of Christ. Lydon identifies how the Christlike manner, demonstrated by religious orders can be achieved. Specifically, he states that it was evident in their 'pastoral care, presence and compassion' (p.128). Concerning how this is undertaken in a Catholic educational context, Lydon (2022) suggests that a surrendering of oneself is necessary as in the instructions given in the gospel of Mark 8:34. Lydon (2022) suggests that this is evident in the behaviour of Christ who is described using a Greek active verb as emptying himself '*ekenosen*' (p.6) and that the meaning of the verb is associated with continually emptying of himself. For Lydon, in a school context this is achieved through relationships, in which the teacher, chooses to reject the 'institutional superior-inferior style' (p.6) and instead adopt a more selfless approach. To achieve this Lydon (2022) highlights modelling the behaviour of Christ and a commitment to fostering relationships.

Leading in a relational way with Christ as a model is explored by Drov Dahl and Jones (2020) who state that:

The notion of kingdom leaders spending quality time with those they are shepherding is a timeless paradigm maximised in Jesus. Intimacy in relationship was a driving force in Jesus' method of equipping kingdom leaders. (p.581)

What Drovdahl and Jones (2020) suggest is that leaders should be among those they lead; spending time with them is part of discipleship. Headteachers should ideally be equipped for the development of others. A servant leader compassionately achieves this. What is of value is a leader tending to the needs of others and being available so that relationships are highly valued.

The case for the servant leader model is also explained and developed by Ford and Wolfe (2020) for a Church of England schools' context:

The servant leader shapes their community, not by force and power but by grace and meekness, not by instruction and policy but by example and action. (p.35)

They put forward a leadership matrix that comprises a framework of practice, centred on the importance of building capacity and effectiveness through valuing relationships in a school context driven by leadership behaviour of humility:

Leaders set the tone, noticing and appreciating, boosting, giving validation, removing the fear of risk-taking, advocating for those lacking in confidence, and drawing everyone into realising the school's vision and purpose. (2020, p.35)

Ford and Wolfe (2020) in their discussion of leadership characteristics of headteachers include: humility, generosity, encouragement, enablement, integrity, faithfulness, vulnerability, nurturing, healing, resilience and interdependence (pp.10-13). They focus their explanation of leadership practice by rooting it in biblical examples. They highlight servant

leadership as a practical serving of others in the school community, primarily through relationships and by exhibiting a biblical approach. By leading in this way, they suggest that the headteacher's own growth and edification is achieved (2020, p.14). Moreover, Ford and Wolfe argue that leading in such a way is a self-refining process.

2.2.7 Leading and ubuntu

The emphasis on the importance of building, establishing and tending positive relations in the workplace is an important aspect in many cultures. As this research examines leadership in a number of African nations, understanding cultural thinking about relationships is of interest and debate. Du Toit (2005), suggests that 'African Culture can be typified as sociocentric' (p.26). He explores the idea of 'Ubuntu', which is, 'The African concept stressing that 'a person is a person through other persons' (p.27). Togetherness; reciprocity and connection are central to the idea of Ubuntu. Du Toit (2005) goes on to explain that 'Ubuntu limits individualism and stresses that social interrelations and responsibilities are a precondition for human life' (p.27). Workplace relationships are highly important; indeed, they are paramount. They are operational currency. The reciprocity of these relationships is assumed by those in the community, and is vital to it.

For school leaders, such relationships are central to the effective running of a school. In an educational context, Msila (2008) argues that Ubuntu is more than building and working as an effective team: 'Ubuntu poses this challenge of fostering a culture of interconnectedness

and interdependence among workers' (p.81) This communal way of working necessitates a trust and willingness of a workforce.

Developing the idea of leading in an African context, Setlhodi (2019) makes the point that 'The role of Ubuntu leadership is to encourage collegiality, team spirit and voluntarism. The leadership has to conceptualise a far-reaching global outlook whilst rooted in African practices' (p.127). For leaders in this research who are leading schools in African nations Ubuntu cannot be dismissed. The very functioning of schools relies on the relational aspect being a priority and is central to leading. Setlhodi (2019) suggests:

Ubuntu-inspired leaders need compassion to cherish the different mannerisms found within a school in an attempt to strengthen one another, maintain a unified staff, and re-establish school identity. (p.129)

There is a recognition of individuality, yet Ubuntu is a drawing together despite differences. Indeed, Ubuntu is clearly useful for leaders in drawing people together around a vision or an idea but perhaps what is more pertinent is Ubuntu when there are difficulties and challenge in this regard, togetherness is supportive of weaknesses.

All of these leadership models and approaches highlighted above in this in this literature review are rooted in the prioritising of relationships, and in being attentive to nurturing workplace relationships. This research aims to build on this literature concerning school leadership and focuses on how headteachers in a Christian international school context

achieve relational interconnectedness. It identifies the variety of ways that relationships in the school environment are tended and the significance of these actions.

2.2.8 Leading to achieve relational flourishing

Leading and the prioritising of relationships in the school community is more recently referred to as leading for 'flourishing' (Cooling 2016; Swaner and Wolfe, 2021). There is a consensus around the idea of how this can be achieved by valuing others. In education, the humanity of this idea is appealing as it transcends faith and is concerned with the idea that everyone matters and is cared for. Swaner and Wolfe (2021) suggest that:

Schools involve webs of relationships and reciprocal actions between and among leaders, teachers, staff, students, families, and others who engage with and in the school community. (p.36)

They suggest a framework of flourishing that is concerned with an emphasis on valuing relationships within the school to lead to flourishing. They argue that this is a moving beyond school values and mission statements to encapsulate a whole 'ecology' of school life. Specifically, this focuses on the importance of leaders operating relationally. The emphasis on flourishing is currently at the centre stage of Christian educators thinking. The core idea of flourishing is that relationships are of central importance and this includes the well-being of both teachers and students. Cooling (2016) puts forward the idea that theology in teaching is beyond the rudimentary implications of teaching and classroom practice and instead about 'a distinctive vision of human flourishing' (p. 156).

However, in writing about mainstream education in the U.K., Fielding (2012) suggests that the concept of flourishing has become a means to an end:

The high-performing school is an organisation in which the personal is used for the sake of the functional; relationships are important; the voices of students are elicited and acknowledged; community is valued but all primarily for instrumental purposes within the context of the marketplace. (p. 689)

He suggests that relationships are only valued and prioritised because of the perceived impact on productivity and output. Moreover, Fielding (2006) also notes that a high-performance school is fundamentally corrosive of human flourishing (p.359). He proposes that prioritising attainment forsakes flourishing and relationships. He considers that schools should be 'more humanly attentive places' (p. 350) and that the 'influence of the personal on the functional is transformative of it' (p.353). People matter first before outcomes and achievement. What is of utmost value is that each individual is part of the school community.

Ball (2008) argues that there is a significant disregard for human interaction in schools:

We are denying the primacy of human relationships in the production of value, in effect erasing the social. (p.22)

He argues that efficiency and effectiveness are measured in such a manner that forsakes the worth of people, values and the need for positive interactions and relationships. There is a need to value the whole person and to consider effective leadership not just by the quality of education and academic successes, as an 'auditable commodity', but by a more

multifaceted experience of education (Ball, 2003, p.225). Some educational commentators see that schools have very much become businesses. Efficiency and effectiveness are measured in such a manner that forgoes the worth of people, and the value of positive interactions and relationships. Morris (2008) argues that:

The character of schooling has been reformed along commercial industrial lines, having measured inputs and outcomes, standardised content and processes, with staff being subject to performance management and inspection. (pp.165-166)

Thus, headteachers and their leadership are measured by attainment and output. The challenge for headteachers in England is keeping faith central to their leadership of church schools. In his critical study of Anglican schools, Street (2007) notes that:

Church schools have assimilated the prevailing educational paradigm characterised by a functionalist preoccupation with test scores, examination results and the cognitive accumulation of knowledge. (p.147)

He sees that faith is competing with an educational culture that considers faith as having limited value. In addition, where faith has a value, it is subordinate to that of attainment.

Writing about mainstream schools in England, Precey (2015) is critical of 'The name, blame, shame, tame culture' (p. 11) which he sees as increasingly goal-orientated and transactional. He argues that 'Leadership that values people matters' (p. 18). In acknowledging the external pressures and expectations placed on leaders, Precey, (2015) goes on to identify the importance of leaders and their own attitude, suggesting that in a U.K. context:

Humility may be seen to be countercultural in a market-driven education system where hero heads, image massagers and empire builders may receive the public plaudits. (p13)

Yet, Precey argues that leading a school is about much more than striving to achieve academic success and high exam attainment. The challenge of leading well and valuing the individual, of leading with compassion, integrity and kindness are important for all school leaders, not just those in Christian schools, and if they are not held as being of central importance then education will be about attainment not people.

2.3 Leadership of church schools in England

This section examines the nature of the leadership of Catholic and Church of England schools in England. Both the Catholic and Church of England Churches view schools as part of its mission to society. The aims and purpose of these church schools differ. The primary purpose of Catholic schools is the centrality of Christ in Catholic education:

to assist in the Church's universal mission,

to assist parents in the education of their children,

to serve the needs of the local church,

to be a service to society. (Stock, 2012. p.7)

The Church of England's 'Vision for Education' (2016) articulates the church school priorities of being 'deeply Christian and serving the common good'. Francis and Village (2020) highlight that the Church's dual mission is captured in that; to the nation and to the church

(p.3). They see as a duality of purpose of Church of England schools, with an educational commitment to the local community and a commitment to the Church.

Significant events in the history of church schooling include the formation of the National Society, established in 1811 when provision was made to educate the poor. By 1851, the National Society had 17,000 schools (Cox, 2011, p.21). 1847, saw the foundation of the Catholic Poor School Society and later Catholic schools were established in 1851.

The 1870 Education Act introduced the 'dual system' (Worsley, 2013, p.6), in which there were Board schools (state schools run by school boards) and church schools. The Church worked with the state to provide schooling (Worsley, 2013, p.6). Among the significant changes included in the 1902 Education Act with the establishment of Local Education Authorities, which succeeded school boards. The 1902 Education Act was also contentious as it saw church schools receive government funding. The 1944 Education Act, was the establishment of 'a unified framework which brought church schools under state control' (Chitty, 2004, p. 21), although run by the church and local authority (Chitty, 2004). This allowed church schools to choose to become either voluntary aided schools (VA) or voluntary controlled (VC) schools. Voluntary aided schools are financially responsible for the maintenance of their buildings 'Aided schools retained their right to appoint staff, to determine admission policies, to have a majority of foundation governors, to decide on the nature of Religious Instruction syllabus' (Cox, 2011, p.29). Voluntary controlled schools are controlled by the local authority which is more restrictive for schools as the local education authority sets the admissions policy and employs staff. While voluntary controlled school

status allows schools to benefit from government financial support, they 'lost the right to appoint staff, governors (apart from foundation governors) and to determine admission, and they had to offer non-denominational Religious Instruction as set out in the locally agreed syllabus' (Cox, 2011, p.30). For Voluntary Controlled schools, this diminished the control they had.

Catholic schools adopted VA status, while many Church of England schools chose VC and some VA status. The 2002 Education Act broadened the faith provision in schools. In addition to church schools, this Act sought to promote a broader range of faith schools. These included Jewish, Sikh and Muslim schools, thus expanding the breadth of faith school provision (Chitty, 2004). Academisation in the last twenty years has allowed schools to have control separate from local education authorities. The concern with the impact of academisation has been with the threat to the autonomy of schools and competition between them. In a contemporary context, church schools face increased marketisation, and 'an obsessive focus on performance indicators and targets' (Chitty, 2004, p. 205). Academisation brings competition that is viewed by some as 'disruptive' (Whittle, 2021, p.122) to the mission and purpose of schools. For headteachers, the faith identity and distinctiveness of a school remains a challenge (Scott and McNeish, 2012). The challenge for school leaders is how to successfully express the church school identity in ways that provide for diverse school communities.

In wanting to be inclusive and embrace the diverse communities that many church schools serve, one of the most significant challenges for these schools is how that belief is

expressed. In Sullivan's (2003) point of view, a highly inclusive approach by school leaders, can mean that the Christian identity of a school can become directionless, seeking to appease all. While church schools may wish to remain distinctively Christian, this necessitates a continual readjusting and refining what church school education looks like in a pluralist society. Arguably, one of the challenges for headteachers of church schools is retaining a firmly rooted Christian identity of the school alongside the many challenges of church school leadership specifically the priority for school improvement and standards.

The recent government report '*Does government do God?*' recognises the value of faith in education in promoting cohesion and an appreciation of diversity in society. This awareness that Bloom (2023) identifies as 'faith literacy' (p.69). This is an understanding of different faiths and beliefs in society and a language, with which to discuss it. Bloom suggests the importance of faith in society in providing a spiritual and moral framework for young people. There is a difference between what is regarded as a faith school and what is considered to be a church school. Church schools have a church foundation but are open to all for example, Church of England VC schools. Faith schools are for the members of a particular faith. Faith schools are contested, some argue that they promote 'social cohesion' (Short, 2002, p.565) and that the existence of the schools themselves is not necessarily 'divisive' (p.570). For others, faith schools are an anachronism. This is because they argue that they no longer have a useful place in society (Pring, 2013, 2018). Reasons for this include societal changes such as secularisation and the multicultural nature of society. Pring highlights that those critical of faith schools see the potential for radicalisation in schools unless there is a framework of accountability. Yet, while he acknowledges the role faith

plays in schools in providing a dialogue about religion, Pring sees religion as 'a private matter' (2013, p.180). He finds the government funding of church schools by taxpayers no longer acceptable in a secular society. Yet if religion is absent from the sphere of education, then arguably it cannot be examined.

The challenge in leading a church school in England is to serve the community and fulfil the Christian mission of the church. The role of the headteacher is to interpret that mission in their school context and to communicate an understanding of that mission and vision in their school. This is further discussed in the literature review section of Chapter seven. Additionally, Chapter seven explores the literature concerning inspection reports of Catholic and Church of England schools.

2.3.1 Leadership in Church of England schools

The approach to the leadership of Church of England schools in England has altered over time. Worsley (2013) talks of 'phases of mission' (p.2) of Church of England schools. The Church of England's policy document 'Vision for Education' (2016) articulates church school priorities of being 'deeply Christian and serving the common good'. Francis and Village (2020) highlight that the Anglican Church's dual mission is captured in that; to the nation and to the church (p.3). This idea is also referenced in the Durham report (1970). The Church of England's 'Vision for Education' (2016) now prioritises the importance of relationships in schools and the flourishing of adults and children. Twenty years on from the Dearing review (Archbishop's Council, 2001) it seems that the Church of England has in part

moved away from this distinctly Christian approach by seeking to adopt a philosophy of church school education that is more inclusive. It articulates a language of Christian values, with a moderating of explicitly Christian vernacular, wanting to speak to and be acknowledging of a more diverse society and the context each school serves. This shift was in many ways considered positive as the Church was situating itself as being accepting of and responding to a more secular and multi-faith society:

Over the centuries we have learned much (often very painfully) about teaching and learning, tolerance, mutual hospitality with other Christians and other faiths.

(Church of England Education Office, 2016, p.5)

This stance was viewed as one that was mindful of the language of indoctrination yet recognising the Church of England's role in church schools in supporting the spiritual development of all. This view did not assume that a child's spirituality is Christian.

The thinking behind this change in focus is as Ford (2018) explains as having 'two characteristics of being deeply Christian and serving the common good by being generously and healthily plural' (p.86). This idea is significant as it recognises society with a range of beliefs and faiths, therefore a church school is one that refrains from attempting to 'impose or expect Christian belief' (James, 2023, p.18). The impact of this while being less definitive about Christian faith, has in part introduced different challenges for headteachers concerning how they define themselves as a church school while also being inclusive and 'serving the common good' (Church of England Education Office, 2016). Terry (2013) suggests that this is one of its greatest strengths:

Church of England schools, each local context, with its diversity of views and beliefs, is a rich field of potential collaborative partnerships. (p.128)

Cooling (2013) sees Christian distinctiveness as problematic for some headteachers who may not fully grasp how and in what ways this shapes provision. He identified the superficial nature of 'trivializing the notion of Christian distinctiveness'. Headteachers do not necessarily have a thought through approach to knowing to communicate such distinctiveness.

Yet Green (2021) sees the Church of England as steadfast in retaining its Christian foundation. Still, with a degree of flexibility 'the language of 'distinctively Christian' is better able to bend, inspire and illuminate' (Green, 2021, p.26) and remain relevant in a society that is diverse. Flintham's (2022) research based on 40 interviews with faith school headteachers suggests the benefits of this plural approach, which offers a 'rich collective resources from which to develop and secure a greater commonality of shared values, irrespective of provenance' (p.5). In practical terms for headteachers, this presents a freedom to express a Christian vision that is inclusive yet the challenge to do so in a way that is mindful of the community that the school serves and their own understanding of their school's Church school character. Finding a language of spirituality and upholding a Christian mission and vision that values all beliefs is central to their role. While this change in focus can be seen as positive, recognising a secular and multicultural England, the shift also poses a challenge for headteachers.

For Church of England headteachers there can seem to be a lack of clarity of the Christian identity of the school. Johnson, McCreery and Castelli (2000), in their research of thirteen headteachers of both Catholic and Church of England schools in an outer London borough address this concern. They suggest that there can be ambiguity for Church of England headteachers for whom there may be a lack of clarity concerning the Christian identity of the school. Cooling et al (2016) similarly express the same concerns for school leaders who 'were often unable to offer theologically informed, pedagogical leadership' (p.151). Thus, in responding to the needs of a plural society, the Church of England although offering a degree of flexibility it does rely on the capability, knowledge and language of the headteacher to convey mission and purpose. The difficulty and challenge for headteachers is to find inclusive language that communicates a Christian vision:

The decisions about the nature of faith and tradition transmission seemingly had been devolved down to the heads, to express the religious position of their schools in terms that were consistent with their professional judgement. (Johnson, McCreery and Castelli, 2000, p.400)

While more recently the Church of England has sought to address this through training and resources, the Christian identity of such schools is very much shaped by the headteacher. Rather than focusing on the faith development and the evangelism of pupils, the Church of England seeks to foster a harnessing of spirituality that is inclusive. Again, the success of this lies with the headteacher. Comparatively for Catholic headteachers, Johnson, McCreery and Castelli (2000) note that:

For the Catholic school, there is no ambivalence. A Catholic school is fully part of the Catholic Church. Its duty is to promote Catholic values, and to transmit knowledge and to inculcate belief. (Johnson, McCreery and Castelli, 2000, p.400)

This clarity of direction and purpose of Catholic schooling is something that provides headteachers with an acute sense of focus and drive in their role.

In his study of Church of England schools, Street (2007) holds the church responsible for headteachers' shortfall in their understanding of Christian education. In part, Street attributes this to insufficient training and development for church schools 'lacking a clearly articulated theological and philosophical rationale' (Street, 2007, p.145). This has been a concern of others who draw our attention to this matter. For example, in her study of U.K. Church of England schools, Jelfs (2010) raises the same concern of whether schools are still able to articulate 'an adequate theology and philosophy of education for their educational task in the twenty-first century' (Jelfs, 2010, p.37). She suggests that there is a not a lack of willingness but a lack of ability to convey the Christian identity and church school foundation of these schools.

Green and Cooling (2009) also expresses the concern that headteachers do not necessarily have a thought through approach in leading the Christian Church of England schools, this concern is an important one because it sees that headteachers need to be equipped with a theological understanding while recognising they may not possess the faith language required to lead a school (Jelfs, 2010, p.37). Church school leaders who have very little

Christian faith, or little experience of the Christian faith have limited capacity to articulate and lead with an 'unfamiliar' language. For Church of England headteachers, having a Christian faith is not a prerequisite for the role. Street (2007) also found that headteachers believed the Christian values of their school would be understood through the school's values, as these values implied the school's Christianity. As such, Street identified that headteachers did not therefore believe that it was necessary to clearly articulate the Christian identity of the school when school values alluded to it.

More recently, there has been a renewed focus on addressing gaps in headteachers' knowledge and a more robust provision of support through various channels. This includes support from the Diocese and training for headteachers through the NPQH programme (Church of England Education Office, 2023). In addition, such documents as 'Leadership of Character Education' (Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership, 2017) offers clarity through guidance and rationale for school leaders. This provision seeks to build capacity and a wider understanding of what it means to be a church school. This includes educating through knowledge, wisdom effectiveness through developing character. It addresses flourishing via relationships in a school context and provides practical guidance for leaders in Church of England schools, by emphasising a demonstrative living out of Christian values:

Not simply talking about particular values - words or statements, but by embedding practices that develop virtues themselves. (Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership, 2017, p.25)

This approach highlights the importance and value of a leader's actions and relationships in creating a Christian ethos within a school.

2.3.2 Leadership in Catholic Schools

The Catholic Church sees education as not just about academic experience and the accumulation of knowledge and skills. It considers that schools should offer spiritual and theological refining and edification and that this is a formative process by which one understands the world and oneself. The priority has always been to ensure the faith life of the school, with a commitment to the poor (O'Donoghue, 2014). It views 'the growth of the whole person' (Hume, 1988, p.109) as important, and sees that Catholic schools are set apart and distinctive because of their Catholicity. In terms of Catholic educational priorities, this has not really changed over time. Catholic schools offer an experience of a lived Catholic faith and their strength and contribution to society lies in the fact that they are set apart and distinctive (Hume, 1988). As such this demands a clearly articulated Catholic leadership, one that provides clarity to the Catholic Church's mission and vision. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) states that teachers themselves should realise their role in the educational process. The relationships they have with colleagues or students create a sense of symbiosis within the faith community. For this to be achieved a specific kind of leadership is necessary.

The faith, understanding and actions of the headteacher are central to the school's mission. Branson et al (2019) identify priorities for Catholic school leaders in equipping and

cultivating the Catholic identity of their schools. This includes having a comprehensive understanding of their Catholic church school identity and responsibility. A priority for Catholic schools in achieving this is through relationships. The value of relationships is one reinforced by The Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) who state that in schools:

The Educational process is not simply a human activity; it is a genuine Christian journey toward perfection... God is found in the work and the human relationships of each day. (p.33)

It goes on to suggest the importance of a Catholic school culture that supports a lived Catholicity by which this can be achieved. Catholic schools see their role as serving the community and exist as models of Catholic communities (Hume, 1988). In England, Catholic schools are not without significant financial cost to the Catholic Church (Morris, 2008) as they work to support and uphold the 'transmission of the Catholic faith' (Morris, p.9, 2008). Catholic schools continue to seek to provide, maintain and extend the Catholic faith through education.

The leadership of Catholic schools in some regard has faced similar challenges to that of Church of England schools. Historically although Catholic schools were led by religious orders this is no longer the case. A consequence is that headteachers, who are required to be Catholic, need to be equipped with an understanding, language and faith with which to lead these schools. Providing training for lay headteachers is central to that purpose to enable schools in their mission 'to preserve and advance the identity of the Catholic school' (Jacobs, 1996, p.vi). The leadership in turn needs to model that commitment,

‘demonstrating the Gospel in action’ (p.88 Morris, 2008) so that the Catholic faith can be known.

The reverence of the role of headship is considered by Grace (2016). He sees that Catholics undertaking such positions as school leaders are exacting a leadership that preserves Catholic schooling and its mission to society. The increasing numbers of lay headteachers brought a concern about the Catholic identity of the school. This was due to the decrease in number of religious brothers and sisters in positions of headship (Grace, 2002). This concern, while very much steeped in the contexts and challenges that he believed were significant for Catholic education at the time, remains a significant matter. Grace (2009) identifies the tension and complexity for Catholic headteachers which he sees as a double duty ‘to serve ‘God and Caesar’ (p.40). For Catholic school headteachers, there is an expectation of prioritising Catholic faith formation alongside academic instruction. Catholic schools are not simply educational establishments, they are ‘defensive citadels’ (Grace, 2016, p.128). Headteachers are not simply providing a deeply Catholic education, they are responsible for the longevity of it.

Lydon (2021) suggests ethos in Catholic schools can be attributed to the role of religious orders that were ‘an embodiment of’ (p.69) Catholic ethos. Lydon (2021) recognises that the responsibility for the continuation of this cannot solely lie with that of the headteacher, but that there is a collective responsibility for that within the school. Wilkin’s (2014) research of headteachers, although slightly dated, identifies a lack of centralised and consistent support for lay headteachers who are the mouthpiece for Catholic faith in their school. This, Wilkin

states, results in a disjointed approach by the Catholic Church in fulfilling its mission. Grace (2016) views the role of the Catholic school leader as crucial to create, retain and sustain the Catholicity of a school's culture, a culture that allows for a prioritising of the Catholic faith. Yet the priority is ensuring that headteachers are equipped and capable to do that. More recently, however, the standards agenda for schools has meant that examination success and academic achievements have dominated the faith life of the school has become of utmost concern for Catholic headteachers.

Although Grace's recognition of education is the Catholic Church's mission to the poor, it is today no longer solely serving the needs of the poor (Whittle, 2021). The Catholic Church's mission to society continues to be concerned with the formation of Catholics. Whittle (2021) suggests that for Catholic schools as places where social justice is promoted, provision should be made not only for the poor but also be inclusive and supportive of those of other faiths and worldviews. To achieve this Whittle (2021) identifies what is needed for Catholic school leaders is a thought-out philosophy for Catholic education that facilitates the transmission of spiritual capital (p.116). Given the climate of standards and attainment, perhaps more than ever having such spiritual capital and a philosophy for Catholic education that headteachers can draw on in their leadership is now more pertinent than ever (Whittle, 2021).

The educational landscape is continuing to change and the standards agenda in schools dominates. It could be argued that Grace's concept of spiritual capital is not a solely sufficient characteristic for Catholic school leaders in the evolving social and cultural climate

schools find themselves in now. To this end, other agencies such as the Catholic Education service (CES) have arisen to support Catholic school leaders in some of the difficult decisions they face in leading Catholic schools and in the preservation of the Catholic faith. Lydon (2021) suggests the role of the CES is an important one in equipping to sustain the faith life of Catholic schools. He sees that this would be achieved by mobilising and drawing on the expertise and spiritual capital of retired Catholic headteachers to equip those in positions of Catholic school leadership.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter provides a review of literature related to the three strands of this study. It examines research about international schools, thinking and practice by heads and principals of Christian schools and church schools, and literature relating to the leadership of church schools in England. The latter is further developed and discussed in Chapter seven. The literature provides a background for understanding why headteachers choose to lead in the way that they do, exploring what shapes their leadership thinking and practice.

The literature on international and Christian international schools identifies that leadership of these schools is complex. There is a body of literature that views these schools as a product of colonialism and that they exist to perpetuate Anglo-American cultural hegemony. Other literature acknowledges the evolving nature of these schools. Regarding section 2, the review of this literature highlighted the value of relational leading in these differing leadership approaches, and the importance of the personal faith of the headteacher to equip and inform their leadership language and behaviour to establish a school's culture.

The third strand of literature looked at the literature relating to the leadership of Catholic and Church of England schools in England. It identified a body of literature that explains that the Christian identity of a school pivots on the role of the headteacher. Equipping church school leaders with skills, theology and language requires careful consideration. The next chapter addresses the research methodology and methods used in this study and the justification for the data collection approach.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The last chapter offered an overview of the literature pertaining to Christian international schools, leadership practices by those in Christian education, and a discussion of church school leadership in England. The chapter suggested that there is a shortage of research on the leadership of Christian international schools in the Global South, in particular the leadership practices in these schools. It highlighted the idea of relational leadership models including that of servant leadership and also identified literature relating to a leader's personal faith and the impetus that that gives them. In addition, the literature related to approaches to leading Catholic and Church of England schools in England was described. These ideas are discussed further in Chapter seven.

This chapter presents my research methodology and the methodological framework that underpins the study. The research design is described and justified. This is followed by an explanation of the ontology and epistemology of practice. The methods employed in the study were borrowed from qualitative ethnography - talking, listening, being with and experiencing leadership practice. The lens through which the study was undertaken is shaped by my own experience as a teacher and school leader, in a church school setting, and as a founding secondary school principal at a Christian international school in East Africa. My background in teaching and my Christian faith cannot be easily separated out from this research. My scholarship derives from my Christian worldview, which also informs this study. My approach to the research and knowledge of Christian international schools

draws on my own experiences. The intention of this thesis is not to reflect on my own practice via an autoethnographic study. Nevertheless, my teaching and leadership experiences, thus far, provide some sense of knowing.

This chapter is organised into three sections. Section 3.1 explains the methodology that underpins this research. Section 3.2 offers an explanation of the research methods used in collecting and analysing data from Christian international schools. Finally, section 3.3 gives an account of documentary research data collection methods regarding the church school inspection reports in England. This research process used multimethods (Anguera, Blanco-Villaseñor, Losada, Sánchez-Algarra and Onwuegbuzie, 2018; Creswell, 2014) to collect the data (Layder, 1993; Stacey, 1969). Each stage of the process will be discussed in this chapter.

There were three stages to the data collection. The first stage of the research was carried out by individually interviewing online nine heads of school, or principals, who were employed in that role at Christian international schools. The second stage, an ethnographic layer to this study, was made up of three parts. I visited two schools and interviewed three headteachers. During those visits, I conducted further semi-structured interviews with each headteacher, which was part one. I conducted observations of the headteachers in situ; this was part two. The third part was teacher focus group interviews that formed an additional part of this research while visiting the schools. In total nineteen interviews were conducted and transcribed by myself as the researcher. The third stage of this study was a documentary analysis of Section 48 reports of forty schools carried out by the church school inspectorate in England between 2011 and 2019. This research involved scrutiny of

leadership approaches captured within these reports. The findings are reported in Chapter seven.

This chapter explains the methodology and methods used to answer the research questions. These questions were used to drive my research (Punch, 1998, p.38) and to consider what can be uncovered about the varied approaches to the leadership of schools. The research set out to investigate the leadership of Christian international schools and church schools, and consider practically what can be understood about it, in terms of the day-to-day running of the school. The scope of the interviews and observations was designed to uncover how vocation, mission and calling directly impact the day-to-day interactions of a leader of a Christian school. Additionally, it sought to discover leadership priorities of these leaders in the various contexts in establishing the Christian ethos of the school.

3.1 Methodological approach

This section explains my methodological approach and justification. It offers a theoretical account of my research philosophy and rationale. It recognises the limitations and complexity of understanding social reality (Hall and Hall, 1996). This framework of thinking influenced decisions taken, and how I have chosen to approach this research concerning leadership in education, and interpret it (Newby, 2010).

3.1.1 Ontology, epistemology and axiology

Ontology is the constructed reality and the nature of things. It is about illuminating an aspect of the world and how we see it. This thesis aims to explore the constructed reality of

international Christian school headteachers and how they perceive and describe it. The study aims to shed light on headteachers perception of the complex world they inhabit and lead. It acknowledges that a headteacher's viewpoint of reality is relative and may be different from how those around them perceive it. It investigates the attitudes of headteachers, seeking an understanding of their leadership by employing a multimethods approach. Ontology asks 'what is reality?' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.183), while epistemology is concerned with how can we know about it.

Epistemology in this study is concerned with the complexity of the knowledge of leadership and exploring individual examples of knowledge (Nagel, 2014, p.116), and evidence of it. This research seeks to know through ethnographic approaches the multiple and varied complexities of leaders' knowledge and triangulates that knowledge. Nagel (2014) suggests that 'Knowledge always belongs to someone' (p.3). Moreover, epistemology is subjective, shaped and guided by our understandings and worldviews as researchers.

Axiology is what is seen as having value and the values that we ascribe to things. Within this research there are axiological assumptions, including the value and emphasis assigned to parts of the research (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, p.28). Axiologically, my value system impacts my approach to the research participants and my treatment of them. It includes things that I perceive to be of value. My values influenced my observations as a researcher, all of which are subjective. In this research I adopted a critical realist approach (Scott, 2005), in observing and interpreting the data, knowing that the research is humanly contrived and is therefore relative and subjective (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.108). My understanding as a researcher was neither naïve nor relativistic. My stance is one of

accepting that the critical realist approach sees there is more than one version of reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p11).

3.1.2 Constructivist, interpretivist paradigm

Interpretivism is to understand people and their contexts (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019), looking at how people make meaning of their life. In my research the interpretive constructivist paradigm necessitates an understanding of worldview, beliefs and thinking (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017 p.26; Woods, 1999). The research is concerned with school leaders and how they interpret and construct their reality; their 'belief system' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.105). The constructivist approach is one that suggests we shape our own reality. The headteachers in this study have constructed their own understanding and knowledge of their leadership. The interviews with headteachers told a story of how these leaders conceptualised their leadership. Alongside this is a humanistic element to this research paradigm, as it has a sensitivity to the views, feelings, concerns and emotions of the participants (Newby, 2010). The research comes from their accounts of their leadership and understanding of their leadership approaches and experiences (Newby, 2010; Willis, 2007).

It is an interpretive study in so far as it examines school leaders as individuals, to try to acknowledge and appreciate their setting (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, p.33), specifically their own interpretation of their leadership in schools. It explores their situation and context as they experienced and understood it (Willig, 2008). Each headteacher in this research sample provided their own interpretation of their leadership (Layder, 1993), from which I as a researcher, made assumptions and constructed meaning and understanding, based on my

evaluation of their situation. Mittwede (2012), suggests that it is in the research process and the 'dialectical interchange' (p.27) between the participant and the researcher and research that meaning is made (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.111). The interaction with participants, and the process of having a dialogue with them allows meanings to emerge. Furthermore, the same principle was applied to the documentary evidence, using an interpretivist approach to reflect on and scrutinise the Section 48 inspection reports and evidence constructed in those reports.

The research paradigm of this study uses an interpretive and constructivist approach. The research was designed to show how participants viewed and understood their role and their leadership within their schools. The research sought to understand headteachers' perspectives and the reality they had constructed (Willig, 2008, p.7). In social constructionism there is no absolute truth (Hammersley, 2018), but perception and emphasis of what leadership is actually like. As a researcher, there is a degree of accepting that we can never fully know what is meant by a participant, and that the meaning that participants attribute to things is personal to them (Hammersley, 2018). As a researcher, however, I chose a variety of methods to uncover how the leaders perceived themselves, how this was validated by what others in the school said, and by what I saw during the observations.

3.1.3 Qualitative ethnographic approach

A qualitative ethnographical approach was relevant to this study because I wanted to understand people and their approaches to leadership, and know the thinking and rationale of headteachers (Castleberry, and Nolen, 2018). I began by employing a variety of methods to answer 'what' was happening in terms of leadership in Christian international schools and to gain insight as to 'why' (de Vaus, 1996, p. 11). I chose a multimethod approach to provide substance to the research, necessary to achieve a 'bedrock of interpretive work' (Layder, 1993, p.113). The selection of methods included: nine online interviews with individual headteachers, two school visits and observations in situ, teacher focus group discussions, further face-to-face interviews with three headteachers, and documentary analysis of church school inspection reports in England. The study of individuals and their relationships in the workplace allowed me to capture the essence of and substantiate the operational practicalities of Christian leadership in these schools and provided an understanding of leadership culture (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995; Seldana, 2011). This research offers an insight into multiple examples of educational leadership and the complexity of workplace behaviour, and interactions in an international school context between those of different cultures and backgrounds.

Qualitative interviews have clear limitations as they are an individual response; a subjective personal viewpoint. The interview questions were structured to allow for reflection and response. The expectation was that the response offered was a genuine reflection and accurate account of what interviewees believed and experienced. What was omitted was a choice of the interviewee, and what was included could be embellished and be a created

version of events. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) highlight the complexity of qualitative research, as there are 'multiple realities, not single truths' (p.288). They see that the behaviour of participants and their actions are 'socially situated, context-related, context-dependent and context rich' (p.288). Understanding personal vision, theology and value systems shapes how relationships are formed and developed. This is a central aspect of this study. Knowing their theological thinking and expectations is part of what shapes a leader's praxis. The interviews were designed to invite headteachers to reflect on their leadership through their own explanations (Bezzina, Paletta, and Alimehmeti, 2018), and their answers are central to the research. What is said and unsaid, their explanation of their leadership, their daily routines, habits, and trivial interactions were all sought to be understood.

Observational ethnography was central to this research due to wanting to understand leadership behaviour and how it shapes school culture. Observing how leaders behave in their schools, workplace and natural contexts (Willig, 2008; Willis, 1980) was a necessary and important aspect to this research. The research design focused on observing and seeing this leadership in situ and explored leadership styles and practices with leaders in their own school environment. Those that are critical of observational research suggest that the presence of the researcher can be a distraction (Willis, 1980, p.31) that may alter the subject's behaviour. More than that 'researchers will tend to want to make inferences about the phenomena observed' (Thomas, Willis and Phillipps, 1981). There are many differing ways of viewing actions (Horng, Klasik and Loeb, 2010) and the role of the observer

is central to that. The observational ethnography used in this research was central to triangulating data through listening, watching and interacting with participants.

3.1.4 Positionality, personal viewpoints

My teaching career shaped my interest in this field, as such, I place myself in this research. My knowledge of leadership in Christian international schools comes from my own experience. While this research is not auto-ethnographic, the empirical focus is ethnographic, alongside a documentary analysis. My leadership experience shaped my methodology, having been a founding school principal of a Christian international school, similar to those that form the basis of this research. Unequivocally, I have a personal response to this study, thinking about my response as a leader and affiliation with leaders of church and Christian international schools (Salzman, 2002). My own experiences of leadership in Christian education, the triumphs and deeply felt disasters and an earnest attempt to do things right and not having very many answers is woven into the fabric of this research. Having worked in a church school in East London for over ten years, I was confident in my understanding of faith education and thus when asked to set up a Christian international school in Kampala, I knew I needed to articulate, model and demonstrate what that should look like. In doing so, I looked to fellow heads of Christian international schools to glean an understanding.

My experiences, understanding of my own practice and personal involvement in the research cannot be isolated from the study. The benefits of this include understanding the

field of Christian international schools, and having been a principal while living in East Africa for seven years. While this knowledge gave me an understanding of salient matters in such a leadership role, I was aware of not wanting to make assumptions and frequently sought clarity of meaning, as a researcher, rather than relying on any 'insider' understanding I thought that I had. My reflexivity necessitated a separation of my scholarly role from the personal (Hufford, 1999). This insight shaped my approach to the study and my awareness and refining of relevant issues (Patnaik, 2013).

While I have guarded against a personal reflection in the main body of this research, to avoid telling one's own narrative, that can lead to a 'self-indulgent' approach (Seldana, 2017, p.17). However, the considerations within this study emerge from personal experience. My experience gave me understanding and insight as a researcher. Willig (2008) notes the personal resonance that research questions can have to the researcher. The research questions in this study are apt to my own background. As a researcher, I found myself asking the very questions I wanted answers to when initially setting up the school I led in East Africa. Then, like now, I had questions about leadership and about leading well that I scoured books for, yet had no framework for understanding. I was interested in knowing practically, day by day, hour by hour, how to lead well, what to do with my time, what words to use and how to use my silence to lead effectively.

3.1.5 Insider/Outsider theories and reflexivity

My own position in the field, indeed my role as a researcher cannot be separated from my experiences of having lived in East Africa for seven years and working as a founding senior school principal in a Christian international school there. My experience has brought me to this point of academic study and allowed me to bring knowledge and a practical understanding of working in an international school context to the research. Working in a country where the culture was different from my own required reflexivity; *Is what I am doing right? Is it relevant? Is it culturally acceptable?* This shaped my understanding and the way I approached researching leadership. Consequently, there are limitations to this research including my researcher bias, as my familiarity with Christian international schools meant I have an insider understanding. However, in researching schools located in different countries and cultures to my own I could never claim to know the national culture of each school and will therefore always be an outsider. Being a white European woman researching schools in the Global South, I was not trying to impose an ideal but wanted to ask what can we learn from colleagues there.

My previous experience and prior knowledge coupled with my experiences of Christian international school culture allowed for an immersive experience. Hodkinson (2005) identified the challenges of this level of 'insider research' knowledge, seeing that it is characterised by significant levels of initial proximity between the researcher and the researched' (p.132). My research was shaped by my experience of having lived in East Africa for seven years and undertaken the role of Senior School Principal in a Christian international school (Hodkinson, 2005). For many participants in the interview process and

during observations in school there was an assumed understanding, that I had 'insider' knowledge of how Christian international schools operated 'You know how it is right?' (Bruce2). While this level of insider knowledge may be considered beneficial, it is necessary, for those who have insider knowledge and experience to exercise caution. While such experience offers insight that can build relationships with research subjects, it can also cause them to feel intimidated and uneasy, meaning their contributions could be contrived (Hodkinson, 2005). The participants in my research were aware of my previous role and this certainly shaped their willingness to speak openly about their school. As such, a careful and thoughtful approach with participants was essential, endeavouring to listen well, not assume, and to explain myself clearly at each stage.

My research position in focusing on the leadership of Christian international schools in the Global South, as a white, British female, also meant that I was an 'outsider', who could never obtain a true understanding of social or cultural matters (Merton, 1972). The schools in this study were located in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, places and cultures in which I do not belong, nor can claim to be part of. Neither can I claim to understand and appreciate their complexities. Merton (1972), states the importance of the relationship between the insider and the outsider 'interactive roles in the process of truth-seeking' (p.36). It is not as simple as the researcher and the researched, but a dialogue in that collective research activity.

My positioning in this field of research is both that of insider and outsider, necessitating a degree of reflexivity at every stage of this iterative research process. My personal experience of living and working in Africa in school leadership altered my view of others in the research

sample who undertake a similar role. Being a senior school principal was challenging and the scope of setting up a school when nothing was established meant that I looked to neighbouring school leaders to model leadership that I wanted to emulate. Willig (2008) suggests that:

Qualitative researchers differ in the emphasis they place upon reflexivity in their research. For some, both personal and epistemological reflexivity are central to the research process and form an integral part of the research report. (p.10)

This is true for the role that I played in this research. Although I was the researcher, I was acutely aware of the roles of the participants as they shared their experiences which were familiar to my own experiences. This gave me insight and understanding but necessitated a realigning with my position as a researcher.

My interactions with each research participant were significant. Their understanding of my background and experience of being a senior school principal in East Africa shaped the responses given. In their engagement with me and responses to my questions, they saw me as a 'co-educator' and someone who had a shared understanding of their role and experiences, whether that was concerning challenges with hiring staff, or working in an international context. Their answers assumed a shared knowledge and understanding. However, in knowing my professional background I was aware that participants may offer responses that they believed I wanted to hear or what they thought might meet with my approval in providing the 'right' answer. The headteachers also knew that I shared their Christian faith and this too altered how they explained, responded and described their justification for some of their thinking, actions and decision making.

The Christian faith is central to this study, which is an examination of headteachers who are inspired by and motivated by their spiritual beliefs. However, limitations are perceived by some when researching spiritual beliefs, suggesting that any neutrality in such a study is unachievable (Hufford, 1999, p.297). To limit one's own spiritual belief is not feasible and can result in "giving testimony" rather than doing ethnography' (Hufford, 1999, p.301), yet Willig (2008) argues that adopting a reflexive approach means acknowledging and appreciating our own stance as researchers. While being supportive of Christian leadership, not all viewpoints were in line with my own; indeed, some were the opposite. I adopted a reflexive position of posing questions, listening, processing and repeatedly reviewing my own stance on these issues. At each stage in the research process, my assumptions were challenged and my understanding often extended. Rather than 'giving testimony,' this reflexive approach made me constantly clarify and reclarify my thinking throughout the process of data collection, reviewing and revisiting findings to determine meaning (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Willig, 2008).

3.2 Methods

A multimethods research approach was adopted to understand how school leaders established, built and sustained a Christian school culture through their leadership, and the practical ways they achieved it. This section of the chapter explains the process for each stage of the data collection and the justification for choices made. It discusses and describes the methods used in collecting and analysing the data and the limitations of that process.

3.2.1 Permission and ethics

Ethical approval was sought and approved by the ethics committee at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) in March 2021, with additional amendments subsequently approved in December 2021 and March 2022. These changes were made because of the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and this affected the countries that I could access. Ethical approval was gained from the university after submitting a detailed risk assessment identifying the health and safety risks of overseas travel. The risk assessment identified potential risks to myself as the researcher while researching overseas such as: the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on travel, political and/or civil unrest and terrorist threats.

Other documentation submitted for approval were the participant information forms, consent forms and the questions to be used as part of the interviews. Permission was sought from participating schools, headteachers and teachers for each focus group, who all received the participant information details and consent forms which were then signed and returned. Participants were reminded that their involvement would be anonymous and that they would be given pseudonyms and the names of schools would also not be disclosed. Each participant was informed of their right to withdraw from the research and this was stated and restated at each stage in the research process (Bouma and Atkinson, 1996; British Educational Research Association, 2018). The storage of personal data was password-protected and the names of individuals and schools were anonymised in all data files.

All countries and participants in this research are anonymous. This was because many of these international schools were the only Christian international school in the country, so by

identifying the country it would make the school easily identifiable. Therefore, the decision was taken to make the country anonymous as well as the school. Countries were given codes, for example, AE1. The names of the headteachers in this study are all pseudonyms. The numbers given relate to their interview being their first, second or third interview in the research process. Bruce1 -refers to the first interview with Bruce. Bruce2 refers to the second interview with Bruce, (also see Appendix 3). Permission was sought from the governments of the two countries visited, for research to be carried out within the country. Country AF2 (see Figure 1) requested that all permission be sought via their embassy in the United Kingdom. After liaising with the embassy and submitting paperwork, this permission was granted. Country AE1 (see Figure 1) requested that I apply online for approval from their research council. I then had to submit all paperwork, pay associated fees and gain further endorsement from a national university based in the country where AE1 is located. This was a lengthier process but permission was granted for the research to be undertaken.

Ethical considerations included acknowledging the intrusive nature of observational research in a school setting. During those visits I requested to spend time with the headteacher to interview and shadow them. I planned to be as unobtrusive as possible (Bouma and Atkinson, 1996), so as to not impede the day-to-day running of the school. The school visits were conducted when schools were opening up after the COVID-19 pandemic and some were still not fully open to visitors. Hence, my presence and my mandatory mask-wearing, concealing my face, was an intrusive, strange presence for these schools. Ethical matters also related to interviewing included the potential for disclosure of sensitive information by participants and sharing too much information.

The research did not include engaging with students. I was mindful that access to schools, classrooms and offices, especially meant that the research, while school-based, did not actively seek to engage in conversations with students. My own self-awareness, respect for the process and sensitivity to those participating was paramount at every stage. Care was taken to be fully compliant in the storage of personal data (British Educational Research Association, 2018, p.23) and even though the empirical research took place outside of the United Kingdom the research adhered to the United Kingdom British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) guidelines.

3.2.2 The interview participants

My knowledge and understanding of the Christian international school field meant that I identified schools that I wanted to be part of the study, specifically those individuals in active leadership, either as the head of school or principal. There are a wide range of Christian international schools that could have been included in the research but I filtered them down according to a set of inclusion/exclusion criteria. My experience meant that I was interested in schools that were not in Western countries. I chose these schools because I knew of them, or I knew of their history, stability and leadership. All of the leaders were either established or experienced educators in the Christian international school community. High turnover of staff in international schools can mean that headteachers only have a brief tenure. I felt it important to identify experienced leaders who also understood the culture of Christian international schools. Appendix 8 provides an overview of the information below for all the Christian international schools in this study.

Keith was the school director at AF1 and had been in post for three years. AF1 was a very established school, having been founded seventy years ago. It began as a small school run by a missionary organisation to meet the needs of missionary families living and serving in this African country. It now has 300 students from 30 different countries and teaching staff from 13 different nationalities. It offers both a combination of U.K. and U.S. curricula. It is located in the capital city. It has been accredited by Cambridge exam boards, Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and Middle States Association (MSA).

Bruce, was not working in school education before undertaking the role of school director at AF2. Although he was experienced in Christian leadership working for various organisations based in the U.S. before relocating with his family to AF2. He had been in post as the school's director for ten years. AF2 is a Christian international school located in a country in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is located in the capital city. It has 330 students from 30 nationalities. It uses an American curriculum and caters for pupils from aged 4-18. Staff who teach here are from 11 different countries. This school was initially established to meet the needs of Christian expatriate families who were home-schooling their children and has grown steadily. It has now bought land to enable it to expand further.

Jane was the junior school principal at MR1. She moved from the U.S. to undertake this position. She was new to the post, although she had previously undertaken a similar role at another Christian international school. MR1 is a Christian international school located in the Caribbean. It has been established for over fifty years. It provides education for students from aged 4-18. 60% of students are national students. It offers a combination of national

and international curriculum (American). It is accredited with MSA and ACSI. It employs 82 members of staff.

Peter was the superintendent at AE3, having undertaken the role for over twelve years. He relocated from the U.S. to lead the school. AE3 is a Christian international school that was founded 75 years ago in East Africa. Its location has changed over the years but today it is centrally located in a capital city. It offers an American curriculum for students from aged 4-18 and has 625 pupils on roll. It continues to provide education for national families, expatriate families, missionary families and the children of diplomats.

Richard was an experienced superintendent at WA1. He had moved with his family from the U.S. to undertake the role. He has worked in many international school contexts, and has been in post in his current role for five years. WA1 is located in West Africa. It has been open for just over 55 years. It was established by a mission organisation to meet the needs of missionary families serving in the country and in other West African countries. Today it provides an education for students from 44 different nationalities. It uses an American curriculum and is accredited with ACSI. Current staff tenure at the school is between two and twenty years.

Catherine, at the time of interview, was a head of school at WA2 working in that capacity for over fifteen years. She moved to the school from the U.S., initially as a teacher before undertaking the head of school role. WA2 was set up thirty years ago by a missionary

organisation to meet the needs of missionary families. It is a Christian international school located in Western Africa. It has one hundred students on role and uses an American curriculum. It employs a total of 30 members of staff, most of whom are national staff. It is accredited with ACSI and MSA.

Sheila was an experienced educator and in post as the junior school principal at AM1 for five years. AM1 is located in Southeast Asia. It is accredited with ACSI and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). It follows an American curriculum. There are currently 700 students representing 23 nationalities. The school has been open for 90 years and employs 96 members of staff, of which, 62 are national staff.

Alison a middle school principal had worked at the school for nine years. Although she had only been in post as the middle school principal at AE1 for one year. Before becoming the middle school principal, she had been a deputy principal and part of the school's senior management team. AE1 is located in a capital city in Sub-Saharan Africa. It opened in 2012 and now has 280 pupils on roll. The school has staff from 11 nationalities and pupils from 31 nationalities.

Patrick is employed at the same school AE1 and was appointed initially as a teacher before later joining the senior management team. He has been in post as the high school principal for three years.

I conducted an online pilot interview with one headteacher, not included in this study; to allow me to consider what the issues were with my interviewing. This gave me the chance to rehearse using Microsoft Teams to video record. While I did not change any interview questions as a result of carrying out the pilot, I did change my approach, particularly with regard to my listening. I took greater care to listen well and to follow up on questioning and clarifying of ideas in the information shared. The pilot study allowed me to test my research questions and to consider the validity of the questions and answers. The pilot interview showed that the manner in which I conducted the interview and the formality of the questioning did not allow for a very deep response. I recognised it would be more fruitful to use a semi-structured approach and to unpick some responses further. This enabled me to drill down, to understand and consider meaning and responses more fully. An example of this is when in the pilot interview the participant gave a stock answer that did not provide a thorough account of her practice (Husband, 2020). The semi-structured approach allowed for further probing of meaning (Diefenbach, 2009) and debate on topic areas. The pilot interview was most useful in increasing my confidence as a researcher to move from a set of questions to probing and seeking to understand more fully.

Figure 1. The Participants: gender, age (not verified), nationality, region, ethnicity, role and experience.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Country	Continent/ Region	Ethnicity	Post held	Years in post
Keith	Male	30- 39	AF1	Africa	White	Director	3
Richard	Male	40- 49	WA1	Africa	White	Superintendent	5
Peter	Male	40- 49	AE3	Africa	White	Superintendent	12+
Bruce	Male	40- 49	AF2	Africa	Indian	Director	10
Alison	Female	30- 39	AE1b	Africa	White	Middle school principal	1 (9 at the school)
Patrick	Male	40- 49	AE1a	Africa	African	High school principal	3
Catherine	Female	50- 59	WA2	Africa	White	Head of School	15+
Sheila	Female	40- 49	AM1	Asia	Caribbean	Junior school principal	5+
Jane	Female	50- 59	MR1	Caribbean	White	Junior school principal	1 year

Peter at school AE3 in East Africa had a detailed knowledge of Christian international schools that assisted me in gaining access to further heads of school. After a preliminary discussion with him via a video call, he contacted a number of other heads of school and principals, thereby facilitating my access to a further three of the participants in the study. I then wrote to all participants introducing myself, my research and inviting them to participate in an interview with them via an online video call (Bouma and Atkinson, 1996). All invited participants agreed to participate in the research. Online interviews with nine headteachers was not originally a planned part of the data collection but 'invented' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.4) in the planning, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions. It proved to be a rich and worthwhile way to collect data about leadership in Christian international schools.

3.2.3 Addressing the challenge

Initially, it was my intention to carry out the research in three international schools based in the Global South. In each of those schools, I intended to spend a week observing the headteacher to conduct three interviews with each of them. Instead, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent uncertainty around travel delayed and altered the planned fieldwork. Access to countries was not possible for a significant period of time as borders were closed. When governments of these countries did permit entry, it was on the basis of my being fully vaccinated, having a negative lateral flow test, providing a negative PCR test, and ensuring that the countries I travelled through were not countries deemed to be of risk because of the pandemic. I also needed to obtain visas. Schools were closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and once opened, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions

meant some schools were closed to unnecessary visits. Additionally, as schools started to reopen, they were subject to immediate closure by governments when COVID-19 pandemic outbreaks occurred within countries. The COVID-19 pandemic posed numerous challenges to the research process that led me to believe that the planned research visits may not come to fruition. Consequently, I decided to begin with online interviews as a means of accessing headteachers. Conducting interviews in this way meant that they would be less likely to be disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2.4 Stage one - online interviews

Stage one of the research was conducting online video interviews, which gave me access to more participants than I had initially planned to engage in this part of the research. I interviewed nine school leaders, both heads of schools and principals, with a further plan to visit two of these schools if access was permitted and the schools were willing to participate. The uncertainty around the planned research process at this stage meant that time elapsed, which proved useful in reflecting on the first interview stage and transcribing those interviews prior to visiting two of the schools. These initial interviews provided an opportunity for a broader engagement with the field, capturing a breadth of experiences and opinions and widening the discourse of this study. Therefore, although the initial research design was altered, it proved to be advantageous, providing rich data across a wider sample of nine headteachers. In many ways this additional layer of interviewing allowed for a more focused and deeper understanding. The initial data collection of interviewing provided me with a rich and varied experiences from heads of school which then allowed for further discussion in the visiting process – stage two. Choosing to visit

these schools allowed for a cross-checking of the stage one interviews and the chance to extend and consolidate my understanding.

My stage one interview questions for the participants were informed in part by my experiences in founding a Christian international school and knowing some of the pertinent challenges in leading such a school. I also think their agreeing to do the interview was in part because of that experience, as I knew the field and was in that regard an insider (Hodkinson, 2005). While in that role I was faced with similar questions about what does a great Christian International School look like, what are the truths by which I should lead and practically on a daily basis, how should I live out, articulate and exhibit Christian values

The online video call interviews with headteachers followed a pattern of asking eleven questions in the same sequential order (see Appendix 1 for the interview questions). The stage one interviews asked participants about their motivations, Christian faith in leading a Christian school and their leadership style. The interview questions built on my research questions for this study as I set out to understand the participants as school leaders and their individual leadership practices. The interview questions were sent beforehand to two of the participants who had requested to see the questions prior to the interview taking place. This seemed to have a direct, positive impact on the quality and thoughtfulness of their responses. The two heads of schools that requested the questions provided considered answers that were robust, citing minutiae of events and thinking. They provided clear and detailed explanations about their leadership in Christian education. I also sent the questions to the other participants but not all had looked at the questions, presumably due to time constraints. The personal responses in the interviews were inevitably skewed to that time,

capturing personal, subjective and sometimes overly critical judgements of themselves and those around them (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It is the essence of the accounts of their actions, attitudes and behaviour and understanding their motivation that was central to the interview research.

The interviews were video recorded and for the most part, took part during the school day. Headteachers were in their school office for the interview. This setting was important as it was a private, yet professional space that allowed participants to share as they wished (Layder, 1993). Two participants chose to be interviewed in the evening - both of these were in their own homes and uninterrupted for the duration of the interview. The interview schedule was designed to scrutinise ideas and experiences. Listening well, being polite and smiling, albeit via a screen was also important to garner a sense of trust and welcoming their willingness to tell stories of leadership experiences through their recollections and responses. It meant creating a rapport (Thomas, Willis and Phillipps, 1981), listening carefully and being ready to have a dialogue with the participants and engage them in discussion around the answers they provided. Appendix 7 provides an example of a whole transcript and highlights this interaction. Each interview lasted between fifty minutes and one hour and twenty minutes. It was my intention to capture the headteacher's perceptions and perspectives of their own leadership. The interviews were all conducted in English, as this was the language the participants used in their professional lives and the language used in school. Discussion was at times part of the interviews. This included re-phrasing, explaining and sharing a dialogue as part of the process (Mittwede, 2012, p.27). My own experiences of leading a Christian international school shaped the questions I had chosen to

ask (Newby, 2010). My understanding gave me insight and confidence in seeking clarification about some of the answers given. Additionally, my experiences gave me an awareness of some of the language used to describe international schools and international school leadership experiences. In some ways, the interview questions although each related to international school leadership, they merged and overlapped. This was intentional. I asked leaders to articulate and rearticulate what they were doing as leaders in terms of priorities and effective leadership, knowing that in the interview process, I was asking them to clarify and re-clarify their thinking (Willig, 2008). By doing so it gave the participants the opportunity to provide many rich examples to illustrate their answers. Additionally, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for discussion, further prompting and revisiting of ideas in order to drill down deeper into the participants thinking and reasoning. Although this did feel like there was some repeating and re-phrasing, it almost always resulted in participants providing more developed ideas and contributions.

I listened to anecdotes and sought clarification of ideas. An example of this is when I would ask, *'But what does that look like?'*, or *'Practically, what does that look like?'*. I asked participants to develop their thinking by probing specific aspects of their responses (Gaskell, 2000). At times I wanted participants to be more specific, so my response to their answers was often about zooming in and getting to the point of the key ideas about *how* headteachers engage those in their school community. Additionally, questions were skewed in a certain way to challenge participants thinking, values and priorities. For example, *'What is the most important thing that you do in a school day?'*, rather than *'Tell me about your day'*. There was an assumption that there were significant aspects of a headteacher's day

that were more important than others. This also assumed that participants felt there were important aspects in their school day. I think such probing helped me to get closer to answering the first research question, *How do Headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith?* Jarviluoma, Moisala and Vilkkko (2003) put forward the idea that:

We perpetually tell ourselves and others narratives about our lives. Those versions of life incorporate personal stories about events, choices, fateful moments, important experiences and meaningful life course transitions. Each successive account, reflection and moment of storytelling adds new issues to the story: they strengthen or revise old interpretations, transfigure the compositions and plot the story anew. The shapeless mass of life events becomes ordered in a series of everyday story-tellings, and the cumulative outcome of that succession is the story of a life. (p.47)

Thus, the personal response in these interviews is complex, shaped, crafted for an audience and what emerges is a story that the participant wants to tell of that experience. What is shared is an edited version of selected information, modified according to what they choose to reveal. Thematic analysis of these interviews and of the stage two interviews is discussed later in this chapter.

The limitations of the stage one research process were that the interviews were conducted online. Technical difficulties arose when the internet was unstable and I considered it more difficult to establish a natural 'rapport' than it would have been if the interviews were conducted face-to-face. The stage one interviews with headteachers also focused on their perspectives, ideas and thoughts about their leadership. Of the sample of nine

headteachers, only three headteachers in two countries were visited as part of stage two of the research. This meant that it was not possible to triangulate all the stage one interviews. I had to accept that their constructed accounts of their leadership. There was the potential for things to differ from how they had described them. In visiting the two schools, I was able to further understand the headteachers' accounts from the stage one interviews which were validated in my observations and subsequent interviews. This reinforced the credibility and veracity of the stage one, online interviews with headteachers. While the findings are about leadership much of the stage one research focused on the headteacher's perspective, their voice and experience and was not in each case triangulated. While it would have been of interest to capture the wider sense of their leadership as experienced by parents, students and others, this was beyond the scope of this research.

3.2.5 Stage two - ethnographic research approach

After the stage one interviews of nine headteachers had taken place and those interviews had been transcribed, I short-listed four heads of school for stage two of the research process - the ethnographic visits. Stage two was divided into three parts. Part one, was to conduct further interviews with these headteachers. Part two was to observe headteachers and part three was to conduct teacher focus group discussions with teachers in those schools. The headteachers visited as part of the ethnographic study were chosen based on the answers that they provided in their first interview. I arrived at my shortlist on the basis of the quality of the answers given, experiences and perceived openness of participants. One headteacher who was my preferred choice to be included in stage two of the research was Peter, a school director. He was, however, leaving his position at the school and said he

was 'too busy' to allocate time for my research visit. Another head, (Keith) was in a location that was too volatile, with civil unrest and therefore it was unsafe to visit him. In the end, for stage two of the research, I visited Alison, Patrick in AE1 and Bruce in AF2, spending a school week with each, observing and interviewing them over the course of that week. Appendix 8 offers an overview of information about these schools.

Christian International School AF2

Located in Africa, AF2 was a medium-sized Christian International school of 330 students. The school student body represents 30 nationalities. These include local students, the children of embassy staff and other expatriates. The school was established over twenty years ago. It is a fee-paying school located in the capital city. It is based on one campus with separate sites for kindergarten and then a joint primary and secondary site. The teaching staff comprises of 50% national staff and 50% overseas hire, from 11 different countries. The school uses a US curriculum from kindergarten to Grade 12. The governance of the school is with a board of trustees. These volunteers include parents and professionals based in the city. AF2 has bought land and plans to move to a new campus in the next few years. Bruce, the current school director has been in post for ten years. He had relocated to the country in which AF2 is located to undertake the role of school director. Before taking up the role, he had worked in various Christian leadership positions in the U.S. He had very little experience of working in schools. Additionally, on the represented senior team at the school is a director of academics, a primary principal and a secondary principal.

Christian International School AE1

AE1 had 280 students and was located in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is a Christian international school that is non-denominational. It adopts a combined curriculum using both U.S. and U.K. academic pathways. It has 31 nationalities represented on the student body. Staff are from 11 nationalities, with more than 60% being national staff. The school opened in 2012. It is situated in the capital city and is a split site school, separated over two campuses. The school has one school director who founded the school and three principals, a junior school principal, a middle school principal and a high school principal. In addition to this, the governance structure that it adopts included a board of directors and a school board. It serves missionary families, expatriate families most of whom work in the charity sector and national families. AE1 had purchased land and over the next few years was anticipating developing purpose-built school facilities to provide space to better meet its growth. Alison and Patrick were both less experienced principals at this school; Alison a middle school principal and Patrick a high school principal. Alison, from the U.S., had been teaching for eleven years, nine of which she had been in post at AE1 school. She was new to being a middle school principal, having previously worked on the senior leadership team as the deputy principal. Patrick was born in a different African country; he trained as a teacher in the U.K. where he taught for ten years. He then relocated to work in the African country where AE1 is located. Before becoming a principal, he worked on the senior leadership team at AE1 for three years before becoming the senior school principal, a post that he held for an additional three years.

Stage two of the research was an additional ethnographic layer to the study, visiting, interviewing and observing three headteachers. I travelled to observe them *in situ* and to interview them further about their leadership to build trust and explore their understanding of and approaches to leadership in greater depth.

3.2.5.1 Stage two - part one -further interviews with headteachers

The interviews with headteachers in stage two of the research were concerned with uncovering more about leadership culture. Part one was further interviews with each headteacher, asking them to develop ideas they had shared in their initial interview. I prepared questions based on the answers given in the first round of interviews, asking more about issues they had raised, or examples given. For each headteacher, I used the transcript of the first interview as a basis for specific questions to them regarding their leadership. For each, I drafted a list of interview questions based on what they had already told me. For example, with Bruce, I was interested in following up about the ideas of calling and vocation, servant leadership, and his personal faith in carrying out the role. Thematic ideas developed in the first interviews were revisited in the face-to-face interviews. Some thematic ideas like vocation and having a sense of mission were not unexpected but some ideas I had not anticipated to feature so significantly, like the significant impact the COVID-19 pandemic was having on school leaders in their professional undertaking of their role. I asked open-ended questions and asked for examples, anecdotes and further details of how they led their schools. The focus of my questioning was also interspersed with points where I sought clarification alongside seeking to understand clearly and allowing personal stories and recollections to be told (Hall and Hall, 1996). The semi-structured nature of my

questions was designed to encourage participants to reflect on their practice, explain and explore their leadership trajectory and current practice through a dialogue with me. At times I prompted a more specific response, asked for examples, stories and the details of these recollections. These questions allowed for 'progressive focusing' (Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 42) with an attempt to drill down into the participants leadership experience and practice within their school context. These interviews with headteachers were audio recorded.

3.2.5.2 Stage two - part two-observations

Part two of my ethnographic approach was in-school observations of three headteachers in two schools. The time allocated for this was one week with each headteacher. The point of these observations of headteachers was to understand their leadership as they had described it, by observing it. I carried with me a notebook at all times and spent much of my time shadowing each headteacher, listening to their conversations, attending meetings with them and observing their interactions with others to ascertain their approaches to Christian leadership. Observation was a valuable additional data source. However, I noted the impact my presence had on the participant (Stacey, 1969). Often, while I was shadowing a headteacher, they would explain to me what they were doing and why. Rather than just observing, the participants would walk and talk me through different interactions, events or conversations, either prior to, or after each one had taken place. While this was not something I initiated, however, it proved highly useful in understanding their leadership. An extract from my field notebook 5th May 2022 noted:

Watching how Bruce interacts with staff is interesting, in the morning before school starts, he greets people in the school. This morning, like yesterday, I walk with him,

at times a few paces behind him. He walks around the buildings, greeting staff, admin staff, pupils. He is cheerful and upbeat. He doesn't just say 'hello' but often something specific to each individual staff member. He uses lots of praise. With the support staff, the cleaners and the grounds staff he speaks with them in the local language. This morning, as we reached where the support staff were stood, they seemed genuinely delighted to see him, they appear to be very happy. Bruce has a conversation with a group of them and they all laugh and laugh a lot at something he says. He later tells me that they were all laughing about an ongoing joke that they had about a bucket with a hole in it. He was interested in them, engaged with them and connected with them. They seemed to really like him.

Absorbing the ethos of the school and observing the participants was a critical aspect of the research and a way to validate what a school leader was saying about how they practically engage with those in their school community. However, observational research can be problematic as it is individual and personal; it is what I as a researcher choose to see and record (Hall and Hall, 1996). My role during these observations was not passive, but engaged and reflective, asking questions of myself '*Why is this interaction happening now? What is the intention behind this action?*' Noticing interactions, discourse with others and moments of silence were seen as a valued part of the observation process. Berkovich and Bogler (2020) suggest that in a school setting, and as principal, language is of utmost importance 'Talk is the work' (p. 325). As a researcher, much of my role was to observe and listen to conversations, noting the language and content of exchanges with members of staff alongside the time spent by the headteacher in these exchanges.

During part two of the observation research, there were moments of pause and discussion with headteachers, which caused them to reflect on their leadership actions. Although there were times of silence in this process, there were also times of interaction. Headteachers would discuss their thinking and actions with me *'I need to have a conversation with John about the Grade 12 prom'* (Bruce2). Occasionally, I sought clarity with headteachers about what I was observing and how I could best understand and make sense of it. Sometimes they invited my professional opinion about a school-related matter, for example how would I approach a matter of conflict. I tried to avoid engaging in such discussions. Observational data was collected by notetaking, observing the school day from start to finish, listening in to video calls, attending staff meetings, shadowing during coaching and mentoring activities, and being a bystander in planned and unplanned interactions (Willis, 1980).

3.2.5.3 Stage two- part three -teacher focus groups

Teacher focus group interviews were part three of the school visits. They took place at the end of a school day. I requested to meet with teachers who had a variety of experience and length of service at the school and a range of staff who had a cross-section of school responsibilities. Teachers were selected by the school in negotiation with myself. Their participation was voluntary. Upon the arrival of each teacher, I sought to build relationships through informal conversation prior to the focus group taking place, to make discussion feel less formal (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995). I met with three focus groups in the two schools. Each focus group was made up of six teachers. All focus group discussion was audio recorded. I organised the group discussion by using open-ended questions (see Figure 2). Limitations for the focus group discussions were that of turn-taking (Newby, 2010) and

knowing how answers were being modified according to the group and other participants in it. I was mindful of disrupting the flow of the discussion to move things on to the next question (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995). For some questions participants provided information that was not relevant to the study, for example their frustrations with the school timetable and at times I needed to move past some comments quickly.

Responses in the teacher focus group discussions were interesting. They were varied and allowed for extended discussion (Newby, 2010). Question five, *What characteristics, do you value in a school leader?* (see Figure 2) was about school leadership. This question was not intended to be leading. I wanted to know what, as teachers, they valued in a school leader, but instead, teachers talked about the leadership that they knew and experienced in the school. I was not endeavouring to coerce teachers to discuss the leaders in their school. This question, asked of the three teacher focus groups in both schools, resulted in an exploratory discussion that provided further insight about the current leadership and sought to explore repeating themes (Newby, 2010). Limitations of part three, the teacher focus group activity, meant that participants were potentially reluctant to share openly and discuss their thoughts and ideas in a public way, in case their personal opinions did not align with those of others (Leshem, 2012). Questions for teacher focus groups are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Teacher focus group questions

1. What made you want to teach in a Christian International School?
2. What do you enjoy about working at the school?
3. Tell me the best bits about being here and teaching in this environment.
4. What attracted you to applying to work at this school?
5. What characteristics, do you value in a school leader?
6. In what ways have you thrived working here?

I engaged with teacher focus groups to triangulate and validate my findings from the stage one interviews, while also exploring some issues more fully (Rallis and Rossman, 2009). I wanted to understand their experiences of school leadership, and specifically the idea of a Christian international school culture. This part of the research is related to research questions one and two. *'How do Headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith? 'and 'What does future leadership of church and Christian international schools look like? And why is it important?'*. I sought to examine how relationships were fostered, developed, and valued in the school. I was intentional about not wanting to directly ask about the headteacher *'What is he/she like?'* But asked the question, *'What characteristics do you value in a school leader?'* This question always resulted in a discussion about the leadership in the school, which was helpful in ascertaining a comprehensive view of the headteacher's practice and impact on school culture.

3.2.6 Challenges and limitations to the visits

The limitations of stage two of the research (the school visits), was that the sample of three headteachers was chosen in part because of availability and willingness. While visiting the schools I did not actively speak to or seek to engage in conversations with students or other stakeholders, apart from the headteacher and those participants in the teacher focus groups. There were times when it was tempting to discuss situations with other staff, but this was not planned for, agreed to or part of the study. The research had been designed to be as unobtrusive as possible so as not to impede the day-to-day running of the school. With the COVID-19 pandemic, I was hesitant to have unplanned informal interactions with staff as I knew that there was considerable anxiety about the spread of the disease. Shadowing headteachers was worthwhile, although time was the biggest challenge in that there was not always time for them to explain their thinking and practice after each meeting or interaction. To compensate for this, I tried to record all interactions in my notebook and to seek clarification on these at a later time with them. This provided greater clarity to these observations and my understanding of them.

The biggest limitation in stage two of the research was the teacher focus group discussions. Although I tried to manage these well, at times it appeared as if some staff did not speak as freely as they might have done if they had been interviewed alone. If I were to repeat this research, I would request to interview individual members of the teaching staff separately, rather than meeting them in a focus group setting. Conducting the focus groups and managing discussion in them was another challenge. The difficulties included encouraging participants to take turns and not talk over each other. My role was to steer the discussion

using the questions as prompts to do that. The skills required to do this were very different from interviewing the headteachers on a one-to-one basis. The focus group discussions needed to be planned and managed in terms of time, but also in terms of the focus of the discussion. Keeping the discussions in line with the question and not deviating from that required careful refocusing of the conversation at times.

3.2.7 Stage two - data analysis of interviews

My analytical framework used a theoretical thematic analysis to examine the data. My own background and experience in this field of study, provided me with a foundational understanding of it. While I did not use predetermined themes, I did anticipate certain themes to be evident in the data. The research interviews asked open-ended questions that allowed participants to provide personal testimony that 'reflects the priorities, concerns, values and attitudes' (p.500, Newby) of headteachers. My conceptual framework, informed by my own experiences as a senior school principal had shaped the questions that I asked. The questions formed the basis of semi-structured interviews in which headteachers provided details and personal accounts of their leadership.

My own leadership experiences in some regard gave me access to these heads of Christian international schools. They knew my background and experience, which in turn shaped their responses and indeed at times they referenced it in their responses. The danger of this in the thematic coding process is that of 'projection', (Boyatzis, 1998, p.13). Knowing that my own beliefs and values shape the coding and whether that be unconsciously, I am attributing my experiences of leadership through the coding process by making 'active

choices' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.78). I was aware that at each stage in the research activities meaning was made 'findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.111). Therefore, I was acutely aware of my agency in the process. In arriving at this research and the questions for the online interview, I drew on my own understanding and experiences of leading a Christian international school (Braun and Clarke, 2013). In turn in the analysing of the data my positionality as a researcher and in the data, syntheses was not neutral.

We must take the researcher's position, privileges, perspective and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality. (Charmaz, 2014, p.13)

My experience and grasp of leading such schools was an 'analytic resource' (Braun and Clarke, 2021, p.3) something that I drew on in the thematic analysis stage. In my thematic analysis of the data, I wanted to capture the individual explanations, descriptions and accounts of headteachers' experiences in leading their schools, which illustrate how they have established an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith.

I sought to code the data, grouping codes and drawing out thematic ideas across the data sample of headteacher interviews and teacher focus group discussions to answer my research questions. In transcribing the interviews and the focus group discussions myself, I was able to recall the data and familiarise myself with the content of each interview and know it, to help with data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). As part of this stage of the process, capturing and then processing the interviewee's words were part of the research analysis, including recalling what was sometimes implied but not stated. All the interview transcripts from stages one and two of the research process were

coded using NVivo software, this included the nine online interviews, face-to-face interviews with three headteachers and three teacher focus group interviews. See Appendix 7 as an example of a transcript.

I used theoretical thematic coding, thinking about the data in terms of answering at least two of my research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I approached the data having read literature and with my own experiences and interest in leadership of Christian international schools and known leadership practices associated with leading those schools. The specific codes were not decided upon prior to coding, however, I had anticipated finding certain codes in accordance with answering my research questions. The codes that I expected to find were associated with actions, attitudes and behaviour of the headteachers. Coding was achieved by assigning a code to parts of the text during the coding process. Although having transcribed the interviews myself, coding took place after reading the interview transcript once. Further coding was applied on the second or third reading of the transcript. At each stage codes were developed, applied and refined. This process allowed me to get to know the data in this form and to identify initial themes across the transcripts as the coding activity progressed. This was driven by the research questions and thematic coding of the data sought to identify answers to those questions. It often led to sentence-based scrutiny of language. However, what I noticed was that in coding in this piecemeal way, was that it did not always capture the cumulative wealth of actions or rich details evident on one leader's leadership journey. Chapter six offers a more detailed look at Bruce's leadership in an attempt to demonstrate this. It provides a more holistic approach in considering his leadership rather than just relying on what the atomised codes offered.

The analytical process identified codes concerning the experiences, approaches and the rationale of the headteachers in their leading. The process for this included identifying the salient points and ideas by reading and re-reading the transcripts as part of the coding process. In coding, some codes became overarching codes. These codes were grouped together as code groups (see Appendix 6) and later became themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I sought to review the transcripts a number of times, identifying codes, code groups and looking for themes and patterns. From the outset, I had a framework of themes that developed while conducting the interviews with the nine headteachers and during the development of my research questions. In the coding process, however, further themes came about and initial themes were revised. I wanted to scrutinise the language of leaders as they described their leadership behaviour and capture the associated themes and ideas more fully in the development process of coding (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

To mitigate against my preconceived ideas about leadership, from my prior experience, I endeavoured to code several times. I examined each transcript over weeks and months, reading and re-reading each one and coding them accordingly. The revisiting of the data and returning to the coding of it brought greater clarity to my thinking regarding the themes from within the transcripts. The process also helped me in looking for trends and commonalities across the data (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018), concerning the leadership in these schools, specifically individual ways of leading. I identified a broad range of themes across the interview transcripts associated with the leadership of Christian international schools. In examining themes within the data, I put the codes into code groups (Braun and

Clarke, 2006). I went back to the data and coded again, organising and reviewing the transcripts in line with the codes and code groups. Even at this stage new codes developed that I had not noticed in the first round of coding. By revisiting the data in this way, I started to see commonalities across the interview transcripts. Through this process, code groups were clearly established from the data, these were personal faith journeys, developing others, servant leadership, proximity to others in leading, leading and healing, leading beyond oneself (see Appendix 6).

There were other notable themes, that resonated across the data including disappointment in oneself, facing challenges in leading and having a philosophy for education. For example, one surprise in coding that I had not anticipated was how much the COVID-19 pandemic had deeply impacted the leadership of these schools and how much headteachers would refer to it. This is discussed in Chapter six. Another unexpected theme was that of the social interaction of leaders sharing food with their staff. In discussing their leadership practice, headteachers all mentioned the significance of food. This is discussed in Chapter five.

Figure 3. Braun and Clarke

I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) suggested approach for thematic analysis:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report (p.87)

The first research question guided my thinking and approach to coding *How do Headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith?* While the initial interview questions were in part based on my own experiences, certain themes were more common from the online interviews and subsequent face-to-face interviews. For example, servant leadership as a theme became something that headteachers talked about concerning their own leading. Headteachers talked about how they aspired to be servant leaders. Yet the details of how they achieved this and their motivations around wanting to seek to be servant leaders became valuable sub-themes. I identified codes such as acts of service, enabling staff and gestures of kindness which formed part of a code group and associated with the theme of Servant leadership. What was interesting in coding was their pursuit of and aspiring to be servant leaders, and then how they achieved that in adopting certain leadership practices to attain that leadership style.

My role in understanding, assimilating and making sense of the data was an active going back and forth reading and re-reading the transcripts (Charmaz, 2014) one in which I as a researcher returned to the data, two, three, four times and more. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) suggest this active sifting in thematic analysis, uses 'inclusion and exclusion criteria' (p. 809), to decide which aspects are pertinent to the study, and which are not. My role in this process was an active one, engaging with the data and revisiting it. For example, in revisiting the data, I sought to scrutinise the 'actions' of leaders and the practical activity that they saw as important. The personal faith of the headteacher and how they had developed in their faith and how it was evident in their actions in leading was a significant theme across the sample. Thus, meaning was created and thematic elements were defined and became more specific in the coding process.

3.3 Stage three - documentary analysis of church school inspection reports in England

Stage three of this study was the analysis of documentary evidence of church school inspection reports in England. This documentary analysis was chosen as it was a useful way to consider aspects of leadership behaviour without visiting a range of schools in England – which would have been beyond the time limitations of this doctoral study. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the research was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and as such some research decisions were pandemic related. In the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary to exploit desk-based research opportunities and the inspection reports provided a fascinating insight and overview of a range of church schools.

The documents scrutinised were church school, Section 48 inspection reports of secondary schools in England. The Section 48 inspection reports of forty schools were examined, twenty Church of England secondary schools and twenty Catholic secondary schools. These provided some insight into leadership practice in both the Catholic and Church of England school settings. The reports provided both an inspection judgment and a written report, based on observations of what the inspector had seen and experienced during an inspection. The language of the reports reflected the language of the inspection frameworks. The observations captured by the inspectorate in these reports highlight the school leadership among other inspected aspects of school life. Details of this are discussed further in Chapter seven. The leadership behaviour identified is worthy of being recognised and offers a small insight to leadership practice in a sample of schools in England.

There is considerable documentary evidence in the U.K., which offers a critical view of those in education. McCulloch (2004) identifies that negative press associated with their role, which over time resulted in the 'demonology of teachers and teaching,' (p.90). Concerning my study, I think that the whole notion of positive documentary evidence and the story that tells is an important one for headteachers of church schools in England. The inspection reports chosen for this research were identified as 'Good', 'Excellent' or 'Outstanding', to reflect best practices rather than the opposite. I wanted to capture examples of what leaders of church schools in England were doing well, rather than find examples of leadership that were considered poor. The schools and academies covered a wide geographical area from Cumbria to Kent and were located in urban and rural communities. The reports were written between January 2011 – January 2019. The schools were led by both male and female headteachers and inspected by male and female inspectors.

The schools chosen were a sample and not intended to be representative of all church schools. Schools that formed the basis of this documentary research are anonymous. However, each of the Section 48 inspection documents is available in the public domain. Each school in the sample has been anonymised and instead has been given a code number, followed by the year of inspection. For example – S30, 2019. I made the decision to keep the name of the school and the specific judgement of the school anonymous as I wanted the focus to be on the language and description of the leadership in the inspection report. McCulloch (2004) puts forward the idea that ‘Documents are often neglected and taken for granted, estranged and alienated even in their familiarity, propinquity and abundance’ (p.131). This is important as all too often the content of such reports can be dismissed and in the case of inspection reports, the inspection judgement grade has taken precedence. The inspection reports were chosen because they offer examples of leadership practice from across the Catholic schools and Church of England school sectors. They offer a documentary summary that measures and accounts for the quality of the leadership within a school. This documentary research was helpful because it informed my understanding and provided evidence of church school leadership in England.

3.3.1 Thematic process and analysis

The stage three documentary research began by focusing on the inspectorates' appraisal of leadership within those schools. I used NVivo software and imported the inspection reports to code the language of the reports, identifying the themes of leadership practice described by inspectors. The leadership practices which came to light, distinguished school leaders that were considered by the inspectorate to be ‘strong’ and ‘excellent’. In coding, I accepted

that the inspectorate's description of the leadership was a justification for their judgement. I used my first and third research questions to guide my thinking and coding. The first being, 'How do headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith?'. The third research question 'How does the evidence from these examples inform the debate on the future of leadership policy and practice?' also guided my coding. (See Figure 3). I coded the reports and identified examples of practice referenced in the reports. In the coding process, I reviewed the language of the inspection reports associated with headteacher's actions, attitude and behaviour. The initial coding began by looking at the inspectorates' view of leadership within those schools and coding language associated with 'effective' leadership used by inspectors. This stage of the coding focused on words associated with effective leadership in church schools. This included language associated with impactful leadership such as 'strong', 'outstanding', 'excellent'.

I created codes within which there were further sub-codes that developed from the data that captured the details of leadership practice. For example, in coding a headteacher's actions prayer was identified as a theme across many reports. Prayer is an example of an action referred to and explained in many Catholic and Church of England reports (see Chapter seven). Prayer as a code was too broad and did not capture the breadth of action associated with prayer. Sometimes the prayer action of the headteacher was private or personal to their own faith life, sometimes it was with a small group of people such as the senior leadership team, and sometimes it was praying with the staff body. For each prayer action, I assigned a separate code. In the following round of the coding process, I started to group codes together. Prayer is an example of a code group, within which there were a

number of codes associated with prayer. Even at this stage of the coding process, I noticed more specific details of leadership practice, based on which I continued to add further codes or assign codes to a code group. Code groups often combined and became a theme. An example of this is in Appendix 4. Importantly I was not trying to ascertain how prevalent certain practices were for leaders, but attempting to capture the breadth of the leadership practice as described in the inspection reports. From these reports, themes developed which, in turn, provided me with the scope to explore a 'thematic description' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.83) of practice evident across the reports. While I arguably did not code every issue relating to leadership, but instead, my coding focused on practical aspects of leading to capture 'a sense of the predominant or important themes' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.83) across the reports. In the coding process I was very much guided by my research questions.

The inspection reports, at times used statement phrases, for example, describing the behaviour of the headteachers as adopting a 'servant leader' approach. In coding, I looked at the justification of those statements to understand the practices attributed to that style of leading. My coding of the reports scrutinised the described practice and the explanation of the impact of that practice in schools. Often the headteacher's actions were singled out. However, in some reports this differed and the headteacher was described as part of the leadership team as a collective whole rather than directly as the headteacher. In coding the details of each inspection report, this process determined the themes. Thematic ideas and patterns of leadership were evident across the inspection reports that highlighted similarities of leading Catholic and Church of England schools. These themes (also see

Chapter seven) include embodying and modelling the school values, the vocation and moral purpose of the headteacher, prioritising relationships, enabling others, compassionate leadership and prayer.

I coded each inspection report using NVivo until I reached a saturation point meaning until ideas were being repeated and no new codes developed from the data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). This was an iterative process with thematic patterns developing through reading, re-reading and coding. I remained open to the different language used to describe the leadership. The data from the different inspection reports for Catholic schools and the Church of England schools identified slightly different themes. In coding, I accepted that the language used to describe actions differed. Words associated with leadership in Catholic schools often referred to the 'Catholic life' and the impact on the 'Catholic life' of the school. Of the twenty Catholic school inspection reports scrutinised, there were 133 references to leadership influencing the 'Catholic life' of the school and the impact of the 'Catholic life' of the school. My research then looked at the justification of those statements within the same inspection report. Often this language, as would be expected, was aligned with the language of the inspection framework, but at times inspectors noted details about aspects of the strength of the leadership within their reports. One example of this is the idea of the impact of school leadership resulting in 'flourishing'. This was used 4 times in twenty Catholic school inspection reports, yet mentioned 28 times in Church of England inspection reports, as it forms part of the SIAMS inspection rubric. In coding this, I looked at the data to identify what leadership behaviour or action was associated with or justified

with the word flourishing. Details of leadership behaviour and its breadth and complexity emerged as a coherent picture of what successful leadership looks like in these schools.

The inspection reports captured details of aspects of leadership that would have merited further commentary by the inspector, but this was not always provided. Some Catholic school reports identified the idea of 'Catholicity' which was not something I had set out to look for, yet it was an emergent feature in the Catholic school inspection reports, as school leaders were identified as promoting the 'Catholicity' of the school through different leadership practices. Details of leadership behaviour and its breadth and complexity emerged as a coherent picture of what successful leadership looks like in these schools.

3.3.2 Challenges and limitations

Documentary evidence cannot truly be relied upon to tell the whole story regarding the leadership style and approaches within a school. Rather, findings are aligned to the inspection criteria and often then, substantiating that judgement. The headteacher's performance is described by an inspector and this is limiting; leadership is only viewed through the lens of the inspection criteria, and through the understanding and viewpoint of the inspector themselves. The language used to describe and comment on the leadership is the language of inspection criteria. Thus, an inspection report sums up, in brief, the leadership of the school in response to the framework set by the inspecting body; it does not always fully explore leadership approaches and leadership presence within the school environment. It was the expectation in the documentary analysis that the inspectors were

able to recognise excellence in church school leadership and that the reports captured some of the breadth of the practice of the headteacher. A further limitation of this aspect of the research is that it does not consider the headteacher's point of view. Additionally, there are clearly layers of modifying and standardising an inspection report to provide a uniformity. What inspectors see and witness in the time when they are visiting the school is a construct, a performance in which the headteacher performs (James, 2018) and responds to what they believe is expected. This idea is further discussed in Chapter seven.

The limitations of using documentary research in this way is that it does not explore the role of the inspector - or indeed what inspectors think is good practice. The language of inspection reports is a modified language, a language shaped by the rubric of Section 48 inspection frameworks. The moderating and standardising of inspection reports further allow for language adaptations and seeks to build consistency and cohesion throughout the reporting. There are limitations to these findings and caution is needed in how we read and value them.

Inspection reports reflect a church school leadership culture that is broad and complex. The public persona of the school leader is recognised in these reports and proves a useful insight into knowing aspects of practice and that should not be ignored (McCulloch, 2004). Inspection reports provide an interesting insight as to what successful leadership of church school is like in action; practically, what leaders are currently doing, not what they should aspire to do, or theoretically what leadership might look like. I was most interested in the specific details of leadership behaviour, not generic statements that the leadership uphold

the Catholic ethos or had strong links with the diocese. These things are of course relevant to leadership, but what I sought to uncover was the individual and personal attributes of leading that the inspection reports captured.

While the documentary research (stage three of this study) was useful, it used a one-dimensional method of sifting data, of which there are significant limitations, including that of bias (Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 212). The value of the documentary analysis was that it confirmed findings from the ethnographic research- aspects of leadership behaviour was found to align with leadership practices of colleagues overseas.

3.4 Conclusion

The methods used in this research study were layered with varied interpretative elements of education and leadership. My own experiences of leadership could not be wholly set aside. My experience as a leader and the qualitative ways of gathering evidence were subjective: conversations, informal discussions and observations. I asked participants about their own behaviour and asked them to share thoughts on their attitudes about their own practice, and to reflect on this practice. The responses of the participants assumed that my experience and background of working in East Africa meant that I would understand the complexity of working in a Christian international school. These experiences were not representative of Christian international schools as a whole, but were based on experiential accounts of leaders reflecting on their personal experiences.

What makes this research approach valid as a small-scale study is that it offers insights of headteachers whose voices have previously been unheard. Additionally, it offers a unique comparison of headteachers' perceptions of leadership, alongside that of the church school inspectorate. It did not set out to make conclusions about Christian leadership *per se*. Instead, it endeavoured to focus on a small sample of leadership practice overseas, and compare this practice to the current leadership practice in church schools in England. This aspect of the research was viewed through the lens of the inspectorate, but also through my lens of having worked in church school leadership in England and as principal of an international school. Hall and Hall (1996), state 'The personal characteristics and perspectives of the researcher are themselves regarded as part of the research' (p.51). This indeed was true for this research, from which I cannot detach myself. The research was influenced by my own thinking and experiences and by my concern for this area of education.

In terms of research evidence, more weight was placed on the first two stages - stage one, the interviews with nine headteachers and stage two, the ethnographic study. Stage two included interviews, observations of leaders and teacher focus groups. These elements were designed to describe the action and interactions of the leadership as a means of triangulating data. Stages one and two provide the basis of this study, an in-depth examination of leadership in Christian international schools. The focus of the research was their leadership situated alongside current practice in church schools in England. The stage three part of the research therefore provided a context, so that findings from the Global South could be linked with current practice in schools in England.

The leadership of schools is complicated and multifaceted. This research captures leadership aspirations and regrets. Headteachers tell of disappointing stakeholders and of not fulfilling or meeting expectations of what those around them wanted or expected. Leaders' perceptions of their leadership are not necessarily truth. Rather, it is leaders' own recollections and thoughts about their practice and the intended impact of that practice, that was of value in this research. The next chapter (the first of four findings' Chapters) examines headteachers' philosophy for Christian education. The chapter details the headteachers' personal faith, sense of calling and mission in leading Christian international schools.

Chapter 4 Leading a Christian international school, headteachers' philosophies for Christian education

The last chapter explained my methodological approach to collecting data. It indicated my rationale and my own positionality in the research. It described my methodology and justification for the research approach. The chapter detailed how multimethods were used as part of a qualitative research design. These methods formed different stages in the research process, yet interacted with each other and were tailored in such a way as to strengthen the research and provide robust answers to the research questions. All leaders in this study were given pseudonyms. The system of referencing used (see Appendix 3) refers to the headteacher's pseudonym and the interview number, for example, Alison1.

This chapter examines the personal faith and attitudes of nine headteachers in leading their respective Christian international schools. Headteachers talked of a personal Christian faith that underpins and shapes their leadership. They also spoke about their personal philosophies for Christian education. A philosophy for Christian education is not just about faith, it is about the foundational notions of what Christian education should be about; the values, principles and function of Christian education. This chapter looks at the values and beliefs concerning Christian education held by the headteachers in the study and explores how their leadership approach and attitude is underpinned by their thinking.

In this research sample, heads of schools and principals were directly asked about their personal faith and how they felt it impacted their workplace. The semi-structured qualitative interviews also focused on asking the headteachers about their own philosophy for Christian education and how that shapes their leadership. All headteachers mentioned the importance of their own faith in the workplace, their faith background, their relationship with God, and their Christian beliefs and attitudes. Responses ranged from: the importance of prayer, of work being a ministry, of serving others and an opportunity to serve God. All leaders who participated in this study held faith and education in tandem, in their decision-making and praxis. Personal faith, spiritual capital, charisma, mission and the headteachers' own philosophy for Christian education form thematic links across this chapter. While these ideas overlap and merge, they also provide a framework of understanding that is helpful in exploring their leadership practice.

4.1 Personal faith and relationship with God

Headteachers in this research expressed a deep sense of personal faith in which their leadership was rooted. More than that, they viewed their work as a personal response to their faith in the workplace. Their Christian faith was a priority for all of them in the running of their schools. All leaders in this study talked of faith being foundational to their actions. In his research of Catholic headteachers, Friel (2018) identified the importance of personal faith 'headteachers drew upon their personal faith as a sustaining resource' (p.88). They described how faith shaped their leadership practice. They saw that faith underpinned it and strengthened it. This was achieved through an active prayer life, talking and listening to God and being expectant of His guidance and provision in their leading.

Sheila an experienced primary school principal reflected on how her personal faith equipped her as a school leader. She described the value of her faith, which compelled her to be the very best she could be in that role:

I think that you have to have a personal relationship with Jesus and I know that sounds like the basic Sunday school answer, but I think sometimes we forget that basic sense and what I mean, a personal relationship, like a dynamic, healthy, regular time spent with the Lord. Regular time spent in his presence, reading scripture, so that you be can recharged, refreshed so that you can pour into the lives of others.

(Sheila1)

Sheila talked of maintaining a personal relationship with God, through daily prayer time and reading the Bible. She viewed these habits as being fundamental to being equipped to fulfil the demands of the role. She also commented that the impetus to carry out her role as principal was rooted in her faith and that it gave momentum to her role:

I think my faith also compels me to do my absolute best every day and I expect that of my team. So, I know that my work ethic comes from my faith and that the Lord gives me a responsibility and I am accountable to honour Him in what I do. (Sheila1)

Sheila considered that her discipline of prayer and reading scripture fostered for her a deep and active sense of faith and a personal relationship with God. She also articulated that a constancy of this habit is something that increased her compassion for others.

The headteachers in this study did not view their work as a job, but saw their leading as an expression of their faith, a response to God. Headteachers talked about the importance of a

routine of prioritising this personal relationship with God to make them better equipped for their role. They saw how in turn this impacted their work:

The first thing I do is get up very early in the morning, about 4 or 5 o'clock and I pray for our staff and our kids and just read God's word and contemplate. [It's] a really important way to start the day. (Jane1)

This consistent spiritual practice of prayer was not just about a personal faith in God and being convinced of that faith, but a fostering of that faith and then applying it to leadership in the workplace. It was habitual and a routine part of their day. Headteachers all described making time in their day to pray, to present their concerns before God and listen to God. One head of school talked of:

Spending time in prayer because that is just an important thing for figuring out priorities for the day and just for wisdom in making decisions, because lots of decisions are complicated and there are multiple points of view to look at.

(Catherine1)

Catherine an experienced head of school explained that prayer was not just about presenting to God her worries and concerns but also about knowing the will of God in the decisions she faced as a school leader. This involved being quiet and listening to God as part of her prayer time. Another headteacher explained that although he had an assurance of his faith, prayer was vital to equip him in his role to lead:

I must personally be growing and spending time with the Lord in prayer in my own life or I cannot lead others. (Richard1)

There was a clear sense from him and several other leaders that daily time for prayer was an essential part of discerning God, in a preparedness for leading and being able to carry out the demands of the role. Praying regularly, taking time away from others and being alone in prayer was a habit shared by several headteachers. Some headteachers talked of being renewed by it, as it offered them a deeper sense of knowing God and gave them the reassurance of being equipped through prayer to carry out leadership duties.

Prayer was a familiar routine for all of these school leaders, not just out of habit, but out of a natural response to their work. Additionally, they told of a school culture that emboldened their personal faith and made permissible both public prayer and private prayer time. Peter another experienced school director talked of:

Building in time in the day for devotional time and prayer and I would say, I am probably not alone in this. I could and should do more but you can't give what you don't have, as you know and if my faith isn't real and growing and honest then my capacity to lead a Christian organisation is going to be hamstrung from the get-go.
(Peter1)

Peter described trying to be disciplined in prayer and prioritising this area of his life in order to be effective as a school director. He explained how he sought to give prayer precedence and to daily spend time doing that, as a way to develop his relationship with God, and in turn prepare him for the challenges of the role.

4.2 Leading and spiritual capital

The idea of spiritual capital explored by Grace (2002) in his writing about Catholic education, is similarly an important one for these leaders. Spiritual capital is concerned with an understanding, an accumulated framework of thinking and experiences that offer 'a source of empowerment because it provides a transcendent impulse, which can guide judgement and action' (p.236). With this, there is an equipping for leaders 'whose own formation has involved spiritual capital' (p.236). When writing about 'Charismatic Christians', Guest (2007), suggests that 'Their 'spirituality' is shaped by an interactive process, set within a complex network of relationships' (p. 182). He goes on to suggest that 'reciprocal relations' both reinforce collective boundaries and generate fresh interactive networks, both of which provide the context of exchange for emerging forms of 'spiritual capital' (p.189). Leaders in this study draw on spiritual capital in their schools. This capital is a personal spiritual resource framework of language, experiences and behaviour that is shaped by their own faith background. This resource includes faith experiences, prayer and religious habits (Grace, 2002). This spiritual foundation is an intrinsic value system that is a shared value system in their schools. It informs the leadership language of these headteachers, their attitudes, actions and behaviour. It roots them in an understanding of the Christian faith, a language and theology, with which to articulate faith in their school settings.

All headteachers utilised a spiritual capital that emerged from personal faith and offered them agency in the leadership of their school. Their faith, their life and leadership experiences thus far in a Christian habitus, impacted their language and actions in leading (Noghiu, 2020; Verter, 2003; Wilkin, 2014). Spiritual capital provided an understanding of

the choices made by these headteachers as they lead. It offered a language of faith for their actions, as they sought to embody and live out their Christian faith as they led. Shared spiritual capital is important in the leading of a school and in the trajectory of the school itself as a means of establishing an organisational Christian culture (Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010). Such capital offers these headteachers a faith language and experience that is used to articulate their schools' mission and vision. In both of the schools visited, the shared capital was a resource evident across the school. It was unifying and strengthened the Christian identity of the school.

In his research of Catholic headteachers, Friel (2018), suggests that as they lead, headteachers are, 'Drawing on reserves of spiritual capital derived from a Catholic upbringing' (p.87). Correspondingly, headteachers of Christian international schools in this sample expressed how their Christian faith impacted upon the various ways they approached leadership. One superintendent Peter, talked of being aware of such capital and described how he wanted to be in a school with values that matched his own:

I wanted to find a school where I was fully aligned and where there would be a minimal amount of tension between what was most core to me and what was most core to the school. (Peter1)

This is important because, for Peter, like other leaders in this study, there was a sense of wanting to be 'open' and transparent about his spiritual position. Even in his professional capacity of leading the school there was a clear attempt to be open about his faith. Peter talked of seeking out a school that would be supportive of his Christian beliefs:

I want my faith to touch and influence every aspect of my life and that would certainly include my work. So, what does that look like? My faith has brought me my career choice, my career choice was related to my faith. The chance to impact students and to be a part of their spiritual formation as well as intellectual and moral formation. So, I think my choice of career in the first place was related to that. (Peter1)

He then went on to explain his reasoning and thinking:

I want to be walking the faith that I am pursuing in my work, so my faith influences my mission, personally and as a school. It influences the means by which we pursue that mission. Then it provides meaning and significance to even the small things that would ordinarily be just mundane. (Peter1)

Peter's ideas were not unusual among the headteachers interviewed for this study. The idea of leaders' personal faith aligning with the Christian values of the school and subsequently those values framing their role in the school, allowed for a strengthening of leadership. Their personal values and the professional values of the school were not separated out in the workplace, rather, there was an articulation of the joining together of the two. Personal theology for these headteachers was not hidden but expressed in their professional undertaking of leading. This finding resonates with that of Baig (2010) and Middlebrooks and Noghiu (2010), who identified the impact of personal faith on leadership practice and actions. Several headteachers expressed the importance of their own personal faith trajectory, and a continual drawing on those experiences and a developing of related competencies aligned with the Christian faith. One headteacher explained how he had a

theological education and training which provided a foundation for his values, and which saw his personal beliefs and faith alter over time:

I started to explore missions. I started to see how schooling and missions were interrelated and I went to seminary in the midst of my missionary time and really was struck by how many things and beliefs that I held [that] were not Christian.

(Richard1)

Spiritual capital matters, because all of these headteachers approached the role imbued with a theology and accumulated Christian values, beliefs and attitudes that had developed over time. These experiences and their understanding ultimately shaped what they saw as important for their school. Their beliefs impacted their approach to leadership. Their operational way of being in the workplace was underpinned by a personal faith conviction and associated experiences.

In a school context, across the staff, mutual theology allows for means of connection. A shared language of faith and an understanding about Christian practices and beliefs can be utilised in drawing together the staff body and unifying them through this shared knowledge and belief (Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010). The shared understanding of the Christian faith, as a collective spiritual capital, was articulated by these headteachers as important in establishing a Christian school culture and for themselves in being understood. Headteachers talked of the value of having a collective shared capital across the staff body of the school, which shaped and informed daily interactions:

We all have that common faith with lots of various denominations within that, but at the very least we all have that very common background which I do think helps a lot because it gives us more understanding I guess, we are kind of on the same page.

(Alison1)

Alison a middle school principal, who had been in post for one year, saw the Christian faith as unifying for the staff community despite differences in attitudes. This shared understanding was one that Alison viewed as giving impetus to her leading. Although there were still differences in the Christian beliefs held, there was a mutual understanding and thinking. Alison saw that this commonality across staff was a strengthening of the school's organisational Christian values.

Richard an experienced superintendent described his expectation that the Christian faith be discussed in the professional sphere. More than that, it was harnessed to develop and sustain the Christian identity of the school:

I have been regularly, several times I should say a month, at meetings, talking about how to lead from a gospel-centred paradigm of talking about limits, talking about how to you know, how we'll become, how we are getting going in our realisation that we are loved not for what we do but we do because we are loved.

(Richard1)

If we are going say we are going be Christians we need to be talking about the Gospel all the time and diving deeper into that and not just give lip service to what

we do. But in my admin meetings, we are applying that to our personal lives and talking about how that stuff applies personally and in situations. (Richard1)

Spiritual capital for leaders such as Richard, in a school context, provided a framework when interacting with staff. It was an understanding which brought together and harnessed the Christian belief as an understood commonality between them. Additionally, there was a level of expectation that reciprocally, staff would participate in dialogue with a degree of openness about their own Christian values and understanding in the workplace.

Organisational spiritual capital in a Christian school context, can in turn lead to expectations among colleagues about leadership attitudes, behaviour and practice. Despite a shared faith, attitudes can vary concerning how organisational challenges should be addressed. Colleagues' expectations often differed about how to resolve conflict, concerning personnel matters, or issues of grievance and disciplinary issues. One headteacher Patrick who had been in post for three years, talked of how he dealt with frustrations on a personal level, 'I am annoyed with you,' but you just have to forgive. Yes,' (Patrick1). He also went on to explain his approach and thinking towards colleagues in the workplace:

You just have to give them more opportunities. You just have to try them again. Yes, so that you do not base your judgement on what's happened in the past, but you give them another opportunity, more chances, yes. And you don't also take things to heart, yes, you don't take things to heart. (Patrick2)

Despite having a shared faith and framework of thinking, differences still existed along with misunderstandings. Patrick's response was in some ways indicative of an attitude of service

(Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010), as he prioritised the relationship with colleagues above anything they may have done wrong.

Richard talked of how he sought to uphold Christian values such as grace and forgiveness, but also very much believed in holding people to account. Even with a collective spiritual capital among colleagues and mutually understood Christian values, professionally, there needs to be established school frameworks, systems and structures that underpin accountability and provide clear boundaries for staff. He explained:

So organisationally you can't have a grace-based culture, that is the irony I think that people don't often get is you can never have a gospel-centred culture, unless you create a place where the organisation is safe and justice is enforced. So that you have on a personal level the safety to do that, because if it is chaos, it is not going to be accomplished. (Richard1)

Shared spiritual capital was important for Richard, so too were professional boundaries, which were necessary, otherwise there was the possibility that the position of the headteacher was undermined by a school culture that did not offer rigid enough operational guidance to create a safe place to work. Several headteachers told of not making organisational assumptions because of their own values, language and understanding:

I think clear vision is a super important one. It is so important to be clear in what you are pursuing and how to present that and share that, and articulate that with the whole community. (Keith1)

The importance of using the 'right' language to communicate is a significant one in an international school context. Although there is often a shared value system, there is often significant diversity in international schools (with some participating schools welcoming pupils from more than 30 countries). Patrick summed it up stating, 'You have got to be a bit more patient and also you also have to bear in mind the culture' (Patrick2). A headteacher, therefore, could not assume a shared capital across the school community, as this could be alienating to those who did not know it or were unfamiliar with it. The need to communicate clearly is imperative to build an inclusive school culture and, as such, the language and communication of the headteacher should have clarity. Headteachers gave examples of cultural misunderstandings and disagreements. When these occurred, the language of faith, a theological and spiritual language, and experiences provided a framework with which to realign thinking and bring people back to the Christian vision.

For the majority of headteachers in this study, spiritual capital was unifying and allowed for a drawing together of ideas and thinking. It provided a 'Christian' language that leaders utilised to share understanding of practices and routines associated with the Christian faith. The headteachers in this study had the freedom to lead a Christian school that prioritised and valued such spiritual capital. Indeed, it assisted and allowed them to operate in a school environment that was accepting of it in all aspects of school life, and in everyday leadership interactions.

4.3 Charism and leading

Headteachers in this study demonstrated a commitment to lead as a response to God. They talked of a calling and alongside that, a God-given ability to lead. All heads of school in this cohort articulated a belief that their leadership abilities were a divine equipping, and their leadership actions were a personal response to that. They viewed their own ability to carry out the role as an ongoing provision from God. Grace (2016) describes charism is described as:

A special gift of the Holy Spirit given by the grace of God to those individuals who are called to various forms of leadership, with the capacity to inspire others in the mission of salvation. (Grace, 2016, p.42)

Several headteachers talked of a charism, or a gift bestowed upon them by God, to lead their schools. For all headteachers in this study, there was a recognition that there was a sense of calling on their lives and a deep sense of personal faith in responding to that. All talked of a profound sense of personal conviction to do good works:

I've never felt I've had a job, I have always felt that I have a calling that God has entrusted to me, so faith has played a huge part in discerning that. (Bruce1)

I take this as a calling, that this is the calling that the Lord has for my life at this time and so when I come into the office, it is my job but it is also ministry. (Sheila1)

Very grateful how God has been able to equip me and work through me despite me. (Alison1)

All of the headteachers interviewed saw their role as a vocation and a ministry. They articulated it as a sense of calling to undertake the role of headteacher. They described this

sense of calling in differing ways. Some clearly saw it as an anointing on their life and supernatural equipping to fulfil the call of God on their lives. Other leaders felt that they arrived at the job through circumstance and, at times, opportunity, all of which they attributed to being ordained by God. All leaders viewed their role in the school as more than a job:

Having that mentality that we are not just here as a part of, you know a wage-earning job, that is not the primary focus. (Alison1)

I actually was never looking for the job (laughs). I did not see myself as a principal. I saw myself as someone who loved education, loved teaching erm just really passionate about helping students to see God in everything they do. (Jane1)

Participants in this research saw their work as a ministry, to a school community first. They felt called to realise a call on their lives. For all of them, this included relocating to another country to live out what they saw that calling to be, sharing God's love for the world.

The enormity and challenge of that for individuals was significant. While there was prestige in the belief that God had bestowed and equipped them for the purposes of leading the school, in times of trial that 'calling' was possibly one that was burdensome in needing to do it well. Headteachers talked of an earnest desire to carry out the demands of the job, of getting it right:

God is not going to care as much about what I have done, as about was I faithful, did I honour Him? (Richard1)

We should be representing our Heavenly Father well. (Sheila1)

I think it is important to be humble and appreciative and dedicated to whatever I do whether in word or deed do it all to the glory of God. (Jane1)

We are part of something much bigger, so a sense of mission, bringing value to even the small things and then the desire to make sure that the mission and the means have integrity, that they meet. (Peter1)

There was an articulated sense of the challenge and commitment of charism, to respond to God's call, to lead well in accordance with the will He had for their lives and the reality of how testing that was. One headteacher talked about the difficulty to live and lead authentically, to respond to God and to carry out that calling:

A really important piece of Christian school is you can think... fake or whatever, integrity or whatever it is for a while, but eventually and especially within a community like ours, you know, we live next to the people that we work with sometimes. We see them you know, 365 days a year. Well at some point and anyway, you cannot be other than you are, so you may as well not even try. (Peter1)

All leaders in this research cohort talked of Christ as their biblical model, a plumb line for them in their leadership. In turn, they saw themselves as ambassadors for Christ, attempting to live as Christ lived, showing the same grace and compassion that was modelled by Him. For several of these leaders, their work was a personal response to God, but was made complete in collaboration with others, and through making their personal faith as leaders understood as they lived out the mission and vision of the school.

Grace talked of headteachers who recognised 'their responsibility for the renewal and development of the Catholic faith' (2002, p.135). The idea of responsibility is noteworthy. While charisma carried with it for individual leaders a sense of honourable purpose, it also brought with it a responsibility that never ever diminished. In upholding and extending the Christian faith, there was the consideration that it was continuous, unceasing and in part onerous because the 'job' was never finished. The relentless nature of the role and the concept of emotional and spiritual burnout of Christian headteachers is explored later in this chapter.

One school leader talked of the need to be authentic in responding to the calling he felt to lead his school. He explained:

We say to our teachers, 'You can't teach and model what isn't there and so, so commit time to, be engaged in your church, and be engaged in an accountability group and your own personal spiritual life. (Peter1)

An idea expressed by all headteachers in this study, was that their leadership emerged from a belief and relationship with God. They talked of this being something 'alive', organic and not a static belief. One leader explained it as an ongoing maturing, that he saw himself developing in his faith:

If we are not growing in the gospel, if we are not growing educationally, we will not change people. Changed people, change people. You know, growing people, grow people. If you are not growing, you can't grow others and you know our passion for Jesus must do that. (Richard1)

For the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, for God to be at work, and to use these leaders required an active, continued pursuit of faith and relationship with God. Personal growth was a common idea shared by these leaders, that in their leadership, in their calling, they were striving to 'grow' in their faith. For several of these headteachers this was a necessary part of charism, and responding to the Holy Spirit who was alive in them and working through them. Their personal response to that charism was a commitment to their own spiritual development. It was also a personal edification to pursue holiness in their leading, seeking to model Christlike characteristics in leading, because of their obedience to God.

4.4 Mission in leading

The motive of mission in the workplace was also a common theme for these headteachers. All of these leaders saw themselves as 'professionals and witnesses' of their faith (Grace, 2002, p.236). While they were operating in a professional sphere, school was a place in which their personal faith was shared and extended. It was a fulfilment of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 (Holy Bible New International Version, 1984, Matthew 28:19). This missional approach did not just impact the student body, but also included the staff and wider community. These leaders sought to impact all in the school in fulfilment of that mission. This was an active, ongoing process. It was not passive, or ever completed. Every communication and utterance was about the fulfilment of that mission and vision.

For all headteachers in this research, schools were places of mission where the Christian faith was extended and where the gospel is to be shared. Christian international schools are often diverse, with many nationalities represented. Of the nine headteachers in this study,

all were leading schools that were not in their home country. With that physical relocation, was an acute sense of being drawn to their school out of a sense of mission. Several headteachers expressed the view that their work was a mission, to put God back into education. As educators, they saw that education had become increasingly about taking God out of our understanding of the world. As such, several of these headteachers saw their role as trying to correct that:

The point is education for the last 150 years has been intentionally separating faith from learning. (Peter1)

Jane, a junior school principal explained the purpose of her role at the school as, 'helping students to see God in everything they do' (Jane1). Another headteacher in describing his missional purpose in the school, pointed out, 'education is always a tool to glorify God and love others' (Richard1). Richard, along with the other headteachers saw education as not separate from faith but linked to it and imbued with it.

The Christian faith was of paramount importance to these headteachers and they had the freedom to keep Christianity central to the life of the school. All headteachers in this research saw their workplaces (their schools) as places of mission in which faith could be shared. Spirituality was talked about and held as important (Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010). Headteachers explained that their schools were places in which faith in Christ could be discussed openly and shared with an intentionality of reintegrating the Christian faith with pupil learning. One headteacher, Bruce, talked of schools being a 'spiritual greenhouse', in which, educators in the Christian school setting had the opportunity to share their faith. He explained how he understood it:

Let's open up God's word and let God's word work, and let the Holy Spirit into every square centimetre of your classroom of your school. And let you do your part and let God's word and the Holy Spirit do their part. (Bruce1)

Bruce a school director and in post for ten years saw the school as a place of mission and, in part, that was a leadership responsibility for him and a collective responsibility for the school:

You've got to believe really right, that Jesus was not just being figurative when he said let the little children come to me. And so, I think you have got to have a real sense of theology of children and learning... and I think too, there has got to be a deep sense of calling to be an effective school head because there's too many challenges. (Bruce1)

Bruce told how he wanted his school to be a place where the gospel was shared and where all in the community could experience the love of Christ.

Another headteacher explained his idea of developing and extending the mission of the church in the school context. He explained the importance of discipling and enabling, of raising up more Christian leaders, and building a strong body of Christian believers among the teachers:

I do measure my leadership both at [the school] and in the church, by how I am able to raise others up as leaders. (Patrick1)

The professional development of staff then, is more than an equipping of teachers to improve professionally. It is a broader equipping, a missional enabling, for many of these

headteachers. It is not simply a training of, but a belief in a colleague and in their professional and spiritual development. Patrick explained how he as a headteacher and leader understood his role:

When you ask people and say I want you to do this, and I believe that you can do it and I trust you can do it. (Patrick1)

Patrick identified the importance of his words in the mentoring and enabling of others, recognising his ability to encourage staff. He saw this as part of his responsibility to develop others and to speak into their lives to motivate and inspire them. He referred to the model of Christ who shepherded those around him and assumed a pastoral approach to leading. Patrick went on to say:

I don't really see myself as an effective or a good leader until I have around me a team of people that I have brought up, trained and empowered and trust.

(Patrick1)

Significantly, several headteachers told how they approached mentoring others in the staff community as a spiritual, if not prayerful enabling.

Richard also talked of what he saw as his missional responsibility in the development of staff. He talked of needing to operate with discernment, akin to a spiritual sensitivity towards colleagues:

God give me eyes to see people's giftings and how we are actually doing your will and vision and helping to see it. Don't let my arrogance be blind to [it], because as a

leader I need their gifts and what they are bringing to the table. I need my eyes to be open to it and not be blind to it. (Richard1)

The training and development of staff, not only in terms of educational understanding, but also in terms of supporting character growth and spiritual development, was something that several leaders in the study described. As leaders they all articulated their desire to support, nurture and raise up other leaders in the Christian school community. In turn, this is the fulfilment of the Great Commission (Holy Bible New International Version, 1984, Matthew 28:19), to 'make disciples of all nations,' to support and extend the Christian faith. Headteachers spoke of being expectant that God would use them in their role and their work at the school to develop themselves as individuals, and others. Indeed, more than that, some saw it as their responsibility as heads of school, to encourage all in the community to grow in their faith:

So, what I am telling my teachers is, I want you to grow as much as you are asking the students to grow. (Richard1)

Richard saw this development of his team of teachers' faith life as fundamental to his duty as a headteacher, along with supporting professional development. He wanted to encourage teachers in their faith not just for organisational purposes, but for what he saw as their own spiritual benefit too.

Have I provided the means in which everyone can grow as part of the school, that every teacher leaves here better instructionally and deeper down in their faith?...

Who you are becoming is much more important than what we are doing, so if who we are becoming is the more important part, we need to always be learning and growing. (Richard1)

Richard's approach to leading was an expectant one, not only of himself but of others. His objective for staff as individuals was ongoing growth in faith and spiritual development. He went on to explain his attitude and expectations of himself and others:

What I think we need to emphasise as Christian leaders is growth. It is kind of like the growth-mindset, but the growth-mindset does not go far enough because it is not dealing with faith, it is not dealing with a hunger for Jesus. My hunger for Christ should be growing every year, not diminishing and shows in where I put my time and where I put effort. (Richard1)

Richard's attitude as a leader of the school prioritised the educational provision of the school and the quality of teaching and learning. He placed equal emphasis on the spiritual care and development of those in the school community. His attitude was not unusual and this was a common theme expressed by other headteachers. Richard highlighted the importance of supporting the Christian faith of all staff at the school not only because he wanted the school to benefit from this, but also because he saw it as important. He simply wanted to encourage others, mentor, disciple and support them in their faith, because he believed it was the right thing to do. He explained how he believed that God had called him to the position of superintendent and how in that capacity, and because of that calling he should do his best to support those in the community to develop in their faith. However, Richard was also accepting that staff did not always want to develop their faith.

Character development of staff was seen as part of spiritual growth and also highlighted as important for headteachers. This included their own character development, which eight of the nine headteachers interviewed explicitly referred to. Character development was seen as an important part of their growth as a leader and something they felt they should encourage in others. This idea resonates with that of Ford and Wolfe (2020) who advocate for leaders to be self-reflective, and to develop their own character to continually improve and enhance one's self. Character development is about sanctification, a growing in godliness, a constant renewing, learning and developing of oneself. Another headteacher reported:

How I choose to engage or encourage our staff, all of those things come out of my own walk with the Lord and what God is teaching me. (Bruce1)

Alison said she was:

Humbled about what I myself can do, but also very grateful how God has been able to equip me and work through me, despite me. (Alison1)

Developing staff for work beyond the remit of the school was a specific goal for the headteachers in this study. They talked of developing, training and equipping, not just for the sake of the individual themselves, but also for a broader mission, for eternal purposes and the impact that individuals might go on to have:

I have to die to me feeling like I am accomplishing my goals of the day, my checklist, when the goal really is investing in those people. (Keith1)

Who you are becoming is way more important than what you accomplish. (Richard1)

Having more grace or humility changes the way that you...in my opinion, it changes how I lead, whether that is with staff or students or anybody. Seeing them from a perspective of being children of God, it is very different than just seeing them as, you know, warm bodies in a classroom. (Alison1)

Leaders saw staff development as part of their mission, not just in terms of the benefit to the staff body or for the school organisation as a whole, but beyond it. A recurrent concept among several headteachers in this study, was about getting to know staff well. The interest shown by these headteachers in their staff members was not purely to benefit the school from an organisational point of view, but stemmed from an authentic interest of wanting to know staff members as part of the school community. The aim was to understand individuals on the staff body better, to foster positive relations with them, to know their likes, dislikes and hopes. Such leadership demonstrates compassion. It is caring and community-minded. In addition, knowing staff in this way, it offered these headteachers an insight that was advantageous to the school itself, because it allowed headteachers a better understanding of staff members' capacity, family situation and wider needs. This, in turn meant that they were more informed about their staff as individuals and how they might be best suited to a certain role or were equipped to carry out a task. This awareness was achieved through relationships and ultimately provided a benefit to the school community as a whole. Mission within the sphere of the school was evident in the mindset of all headteachers in this study. Mission was also apparent through action, as headteachers talked of demonstrating a Christlike way of coming alongside, offering care, practical support and through various gestures. These practical approaches to lead missionally are explored further in Chapter five.

4.5 Philosophy for Christian education

Participants talked of their own philosophy for Christian education. At times, this was informed by their own experiences, their spiritual capital. Of significance was what these leaders believed education to be ultimately about and how that impacted their leadership of the school. Headteachers in this study were clear about their own philosophy for Christian education and were accomplished in explaining it. The headteachers in this cohort all led schools that were ACSI (Association of Christian School International) accredited and, as such, would have reflected on the ideas and values of Christian education as part of that process (see Literature review 2.2.4). Their thinking was interesting because it highlighted their values and beliefs about Christian education which, in turn, shaped their priorities in terms of how they led their school.

A distinctive language of Christian school leadership was apparent among headteachers. This was evident in their practice of leading and of articulating a Christian ethos and school culture. For many of the headteachers in this study, Christian thinking and theology characterised their language, it permeated exchanges and interactions (see Chapter five which discusses these interactions). In their study of Christian education, Green and Cooling (2009) make the point that there is an absence of a faith language in the Christian education context in England. They go on to state the negative impact of this for headteachers, as it inhibits their ability to adequately and confidently express the Christian faith. Crucially, the headteachers in this sample drew on their own experiences and their thinking, and articulated a language of Christian leadership that framed their practice. These

headteachers had developed a rationale and language concerning Christian education that stemmed from their personal faith, was imbued with their own spiritual capital, articulated a belief in charism and expressed a sense of mission.

Several headteachers talked of their own personal philosophy for Christian education being based on the teachings of Christ, and of Jesus being their model:

I think that our Christian worldview gives us some very good parameters of like, you know life, like how you do life right? If you don't have any sort of benchmark or any sort of guideline, I don't know what you use as measurements but since we have Jesus as our model, we have very clear teachings and directions from him. We have a structure there, so it is not just a vague, "Oh we want you to be good people".

(Alison3)

Alison explained that her understanding of the Christian faith was fundamental to her leading. Her philosophy for Christian education emerged from the example of Christ. Jane talked of her personal principles for Christian education and how these had shaped her approach to leadership:

Live every day in light of eternity, bless others and do hard things. And when I am doing those things with my staff, I can model what I want them to do. (Jane1)

Jane went on to say that:

When I look at everything in light of eternity it changes the way I lead or do everything, because we want the students to see that it is not something we're just tacking on to our curriculum, or we're not just doing kind things, or we're not just

you know having a classroom that's organised. Everything is derived out of how we see our eternal perspective or our worldview. (Jane1)

My top priority is to help staff, erm, see an eternal perspective and teach from an eternal perspective every day. My second priority is to build community and collaboration between staff, not only staff but students and all the faculty. Whether they work in the kitchen, or you know on the grounds, or to have everybody collaborate and be a community together working, and my third priority is to make sure that everybody feels valued from you know my assistant to, the person who cleans the bathroom to the child who is autistic. Everybody to feel valued and loved because of who they are in Christ. (Jane 1)

For Jane, a junior school principal, her ideas about the school experience itself are much more than learning content and the acquisition of skills. Academic achievement was a priority for Jane, but so too was character formation and the development of students. What emerged in her narrative (and that of other headteachers) was a belief that education should be concerned with creating a school culture, with a parallel focus on developing spiritual formation. Keith put forward the idea that:

Education really is about the whole holistic development of every person, right? That God has honoured not only by what our minds are thinking which, by the way, people take that as like in a de-emphasising academics, or subject matter. It is not a de-emphasising of those things; it is just a recognition that there are other things that are also valuable. Right? (Keith1)

Keith a school director, in post for three years explained his rationale that who you are and how you treat others matters. He saw that this should be modelled at every stage by the

headteacher and staff in the school community. This idea was central to how he viewed and valued education. Gestures of kindness and compassion by school leaders are evident in many schools, but for the headteachers interviewed in these Christian international schools, their actions were a result of their convictions and their thinking about Christian education. Their theology shaped the values and culture they were fostering within their schools. Keith talked about how his philosophy for education shaped his school's culture:

I think it really affects a lot of things that it may not always superficially look different, but the heartbeat of a lot of those things are I think, radically different.

(Keith1)

Keith believed that although his motives and intentions as a school leader may appear to be like that of many headteachers in wanting the best for students academically, his conviction was that all aspects of education should be honouring to God. He believed that the school, its processes and curriculum should have a biblical worldview. The premise of his approach to education was rooted in a faith in Christ which influenced and shaped the school's approach to education. Jane gave an account of her philosophy for Christian education:

Christian education gives us an opportunity to be a compassionate professional where we don't have to only look at the data, or only look at the programmes or only look at, you know, certain things. We see the whole picture, not just pieces of it and in this, I think it is important to be humble and appreciative and dedicated to whatever I do, whether in word or deed. Do it all to the glory of God and help students to grow and learn in all these ways. (Jane1)

Having an understanding of the purposes of Christian education is something that Grace (2002) identifies as being absent in U.K. Catholic schools. He identifies a lack of competency in this area:

Many candidates for the headship of Catholic schools in England can now talk confidently about achievements in test scores and examinations, business planning and budgets, marketing and public relations, but are relatively inarticulate about spiritual purposes of Catholic schooling. (Grace, 2002, p.237)

Having a faith language in leading a Christian school was evident with all headteachers of the Christian international schools in this investigation. Headteachers had a thought-through, rehearsed vocabulary and a clear understanding of the role faith plays in their school (Jelfs, 2010).

What Grace (2002) sees as absent in the leadership of Catholic schools is the ability to truly understand and articulate the school's Christian spiritual mission, values and trajectory. This was not the case with the headteachers I interviewed. Christian thinking, teaching and spiritual development of others was of central importance. Headteachers understood this and could express it. Peter explained:

Alignment to the Christian mission, that would be a top priority, that we have a clear idea of where we are going and that everything is focused on that mission. (Peter1)

All headteachers in this research acknowledged the fundamental importance of education and academic achievement in their schools. They were able to discuss academic attainment

and approaches to learning, but central to their leadership was the clarity with which they expressed their philosophy for Christian education. Keith expounded:

If our understanding of the Christian life is for each person to become more and more sanctified as an image bearer of Christ right, for kingdom purposes, for His glory for the ushering in of His kingdom and greater purposes. The ultimate desire then for us, is to prepare them for tertiary education, for university, which for many of them, that is the next step to develop them and so I am not undermining that either right, but the strike zone is actually something much bigger than just college, right? (Keith1)

Several of the headteachers in this thesis told of how Christian values were a central tenet of their school which needed to be stated and restated at every juncture. They talked of the need for clarity in terms of their language when expressing those Christian values.

As school leaders, they acknowledged that a key responsibility for them was to articulate values clearly and to have a language that communicated these values well to all in the community. Several headteachers explained the need to make Christian vision and values clear and to be able to express them well:

The reminder of why what we are doing is important, and that that is understood by the whole community and that is a high priority for me, so if there is ever a chance for me to do that, I seek out chances to do that. (Peter1)

I think clear vision is a super important one, just erm...It is so important to be clear in what you are pursuing and how to present that and share that and articulate that with the whole community. (Keith1)

Leadership in education for these headteachers was permeated by their Christian beliefs. Christian values were incorporated in all aspects of school life: curriculum, teaching and learning, sporting activity and leisure time. In classrooms and corridors, interactions were framed with the understanding of being a Christian school and a practical outworking of what that meant. Comparisons can be drawn between this approach and that highlighted in the *'What if Learning'* model of Cooling et al (2016), in which he poses the question 'What sort of young person do we aspire will emerge from the years spent in the classroom of our school?' (p.35). Cooling highlights the value of not only what is taught but also how it is taught. Similarly, Alison shared a likeminded rationale:

Not that the content isn't important, it is important and does shape the rest of their education and their academic trajectory but I think it is more, a tool or a stepping stone, or it facilitates that bigger picture learning and maturing. Yes, that is more character-driven. (Alison3)

Alison went on to describe her philosophy in leading her school:

Not that I ever want to tell them like, "Oh by the way Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde doesn't really matter, I don't care if you remember it" because I do want them to learn it well while they are in the class. But in twenty years that is not going to be what made any difference. That is not going to be what sticks with them. It is the personal growth or how they learned character, not necessarily facts, you know or particular content. (Alison3)

Alison's reflections about Christian values and experiences in school were shared by other headteachers in this thesis. They all articulated an approach to education that prioritised the exposition of Christian values, equal to or more important than what was taught while having their own philosophy of Christian education. Peter explained how his thinking endeavoured to be sensitive to context, current thinking, expectations and the demands of stakeholders. He told of having to lead a Christian school and the need for sensitivity to the diversity of Christian thinking in an international context, and the differing attitudes and values of others, which often coexist within international schools. Peter talked of being willing to review his own philosophy for Christian education and that of the school, in order to be relevant and inclusive. He explained:

Applying that mission to changing circumstances, we have to be nimble too and it is going to look quite different. Pursuing our mission today, looks very different than pursuing our mission in 1970. Circumstances have changed, culture has changed. (Peter1).

The belief expressed by this headteacher is that Christian thinking and philosophy for education is not static; it shifts and alters, it morphs with time, responding to changes in thinking and to context. As issues arise in the school community, how the school (and therefore the headteacher) responds to them, needs to constantly be reviewed in line with the school's Christian values.

In pursuing his school's Christian values and vision, Keith talked of the importance of knowing and understanding the school's context and operating within that understanding -

‘culture is everything’ (Keith1). As a headteacher, navigating school values concerning Christian education needs to be done with an understanding of local knowledge:

History plays everything, so that there is a cultural phrase that they use here that says ‘We walk into the future backwards’, meaning you know like, everything is defined by the past. And so erm... I have never been in a place that has been so driven by that. So, you have to be really aware of past and history and those things, organisationally and the country, all of those things. (Keith1)

Leaders such as Keith are finding a language of leading and of Christian thinking, while navigating internal school wrangling, policy and practice alongside external pressures, including, ‘covid, and civil unrest you know, a civil war’ (Keith1). He determined to root his philosophy for Christian education firmly in Christian belief and to make it robust enough to transcend cultures and be understood.

The philosophy for Christian education that these headteachers described also prioritised compassion. They talked of offering love and care for those in the school community. This compassion altered and shaped their treatment of people in the school. It was a very pastoral way of leading. It demonstrated a concern for the wellbeing of individuals and in doing so it fostered a sense of trust and established a sense of belonging. Headteachers described how their own Christian philosophy for education was challenged when there were personnel issues in the workplace. Sheila, a school principal, spoke of how she was mindful of her attitude in dealing with challenging situations in the school, knowing that she was modelling what she expected of others:

Be accountable for our behaviour, we are accountable for our actions but we never attack the person, we never attack the students. So how do we do that? We do it in a way where we affirm them as a person and yet address behaviours, in a way that is consistent and fair yet loving. (Sheila1).

Central to this approach was the value placed on the relationship. What was valued was the person and more than that, the spiritual life of colleagues and their flourishing (Cooling et al, 2016; Swaner and Wolfe, 2021). For many headteachers in this study, their thinking about Christian education prioritised relationships with others in the school community. Their approach was designed to improve and develop others, and yet relied on the school's leader to model that.

One of the most interesting things to mention was how this style of leadership impacted on the school community. One of the teacher focus groups talked about the leadership that they experienced in their school and how they perceived it had impacted them. One teacher suggested that:

It makes a big difference to know that the person cares for you and it doesn't matter where you are from. (Teacher focus group AF2)

Teachers described experiencing a leadership of altruism, born out of faith.

I have grown in the way that I treat people because I've seen my leaders exemplify that, so I remember one person back at church who commented how I am so different in the way that I lead people, like "You are so different, you are so

intentional, you are so attentive”, I am like you know what, I didn’t know that this is rubbed off but I know where I am getting it from. (Teacher focus group AF2)

Headteachers interviewed described prioritising a Christian philosophy in their leadership, seeking to model leadership behaviour that reflects that of Christ. This idea of modelling compassion and creating a school culture that puts others first is discussed further in Chapter six.

Keith described how he demonstrated his personal philosophy for Christian education when dealing with challenging personnel matters or student behaviour concerns. He gave details of how he tried to approach conflict in a biblical way:

Not only fixing the behaviour, but trying to address the heart of those people and trying to use a restorative, a modified version of restorative practice, because of this idea of saying “Hey, look when these broken things come, it breaks relationships as well”. So, we want to teach people also how to restore relationships and how to reflect and think about the actions that they had for further growth. It is not just slapping the punishment to try to mute or silence. (Keith1)

In some ways, it seems counter-cultural in a workplace setting to easily forgive and let someone try again, and to extend compassion to them in that regard. However, headteachers also talked of how this leadership approach was underpinned by theological thinking in dealing with challenging personnel matters. One principal described her own thoughts about such issues with staff:

I think also speaking the truth is equally important, not just that you are always very meek you know, having so much grace that there is never any accountability.

(Alison1).

Another school leader described how Christian forgiveness was something that he believed in and practiced, but that within that, systems and structures needed to be in place and that an organisational hierarchy in a Christian school was necessary:

I always tell my new teachers, "I believe in servant leadership and I believe in authority. So, I am here to serve you but if you also don't realise that I am over you, then that can't work". There has to be authority structure, God has instituted authority structures and they are good and they are right. Not that that authority is always good, I will mess up a tonne, but it is better than not having an authority structure. (Richard1)

Alison and Richard's viewpoints highlight the fact that leadership is most effective within a Christian organisational structure when it operates with accountability. Having a clear Christian philosophy for the school and personally as a leader, did not mean the absence of systems and structures. Such frameworks reinforce boundaries, which many of these leaders saw as helping relationships within the organisation to operate with clarity (Greene, 1998; Sullivan, 2006). The distinctly Christian nature of these schools was described by the headteachers as being clear for all stakeholders. The leadership language, in line with that, articulated a clear philosophy for education which showed an understanding of it. In turn, this provided a clarity concerning the Christian identity of the school, as the leadership, language, systems and structures were all underpinned by this Christian philosophy (Cooling et al, 2016; Johnson, McCreery and Castelli, 2000).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by addressing the concept of the personal Christian faith of the nine headteachers interviewed and how faith influenced their professional practice. Personal faith motivated these headteachers and supported much of their thinking. They explained that it shaped their professional conduct, their decision making and leadership behaviour. They described drawing on their faith in everyday interactions in the workplace and articulating their beliefs as part of their role in upholding the Christian values of the school. Expressing one's faith in a professional situation has been considered not always something that is freely done (Bloom, 2023, Buchanan, 2020), but these leaders demonstrated no reticence in their willingness to be explicit in sharing their faith in a work context. Not only that their personal faith was shared, but it was also a motivating factor in the work that the headteachers did.

The headteachers also acknowledged a Holy Spirit-inspired equipping, a charism that enabled them to carry out the demands of the role (Grace, 2012; Grace, 2016; Lydon, 2009). Personal faith was not only shared by these headteachers in a school context, they also shared how they drew on their faith to uphold and sustain them in their work. The key point to emerge from this chapter was not only that a deep sense of Christian faith motivated these heads of schools, but also the freedom and willingness that they had to articulate their faith in the workplace. Headteachers had the freedom to boldly emphasise their faith and gave many examples of how they did this. This, in turn, framed their leadership, language, choices and priorities. Their personal faith equipped them with a theological language, which they utilised in their schools as part of their leadership (Green and Cooling,

2009). They described using a faith language in their interactions with others and to leverage change, provide a unifying mission for the school and to harness its strategic direction (Baker and Miles-Watson, 2008; Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010; Noghiu, 2020). The shared Christian ethos and purpose across a staff body was important in building unity. Shared spiritual capital encouraged unity of understanding and helped build community through the commonality of Christian thinking. The value of this should not be underestimated. This collective purpose provided a framework of understanding across a staff community and lent impetus to headteachers driving the school's vision (Grace, 2002; Grace, 2016; Guest, 2007; Verter, 2003).

All headteachers were able to articulate spiritual confidence; they were compassionate leaders because of their faith. Much of what they did could be masked as kindness, but it was an outworking and an expression of something more than that. They were drawing on spiritual capital, charisma, mission and personal faith. For these headteachers, their role was an implementation of their theology and philosophy about Christian education. For many of these headteachers, their personal philosophy for Christian education was not distinct from the school's Christian vision and values. The values held by these headteachers were evident in what they communicated to stakeholders and also the in practical accomplishment of this style of leadership, and its associated actions. These actions are now explored in the following chapter

Chapter 5 Leading to establish and develop relationships that engender Christian values

Chapter four examined how the personal faith and the philosophy for Christian education of the nine headteachers leading Christian international schools influenced their approach to leadership. The chapter also addressed headteachers' spiritual capital, sense of mission, vocation, and calling to the role. It focused on their belief in charism in their leading, a God-given equipping to lead, through the Holy Spirit. While the last chapter considered headteachers' thinking, this chapter considers the actions of headteachers as they lead – their 'doing'. It addresses how calling and vocation impacted their leadership behaviour in the workplace and in turn the culture of the school. All headteachers in this study have been given a pseudonym. The system of referencing refers to the interview number (see Appendix 3).

Chapter five explores headteachers' attitudes about their leadership actions as they seek to engender positive Christian values across a school. When participants were asked about the most important thing they do in a school day, many cited times spent with staff in the school community. Some of the micro aspects of their leadership behaviour that are pertinent to this question are explored. The relationships these leaders foster with those in their school community are discussed to ascertain a deeper understanding of their leadership presence and how they build school culture. The chapter includes fieldnote observations and perspectives of teacher focus groups. The nature and details of these

observations, conversations, exchanges and interactions with colleagues are central to this chapter. The chapter is divided into sections. Section 5.1 and 5.2 focus on how headteachers prioritised getting to know staff and the importance of talking to establish a relational culture. Section 5.3 addresses the value of how headteachers made time to listen in order to build relationships. Section 5.4 explores the value of how headteachers used words clearly to articulate and sustain the mission of the school. Section 5.5 examines how the nine headteachers used their words to affirm and encourage staff. 5.6 appraises headteachers' actions and gestures while leading a Christian international school to maintain a Christian school culture. Section 5.7 looks at how prayer is used by headteachers in these schools and section 5.8 investigates the idea of eating together to develop and sustain a relational school culture. Section 5.9 addresses actions taken by headteachers in times of challenge. Section 5.10 concentrates on the leadership priorities identified by headteachers in their schools and section 5.11 concludes the chapter.

5.1. Getting to know staff quickly

Making time to have informal conversations and knowing the significant value of such interactions to build a team quickly and effectively is a necessary skill, because of the transient nature of international schools (Benson, 2011). The importance of these exchanges was recognised by all participants. In an international school setting where staff have come together from all around the world, it could be seen as more necessary to engage with staff swiftly and intentionally to build relationships within and across the staff body. For headteachers, this included understanding and respecting cultural differences, staff members' individual needs, as well as their professional requirements. The movement

of teachers in the international school community brings a rich and diverse understanding and a mixture of experiences of education, and what learning looks like. As such, many headteachers in my research stressed the importance of getting to know staff quickly.

The cultural importance of greeting colleagues in different African cultures emerged as an important activity for these headteachers. Keith, a school director, in post for three years said:

People go and see all these men sitting at the coffee shop going, “They are sitting here, in the middle of the day, like aren’t they working? Like?” “These lazy people” and it is a complete misunderstanding of _____ culture, that is the work, that is investment. (Keith1)

This same school leader talked about how he had quickly needed to realise the value of relationships in African culture:

Especially with our _____ brothers and sisters, those community members, government relationships, me dropping by that office and having a coffee means more than me going in to talk business or anything else and that actually paves the way for all the things. (Keith1)

Taking time to greet fellow staff members, enquiring about them, their day, their family and their home is culturally expected and a norm. Relationships are highly valued in African culture (Du Toit, 2005), and to say nothing, or to offer a brief verbal greeting or exchange is considered rude. To pass a colleague in the corridor and not offer a greeting, is in itself a statement of silence that is dismissive, aloof and would appear as if one is uninterested in that colleague. Of the nine headteachers interviewed, five talked explicitly about how in

their leadership they had a cultural awareness and recognised the importance of building relationships.

In a school, working relations are more easily understood when the worth of these smaller interactions is considered. These kinds of exchanges provide a foundation for working, where colleagues feel appreciated through small conversations. Headteachers gave examples of their actions and speech that demonstrated small, often incremental steps: intentional, and on occasion measured verbal gestures that denoted a mood of openness, being interested in colleagues, conveying support and inquiry. Sometimes this included just being present with colleagues to build relationships by showing support, interest, care and engagement. Harnessing and building relationships through such actions is a key aspect of leading in this context (Msila, 2008; Setlhodi, 2019). Keith explained the importance of his own learning in a culture that differed from his own and how he sought to understand and discernment appropriate norms, 'How you gain influence, how you build relationships, what order it goes in' (Keith1). He explained trying to navigate the importance and complexity of relationships in an international community, in a host country that differed from his own.

Additionally, the extent to which personal faith in Christ made an impact on the leadership practice of headteachers meant that for many of these leaders, their leadership was their faith in action, a lived worship to God. It was not a job, but a profound sense of living out and responding to the idea of 'calling' and vocation. They saw themselves as needing to express clearly, live out and embody Christian values. Headteachers all referred to their actions as 'serving' in the school community. These actions were intended to underpin the

Christian values, culture, and model a certain kind of leadership behaviour for the school community.

5.2 Talking to build a connection

Compassion for those in the community was a key theme for these headteachers in living out their faith. All told of a dedication to their position in the school that moved beyond the expectations of the role. One leader talked about how he viewed his approach to leadership, of 'intentionally choosing to live my life in a way that people see Jesus' (Bruce1). All headteachers described their commitment to carry out the role of head of school or principal viewing their work as not being the fulfilment of a job description, or indeed a vocation, but as an act of worship. All leaders in the sample viewed their work and colleagues from an eternal perspective:

How I lead, whether that is with staff or students or anybody, it is about seeing them from a perspective of being children of God. (Alison1)

Clearly, this impacts how leaders think of and value others in their community. Peter, a headteacher of an international school in East Africa, who had been in post as superintendent for more than ten years, accorded with this idea:

It is not just a conversation with a colleague or someone who is on my team, we are part of something much bigger, so a sense of mission, bringing value to even the small things and then the desire to make sure that the mission and the means are...have integrity, that they meet. (Peter1)

Peter explained how he established and built school culture in this way. He told of his actions, attitudes and behaviour in doing that. Peter stated that he approached conversations with staff, recognising the potential value of them. He intended for his conversation with others to be meaningful and to engage in a significant way with the recipient. The merit of these exchanges was more than a polite greeting. Instead, the verbal exchanges for him as a leader were intended to convey a very genuine interest and connection with that member of the school community, thus building up the relationship and an interconnectedness (Msila, 2008).

Peter gave an example of such a conversation as he recounted an exchange that he had had recently:

I am thinking about conversations I had with one of our long-term janitors. His stepson, adopted son, was married on our campus on Saturday. I was able to say, "Hey- I heard it was a beautiful wedding,". I wasn't able to go, my wife was, and "I heard it was a beautiful wedding" and I was able to ask additional questions about that and hear about his stepson and their story. Again, do I have time to get into that all the time with every staff? We have two-hundred staff members and that is not possible. But when there is an opportunity and when I have eyes. So, there is two things on that, one, do I have a desire to ask those questions in the first place? That is important. If I don't have the desire those conversations won't happen, so that is something that I have had to work on, to say you know, "Lord give me a real genuine interest in the people who serve here as people" not just as parts of our machine.

(Peter1)

The nature of this interaction, went beyond a conversational courtesy, a brief greeting of “Hi how are you?”. For this leader, it was a practical living out of his faith and recognition of cultural differences, even in these informal exchanges. It was an intrinsic recognition of someone, a commitment to them and showed an interest in them. Central to his leadership role, Peter explained that he tried to make sure that everyone felt that they belonged and that they were of value. He described a bending to meet people on their level, instead of assuming the role of an authority figure.

Peter saw that although his position as head of school, marked him as superior in terms of an organisational structure, he explained how he sought to foster an approach to leading that was relational and compassionate towards the staff:

It is kind of a professional hat or at least a Christian professional hat in those conversations but the other is and this about the means, at the same time we all want to be valued not just for the role we play in our organisation but for who we are as people. So, to the degree that I am asking questions about people’s lives, “How are they doing?”. (Peter1)

Peter explained how the intention of such conversations was more than an informal chat, it was about a commitment and connection to staff, by building relations with them in this way. Additionally, he explained a desire to model and exhibit Christian values to staff in his interactions with others. Peter went on to comment on the intentionality of this which was central to his leadership priorities:

Have I built in enough time in the day where there is the ability to, say yes to those moments? (Peter1)

He talked about the value of those interactions as part of the nature of his work, choosing to be a leader who was inquisitive and curious:

So, when I do that, it is showing that person that they matter as a person, not just a piece of an organisation. It is encouraging to them. It would be to me, for sure, it is to me, when people take the time to ask about me. I guess do unto others as you'd have them do unto you and try to apply that. (Peter1)

Peter saw this type of interaction as valuable in building a mutually compassionate culture. As leader, he saw his role as modelling and living out a caring Christian school culture. Building workplace relationships through informal interactions and exchanges was a significant priority for all of the participants. One head of school, Keith, provided an explanation of how he understood it. He talked of using a culturally appropriate greeting and showing care and interest to individuals within the community:

“How are you? How are the family? How has the day been?” etc. etc. You know, but it is especially on the _____ side, that is those really important moments.

(Keith1)

Keith believed these to be significant interactions, because in these moments trust in the workplace is built and effective working relations were forged, ‘The initiatives and goals, right, those are secondary here to that relationship’ (Keith1). He went on to explain that:

I spend a lot of time trying to have those natural and smooth relations and connections where a lot of conversations can happen. (Keith1)

He told of achieving this through unplanned exchanges, through being available to have those interactions and by walking the school corridors. Keith explained what he saw as a priority in his leadership in a culture that highly values relationships and where interconnectedness is important. To achieve this included being deliberate in building individual relations with staff members to get to know them and to understand them.

I observed similar interactions while shadowing Bruce, an experienced school director, between him and the caretakers and the cleaning staff. This exchange was useful in understanding his leadership behaviour. Bruce followed a regular early morning routine before the start of school, walking around and greeting staff members and students. He would take a few minutes each day to greet people, asking them about their families and interacting in a friendly, jovial manner. Connecting with staff in this way appeared to be routine and anticipated by these recipients, and the exchanges I witnessed were only ever about greeting and never about work. Bruce expressed a desire to prioritise time with his staff, saying he knew as a leader that he had to have flexibility with his time and a degree of selflessness:

Be okay to pause and have that conversation, and in every interaction your chief job is to be the vision bearer for the school and make sure you bring people back to the vision at every turn. (Bruce1.)

Bruce saw that this could be achieved through informal conversations and interactions. He sought to put himself in communal places to allow for conversations with staff. This was also evident in the fieldwork observations. For Bruce, it was an intentional leadership

decision to make himself available and one that was at times planned for and was scheduled in his diary.

Patrick, a secondary school principal explained how he used humour to engage colleagues. He retold how he achieved this through friendly interactions:

I think it was the Junior kids' sports day, I saw this boy running, speeding. And I said "Who is that child?" And they said "_____'s [a colleague's son]," I said "What? I didn't know her son was capable". As soon as I came back, [to school] I said "I met your boy, he is very athletic! Wow! I would like to race with him! I would like to race with him". (Patrick2)

He commented on how, in the noticing of this event, and later the subsequent recounting of what he saw through an informal conversation with this staff member, he forged a stronger and trusting relationship with this colleague. Patrick went on to explain how he was intentional but sensitive about gradually enquiring about the family:

You do not want to be like an FBI investigator, just go in and talk, "How is your family?" I do it step by step. (Patrick2)

He went on to say how this conversation and subsequent ones happened naturally and how this incremental commitment to this colleague (in his opinion) impacted positively on their working relationship.

Sometimes being accessible to staff to allow these conversations to occur in this way was difficult. This was explained by one leader:

Be okay for your day to be interrupted, be okay for you to pause and have that conversation. (Bruce1)

Not only was availability part of the role, but also combined with that, was the attitude of the school leader, a dedication to staff and to building a positive relational culture. All participants told of how they sought to value individuals in the school community for who they were as individuals regardless of what they contributed to the school as an organisation itself.

5.3 The need to listen

The commitment of being available, also necessitated listening, which was part of engaging in and building of relationship. Alison, a middle school principal, talked about the importance of 'a two-way communication' (Alison1). She explained her approach to leading with an understanding that:

You get the content that you need to get across, but also that come-back from the staff and you can hear from them about how it is going. (Alison1)

Alison felt that listening was vital. She explained it was more than being present, being available or having a conversation. She saw that it was not simply talking to or having an audience with the teaching staff and individuals she was leading, it was also about hearing from them, listening to their concerns and allowing for situations in which informal conversation could allow for feedback. Alison spoke of the need to be available to listen to staff, to have compassion and the value of listening as another way of connecting with her team. She wanted to hear from staff:

I think it is important, that you are not, you don't come across as too busy or too good for them or you know like unavailable because you have better things to do, which is I mean, I am very busy, my time is sometimes a challenge, but I always try to, even if I don't have time then, I do try to consciously say like "I want to hear about this, I just don't have time right now" and to value that, because if people get brushed off that is really undervaluing or demeaning. (Alison2)

Similarly, Jane, a primary school principal, created opportunities to hear from staff. This could not always be achieved through informal corridor conversations, but through establishing times in meetings, to invite feedback and to establish that as a norm, 'Listening to the staff and hearing their perspective' (Jane1). Peter talked of the value of listening to colleagues and how he viewed it:

Asking "How you are doing? What is working? What is not working? Are you frustrated? Are you encouraged? Why?", and then listening. Because generally, they are going to have the answers for themselves, more than I will. But it is just a matter of giving them a chance to express that. (Peter1)

Peter stated that he tried to create an environment whereby those conversations could take place naturally and with a degree of fluidity. He wanted to be present but not intrusive. He recounted how he tried to lead in a way that demonstrated sensitivity to individuals and took time to listen well.

What emerged for all of the headteachers, was an attempt to foster a culture of compassion-based relationships and interconnectedness. The intention of these leaders was

to show their care for staff members. All headteachers attributed this deep level of compassion and care for those they were working alongside, to their Christian faith. It was not only about listening but hearing about challenges and difficulties that might be easy to gloss over or ignore. Keith, explained it as seeking a sincere and relational interaction:

Not just “Hey, how are you?” it is like “How is this really going?”, right? and wanting to, ask about a certain tension point. (Keith1)

All headteachers referenced the leadership practice of inviting conversation, and building trust through compassionate interest and care as helping them to foster and develop positive workplace relations. Keith, Patrick, Bruce, Alison and Peter specifically told of how such conversations enabled them to build relationships quickly through compassionate interactions, and of the value of these conversations to gain trust when working in a multicultural setting. These same leaders also described the value of listening well to staff and seeking to understand their needs in creating a caring culture. The impact of this kind of relational way of leading was further understood during the research visits to schools. At one of the schools visited, staff reported that, ‘the welfare of staff is so important’ (Teacher focus group at AE1a school).

The genuine care for staff was something that was felt and understood by teachers at the school. So too was the unique sense of working in a school where their faith was valued and their shared faith was something that they attributed to the ease of such conversations:

It is nice to be able to be surrounded by people where you know that you share the foundation of faith and so you can erm...there is like a level of trust like what has

been said, that you expect you wouldn't be able to have at other places and then it opens up conversations that you wouldn't naturally have with other co-workers.

(Teacher focus group at AE1a school)

The value of respecting and caring for others in this way is not something new, yet teachers cited it as an important aspect of how they were treated. They reported feeling listened to and supported.

5.4 Using words wisely

In the day-to-day running of the school, headteachers expressed the importance of their language. All headteachers recognised their role in articulating the school values clearly as a way of uniting a school community. Several leaders explained how they had come to understand the value of their words and were careful in what they chose to say, knowing that those words were heard and had an impact. Peter discussed the reason for the importance of language in all his interactions and exchanges in the school community. He suggested that his words should have a professional formality. He also saw that his words were of considerable importance as they provided an opportunity for increased clarity and vision bearing:

I want to have a very clear idea of what I want to say in a public situation, related to the mission and purpose of the school, because of clearly articulating as a leader the school values. Also, as much as those public front-of-house duties call for a certain kind of language and communication. That hat is still on when I'm having a personal private conversation where I am thinking about how can I encourage them [staff] in

living out the mission of the school, showing them the value of what they do for the mission for the school and for what the impact is having on not just the students but the staff. (Peter1)

He explained that every conversation and interaction, every discussion and greeting was rooted in a desire to express and live out the Christian values of the school. At times, these values were explicitly stated. Peter saw that every utterance should uphold the values of the school, the informal conversations and the formal ones. Peter also rooted his reasons for this as being driven by personal faith in God:

Every chance that I have I want it to be about our Christian educational mission and it may be that it is related to my personal growth as a believer as well, but I want to be intentional. So, if I am giving a fifteen-minute devotional on Tuesday morning, I am going to spend you know a couple of hours to make sure that it is not a wasted time because I don't get that much time in front of everyone and I want to make the most of it. (Peter1)

For Peter as head of school, every communication at every level, whether that was with co-workers, students, parents or other stakeholders needed to be clearly articulated to communicate effectively the overall mission and vision of the school:

I used to just kind of say "Right I've got this meeting" I'd jot down a couple of ideas on the back of an envelope before I go into the meeting and have a couple of, you know, thoughts to share. I don't do that anymore unless it is genuinely a spontaneous meeting. I don't do any off-the-cuff remarks anymore. (Peter1)

The importance of language and the need for a degree of professional formality was explained by Peter. He saw that during his time at the school he had become more adept not only at communicating, but being an ambassador of those values:

If it is kind of flippant or shallow or unprofessional, these are opportunities that can't be wasted for a school leader I think so this is something that I am doing a lot better than I did when I started. (Peter1)

Peter expressed the intention that as a headteacher every utterance was considered by a wide audience and that these cannot be wasted words. As words were used to build relationships, they were also used to articulate the vision of the school. Peter explained that it was important that the words chosen were in some way rehearsed and practiced and that they set a clear direction for the school community. He suggested that his words were about keeping staff heading in the right direction, 'the gatekeeper of our vision' (Peter1). In this regard, Peter had developed a theological and philosophical understanding of the school's vision and values, and his role in that. Peter utilised and developed his spiritual capital (Grace, 2002). As a headteacher, Peter rehearsed and refined his theological language and understanding in clearly expressing the Christian mission and vision of the school. He believed this helped to develop a shared vision and to strengthen the school's Christian mission and organisational culture (Baker and Miles-Watson, 2008; Middlebrooks and Noghiu,2010).

5.5 Using words to trust and equip

All of the headteachers explained the differing ways that they sought opportunities to edify and encourage staff members in their schools. Some headteachers explained how they were

active in appreciating colleagues, seeking out opportunities to praise them. One head of school, Keith, who was relatively new to his position, (three years) saw that part of his role was to actively engage with colleagues in the workplace, to speak into what he saw happening around the school, and look for examples of what was positive and supportive of the school and the direction that it was going:

When I see people doing things well, I want to encourage it, exhort it. “This is the right way; this is how we are going”. (Keith1)

He also explained how he took opportunities to affirm staff and keep the vision of the school on track.

Praising and encouraging staff, and thanking them for their work was another way that many headteachers stated that they connected with staff. To offer meaningful praise in this way requires that a leader has noticed something that is praiseworthy, which necessitates engagement and understanding of what has been accomplished. Encouraging others builds relationships, and the presence of the school leader, their proximity to staff and availability to support staff in this way makes this possible (Cooling et al, 2016; Drov Dahl and Jones, 2020). Not only does this build a positive school culture established by a leader, but it also cascades, sets a mood of appreciation and a school culture that values others. Peter noted the impact in his school of encouraging staff and building relationships in this way ‘there is just high levels of candour and trust’ (Peter1). It was apparent that trust was achieved through these opportunities.

Headteachers in this study gave examples of how they looked for moments to encourage and garner interest to further equip and move colleagues on in their professional abilities. Bruce said that he sought opportunities to build relationships with staff by encouraging and equipping them. He explained his role as 'casting the vision, coming alongside' (Bruce1).

One teacher focus group was willing to discuss how this had impacted them and that they were never (in their opinion) valued for their extrinsic worth. They discussed the role of an effective leader and gave examples of what they thought their head of school was successful at:

Somebody who sees your strengths and uses your strengths to continue on with your growth and how you can use them in the school, instead of just saying "You are a teacher, that is just your job". (Teacher focus group at AF2)

One experienced junior school principal shared her philosophy:

My hope is that everyone, after having worked on my team, walks away feeling more empowered, better equipped. They've refined a skill and so this is something that is very important for me. (Sheila1)

Sheila's mindset was important because her expectations of staff were not limited to what they could do to aid the school, but something beyond that. She explained that she approached her role with an eternal perspective of doing good deeds out of her response to the calling she felt that she had on her work at the school. Sheila saw that all who worked at the school, or who attended the school should not arrive at the school and then leave the school the same. Her desire was that they would be changed, altered because of having experienced working in a community driven by gospel values.

Moving beyond a professional equipping, leaders wanted to create space to support colleagues and allow them to develop and grow in their faith. Showing Christ-centred compassion in this way builds trust. One of the teacher focus groups talked of leaders in their school:

When a teacher is going through a tough time or people make mistakes, you have leaders who are going to come by and come alongside you in prayer first of all, knowing that you are a person in need, whatever your need is at that time and not just offering a service or a skill. (Teacher focus group at AF2)

Even in teacher appraisals, staff felt valued in that process. One teacher explained that:

Our observations are more about our strengths and how we, erm, yes focusing on that and not necessarily just like what you're not good at. I mean, it is talked about but it is not the focus. It is very well rounded and not just punitive, I guess. (Teacher focus group at AF2 school)

The most important thing for this staff member was that she acknowledged she was valued in the process, and that in the valuing of her, she was made to feel supported in her improvement. One teacher said the way she was respected and appreciated had increased her confidence in her own abilities, meaning that she did not feel uneasy about being given a promotion. When embarking on that next stage of her career, she commented:

It has given me the freedom to know that, people know me here and they know who I am and it is not going to be like "Wow you messed up", and horrible, but there is grace and people are so approachable here and knowing that it is not going to be, "I

told you so” but it is going to be coming alongside and saying “Hey how can we do this better”. (Teacher focus group at AF2)

Richard, a head of school recognised the impact of curating a compassionate school culture:

Creating a climate where people can feel safe, that can happen, so that teachers can feel much more free to forgive a student when they know it is going to be enforced at an organisational level. (Richard1)

Richard also articulated his commitment to staff developing confidence:

Creating a workplace in which staff know that they can make mistakes, but being there to help them through the mistakes, being there to help them through the celebrations as well. (Richard1)

To achieve a school culture in which staff feel that they can make mistakes, leaders must foster an environment of mutual trust, in which staff can get things wrong and know that they won't be harshly treated for those errors.

Sheila talked of how she knew how her presence could be unsettling for colleagues and could make them feel nervous:

Sometimes, the principal being present can be intimidating, so I actually give people time and space to lead and I let them know, “Look, you're going to lead this department meeting and I'm not going to be present because I need you to fully own the meeting and I'm going to be doing something else anyway”. So, it gives them the

space to spread their wings without, you know, maybe feeling they're being observed or critiqued. (Sheila1)

Sheila told of how this created an opportunity to develop staff in their roles, giving them a greater sense of ownership and control in a given situation.

Leaders readily gave examples of developing others when it was not successful. They explained about times when bestowing trust had backfired:

Sometimes there are times when leaders under me have made decisions that I feel, oh my goodness. I am going to have to pick up the pieces on this because that was er... and that was an opportunity for me to say, "You know what, you stepped out, you made a decision, and in that case, you got it wrong. I get it wrong sometimes, let's talk about the process". That is a way to equip in terms of giving a sounding board for. you know, reflection. (Peter1)

Even in difficulty and challenge, leaders described the ways that they had sought to manage problematic conversations.

Patrick explained how he tried to keep the relationships with colleagues as a priority. He saw that if he, as a school leader, treated difficulties with staff in this way, then it established a positive school culture of how to treat others. One teacher at Patrick's school stated:

You can work best, you can be at your best, if the people around you trust you. No-one is an island. We need help, all the time, but if you are not on good terms with the people that you are working with then it is going to be a problem and the whole

system will come down. So that is what I have discovered. Yes, it is better to be in a system that is well-oiled, than being with people and always competing. Actually, it is better to work together, than to compete, yes. (Teacher focus group at AE1b school)

One school principal Alison, suggested that in an international community, with many nationalities forming part of the school community, face-to-face discussions and conversations can often seem to be a better way of working. She explained that for a school leader, this allowed for misunderstandings to be addressed quickly. She found face-to-face discussion to be a better way of working to increase understanding, maintain a personal approach and value the needs of the individual:

We send emails back and forth but I think the most effective I have found is an actual face to face conversation, you know, “We talked about this last week, where are you at with it?”. (Alison2)

This approach to leading for Alison demonstrated her availability as she sought to offer an opportunity to listen and showed her willingness to support the staff member in that moment.

5.6 Actions

When asked about the most important things that the headteachers did in their school day, many gave examples of the tangible things that they saw as being valuable. Leaders gave practical examples of what they were doing to engage with staff on their team, and wider than that with the school community. Typical leadership behaviours were described and

discussed by many participants, such as: having a notable presence, walking corridors, and daily interactions with staff and students (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010). Some of their answers were what we might expect a headteacher to undertake, but often it was their reasons and motivation for their actions that leaders stated that was most interesting.

Notably, these school leaders paid great attention to the small details of leadership behaviour. The smallest of actions and gestures were ones that leaders cited as being valuable. Additionally, the routine of walking around the buildings, calling into classrooms, and often the proximity of the leaders to the day-to-day school action allowed for interactions to be possible. The action of 'being present' to have these exchanges was viewed as important. The availability of the headteacher was another example, their office door always being open. The action of being 'out and about', spending time out of their offices looking for opportunities to encourage and build a team was articulated by several headteachers in the study. Catherine an experienced head of school explained the most important interactions she had in a school day:

When I am out there with kids, "What's happening with the Africa cup of nations? How's [national country] doing?". (Catherine1)

Catherine went on to explain how she sought to engage with those in her community, discussing things of interest to them. She stated, 'It is making a connection with them so they know that they can talk' (Catherine1).

In describing the most important thing she did in a school day, Jane, an experienced Junior school principal, (but currently only in post at her current school for one year) said:

I really didn't have time to do this, but I made it a priority, I am writing a note, I have forty-five people on my staff but I am writing a note to every one of them. (Jane1)

Jane explained how she wanted to acknowledge each member of staff and to give specific recognition for the work that they were doing. She wanted her 'note' to be pertinent to each individual staff member, so that they would see that she cared about the details of their work. Jane also talked about the importance of having the capacity to see what individuals needed. Her comments went beyond meeting the needs of colleagues professionally, but also having compassion to support them in other ways too.

Jane talked of being sensitive to their workload and the burden of teaching. She described how she demonstrated her care, intervening and supporting when she saw a need, 'I'll go and cover their recess duty' (Jane1). She went on to clearly explain her over-arching strategic priorities to help turn the fortunes of the school around, yet in doing so she was able to talk about many examples of small, personal and relational ways in which she led. Often the examples she gave were about seeing a need and, in that moment, adjusting her actions accordingly, and giving freely of her time.

I had a teacher that was really down about something, something happened in her family. So, I went and just and took her muffins at her home and prayed with her. (Jane1)

Jane's actions were an active laying aside of her own priorities to prioritise the needs of a colleague who Jane saw as needing greater support. Jane's leadership behaviour and actions as she described them are characterised by a selfless servant-leader approach, as described by Ford and Wolfe (2020). Jane's actions suggest compassion, kindness and generosity indicative of this style of leading. Such servant leadership characteristics are discussed further in Chapter six.

Patrick told of how staff had commented on his leadership behaviour:

One member of staff new to the school commented "I am very surprised how you go to the dining hall to talk to the kids. You come to the classroom to talk to kids. You actually bow down to their desks and all that. I am surprised that even though you are the principal you still always want to come down to the level of the kids" and I think I take that from Christ. Yes, Christ said "I am amongst you, as one who serves" Yes, I always want to try and model that. (Patrick1)

Staff noted that this leadership style impacted on the wider school culture. They described the leadership being modelled for them and the influence of it cascading throughout the school. One teacher in the focus group in the same school told how Patrick's leadership had impacted her classroom teaching and her attitude towards her students:

My role is to serve you and to see you become the best that God has called you to be. (Teacher focus group AE1b)

This finding supports the research of Cerit (2009) who identified the influence of the servant leadership model when this approach was adopted by school leaders. Cerit noted the wider organisational impact of this style of leading in schools, especially on the teaching staff.

Several leaders in this study demonstrated kindness and generosity through compassionate actions which were recognised by teaching staff during the fieldwork focus group discussions. One teacher recounted a time of grief she had experienced while at the school, and how the headteacher responded with generosity and kindness:

I remember when my dad died and they just went out of their way to just make a way for myself and my kids to travel, you know what I mean? And it is like who does that? Until now, I mean I brag about it, you know at church. It is just I never saw that; I never saw that when I was in England. (Teacher focus group AF2).

The headteacher referred to above, gave the member of staff a number of weeks off work to travel to the funeral and to be with family to grieve, but additionally provided support for her financially to travel during this time. Financial generosity of this kind was noted by leaders as a way to provide for staff. One school leader explained how she (with the support of the school board) made the decision for the school to provide a financial gift to staff as a sign of gratitude:

We were able to give everybody a good cash bonus because somebody donated to the school. We could have used it for something else. There are a hundred things we could have used it for, but we blessed the staff because, you know, for a lot of them

it's been a rough year with all the ups and downs of Covid, and you know. So that was a priority. (Jane1)

This monetary gesture was recognised as being a small, but significant way of showing empathy with staff and their experiences and challenges. It was an acknowledgement of the staff and the financial difficulties that they and their families had faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. This provision, as mentioned in the account, could have been utilised elsewhere in the school but instead, staff were considered to be a priority and their needs were met. This is a recognition of their worth and value to a school community which helps to sustain a school culture of care. This leadership behaviour is in many ways the opposite of what Precey (2015) found in his research of schools in England, which he criticised for being attainment-driven, market-focused and not compassionate. Precey advocated for leadership that is humble, kind and people-centred. In her leadership, Jane provided a model of what Precey sees as important in a leader.

5.7 Prayer

Several leaders talked of bringing the staff body in their school together regularly to pray:

We have weekly prayer times as a staff about half an hour long and various people lead devotions at it and so forth. It is a group prayer time. (Catherine1)

Catherine explained that this was in addition to the senior leadership team praying, and the importance of praying through decisions. Catherine described how she made herself available to pray with others:

I have various people who pass by my office who ask for me to pray for something.

(Catherine1)

Prayer used in this way not only shows care for others, but is a building of community.

Sheila explained her approach to prayer:

It is my job but it is also ministry, and so that means I am walking around and praying for the students. I do especially before the start of the school year and in between the semester breaks, and I'll actually go around and pray over the lockers and just ask the Lord to you know intervene, you know. At the end of the day, we're here for your glory. (Sheila1)

The actions of Sheila in praying in the way she described suggest the spiritual aspect of her role. It is a demonstration of her own faith in her role as primary school principal. It is an outward expression of her personal faith leveraged as part of her professional capacity. This is inconsistent with the findings of Bloom (2023) and Buchanan (2020) writing about the U.K. and Australia, respectively, who both found that expressions of personal faith in the workplace were not readily expressed. However, all headteachers interviewed for my research described how their personal faith was expressed daily in their Christian international schools and gave examples of how it was an assumed and natural part of what they understood the role to be. Moreover, their willingness to be open and share their faith, living out and articulating their personal beliefs was what they all saw as expected of them.

5.8 Eating together

For many of these leaders, food was a way of gathering with the staff community, a means of showing appreciation and gratitude for the work of staff. It allowed for a togetherness, a unity of being with others in the community. Perhaps it may be seen, as a token gesture, that is intended to show a level of thanks, but the interaction afforded in eating together is of note. Of the nine headteachers interviewed, while not specifically asked about food, five participants explained at length about the role that food played in their schools. While conversations were not easy to make time for, neither was eating together, but leaders were clear about being intentional in seeking out moments to eat with staff, to forge a connection:

We had ice-cream and so I brought a tray of little cups of ice-cream into the secondary lounge and just hung out and answered questions. (Bruce2)

Bruce explained how this gesture afforded opportunity for casual conversation. The activity of eating ice-cream together became the focus, with the intention for staff to feel less under the spotlight, in front of the head of school. It allowed for a low- key exchange through Bruce's availability and presence shown in this way. Additionally, one primary school principal mentioned the value of providing food for scheduled meetings, almost as a reward for the work of the teaching staff:

I'll provide a really nice snack so that you know, teachers kind of look forward to coming to their staff meeting, cause they know they're going to have a nice snack. (Sheila1)

Sheila recognised the importance of coming together and showing her thanks for the work of staff by offering food.

Teacher appreciation weeks were also another common feature of international schools. Whereby, parents and students could, if they wish, show appreciation and thanks to the teachers at the school. One headteacher talked of how he used this time to serve a meal of thanks to the staff:

We had Teacher appreciation week, so on Wednesday we like provided a meal, so I delivered the meal to the primary lounge. (Bruce1)

Perhaps it does not seem significant for a school community or staff body to eat together, but for several of these leaders it was clear that food and eating together allowed for further interaction that built relationships. One senior school principal told of how he took time to eat with the cleaning staff, the security and grounds staff:

I intentionally have lunch with them, find out how they are doing, are they happy. Do they have any questions, any concerns. (Patrick1)

During my visit to one school, (AE1b) I observed meal times. Staff in that school were served a meal daily at no cost to themselves. This included all staff in the school: teaching staff, teaching assistants, the support staff, including cleaning and grounds staff. The meal was provided each school day, at significant cost to the school, yet the leadership prioritised food as a way of bringing people together and providing for them. Staff groups ate with each other at the same tables as the students, and often with students. The same school provided food for staff even during the COVID-19 pandemic when the school was closed.

(Providing for staff during the COVID-19 pandemic is further discussed in Chapter six). Such gestures of providing for staff were a way of valuing staff. It offered something that had monetary worth, but during my time visiting the school, it was noticeable that the school day was altered by the lunchtime as staff ate the food that was provided; it was a stopping, and a downing of tools to make time to come together as a community to eat.

5.9 Leading to support others in times of challenge

During my visit to one school AE1b, a staff member at the school had suddenly experienced the death of two close family members. It was during my visit to the school that she returned to work. What was noticeable on her return was how the school chose to support her and her family in their grief. There was an active providing for her, praying with her and a sensitive and compassionate walking alongside her to give necessary support. In the same school, another staff member's brother had been stealing money from within the family. The secondary school principal, Patrick (AE1a), talked of how he prayed with, talked through, cared for and supported that member of staff. He listened to and sought to understand the wider family's needs and experiences.

During a discussion with a teacher focus group (AF2), teachers gave many examples of how the school and specifically, the head of school had made provision for them in various ways:

My husband's uncle who is Australian was diagnosed with cancer and was put in a hospice and we were trying to raise money for him to go and say goodbye. We were about halfway there and [head of school] is like, "Hey if he gets his visa, we will pay the rest" Like who does that? I am sorry, but like what? I am very sad for the day I can't work here. (Teacher focus group at AF2)

The pastoral support of staff in international schools is different, the care and practical meeting of their needs operates in a different way, sometimes emotionally, sometimes spiritually, but also, at times financially.

Other challenges that needed to be sensitively handled by the headteachers in this study included managing conflict in the workplace. Sheila explained her approach to managing disputes among staff in a way that was respectful, and compassionate yet valued the individuals:

How we handle conflicts, we follow the biblical model, how we tell the truth in love...

We follow the biblical model. Just because we are Christian doesn't mean that we don't have hard conversations. But we do it in a way that is honouring, that is restorative, that does not attack a person's character, but addresses concerns and I model that because that is what I want my teachers to do with their students.

(Sheila1)

The actions of some of these leaders in many ways goes beyond what we may expect of headteachers in England. There is an inherent selflessness, a compassion for staff and a desire to lead and serve others in practical and helpful ways. It is achieved through the pursuit of living out Christian values and in doing so it reinforces these values (Sullivan, 2003).

5.10 Leadership priorities and values

For many of these leaders there was a clear articulation of educational priorities that went beyond academic success, exam passes and attainment. Faith and faith values were central to how they led their schools:

People take that as like a de-emphasising academics, or subject matter, it is not a de-emphasising of those things, it is just a recognition that there are other things that are also valuable. (Keith1)

For these leaders, a living out of these 'other things' was their priority. The Christian values of the school were a prime concern and needed to be articulated, lived and breathed by themselves as school leaders. This is how they engaged members of the school community and built a positive, affirming school culture. Many activities were cited as ways by which this was achieved. One headteacher talked of building understanding within the school community to establish a greater sense of empathy within the community:

You know with the cleaning crew, one thing we did this year, they were having trouble with some of the kids, trashing things around campus or not taking care of the bathrooms. So, we did this, you know initiative, where we were 'Be kind to the cleaners and think about their job' and so the kids all got on board and everybody took a day to clean the campus. (Jane1)

Jane explained this event increased empathy within the community, developed respect for others and improved student attitudes to those working in the school community. Importantly, it allowed lower-tier workers in the school to be recognised for their work, 'It helped them to know we cared enough for them and their job too' (Jane1).

In living out the school's Christian culture and values through actions, leaders were emphasising that school values were paramount. Peter talked about dealing with criticism and challenges from within and from outside the school, and how this was made easier by having a clear Christian framework of thinking and a firm sense of values:

Having a clear sense of mission and core values and beliefs, because those things are easy to handle when you know who you are and you know what your purpose is.

(Peter1)

In explaining how leaders established values and a school culture, many returned to their own personal and wider philosophy for Christian education and what they saw as their purpose and priorities in leading. Peter was very clear about his own concerns 'Education for the last 150 years has been intentionally separating faith from learning' (Peter1). A most important consideration for him as the head of school was to make the Christian faith central to his leading and to the student experience in his school. He saw his role to reintegrate faith into the student experience, not just in chapel or as an add-on, but as central to the learning and daily experiences of the school community.

Another head of school talked about the Christian values of the school and how they were a priority for him as a school leader. He felt the Christian values should be reinforced in every aspect of school life. The values were made known through living out of and prioritising them:

How does that show up? Right? By our signage? Is it by actually what we are doing?

If we are putting so much emphasis on objectives and curriculum and seeking to

assess how they are growing in these areas academically with our Cambridge curriculum, then why the heck are we not doing that with holistic understanding of competencies and those things? Why would we expect a kid to be able to have influence, to be a kingdom-impacting person if we aren't really challenging and growing this other side as well? (Keith1)

He went on to describe what he saw as the importance of the school's purpose and role in terms of Christian education:

The ultimate desire then for us is to prepare them for tertiary education, for university, which for many of them that is the next step, to develop them. And so, I am not undermining that either, right but the strike zone is actually something much bigger than just college, right? (Keith1)

Keith saw that Christian education should be about more than attainment and academic success. His philosophy for Christian education was about the academic and spiritual development of the whole child.

Several leaders explained their leadership priorities in a similar way:

If you are not focused on the character that is in the students and what you are only looking at is whether they are memorising facts, that is a wasted opportunity to have a bigger impact or to make a bigger difference in who they are going to be. (Alison3)

Alison, went on to explain her own education, which she viewed as a values-based education:

I don't remember, you know the particular texts. A lot of times we were taught but it is the like character development that you get out of that, that actually matters.
(Alison1)

Her philosophy for education prioritised Christian values that underpinned the school culture: She explained further her thinking, in terms of Christian faith providing a foundation and framework for not only what is taught, but how it is taught:

I think that our Christian worldview gives us some very good parameters of, like you know life, like how do you do life, right? If you don't have any sort of benchmark or any sort of guideline, I don't know what you use as measurements but since we have Jesus as our model, we have very clear teachings and directions from him. (Alison3)

As a headteacher, the emphasis for Alison was on leading to develop the Christian worldview and the character of students through being at the school (Sullivan, 2006). Sheila also adopted a similar philosophy for Christian education. She explained her educational priorities:

I want the students to walk away having experienced our Heavenly Father and knowing who He is. So, you know if they get their times tables and if they understand the Magna Carta and if they know about geometry, that is a big win for us as well, but for me, my heart, my most important desire is that kids walk away knowing that they are loved, that they are loved by their Heavenly Father, that they are loved by their teachers. (Sheila1)

The views of Alison and Sheila were shared by all of the headteachers interviewed for my research. They understood education to be about the development of the whole child and

that faith was central to this. This, in turn, shaped how they viewed their leadership in light of this thinking. As leaders they saw the opportunity to undertake a vocation, a calling to share the Christian faith and live out this commitment to God, in their role as headteacher.

All of these school leaders were able to explain their priorities for their school. Some priorities included plans for school growth, staff development and wider development in communities. But for the majority of these leaders, Christian faith values and mission were central to their leadership priorities. Peter summed it up:

Spiritual formation, moral formation and intellectual formation should be all intertwined in a Christian school in a way that gives life to each of those pieces.
(Peter1)

Several school leaders were clear about their role in the school to achieve this. Keith explained how he understood his role as head of school in achieving this, 'One of the greatest things we can ever do is keep bringing clarity' (Keith1). Keith saw his role as headteacher was to refocus and realign the school community in line with its Christian purpose and vision:

I think that is what keeps drawing people together in the multicultural and the diversity and in the midst of all the other activities of a school, you have to have that to draw everything together or it is all siloed. (Keith1)

For all of the headteachers interviewed there was a clarity to their understanding about the purpose of Christian education and their role in that. They understood what they believed education to be about and could articulate that. They expressed clearly the Christian values

of their school and this was reinforced by their leading, which they described as a living out of their faith. These headteachers provide a lived example of the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership (2017), in which school leaders were encouraged to embody the Christian values of the school. Such values are not an annexed part of school life, but an integrated part of the school experience and the role of the headteacher is central to that.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the actions of headteachers in leading Christian international schools. It detailed the actions of these school leaders in living out their mission and vision in the school. Often these actions were people-centred and fostered positive relations with staff through intentional exchanges and interactions. In sum, the actions of these headteachers were described and observed as sometimes being small gestures for example: a phone call or a conversation, which are not in and of themselves very remarkable. One leader talked of helping serve meals if needed and also gave the example of:

If we have asked the students to stack chairs, I stack chairs with them, something like that. That is very practical. It is just small little thing, but a very practical actionable step. (Alison3)

To those watching it may seem rather insignificant, but it is the cumulation of those small gestures and what they communicate to the school community that conveys important messages:

I think those small actions...If you are kind of aloof and say like “It is not my job”, it can look like you know that those things are beneath you. (Alison3)

What was evident in many of these gestures was a thoughtfulness, a kindness that is a result of the school leader modelling a relational and compassionate way of leading, that is sensitive to the needs of others. It highlights practically how relational leading is practiced (Cerit, 2009; Cooling et al, 2016) and the small actions and gestures that contribute to how it is achieved.

This chapter also additionally highlights the nature of Christian international schools, which often need to consider the whole person, to understand their wider health and financial needs, and support when there is a need. In doing so there is a very practical, demonstrative way of showing kindness that goes beyond meeting professional needs and the needs of the workplace. By seeking to provide a wider stability of housing, healthcare and flights, this not only encourages longevity for service in the school community, it also builds a supportive, caring school culture. All of this considered, the leadership seen went beyond what would generally be expected in a headteacher’s capacity to allow for thriving.

In considering the leadership behaviour of nine headteachers of Christian international schools, this chapter provides an understanding of how these school leaders operate in practice. For all of these leaders, there was a desire to pursue a gospel-centred leadership which prioritised Christian faith for all in the school community. For many headteachers this was achieved by building relationships through conversation and interactions which were a

high priority for these leaders. This finding supports the research of Linton (2015), who identified that teachers in Christian international schools were considered to be invested in those in the school community.

The key points to emerge from this chapter are that, despite the constraints on heads of school and school principals' time, conversation and engagement with the school community, especially through regular and conversation, was a rich and vital way to build the community. This was at times unplanned, but also to some degree, intentional. Headteachers were aware of their own actions in living out the values of the school and this was evident in the selfless ways that they chose to prioritise the needs of others and model biblical values to others in the school community. They attributed their approach and attitude to leading to their Christian values.

Following on from this, Chapter six examines the idea of servant leadership and the leadership of Bruce as he recounted trying to emulate being a servant leader in his school. The next chapter also uncovers the impact on school culture of this leadership approach in Bruce's school.

Chapter 6 Servant Leadership

The last chapter examined the leadership actions of headteachers in Christian international schools. It specifically looked at how school leaders establish, articulate and maintain a Christian school culture through their actions. It focused on specific actions of leaders living out their Christian faith.

This chapter looks at lived servant leadership and focuses mainly on the leadership of Bruce and his experiences leading a Christian international school. Along with the other nine headteachers of Christian international schools in this research, Bruce identified his leadership model as being that of a servant leader. I chose to include this chapter because I wanted to explore in more depth one leader's approach to leading an international school. I chose Bruce because of the detailed way he described his own leadership in the online interview and how he developed his ideas and explained his rationale for leading in a considered way. In the initial online interview, Bruce's explanation and thoughts around his leadership, leading people and his interaction with staff were illuminating. His own philosophy for Christian education was worthy of further discussion as he talked of his school being 'a spiritual greenhouse' (Bruce1). He also stated in the online interview 'I don't think our job is to convert people' (Bruce1) and 'let the holy spirit into every square centimetre of your classroom and school' (Bruce1). His rationale for leading and his experiences afforded him a rich insight which was why I chose to visit his school and carry out further interviews with him.

The interviews with Bruce, the visit to his school and the observations carried out of his leadership brought to the fore some of his cogent thinking about leadership and a convincing testimony of how he employed the servant leadership approach in his school. While shadowing Bruce at his school his reflections on his own leadership were further demonstrated in the leadership behaviour that he enacted. The system of referencing used (see Appendix 3) refers to it being a headteacher's first - Bruce1, second - Bruce2 or third interview – Bruce3.

Examining the servant leadership approach in this way provides an example of how a school leader establishes, articulates and maintains a Christian school culture. Bruce's servant leadership was underpinned by his faith as he sought to uphold Christian values in pursuing this leadership style. His detailed recollections and stories offer an insight into what lived servant leadership as a head of school looks like. This chapter also addresses some of the micro aspects of servant leadership and explores some of the care evident in this style of leading. Additionally, it goes on to recognise with some degree of candour, the difficulties faced by leaders who pursue this model of leadership.

In the online interviews all nine leaders were asked to describe their approach to leading. *Describe your leadership style? How do you seek to lead?* (See Appendix 1). Some heads of school and principals talked specifically of servant leadership and of wanting to pursue that model of leading in a school context. They were also asked about how faith influenced how they lead and about their own philosophy for Christian education. This chapter considers actions of headteachers in striving to be servant leaders and highlights some of the

leadership choices made and their reasoning. This chapter seeks to look beyond the altruism of being a compassionate leader who cares and is kind and works relationally. It examines the behaviour and reasons for the adopted leadership approach. The leadership of Bruce and others in this study, could on the surface, be seen as acts of kindness or of service, a generosity of leading, leading with compassion and care for others. However, for these leaders, their approach, reasoning and rationale is rooted in their faith. All leaders who participated in this research talked of a personal conviction and a deep sense of Christian faith, which has in turn, led to a sense of vocation and calling (Grace, 2012). It is this that has ultimately shaped their leadership. Key findings that emerge in the chapter are the practical approaches of a school leader as they pursue the servant leadership model in an international Christian school context. This chapter highlights how Bruce sought to achieve that on a day-to-day basis and during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The chapter has eight sections. Section 6.1 explains the servant leadership model as a leadership approach adopted by some of the headteachers. Section 6.2 explores the lived experience of Bruce, an experienced head of school. Section 6.3 looks at servant leadership as a school leader leading an international school in Africa. Section 6.4 examines Bruce's servant leadership approach as he mentored and developed staff in his school. Section 6.5 describes and evaluates how Bruce addressed challenges, while still adopting the servant leadership model. Section 6.6 explores Bruce's servant leadership model during the COVID-19 pandemic. Section 6.7 evaluates the servant leadership model and Bruce's wider sense of calling and vocation. Section 6.8 investigates the idea of succession planning. Section 6.9

evaluates the servant leader approach and burnout and section 6.10 offers a summary of Bruce's servant leadership as described in this chapter.

6.1 Pursuing the servant leadership model

The servant leader approach was acknowledged by several leaders in this study as a model they aspired to, or attempted to emulate. Their reasoning was that it is a biblical model and they all viewed Christ as the ultimate servant leader. Therefore, it is one that for some leaders was aspirational, as they strived to be more 'Christ-like' in their leadership. Headteachers described how it was a leadership model that they desired to live out in their schools, but recognised that they could not replicate it without God's help. The servant leader is a biblical model based on Jesus and the life of service to others he led. Jesus gave instruction about leading in Matthew 20:25-28 'Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant' (Matthew 20:26) and 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve' (Matthew 20: 28). The model Christ articulated and modelled was an inversion of leadership whereby a leader exerts their authority. Instead, Christ's model is one in which the leader serves. T

he servant leader as a leadership theory emerged in Greenleaf's seminal essay '*The Servant as Leader*' (1970) and highlights the leadership characteristics that are pertinent to this model. Although not a Christian philosophy (Greenleaf, 2003) explored ten tenets of this approach which are: Listening, Empathy, Healing, Awareness, Persuasion, Conceptualization, Foresight, Stewardship, Commitment to the Growth of People and

Building Community (pp.16-19). Indeed, Bruce and other leaders in the research employed many of these principles. While not all headteachers talked in detail about being servant leaders, they all sought to model their leadership on that of Christ and his teachings.

In their discussion of servant leadership in Catholic schools, Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019) suggest that 'it is deemed to be extremely hard to achieve servant leadership on a regular basis because so many managerial and administrative expectations and responsibilities make the principal feel very unlike a servant' (p. 220). Furthermore, they recognise that the principles of servant leadership are 'based on the actions of Jesus Christ, the son of God, many view it as God's theory and beyond their human capacity to achieve' (p. 220). Instead, Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019) endorse a 'transrelational' leadership model (p. 220). This leadership model values people within the workplace. It prioritises above all, relationships 'the inclusion, dignity, integrity and growth of each person is maintained' (p. 228). They state:

Building collegiality, cooperation and teamwork should not be seen as only part of leadership, but rather, be understood as its very essence. (p. 222)

While not all school leaders identified themselves wholly as servant leaders, several school leaders in this study explained their actions, behaviour and attitudes which resembled that of a 'transrelational' leaders who prioritised relationships above all within the organisation. Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019) suggest that:

The most important responsibility for the school principal is in understanding what Jesus taught about the kingdom of God and then being fully committed to proclaiming, creating and portraying it. (p. 226)

Many headteachers explained that this was their ultimate goal. Keith reflected on this idea:

I have to die to me feeling like I am accomplishing my goals of the day; my checklist.

When the goal really is investing in those people. (Keith1)

Of the nine headteachers interviewed, all talked of choosing the right school, with the right values, that aligned with their own. This idea was a common one as leaders wanted to work in a school that gave them space to articulate and advocate a Christian philosophy for education that supported their own beliefs, and a Christian school culture that would allow them to thrive as leaders. Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019) argue that relationships should be the priority for a school leader. Several of these leaders considered their leadership to be enhanced through their prioritising of relationships and the organisation, as such was propelled forward, as a consequence of this priority. Paramount to this though, was the nature of those relationships and the motive for prioritising them. Bruce told of wanting to model himself on Christ's actions and attitude as a servant leader.

In pursuing the servant leadership model Bruce described drawing strength from God. Grace (2012) talks of 'vocational commitment' in which headteachers are, 'drawing on a spiritual and religious resource which empowered them and gave them a sustained sense of mission, purpose, and hope in their work' (p.8). This concept is an important one because it addresses where leaders in this study (who saw themselves as servant leaders) felt their

help came from. All articulated a sense of feeling equipped to serve others because of their Christian faith.

6.2 Servant leadership: being called to serve

Bruce, the head of a Christian international school with 335 students on roll, has been in post for over nine years. This section explores his motivation to become a headteacher and to model servant leadership as he had experienced it in his early career. He explained how he believed that such experiences had shaped his philosophy for Christian education. During the online interview, when asked *'Who or what has influenced how you lead?'* Bruce was emphatic *'Jesus, as the model of servant leadership'* (Bruce1). Additionally, Bruce recognised that his parents were also influential:

They set such a great example for me of hard work and their servant leadership, so, you know, like rolling up my sleeves and getting to work is not a new concept for me.

(Bruce2)

His parents were immigrants, they worked long hours and sometimes two or three jobs to have enough income (Bruce2). He attributed his work ethic, values and determination to what had been modelled for him as a child. He explained his background and highlighted the careful and intentional choices that he had made in his career because of his Christian faith:

When I came out of high school, I knew that either I would end up on Wall Street, having grown up in New York and, you know, pursue that path of wealth and what not, or if I wanted to do the nice thing, I would teach and coach. (Bruce2)

The idea of sacrificing and surrendering some of his own ambitions, and of choosing to pursue a career of serving was a foundational idea for him. He talked of feeling unsuitable to pursue a career in Christian ministry. When he was a young adult, he attended a Christian camp:

I went with 31 of my friends from New York and _____ if you said okay, everybody put \$100 in on the person you think that God would never use in full-time ministry, all \$3100 would have been on me. (Bruce2)

At each turn, Bruce chose to put his faith in God. After attending the camp, Bruce recollected a clear sense of feeling called to share his faith, but not really knowing how to, or in what capacity. He recalled a sense of feeling willing:

The call was, “How do I share the gospel with the world?” and so I went back to my campus, [at college] like “How do I share the gospel here?”. (Bruce2)

These formative decisions impacted his career choices and next steps, as he took a stance responding to that calling. Bruce’s response was for him a personal sense of calling on his life, that occurred during his time at college, which then subsequently shaped future choices that he made:

Intentionally choosing to live my life in a way that people would see Jesus and so then from there, it was like okay, like I am trained as a teacher, I have got this heart for the gospel to share, so I went to seminary right after. (Bruce1)

Bruce attended seminary to equip him with theological training as a preparation for Christian ministry. He explained that he believed God was ‘opening and closing’ the door at

various stages in his life and with various opportunities, both within the US and outside of it (Bruce2). He talked of how he believed that God had at each turn, led and showed him the next steps in his career. Through prayer, he actively sought what it was he believed God was calling him to. He described how he worked for an international Christian organisation:

They invited me to be part of what was called the senior leadership initiative, where they take twenty-five leaders and invest in them. (Bruce2).

He knew that he was on a leadership trajectory, yet all the time wanting that leadership path to be one of Christian ministry. There were several instances in Bruce's early career when he worked in Christian ministry and for different Christian charities, where he had to prioritise others and put his career on hold for various reasons. He reflected on personal challenges which he saw as having moulded him and that had brought him to have a deep sense of faith. He recalled, how in times of crisis he considered:

“What do I want my heart posture to be?” and I wanted my heart posture to be one of worship and one of surrender. (Bruce2)

It is these experiences that he viewed as being significant to the leader that he is today. They influenced his life, his faith and his family, and informed how he responded to others.

Bruce explained that there were very significant health issues within his family that he had had to give precedence to above any work aspirations or dreams. As a result, at various times this meant having to walk away from positions of employment and opportunities for promotion, or development in a role. He shared one occasion when he had had to halt his work travelling internationally, because of a close family member's health condition:

I am like “Okay guys we are done. I am not getting back on a plane...” like “Let’s find a different leader”. (Bruce2)

He also talked of numerous times in his career when he had walked away from opportunities:

I took this kind of pause, of just not a pause, like a place of surrender. Like surrendering my role, surrendering my titles, surrendering my like... every part of my life. (Bruce2)

As a result of having to give up opportunities to further his career because of family health issues, Bruce was led to an earnest pursuit of a deeper Christian faith. He described achieving this through prayer, reading the Bible and listening to the counsel of others, to seek out what God desired of him at each juncture. He held the jobs he had, organisational titles and his career developments lightly. What seemed most important of all was his faith and his family in all of his experiences in his early career. Although these times were tumultuous, they often forced him to step back, to re-evaluate and to reflect. They also afforded him a clarity of thought about what he saw as important in life (Bruce2).

Bruce told of colleagues and superiors in the workplace who were important and influential to him, both in their support of him and his family’s needs. He gave examples of how those in his early career in the workplace willingly supported him during these difficult times. He talked of the president of the Christian organisation he had worked for:

He would just call me probably once a quarter and I am sure he set it, they scheduled it, he would. It was never an appointment, he would just call me, like “Hey _____

how are you? What do you need? How is _____ doing? How are things going with the kids?" wanting to offer support, finding time to show compassion and give encouragement. "Any help you need?" and he would also say "Hey Bruce, God is not done with you," Yeah. He said "You are going to get to the other side of this, one way or the other right? But I just want you to know God is not done with you,"".

(Bruce2)

Bruce sought to demonstrate the same generosity and kindness that was offered to him during his time of need, as he led the school. He explained how he offered a compassion-first approach when staff were in need. His own experiences and circumstances had impacted Bruce as a leader; he had experienced working for leaders who cared and whose support extended beyond the organisation. Bruce acknowledged the value of these experiences and had worked in organisations where a compassionate culture was the norm. The relational way of leading that Bruce himself encountered as an employee was one of the factors that impacted how he intentionally chose to lead. Bruce told of another colleague, a boss, who mentored him:

He just invested in me, grew me and walked with me during lots of mistakes I made, I would say so much of how I function as a school director goes back to what I learned. (Bruce2)

Bruce told of how he was trained, trusted and given opportunities by a previous boss. He recounted how this leader took time to understand him, to build a relationship with him, to foster positive interactions with him and to develop him. Bruce explained how this manager counselled and supported him:

From teaching me what was expected of my leadership, to how to like steward a whole staff, to then walking with me in my own personal journey of buying an engagement ring, I mean I stood with him at his wedding and he stood with me at mine. (Bruce2)

This supports Buchanan's (2022) research that identifies leaders prioritising others in the organisation, fostering positive relationships with them, not for any other reason than to offer support. This approach is not about gain for the organisation itself, but building a connection and valuing individuals.

Bruce's own experience of influential leaders was not exemplified by their power within an organisation, but often the opposite. It was about coming alongside individuals and supporting them. It was Bruce's own experience as an employee, of a leader listening, phoning and caring enough to know him and develop him, that he said shaped his own approach to leading. What distinguishes this approach is the relational way of leading, of taking time as a leader to appreciate, value and connect with those in the organisation on a human level, not because of what they offer the organisation (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Cooling et al, 2016; Fielding, 2012).

6.3 Servant leadership as a school leader

Bruce applied for his current role as head of school because he saw an alignment with the school's mission and his own Christian values, 'One of the things that drew us here was the vision' (Bruce2). Additionally, in this international context he explained that, 'It is the first

time that I ever felt like I belonged' (Bruce1). He explained that he felt like this for a number of reasons, not least because it was a diverse community - a genuinely international school. Previously he had only really experienced working in white communities.

Once in his role at the school, Bruce explained he was immediately sensitive to the fact that this country was recovering from war and this continued to shape his leadership behaviour. Bruce talked of conversations, meetings and time spent gaining trust in a community that was extremely hurt from war. He saw his role in that as being a small part of a country's rebuilding and healing. He talked of a parent community that had experienced a devastating conflict and how this had had an impact on how he chose to lead. It was important to communicate well with parents, with 'no surprises' (Bruce3). Being clear, transparent and honest was more important than ever in a country that was extremely wary.

Given this context, relationships were essential to get right, while building trust in the community. This was achieved by making time for and prioritising people. Bruce talked of how he sought to be understood. He made time to forge relationships with parents and to listen, to hear from them and their concerns. He explained his approach, 'When they came on to campus, I welcomed them, I spoke to them' (Bruce2). He talked of the school's values and the articulation of those, but not only that, articulating them to key stakeholders, especially parents and taking time to do that well. Bruce stated:

In every interaction, your chief job is to be the vision bearer for the school and make sure you bring people back to the vision at every turn. (Bruce1)

Having a desire to serve the community well was something that Bruce talked about - to be among the community, known by them, and to genuinely know and understand them. He explained how he sought to demonstrate a 'sincere interpersonal engagement' (Branson, Marra and Buchanan, 2019, p. 222). Bruce told of making time daily in the earlier years of his tenure to greet parents of the students at the school, to welcome them with a handshake, or more culturally appropriate custom; a three-kiss greeting (Bruce2). His actions were born out of a sensitivity to the community and an earnest attempt to build culturally appropriate relations with parents and other stakeholders.

Bruce talked of his office and its central position in the school, with many windows, 'right in the centre of campus' (Bruce1). This meant that he was highly visible when staff and students were walking around the school. Being visible and not hidden away was important to him:

I will walk kind of between 8.15am and 8.30am around the secondary campus or around and throughout the primary campus. (Bruce1)

This was something that I saw firsthand during my observation week. Bruce described wanting to be in the community, not just to be seen, but also to allow him to genuinely engage with the community:

Sometimes I'll show up just in the Primary or secondary staff lounge and yes and that is what I mean by literally, physically being present. (Bruce1)

The centrality of his office, his movement around school and the exchanges with staff, formed a key part of the awareness he had of his school and commitment to build a

community with the people in it. He shared a current priority of his, championing girls' football:

I will try and get out there and have my face shown and just be, let them know that I don't just care about the boys' football team, but I care about their team as well.
(Bruce1)

This was something that was also evident during the in-school observations, as Bruce was intentional about attending matches, cheering on and even coaching (boys' basketball) when time allowed. He turned up, engaged with students, staff and parents and then returned to his office. He explained what his toolkit for leadership was comprised of:

Four things I keep in my backpack: my Bible, my journal, my work journal and my computer. I am intentional to bring all four every day. Because one without the other... (Bruce2)

These he saw as necessary to his leading and leadership decision-making each day.

The range of diversity in Christian international schools (Hayden, Thompson and Walker, 2003), brings with it a complexity of assumptions about what Christian education should be. Bruce explained that he had worked to create a compassionate school environment in which all students were welcomed and included regardless of who they were and their faith background. However, Bruce talked about how the challenge of trying to remain inclusive often led to frustrating various stakeholders and their expectations in the school community. Bruce told of addressing recent challenges that had arisen, for example navigating the LGBTQ+ issue and what the school's position should be on this in a diverse

Christian community that represents a cross-spectrum of attitudes. Bruce talked of how his desire was for the school to be firmly Christian and follow the teachings of the Bible, but to be inclusive, open and welcoming to all. Handling this matter with compassion and care was of paramount importance. Similar views were articulated by other heads of schools who were tentatively addressing this issue while leading in countries where homosexuality is illegal. Despite leading a Christian international school Bruce spoke of his opinion that he should not place any faith expectations on students:

I think that our job is not to convert or to convince people of Jesus, like, I think our job is to meet them right where they are with the love of Jesus. (Bruce1)

I think the servant leader approach is of note. Bruce demonstrated an acceptance of others, loving them for who they were and not asking them to change or alter to be part of, or to be accepted into a Christian community.

Bruce described how he addressed the issue of diversity on the school board and diversity across the teaching staff; ensuring that it was no longer predominantly white (Bruce2). Bruce developed the staff profile to be much more representative of national staff and much less so of international staff. His own experiences shaped his approach to this matter:

I have been a minority my whole life and I have especially been a minority in the white evangelical space. (Bruce2)

Bruce's experience resonates with the research of Gardner-McTaggart's who posited that international schools usually have a legacy of 'whiteness' (2021, p.2). They promote Western cultural hegemony that utilises and replicates a Western curriculum which is

offered up as being international: 'Policy makers there reinforce a "covert and systematic" ontology of whiteness and Anglo "Englishness" through a hegemonic understanding of what it is to be international' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021, p.2). Rather than being educational centres of a more global approach to international schooling, they perpetuate a colonialism of 'white' education, (p.2). While this research does not examine the neo-colonial associations and heritage of these specific Christian international schools, it is worth recognising the experiences of Bruce in light of Gardner-McTaggart's research. As a leader, Bruce's attitude and awareness of this issue was evident in his willingness to address it 'I would kind of hit like a glass ceiling because I wasn't white' (Bruce1). Indeed, his own experiences as a minority informed his determination to bring cohesion to the school community, to shape a school that is reflective of the local community, which was in some part a gesture of restoration. Bruce's approach in many ways explicitly disproves Gardner-McTaggart's theory. Bruce has sought to employ a staff profile that is dominated by national staff alongside some international staff. Bruce while acknowledging the problem has through his leadership endeavoured to change it.

6.4 Succession planning

Bruce talked about his identity (of not being white) and of leading a school in Africa (and not being African). Despite this, he described how he felt a sense of belonging in the role, although as mentioned in his own career this had not always been the case (Bruce1). Bruce expressed his own frustrations at the difficulty of suggesting who might be able to replace him when he would eventually leave the school. He told of the school board dismissing his suggestion of employing a 'local' rather than an international appointment from overseas:

The initial response was literally a laugh-off by fellow [country AF2] on the board.

(Bruce1)

Conflict between headteachers and the school board is not unusual in international schools (Benson, 2011). Bruce told of his own frustration with the board at his school. He saw that as a minority, he had fought for his own place as head of school and now wanted the school to appoint a head of school from within the country, rather than appointing someone from overseas. Bruce explained how he advocated for appointing someone locally. His discontent was with national stakeholders (the board and parents at the school) who wanted to appoint a new international head of school, as this was perceived to be 'better' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021; Gibson and Bailey, 2023). It was not the international expatriate community who deemed an overseas hire to be better, but national parents. Bruce expressed his exasperation at this, 'How brainwashed has everybody become' (Bruce1). He saw the many benefits of supporting and promoting national staff and sought to encourage a national hire to be head of school, rather than an Anglo-American appointment. This was not least because of their understanding of the school's context and the likelihood of their longevity in the role (Hayden and Thompson, 2008; Linton, 2015).

6.5 Developing those in the school community

Bruce discussed many features of servant leadership in his leading of a school. Developing others was of central importance to him (Greenleaf, 2003). He saw his role as that of a vision bearer in action:

Casting the vision, coming alongside, and still letting people lead and make mistakes but being there to help them through the mistakes, being there to help them through the celebrations as well. (Bruce1)

He talked of a continual commitment to the training of and developing of staff. This was not an organisational desire for staff to improve to in turn make a better school, but a determination to want to see others succeed. It was more than equipping, more than professional development; it was an ongoing modelling, articulating of values, of expectations and a sharing of 'how to', so that in everything there was an opportunity for development. He reflected that:

You have to be okay with developing a leadership team, developing a board, like learning how to engage with stakeholders and bring them on board. (Bruce1)

While being a head of school who was highly visible and engaged, he also sought to equip others, to develop them. Bruce explained a situation in which a senior member of staff had prematurely shared their own appointment to a leadership position within the school on social media:

I had to do some real time coaching with her and say that there is a process to this, there is a process to how we navigate with our stakeholders. (Bruce1)

While in school AF2 with Bruce, I had the chance to observe his interactions and school behaviour over a school week. I was able to sit in on many meetings he held with groups of staff and individuals. There was a continuous sense of him coaching and nurturing individuals in their roles. One staff member was new to the role of principal in the school and Bruce spent lots of the meeting talking through how to manage a difficult situation. This

included Bruce showing her what language to use. What unfolded in the meeting between Bruce and the member of staff was a mentoring that pre-empted a difficult conversation that she needed to have with a teacher. The interaction was almost like a role play.

Bruce explained how he met regularly with his senior team. During my observation week, he met with at least six of his senior staff individually, with each meeting following a similar format. He opened up conversations, he probed, asked questions, he listened and tried to put his team members at ease. He seemed to be honest and direct and appeared not to be hesitant of having difficult conversations. Exchanges were professional, courteous and supportive and staff appeared to respect him. They listened intently to him appearing to want to hear the advice that he gave.

Bruce described how he talked another senior colleague through his approach to carrying out a staff member's dismissal:

I tried to coach them I tried to show them, and I tried to take that responsibility myself. (Bruce1)

Bruce's self-reflection indicated he was aware all the time that as a leader he was modelling for the staff body leadership practice. He chose to treat others with dignity and articulated that commitment to the leaders he was developing (Bruce2). This was evident during the observations I undertook of Bruce. He managed to adopt a dual role of leading and offering clear direction, and yet at the same time balancing that with mentoring, guiding and

explaining decisions he was making or a conversation that was about to be had. One teacher in Bruce's school commented that:

I appreciate that our leaders model servant leadership and, you know it sets a good piece for the rest of us as staff members, because I think it starts from the top. Once there is a solid foundation then we all have a good role model to follow.

(Teacher focus group AF2)

Another teacher in that group agreed about recognising the attributes of a servant leader in the head of school:

So, when I met Bruce on a Zoom call, it was just amazing to hear from someone who has invested in this place and was here not just for a job. (Teacher focus group AF2)

One member of staff talked about the impact on her and her own development:

I have grown in leadership. I have grown in the way that I treat people because I've seen my leaders exemplify that. (Teacher focus group AF2)

Bruce explained how he had worked to create an environment where staff were able to develop and thrive, establishing and fostering a culture that prioritised relationships (Branson, Marra and Buchanan, 2019). One staff member commented on how she had experienced and now viewed the school culture:

An inclusive nature of valuing each person's role, no matter what level of education they have or what job they are doing, I think a school leader who is able to, erm, publicly value people, I think is pretty excellent. (Teacher focus group AF2)

One teacher attributed her professional growth to the school, she told of the expectations that the school placed on her in terms of her teaching standards:

Not in a way that makes me feel less valued, but in a way that challenges me in a loving environment so I get excited about it. (Teacher focus group AF2)

She explained how this changed her attitude towards her own professional development and that was something that existed across the school:

I want someone to come into my class and tell me what I can do better and that is just, the environment of that feeling, like someone is helping you grow and keeping you accountable in your growth, it is just amazing. (Teacher focus group AF2)

The same teacher told of a school culture that did not blame, or offer unnecessary criticism:

It is not going to be, "I told you so," but it is going to be coming alongside and saying "Hey how can we do this better". (Teacher focus group AF2)

This idea is supported by Buchanan, Branson and Marra's, (2022) research:

Even the challenging task for a leader of taking a stand and having the 'difficult conversation' with a continually underperforming person is likely to take on a far more constructive and purposeful format for a transrelationally motivated leader because the person and others know that the leader is not motivated by self-interest or bias or personal dislike. (p. 311)

The relational culture was modelled by Bruce in the school and is filtered down through the school. A head of school has the responsibility for setting the school culture. Bruce had modelled expectations, coached staff and had developed a culture that was about a

compassionate team. Another teacher said she acknowledged this as being the school's culture:

I know that the feedback will come in a way that will help me grow and then I can work on that and improve on that and it doesn't just help me as an individual but it also helps the students that I am here for. (Teacher focus group AF2).

At the core of this prioritising of people was a care for them as people and their professional development for their own success, achievement and development:

I know that they care about me as a person and not as, (pause) because, a lot of it is like what if I fail, what if I, I am very much that type of person but, like it has given me the freedom to know that, yeah people like know me here and they know who I am and it is not going to be like "Wow you messed up", and horrible, but there is grace. (Teacher focus group AF2)

The culture of care offered by Bruce as head of school appeared to be inextricably linked to staff engagement and satisfaction in the workplace. The kindness and compassion shown were noted as being significant. It was not just working conditions, but a school culture that fostered compassion that prioritised staff, it valued individuals and was considerate of their needs professionally, spiritually and otherwise (Greenleaf, 2003). One teacher talked of this care not being limited to the workplace but a culture of care that extended beyond that:

Real concern for us, literally and as a family and our well-being and being willing to make accommodations to work it out. (Teacher focus group AF2 face)

Such compassion is not born out of a sense of needing to gain from that employee, but to support them to allow them to thrive in the workplace. There was evidence of Ubuntu, an interconnectedness and collegiality that emerged from the observations and interviews in Bruce's school. This culture was established and maintained by Bruce as head of school (Msila, 2008; Setlhodi, 2019).

Relationships and the thriving of those relationships was the focus. This impacted school culture as the school leader sought to honour each member of the organisation through his actions and attitudes. The teacher focus group recognised the value of Bruce's leadership and the impact it had on their lives outside of school and on their families:

I am very sad for the day I can't work here because, erm, I don't think I will encounter somebody like that, like I know that is very rare. (Teacher focus group AF2)

Staff articulated an appreciation of the care they received. They described a school culture where they knew they were supported and provided for not just professionally, but a wider support that was committed to their emotional and spiritual well-being. This support also extended to a material provision and care for the wider family.

6.6 Leading with compassion in times of challenge

Bruce recounted how he had tried to uphold a compassionate servant-leader approach during challenging times with students and with personnel. As a headteacher, dealing with

the challenges and difficulties within the Christian international school context, Bruce was clear about how he viewed his approach:

Grace doesn't mean, like not holding people to account, but as we hold them to account how do we offer them love and care? How do we not condemn them?
(Bruce2)

Other aspects of servant leadership that Greenleaf (2003) mentions include listening and understanding. Patrick in school AE1 adopted a similar stance and explained how he understood it. He stated that:

It's just how Christ led the disciples. Being amongst them, at some point Christ said that "You call me Lord, Lord", it is true, I am 'Lord, Lord' in other words you call me boss, boss. Yes, I am your boss, but He said "I do amongst you as someone who serves", yes so, I do not use this lordship too much. (Patrick3)

Patrick described how in his leadership he referred to Matthew 20:25-28 when Jesus was critical of rulers who exerted their power and control. Patrick explained how he sought to balance the authority he had with a practical supportive leadership in which he tried to serve others in the community. He saw that while he needed to lead, guide and instruct, in leading he also needed to serve and prioritise the needs of those in the school community.

When discussing having to terminate the contract of a member of staff, Bruce explained how he approached the situation and made the decision. He talked of leaning on the systems and structures of the school, for example, policies and procedures and school

committees. This made it easier for him to navigate challenging issues and make the decision to dismiss someone, knowing that the protocol had been followed:

God loves them just as much as he loves me. He/She is a son or daughter of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, just as I am, so how do I want to treat that person when it comes to people issues? (Bruce2)

The attitude of Bruce was one in which he sought to be understood by all parties at every stage, to use frameworks within the school to make the decision objective and therefore easier to follow a set course of action:

We offered to pay for counselling for him and gave him a certificate of completion and I fired him. (Bruce2)

Despite an attempt to follow procedure and cushion the impact of the decision on the school community, Bruce explained the difficulty and challenge of addressing this matter and wanting to be fair in the process of the dismissal, 'I don't know if I did everything right' (Bruce2). Bruce talked of the deeply felt challenge of having had someone as part of a team, part of the community, who he had invested in as a leader and then having had to dismiss them. He talked of trying to be honourable in his work, and trying to respectfully consider all parties involved in the investigation that led to the member of staff having their contract terminated:

I believe I honoured that staff member and his family by not just throwing them out and just being like "Yes, we are done". (Bruce2)

In explaining the situation, there was a clear sense of Bruce's personal faith in his professional conduct. He wanted as a leader to be highly compassionate and show grace and kindness, yet he was willing to dismiss the member of staff who was in breach of school policy. Bruce explained how he tried to be sensitive to, and recognise the wider implications of, ending someone's contract early and the impact on the staff community because of that:

I tried to honour our staff by treating them with respect and keeping them, you know, open and honest about what happened without details. (Bruce2)

Knowing the complexity of this and other similar difficult decisions that he navigated as a school leader, he admitted that:

There are ways that I can get it wrong and I do, but have I honoured those that are impacted through this difficult conversation and situation. (Bruce2)

For Bruce this was how his faith was evident. It was about both honouring God, in his actions as he led and showed servant leadership attributes of compassion for those impacted immediately, and within the wider school community in the decisions he made. As the head of school, he modelled what he expected of others and believed that the Christian values of the school were measured in accordance with his actions (Bruce2).

In dealing with very challenging circumstances, Bruce confronted the difficulty and challenge. To be a servant leader is not about absolute weakness, or kindness and passivity, it is about choosing to take decisive action, yet being mindful and considerate of others. In doing so it is modelling for the staff body, that as a leader difficult decisions need to be made and what those decisions practically look like. Bruce's actions also suggested a

transparency that built trust within the school, even in challenging times. This leadership style exemplified that of a servant leader. Bruce's actions indicated his sensitivity to personnel matters: awareness, empathy and an attempt at healing (Greenleaf, 2003).

6.7 Leading during the COVID-19 pandemic

Bruce's reflections on his own leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic are also relevant to the idea of servant leadership and provide additional insight into his leadership priorities and the school culture. The interviews with Bruce provided a fascinating and surprisingly rare description of the difficulties faced by headteachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. His actions may not have been unique, as many school leaders Christian or not, throughout the world, were faced with similar challenges. However, Bruce's story of that time period is included in this thesis as an example of how a leader, and in particular a Christian international school leader approached those challenges in a time of crisis. Bruce saw his duty of care for all staff: teaching staff, support staff and the student body. He explained some of the decisions and actions he took, sharing that he knew he had the authority to make a difference. These actions attempted to care for and ease the financial burden of the pandemic. Bruce told of an unerring sense of moral purpose; to offer support for all families linked to the school.

Prior to the lockdown, Bruce talked about how he met with other headteachers at neighbouring international schools sharing ideas with them about how to approach the pandemic in their respective schools. He sought to glean ideas, to understand approaches and anticipate obstacles with these leaders, who were leading schools in the same context

as himself. He wanted to plan and to ascertain the 'best way forward' (Bruce3). The foresight and compassion of Bruce during this crisis, suggested a profound sense of care while working under pressure, without which, some of the support staff would not have been able to feed their families. Bruce foresaw the uncertainty of how the pandemic would unfold and endeavoured to provide some assurances. Specifically, he tried to alleviate the needs of staff by providing supplies and financial support. He told of how he made the decision quickly to withdraw cash from banks to physically give to people, as the school was unsure when banks would be open and if staff in the school would have access to cash:

Before the banks closed or limited like, we withdrew what we could and we paid our staff in cash for March and April. (Bruce3)

In anticipating the need, Bruce told how he took decisions to alleviate future problems:

Thinking about who's our vulnerable staff, well there is our service staff, so you know I said "Hey let's buy food and whatever for them". (Bruce3)

Non-teaching staff, cleaners, ground staff, security guards and office staff were given food supplies of rice, maize flour, beans, tea and sugar to ease the burden of access to these things. These packages of supplies were not only for each member of staff, but also for their families:

As COVID was hitting I had our operations guy buy rice, beans, flour, sugar for all of our service staff "Here you go. Let me know when this runs out". (Bruce3)

The care packages provided by the schools were a recurring theme mentioned by other heads of school. They similarly provided food supplies for support staff when schools were closed and movement around local areas was restricted by governments. When restrictions

eased, but schools remained closed, headteachers explained how their schools provided hot meals for staff, which could be collected from school. These actions are important in understanding how a headteacher maintains an ethos that provides a compelling vision for Christian education. The actions taken suggest a caring and compassionate school culture that prioritises the needs of those in the community. Christian international schools faced significant financial uncertainty at this time and some were subject to unpredictable closures. Meeting the educational needs of students was a given, but beyond that headteachers explained the practical ways that they provided for those in the school community.

The COVID-19 pandemic also meant that Bruce needed to provide further support for teachers. Some staff needed to be repatriated, especially those who, with school closed, were either isolated staff members, or vulnerable 'We gave everybody the freedom to get on an aeroplane if they needed' (Bruce3). The priority was to provide care for all, but especially those in the community who might be in need. It was not just about educational provision, but about meeting the needs: financial, medical and otherwise, while keeping the school 'running' and supporting the education of students.

Bruce talked of having to 'release' incoming teachers he had hired because of the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic and of having to anticipate a reduction in student numbers. Bruce recounted a telephone conversation with a teacher he had hired, who he then told that they would no longer be needed for the August of 2020. Their response was:

“That’s fine. I am still coming to [the school], God has called us, if you need me to volunteer for some time, that is what I’ll do, but God has way too much, I know we are supposed to be in [the country]”. (Bruce3)

Seemingly, for school leaders, the constant struggle and burden of work only increased during this time, specifically the complexity of dealing with government to secure entry to the country for incoming staff:

I had to work with members of the Cabinet to get our incoming staff in and they were all very happy and eager to help us, and so there was no Summer, there was no break there was no...There was nothing, it was just constant. Yes, but that is what we did. (Bruce3)

Once school closures were announced by the government, the school organised study supplies for students:

We sent someone to the market and they get like those big rice bags and we put everything that we could in those bags, and then arranged a secondary pick up and primary pickup and, yeah and I think by 8.30 pm that night everybody had what they needed. (Bruce3)

Bruce explained as a leader it was about constantly asking:

What do the students need, what do the staff need, erm what do families need?
(Bruce3)

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to keep schools closed, Bruce recollected that he was quick to make sure that the educational provision was online, while addressing the challenges of that:

We learned what didn't work well. Well, it is not okay to be doing school on a dad's phone and another student to be doing school on a computer, like that is not equitable, right? So, we said great, we are getting computers for everyone in sixth to twelfth grade. (Bruce3)

Even though there was a considerable degree of financial uncertainty, Bruce sought to meet needs that arose in a mindful way. In this time of crisis, he looked to overcome obstacles, rise above challenges and offer care within the community that met individual needs. The uncertainty for him, was in the not knowing how the situation would truly impact the school. He expected the financial toll on the school would be significant, with stakeholders questioning how this would be resolved. Bruce explained how he planned four different budgets based on four different fiscal scenarios (Bruce3). Indeed, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in staff wages being cut:

I voluntarily took the largest pay cut and it helped us keep people and so it was just, we were gonna, we were gonna do whatever we could. (Bruce3)

Bruce's actions as head of school were an individual gesture, an understanding of the collective problem, and a willingness to take action and accept collective responsibility.

The financial provision and generosity of the school, orchestrated by Bruce, extended beyond the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Bruce explained how he asked the school board to demonstrate thanks to staff for their hard work, perseverance and commitment during the pandemic. As such, teaching staff received fifty percent of one month's salary as a bonus. Support staff received one hundred percent of their month's salary, as a thank you

from the school for their hard work (Bruce3). Bruce recounted how this gesture was an important part of appreciating staff. As the head of school, he wanted to do that in a practical, demonstrative way, to be generous, because of all that staff had endured. Bruce described how he wanted to 'personally hand it to each staff and just say thanks' (Bruce3). What is of note is that along with the financial appreciation of the monetary bonus, he sought to meet with each staff member, to offer a personal handshake. He wanted to meet with each staff member and thank them for the work that they had done during the pandemic. He again chose to value and prioritise the relationship in making that gesture, a personable physical action. This acknowledgement sought to value people in the organisation, recognising their individual contributions and sacrifices made during the lockdown. The actions taken by Bruce reflect a servant leadership approach. The leadership attributes he demonstrated are in line with those identified by Greenleaf (2003); specifically, those of empathy, foresight and stewardship.

Leading during the COVID-19 pandemic reveals an important part of how, for Bruce, school relationships were maintained under extreme circumstances. The pandemic led to a crisis for school leaders, yet possibly for some communities it was in part redemptive; everyone was in the same boat and that commonality of experience was also unifying. The pandemic for Bruce, had a significant impact on his leadership in the school community. At each juncture he endeavoured to appraise needs and respond with the resources that were available to him. He was generous, careful, compassionate, practical and pragmatic. Bruce demonstrated empathy for those in his school community and humility in his role, seeing this as one of service and love, born out of his Christian faith. The nature of international

schools, like other fee-paying schools, means they need, in part, to consider the whole person. This alters the leadership remit for heads of Christian international schools. They have a wider concern and responsibility than just the day-to-day education taking place in the school. Health issues and financial needs, are just some of those concerns. By being sensitive to those needs and by responding to them, Bruce's leadership demonstrated a practical kindness, that went beyond meeting the needs of students and teachers' professional needs in the workplace. He endeavoured to meet needs and maintain a unity across the staff to prevent individuals from feeling disconnected.

6.8 Vocation beyond the role of school leader

Along with other school leaders in this study, Bruce had undertaken wider humanitarian and charity work. He had established, developed and was expanding his own international charity. This is important because it reflected his worldview. His work at the school, was a part of a larger commission for him. He articulated a strong sense of vocation:

For me it is what makes this not a career for me, I am not looking for the next head of school role. (Bruce2)

He went on to state:

I am not looking for the next bigger thing, like I am looking to serve, in the continuation of the calling and assignment that God has for me. (Bruce2)

He went on to suggest that he recognised that the school and his role there was a small part of a greater sense of calling 'My call is beyond [the school]' (Bruce2). The relevance of what Bruce was doing in the school and beyond was relevant in understanding his work at the

school. He was living his faith out, choosing to be active and live a life of service and mission, not just limited or confined to the school he led.

Bruce's own experience of leading an international school in a country recovering from the turmoil of war led to him undertaking wider work in establishing a charity. He set up a charity that existed to 'develop schools in countries recovering from war' (Bruce2). Furthermore, it was:

A place where we can develop leaders that want to either help develop or start their own school. (Bruce2)

The work Bruce described was helpful in understanding his calling which he saw as a broader sense of mission, not just to a role at the school. He used the skills that he had garnered (especially in his role as head of school) to develop others. The desire to help and develop others was central to his mission. This was not just within the school he led, or the country or region that he worked, but internationally too. Bruce explained:

We help develop schools by developing school leaders and then by coming alongside leaders that want to have that partnership with us so that they can help their schools grow. (Bruce2)

His attitude to leadership and leading was telling. It was about supporting, transforming and equipping within the sphere of the school context and beyond it. This was not for his own benefit or that of any organisation, but a response to God in living out his faith.

6.9 School leadership and burnout

Burnout and feeling overwhelmed was identified as a concern attributed to servant leaders, by Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019). They suggested that servant leadership while being an aspirational model was not realistically practicable as a leadership style (p. 220). For Bruce in his role, he talked of significant challenges: the expectations of stakeholders and the burdens he had placed on himself. All of these had a cumulative impact on his well-being. Burnout is a valid concern for those adopting this leadership style. Bruce talked of the need to get away from the role, both out of the country on holiday, and of opportunities for rest within country. He also talked of a mental detachment from all that the role asked and required of him 'I think separating -figuring out a way to separate myself from my role' and 'not letting everything be about work' (Bruce3). He explained too, how he had built a house away from the community, that was a place of rest, a retreat from the demands of school responsibilities (Bruce2). In the case of Bruce's leadership, he was able to identify the pitfalls of the servant leadership approach to leading. In some regard, he attempted to mitigate against that through rest and finding opportunities for time away for renewal.

Bruce recognised that his leadership role was unrelenting and profoundly demanding 'I think that it is okay to acknowledge how hard it is' (Bruce2). Although he viewed his role as challenging, he acknowledged that for him, he saw it as a refining process; a process by which his own character was being developed. He talked of his role at the school as part of a wider development of character within himself for kingdom purposes 'God is going to develop in us these principles that will carry with us' (Bruce2). That did not mean that there

were no challenges or difficulties, but in his role at the school he measured experiences by how well he served God and lived out his faith. As a leader, his attitude was more concerned with returning to his personal sense of faith 'My ultimate joy comes from my walk with the Lord and his delight in me' (Bruce2). His leadership prioritised being a servant to those in the community, but it was also about his own spiritual development in which he had a desire to draw closer to God.

Looking at the participants beyond Bruce, the headteachers all identified the emotional and physical exertion of a leadership approach, in which personal faith was so much part of professional practice. Servant leadership is a model that has been identified as a very difficult model to maintain, as it is so onerous (Branson, Marra and Buchanan, 2019). Patrick, Bruce, Keith, Sheila, Alison, Peter and Richard all described strategies that they employed to avoid feeling overwhelmed or burnt out, because of their commitment to their calling (Branson, Marra and Buchanan, 2019; Francis, *et al*, 2011; Guest, 2010).

Nearly all the headteachers in the study explained how they sought opportunities for and built-in time for rest. At one school the senior school principal took much of Wednesday to work from home (Patrick1). This allowed for mental rest and renewal, to allow him to refocus and to be re-energised. Patrick talked of how being away from school, without the day-to-day distractions allowed him to think with greater clarity. One leader had a similar approach of organising his diary to have email time or office time, every day (Bruce1). Another principal talked of how, as a leader she sought to be intentional in modelling a healthy approach to work for staff:

I try to model a work-life balance because, don't want to go over-board, yet we want to do our best. (Sheila1)

Sheila described being mindful of others who she managed, and who saw her burdensome workload. She also explained how she processed difficult matters and challenging issues related to her leadership in school:

I have a very wise and loving husband who is a pastor, so we also pastor outside of school. So, I get to reflect with him in the evenings and that reflection piece I feel is what helps me fine tune my practice. He is not in the field of education, but he is in the people business and so you know I might say "Oh this is what I did" and he might say "Do you think that was the best way to communicate that?" or (laughs) "Is that wisest course of action?" And just asking those reflective questions to really think and then adjust when necessary. (Sheila1)

Peter talked of needing to be alone and how he planned time carefully to allow for thinking and rest:

Making sure that there is time built in the day to reflect and to plan and to think.
(Peter1)

This, in his opinion, gave him helpful margins that were so often needed to think through a course of action, a conversation or an email that needed to be written. Greenleaf (2008) talks of the idea of the servant leader withdrawing, of removing oneself from a situation as a renewing. Peter went on to explain how he achieved that:

I'll write down what tomorrow looks like or what meetings I have, what erm and if I have free space in the day, which always I try to have as much free time as possible.
(Peter1)

Inevitably, for headteachers much of their time was spent with people, but for Peter and other leaders they aimed to carve out time to be alone too. Part of his rest was time spent in prayer, which he saw as providing him with spiritual renewal. Peter also talked of how he used that alone time 'building in time in the day for devotional time and prayer' (Peter1). Additionally, several school leaders talked of how they were able to re-energise themselves:

Once a year I try to build in time to go and visit other schools and see what they are doing. (Richard1)

While this may not appear to be restful, headteachers talked of how they found such activity to be revitalising in terms of their leadership. Richard also talked of attending ACSI conferences and the value of those 'I find them incredibly helpful and wonderful opportunities to network' (Richard1). Meeting fellow heads of school from other Christian school settings also provided him with a fraternity that reinvigorated his leadership. Similarly, Peter suggested that more informal connections with heads of school were of value to him, even when they were not face to face:

Getting together regularly with them, you know probably, once every month or two. We'll have a Google Meet or a Zoom meeting and we will just talk about what we are doing and what we are struggling with you know, in our schools and just hearing how people process that. (Peter1)

He considered the support of fellow heads of Christian schools to be one of the most useful ways to strengthen his own leadership:

I have learnt a tremendous amount just from walking alongside people and hearing how they've responded to things, so it is kind of real life in the trenches learning. That is the most valuable. (Peter1)

As these leaders built community in their schools and established a culture of community, they also recognised the need to seek community from those in similar roles. Peter explained there was real honesty about some of the challenges faced by headteachers among this group of fellow leaders, and that sharing these experiences informed his leadership for the better.

Bruce explained how he sought support from outside the Christian schools' community, in seeking wisdom and the opinions of others 'I probably have three mentors that are outside of Christian education' (Bruce1). This is in line with Friel (2018), who acknowledges the importance of spiritual support for faith leaders. Most headteachers in the study articulated the idea that talking through and processing challenges and triumphs created a strengthening of their leadership. It offered them an opportunity to reflect on their own leadership and was a chance to learn from others to improve it.

6.10 Conclusion

At its foundation, Bruce's leadership was an act of worship; a personal response to God. His attempt to lead with humility and service was because of his faith. Woven throughout the

school were connections and relationships, forged and modelled by Bruce. He pointed out, how his faith impacted his relationships in the workplace:

I have really never felt like I've had a job. I have always felt that I have a calling that God has entrusted to me, so faith has played a huge part in discerning that and staying in that and yes, we are definitely in a season now like Ephesians 6:10, where it just feels like God is calling us to keep standing. And so, it deeply impacts my vertical relationship with God, but then it also impacts my horizontal relationship with others. (Bruce1)

In times of challenge the relationship Bruce had with God, his faith, time reading the Bible and prayer time were all of immense importance to sustain and equip him as a leader. Bruce's faith drove his actions and his pursuit of the servant leadership model. This style of leading demanded his whole self and was a complete commitment. He was undertaking service to a whole school community.

One could accredit this style of leadership to being highly relational, as described by Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019), and also one that acknowledges context and seeks to build interconnectedness through interactions that draw a community together (Setlhodi, 2019). This resonates with ubuntu leadership, a highly relational way of operating. However, it was Bruce himself who suggested his leadership style was that of a servant leader. What perhaps rooted this leadership in that category, is that it was highly relational, but at its core, it was anchored in faith. Bruce held Christ as his model. His work, his service aspired to fundamentally emulate Christ, as servant leader. Bruce's actions and relationship with others was a form of worship. In Bruce's school, relationships were not prioritised for

the sake of the organisation (Fielding 2006; 2012), they were not the means to an end. They were operational currency, and ultimately what (for Bruce) education was about: glorifying God and living well with others.

Bruce's intentions were born out of faith. His leadership was highly relational (Branson, Marra and Buchanan, 2019) in that by its nature it sought relationship as a priority. Ultimately what was more important than the relationship, was the desire he had for every action and word spoken to be rooted in his desire to convey a commitment to and worship of God. This sense of personal faith was the motivation and reasoning for his style of leading. The pitfalls of this approach are that such a leader is ultimately destined to be exhausted. This was an ongoing challenge for servant leaders like Bruce, and other headteachers in the thesis. They had recognised leading in this way is burdensome and had attempted to mitigate against burnout with a support framework which included: rest, time away, time spent with God, professional support and mentors.

While this chapter provided an in-depth analysis of the experiences of one Christian international school headteacher, the next chapter moves to England and provides an overview of the leadership in church schools. The chapter provides a documentary analysis of forty church school inspection reports. It reviews leadership practices as highlighted by the Catholic and Church of England schools' inspectorate in England. By examining Section 48 inspection reports of these schools, the chapter looks at the idea of personal faith in leadership, leadership language and actions in establishing a Christian culture in these schools.

Chapter 7 Church school leadership through the lens of the church school inspectorate

Chapter six reviewed the concept of servant leadership by exploring the practices of one headteacher (Bruce) in detail. It highlighted how he sought to live out and model his faith in a practical way. It was clear that Bruce held Christ as his model as he sought to lead and serve. His personal belief, understanding of faith and clear expression of this influenced his leadership. Indeed, Bruce considered his work as a headteacher to be part of his worship to God.

This chapter discusses thinking and practice concerning church school leadership in England. It is divided into two parts. The first part (sections 7.1 to 7.5) addresses literature regarding the leadership of church schools, and specifically the expectations with regard to leadership of these schools and the church school inspectorate. The second part of the chapter (sections 7.6 to 7.8) looks at examples of church school leadership drawn from Section 48 inspection reports. It offers a documentary analysis of a small sample of church school inspection reports that measure and account for the quality of the leadership within a school (also see Chapter three, section 3.3. 1 which explains how these reports were analysed). Section 7.9 provides a summary of the chapter. The second part of this chapter examines the headteacher's leadership behaviour captured by the Section 48 inspectorate. It focuses on forty church school inspection reports of schools in England and examines what they highlight about aspects of headteachers' leadership behaviours and practices in

their schools. Inspector's descriptions of 'good' and 'outstanding' leadership in both Anglican and Catholic schools is unpicked. Specifically, the chapter reports on the analysis conducted on twenty inspection reports of Catholic schools, using the Catholic inspection framework (National board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers Inspection Working Group, 2017) and twenty Church of England reports from the inspecting body SIAMS, (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). The findings of the inspectorate identify ways in which headteachers embody Christian values through their actions, attitudes, behaviours, and articulation of these. While these are not discrete areas of discussion in an inspection report, they are thematic areas of interest across the report sample indicating how headteachers create a Christian school culture through their mission, vision and leadership. Details of leadership behaviour are evident in many of these reports and ultimately offer an insight into the actions of the headteachers of church schools.

The breadth of the leadership of a school cannot, by its complexity or entirety, ever be fully measured or captured by an inspection framework, or through the lens of an inspector's report. Capturing the true extent of what is lived and breathed in a school and the validity of what is actually happening in a church school day by day is an almost impossible task for the inspector. To understand and capture the complexities of a school's success, its culture and character in a substantive way in an inspection report, poses a continuing challenge for the inspectorate. This chapter is significant because it highlights practical examples of leading in church schools. In turn, the sample of forty reports offers some understanding of church school leadership. This chapter offers a discussion of examples of leadership practice in church schools across both Catholic and Church of England secondary schools. While these

examples are seen through the lens of the inspectorate it does not diminish the validity of them.

7.1 Inspections and church schools

As part of the Education Act 2005, Section 5 (Department for Education, 2005), schools are accountable to Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) for their provision of education. Ofsted inspections scrutinise overall effectiveness, quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management (Great Britain, Department for Education, Training and Skills, 2019). These inspections are separate to church school inspections. Additionally, church schools are inspected by the church school inspectorate as part of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 inspecting faith-based schools and care providers. For headteachers of church schools, this is an additional level of accountability.

Inspections by their nature are limiting, both in time spent in the school, the subjective nature of findings, and the inspector's knowledge, insight and scope of understanding. The language of the inspection criteria is crafted for a distinct audience and is expectant in its focus, looking at distinct aspects of school life. The leadership of a headteacher is viewed through the lens of the inspection criteria, and additionally through the experiences, knowledge and understanding of an inspector. Arguably, such reports cannot truly reflect the breadth and complexity of leadership approaches and styles. Neither can it seek to capture the myriad of ways headteachers lead to engender Christian values. Yet what section 48 reports do offer, is an insight into leadership practice as regards the faith life of

the school. They capture aspects of descriptions of approaches to leading 'good' and 'excellent' church schools. These examples, while not exhaustive, provide evidence of the practical, demonstrable ways headteachers lead. In that regard, they offer a debate about the future leadership of church schools. Inspections of schools continue to face ongoing criticism for their validity and value in terms of what they contribute to standards in education and for the stain and anxiety caused by the inspection process (Scanlon, 1999). They do, however, continue to exist to monitor standards in education and to hold schools to account. Yet there is minimal literature on school inspections (De Wolf and Janssens, 2007), and indeed it seems even less on school inspection reports themselves. Very little research has been carried out that scrutinises the impact of the school inspection process. De Wolf and Janssens, (2007) identify the stress caused by school inspections and the inevitable 'window dressing' (p.382) that schools exercise while being inspected. Baxter and Clarke (2013) raise concerns about the manner in which inspectors arrive at a judgement specifically the concern of whether inspections are 'valid, robust and above all consistent' (p.707) and of the process itself.

The one-word judgements of outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate in addition to the inspection process itself has been subject to very little scrutiny. Jones and Tymmes (2014) highlight that there is a gap in the literature that explores the impact and outworking inspections have on school improvement. Allen and Burgess (2012) Suggest the 'stigma' (p.23) that exists when a school receives a negative judgement. School inspections are a sensitive matter. Schools being held to account is less of a concern. The more contended issue is the value, conduct and effectiveness of the inspection process itself.

Before becoming head of SIAMS, James' (2018) concern, was that inspections by their very nature, do not necessarily capture a truthful representation of what is happening in schools. She suggests too that the inspection process itself can lack true substance 'Creating a performative stage' (p.122), in which schools offer to the inspector their best version of themselves. She notes that it encourages leaders of church schools to 'Present what might be thought of as an acceptable image of self, and potentially, to live a cover story' (James, 2018, p.122). She goes on to make the point that the grading judgement given by inspectors is often seen as paramount, rather than the inspection process itself. James (2018) acknowledges the tension that exists between the inspector and the inspected school. She identifies the power, presence and control of the school inspector, which 'creates imbalance' (p.122) in the inspection process. What James (2018) has highlighted as areas of concern, she has subsequently addressed in her undertaking of the role as head of SIAMS. In seeking to redress weaknesses in the SIAMS inspection process, it has been revised.

James (2023) more recently argues for inspectors to adopt a stance that is not castigatory or reproving but one of 'meaningful collaboration' (p.23) which she sees as being achieved by prioritising professional relations. In addition to this, SIAMS has now removed the four judgement grades and replacing them with a judgement of compliance or non-compliance:

J1 -Through its vision and practice, the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish' or J2 The school's vision and practice are not enabling it to fully live up to its foundation as a Church school.
(Church of England Education Office, 2022, p.12)

By removing the four judgement grades, the onus shift has become less about the inspection judgement grade and more about the inspection process. Thus, highlighting James' (2023) intention that the process is about truly understanding and compassionately yet in a highly considered and robust way evaluating Church school practice.

7.2 Catholic school leadership and Section 48 inspections

The inspection reports analysed in this thesis were based on the framework from *The Guidelines for Denominational Inspection in Catholic Schools/Colleges* (National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors, 2017). However, since September 2022 a different national system has been introduced. In September 2022 Catholic schools moved from an established diocesan-led approach (Dell, and Cottrell-Boyce, 2023). Previously, each diocese had the responsibility to appoint and train inspectors. While using the NBRIA inspection framework, appointments and training were open to interpretation by each separate diocese (Ward, 2021). The more recent national strategy for inspections by The Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI) seeks to provide a more robust approach to the provision of inspections. This is a national system using a national framework and nationally trained CSI inspectors with the aim of providing consistency (Dell, 2022). Dell (2022) identifies a previously 'inconsistent approach' (p.22) because of the separate inspections carried out within each diocese. He goes on to suggest that while this effectively satisfied Canon law, it posed numerous practical challenges across and within the diocese that took on the inspecting responsibility. The new national approach allows for a more consistent approach and a national dissemination of excellent practice (Dell 2022).

The National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges (2017, 2023) identified three key areas within the inspection schedule directly relating to the leadership of Catholic schools: Catholic Life and Mission, Religious Education and Collective Worship. Leaders are held to account in each of these three areas 'How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school' (National Frameworks for the Inspection of schools, Academies and Colleges, 2017, p.10).

In the more recent Catholic inspection rubric, leaders are now assessed on their ability concerning:

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school. (The National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges, 2023, p.39)

The national framework sets out a clarity of expectations by wanting Catholic leaders to 'clearly articulate the Church's mission in education' (p.41). Headteachers are 'guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the school' (p.41), whose role is to 'ensure that Christ is always at the heart of the school' (p.41) (See section 2.3.2 of the Literature Review). The inspection rubric is unequivocal in stating that leaders in Catholic schools should be 'inspirational exemplars' (p.39) in their leadership practice.

7.3 Church of England schools and SIAMS inspections

The Church of England's Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection framework (Church of England Education Office, 2018) is based on the Church of England's *Vision for Education* (2016) which is 'For the common good of the whole community' (p.2). This thinking has shaped the SIAMS inspection criteria that look at seven strands of a school: Vision and Leadership; Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills; Character Development, (Hope, Aspiration and Courageous Advocacy); Community and Living Well Together; Dignity and Respect; The Impact of Collective Worship and The Effectiveness of Religious Education (Church of England Education Office, 2018, pp. 2-15). A key tenet of the Church of England's *Vision for Education* is the importance of relationships.

The SIAMS inspection framework for Church of England Schools (Church of England Education Office, 2018) identifies the area of Vision and Leadership as an area for inspection, which is concerned with:

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? (p.2)

Church of England schools are encouraged to have a clear Christian vision that is supported with a theological justification. Aligned with this is a leadership responsibility to implement the vision across and throughout the school (Church of England Education Office, 2018, p.2). Relationships and the idea of 'flourishing' are central to that - the Christian values of the school are truly a lived reality for leaders. One example is 'the practice of forgiveness and restoration' in workplace relationships (Church of England Education Office, 2018, p.9). This

includes 'Leaders not simply talking about particular values – words or statements, but by embedding practices that develop virtues themselves' (The Church of England, 2017 p.25). This states a leader's responsibility for engaging with, modelling and advocating the importance of relationships within a school - the Christian vision is enacted through a prioritising of relationships. Wolfe, Smith, Harford, and Lacey (2020) suggest that 'the real test of a vision is the extent to which it is lived out in corridors and classrooms, in playgrounds and meeting' (p.163). The value of skilled leadership in schools is an in-depth understanding of and compassion for human interactions and relationships.

Writing on behalf of the Church of England Ford and Wolfe (2020), put forward the idea of a compassionate leadership that is underpinned by Christian theology. They advocate practices that are imbued with gospel values and provide biblical examples. They encourage church school leaders to 'articulate a sense of mission in their approach to education' (Ford and Wolfe, 2020 p.7). Their exploration of leadership practices can also be seen as inclusive as it incorporates ideas of relational and compassionate leadership, culminating in harmonious working relationships (Ford and Wolfe, 2020). While the language and examples are biblical and gospel-driven there is an intentionality in their framework that is inclusive, rooted in theology, yet accessible and pertinent for those whose personal values do not fully align with that of a church school community (Ford and Wolfe, 2020).

7.4 The church school identity

The Catholic Church uses language associated with the Catholic mission of schools the language of the Church of England in its guidance for church school leaders does not use a

language of Christian mission, or explicitly use a language that attempts to instil faith, but uses language which is more concerned with spiritual well-being. It provides guidance for that by offering a practical leadership framework of practice (The Church of England, 2017). In this area there is arguably a difference in the purpose and function of a Catholic school and that of a Church of England school, in terms of faith and education. This is a significant point not least because it impacts the leadership of each type of school. Johnson, McCreery and Castelli (2000) argue that Catholic schools have a clear sense of identity and values that set them apart as being distinctly Catholic. The clarity around these values and beliefs is key as it provides headteachers of Catholic schools with a solid foundation, from which to articulate their vision and values, and 'a strong, easily recognised culture that places its emphasis on building a faith community' (Johnson, McCreery and Castelli, 2000, p.401). This foundation offers a bedrock of understanding for headteachers and future leaders of Catholic schools.

Established values and beliefs anchor the identity of Catholic schools, rooting them in a history and tradition of Catholicity. Catholic schools exist to promote the Catholic faith. This, in turn, offers Catholic headteachers a framework of understanding that provides guiding leadership principles and values. For Catholic headteachers this foundation of beliefs provides a rooted theology and a language of leading that is unequivocal.

Conversely, Johnson, McCreery and Castelli (2000) argue that the Church of England is less explicit in stating a clear Christian mission as a church school:

The Church of England, is structured in a 'loose' way that central control of virtually everything, far less doctrinal certainty, is nigh on impossible. (Johnson, McCreery and Castelli, 2000, p. 401)

They suggest the language offers freedom as 'its values and culture are open to much individual interpretation' (p. 401). This lack of clarity presents a challenge for school leaders. The difference between how the Catholic Church and the Church of England express themselves is important as it poses a challenge for headteachers regarding how equipped they are to lead a faith school, in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the faith. Arguably, such knowledge and foundational beliefs underpin leadership practice and the confidence to articulate Christian values in leadership.

The expectations of Catholic school headteachers in terms of the mission of the Catholic Church is an exacting one. Grace (2016) considers that Catholics undertaking such roles in school leadership:

Are heirs of a tradition of spirituality, established by religious orders and that historically Catholic schools in these societies were constructed as defensive citadels. (p.128)

Grace argues that the work is missional 'not just a social enterprise' (p.2). This idea resonates with the attitudes expressed by headteachers in the international Christian schools' research. Grace (2016) also gives worth and validity to the idea of school leadership and charisma (2012) as discussed in Chapter four. Lydon (2009) talks of charisma as being:

The realisation in practice of grace, a gift which enables the believer to contribute to the common good. (p. 43)

Lydon (2009) goes on to explain how practicing a leadership of service is part of charisma. This resonates with the leadership of Bruce and others, as discussed in Chapter six who expressed a living out of their faith in their role as headteacher.

For headteachers having a cogent grasp of leading a church school, a theological and philosophical understanding is necessary in their own confidence and assurance to fulfil the role. Jelfs (2010) identifies this idea as important 'schools need to know their place in society both theologically and philosophically' (Jelfs, 2010, p.37). It is in truly knowing and understanding of church school values, that there then can be an articulation of those values in the school. In her study of Church of England schools, Jelfs, (2010) argues that there is a comprehensive lack of philosophical and theological understanding of those values in church schools and sees this as a limiting factor for school leaders. Knowing the identity of the school, as a church school, and what it represents in a community is important for headteachers:

It requires working out educationally and professionally how Christian faith influences all spheres of life and learning in church schools in order to shape a coherent and credible Christian perspective and thereby offer a distinct approach. (Jelfs, 2010, p.37)

The knowledge and understanding of the role that the Christian faith plays in leading such schools has to be central to the leadership of them.

7.5 A headteacher's personal faith

The value of personal faith, to equip headteachers to lead a church school has been highlighted by Shaw (2017). In his research of Catholic, Anglican and Jewish school leaders in England, Shaw acknowledges that the personal faith of a leader underpins and extends the faith of a school community. His research stated the value of personal faith for a headteacher was three-fold as it:

Strengthened their sense of values, clarified their vision and provided incentives for them to influence not just the educational progress of their pupils but also their spiritual development and that of the wider school community. (p.100)

The personal faith of a school leader cannot be underestimated in terms of the impact it could potentially have on the strategic direction of the school, and their own leadership priorities. In their research of headteachers in Church of England schools, Holmes and Pratt Adams (2021) address the importance of the impact and outworking of a headteacher's own personal faith, suggesting that 'The head's spirituality is crucial to their authenticity' (2021, p. 202), which in turn shapes their leadership. They identify a lack of awareness of spirituality by headteachers themselves. This lack of understanding or ownership, and a poor grasp of spirituality, hindered the school-wide grasp of spirituality (Holmes and Pratt Adams, 2021). This would suggest that the headteacher's spiritual knowledge and understanding if limited, confines that of the school as a whole.

An absence of headteachers' personal theology is a notable issue facing church schools. While a school leader may be confident in their own ability to support the Christian vision of

the school, the absence of the language and experience of the Christian faith raises the issue of authentic church school leadership. If headteachers do not hold a Christian belief then the school must rely on other pillars of the church school experience, such as the routine of collective worship, links with the Church, and Christian church calendar events to sustain its Christian identity (Jelfs, 2010).

The Dearing review proposed that headteachers of church schools should 'live the values' of the school and do so with their own individual approach (Archbishop's Council, 2001, p. 60). His report suggests that headteachers should model and display Christian values in their practice. It encourages Christian headteachers of church schools to forge a personal yet professional way of leading, which includes an expression of Christian values in their leadership. Headteachers are encouraged to establish a Christian culture within their schools, as 'a form of lay ministry' (2001, p. 60). They are prompted to draw on their personal faith as part of a professional undertaking. Of specific interest is the endorsing of headteachers' utilising their individual and distinct Christian practice as they lead. The confidence, knowledge and theological understanding that church schools possess is often as a result of the understanding and actions of the headteacher. Both the Catholic Church and the Church of England have sought to address this by offering various National Professional Qualification programmes specific to leaders of church schools, to further equip and emboldening them in their roles. These programmes develop knowledge and understanding of the leaders' roles specific to a church school environment.

In his study of Anglican schools, Street (2007, p. 147) holds the church responsible for headteachers' lack of understanding about a distinctively Christian education. He suggests that:

Church schools take refuge in a pragmatic programme of activities, lacking a clearly articulated theological and philosophical rationale. (Street, 2007, p. 145)

Street found that headteachers were of the belief that the Christian values of the school would be understood through the school's values, which suggested and implied the school's Christianity. Christian values are not always explicitly understood by a school community, because schools choose to employ inclusive language that is less distinctly Christian. While they may be biblical, they are not always explicitly so.

In summary, this section of the chapter considered church school thinking concerning the practice of leadership of church schools in England by examining relevant material and resources from the Church of England and the Catholic Church as it supports and guides school leaders. The following section offers an insight into headteachers' practice captured by the church school inspectorate of both Catholic and Church of England schools in England.

7.6 Church school inspection reports – common themes

A small sample of forty church school inspection reports formed the basis of the documentary analysis that follows: twenty Catholic school inspection reports and twenty Church of England Section 48 inspection reports. This analysis explored examples of

leadership that were regarded as 'effective', 'strong', 'outstanding' and 'good' by the relevant church school inspectorate. Methods of selection, sampling and analysis are discussed in Chapter three. Each school is anonymous in this study and was instead given a code, for example, S20. The subsequent date after the code refers to the date of the inspection, for example, S20, 2020. Operationally, many examples of effective church school leadership are highlighted in these inspection reports. Importantly, themes that emerge from the sample of reports echo findings from Chapters four, five and six relating to leaders of Christian international schools. These themes include the sense of a strong sense of personal faith, vocation, establishing a faith culture through one's own leadership behaviour and actions, and a clear language of faith with which to direct the vision of the school.

7.6.1 Catholic Schools inspection sample

The research sample of twenty Catholic Section 48 inspection reports, identified a personal commitment of headteachers to Catholic education and the outworking of that responsibility in practical terms throughout the school and in all areas of school life. Inspectors noted that many of these leaders demonstrated a faithfulness to something that extended beyond one's own success and achievement as a headteacher, to living out of a 'calling' in their professional role. The vision and values of the school were identified by the inspector as being lived out by the headteacher in personal and individual ways, noting the wider impact of this on the school itself.

7.6.1.1 Catholic leaders embodying Catholic values

Many Catholic leaders in this sample placed emphasis on having a strong sense of moral purpose. The Catholic ethos of the school was evident through leadership action. Inspectors highlighted that headteachers, through what was communicated in actions and language, made the school feel like a church school. This included setting out expectations and modelling relational ways of leading such as how staff should talk to each other and treat each other:

The headteacher leads through highly authentic personal witness. (B20, 2019)

Leaders and managers are highly visible, led by example and embody the mission of the school. (S20, 2018)

There were many reports that explicitly mentioned Catholic headteachers embodying gospel values and reflecting in their behaviour what they saw to be of value in Christian school culture. An effective leadership pattern emerged of headteachers who lived out a practical expression of Catholic values. It is a practical expression of ethos and not something that existed on paper, or in policy documents, or in what adorned the walls of the school (Donnelly, 2000). For some headteachers, inspectors noted that every decision appeared to be driven by their Catholic faith. Their leadership was primarily about upholding Catholic values and exhibiting them. Another inspector captured details of a relational and caring leadership approach:

The headteacher is an authentic witness as to how to worship God and live by the principles of faith. Staff and pupils alike value his shepherding and cherish the encouragement he gives them. (H10, 2020)

For Catholic headteachers in the sample, inspectors identified a very strong sense of advocacy of the Catholic ethos, leading to exemplify and live out Catholic values. Headteachers achieved this through a distinct sense of moral purpose and vocation, utilising deliberate relational and compassionate methods in their leadership approach. One inspector acknowledged:

The long-serving and highly experienced Headteacher provides outstanding Catholic leadership to the school community. He is held in high regard and his unique vision of Catholic education is one which is widely shared and supported by all members of the school community. (T10, 2020)

Another inspector identified that:

The school's leadership understand the Catholic mission in education. It is evident in the way they prioritise and deliver outstanding provision for the 'Catholic Life of the School'. [The school] is an authentic and lived Catholic experience. (S12, 2019)

Such attitudes of headteachers captured in a number of inspection reports indicate a personal and deep commitment to the Catholicity of the school.

Some Headteachers are described as having a strong sense of personal capacity (this idea is explored more fully in Chapter four) and see that Christian ethos can lever school improvement. This is evident with inspectors observing that for some headteachers, relationships are prioritised, driven by Christian values which are clearly communicated by some leaders:

He is passionate in articulating his vision which energises every aspect of the college's life. He and the other senior leaders work with enthusiasm and dedication

to translate this vision into a lived daily experience for students and staff alike.

(A10, 2011)

The leadership of Catholic headteachers is notable in this sample of inspection reports. In some schools, the Catholic identity of the school and the culture of the Catholicity was carefully curated to achieve a compassionate school environment. Some inspection reports acknowledged the efforts made by leaders to demonstrate kindness and gentleness, and a school culture that emanated from and was modelled by the lived values of the headteacher:

The headteacher, together with the support of his senior team and governors, leads with justice, mercy and wisdom. He is a highly authentic witness in every aspect of his role both within the school and beyond. (B20, 2019)

The Headteacher meets each week with those whose birthdays are being celebrated and pupils very much value this personal approach. The latter reflects the very strong culture of praise and thanksgiving which encourages pupils to feel valued as individuals as well as members of the school community. (A10, 2020)

The school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and is a source of inspiration for the whole community. This is exemplified by the headteacher who leads the school by living out the school prayer; of acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly. (S20, 2018)

Inspectors observed headteachers who demonstrated a careful crafting of leadership behaviour in promoting the Catholic values of the school. Examples in these inspection

reports featured headteachers upholding and exhibiting compassion and kindness for the school community. Inspectors identified headteachers who embraced the Catholic values of the school. Not only were they acknowledged by the inspectorate as living out the values and ethos of the school, but they were recognised as being equipped to articulate those values by making sure that they were understood by everyone.

The College is driven by the Headteacher's dynamic and inspirational vision for [the school] to be a Catholic learning community in which everyone is valued and the search for excellence flows from this. He is passionate in articulating his vision which energises every aspect of the college's life. (A10, 2020)

In some schools, the inspectorate appreciated that Catholic life was embedded in school culture; where faith pervaded everything (H10, 2020). Every decision by the headteachers was driven by a clear sense of moral purpose and commitment to the Catholic faith, and to make a significant difference. These headteachers were described as not only raising awareness of Catholicism through activities that were inclusive by design and intention but also in building community and relationships.

The idea of a headteacher as a role model was not an uncommon one, but very few inspection reports afforded any detail about what that looked like in practice. Often the language regarding excellent leadership and governance centred around notions of outstanding role models, strong vision and leadership, supportive and inclusive ethos, and not how this was practically achieved.

7.6.1.2 *Charism*

Charism was identified in some inspection reports; the idea of calling, with a spiritual capability that is coupled with a gifting that is God-given. Grace (2012) highlighted the idea of the charism of leaders in Catholic education and this is discussed further in Chapter four. Charism was specifically identified once in the sample of inspection reports, stating that the school 'Recognises and celebrates' its charism (S50, 2016). The idea of charism was more indirectly alluded to in other Catholic school inspection reports. The sample identified evidence of leaders who clearly were responding to a sense of calling, spiritual equipping and a sense of vocation.

The sense of commitment to respond in faith by leading beyond one's self, leading well, despite challenges and conflict, and leading others selflessly was captured in some inspection reports:

The headteacher is an inspirational Catholic leader, whose personal faith strongly underpins the school's Catholic ethos. (E10, 2019)

The commitment of leaders to Catholic Life is unwavering. Spearheaded by a faith-filled headteacher, leaders effectively share their vision for the school with all stakeholders, resulting in a school that is unapologetically Catholic. (H10, 2020)

The strong personal faith of the school leader is very clearly identified in fourteen of the twenty Catholic inspection reports analysed. The faith was seen as having a notable impact on the school community, as it strengthened the Catholicity and emphasis on faith in the community. Having a commitment driven by faith results in leadership that is difficult to

capture using an inspection rubric. Grace, (2016) considers that Catholics undertaking such roles in school leadership:

Are heirs of a tradition of spirituality, established by religious orders and that historically Catholic schools in these societies were constructed as defensive citadels. (p.128)

This idea emerged in a small sample of the inspection reports, in which leaders were ambassadors or preservers of the Catholic faith. The headteachers in this sample were committed to upholding, strengthening and extending the Catholic faith. For headteachers in this sample, there was an obvious commitment to this concept. The faith life of the staff community was valued and prioritised to achieve 'defensive citadels' of the Catholic faith. One inspector identified the importance of this for a headteacher:

Senior staff acknowledge with humility the great responsibility they have to promote the provision of Catholic Life. This responsibility manifests itself in the headteacher leading the senior leadership team on an annual retreat for 2 days of prayer and fellowship, where the Catholic Life of the school is explored and deepened. (S20, 2018)

This was typical of several reports in which the faith of staff in the school was of great importance to the headteacher. Another inspector noted a similar approach by a headteacher:

The influence of the Headteacher in promoting a distinctive ethos cannot be overstated. This was affirmed by teachers and pupils in interviews. The quality of provision for sustaining and developing the 'Catholic Life of the School' reflects the understanding and commitment governors have of leading a school of service to others. (S12, 2019)

A distinctly Catholic ethos was achieved because there was an understanding of it, a recognition of how those values should be practically and spiritually communicated across the school and an appreciation of the differing faiths of others. In one inner London school in the sample, inspectors recognised that:

Students benefit from the many opportunities to celebrate their faith and increasingly appreciate the importance of living their faith and respecting and dialoguing with those of other faiths and beliefs. (S50, 2016)

Furthermore, the inspectorate captured the impact of that:

A Year 13 student who spoke eloquently of how she was able to share her faith: “be tolerant of other beliefs but bold; speak with compassion and love, not forceful but with respect”. (S50, 2016)

Significantly, while Catholic schools promoted the Catholic faith, they also promoted ‘faith literacy’ (Bloom, 2023, p.69), with which dialogue could be had with those of other faiths. Faith and belief was central to the school experience and in turn equipping those within the school community to value their own faith and that of others.

7.6.1.3 Relationships and building community

A feature of leadership in this inspection sample of Catholic schools was building a leadership presence and establishing a school culture through leading relationally. This included recognising the value of encouraging others and empowering staff. Leadership traits of humility and kindness were hallmarks of some leaders acknowledged by the

inspectorate. Being present and visible in modelling good practice and building relations was also evident. Several reports recognised leaders who enacted Catholic values:

Leading by example, he models the values of a servant leader and this is offering hope for the school and wider community. (S30, 2019)

Catholic Section 48 inspection reports identified headteachers who sought to express and exhibit the values of Christ as the lead pedagogy in their role as headteachers. Leaders were found to approach their role with a sense of nurture, they recognised the value of relationships and specifically the role that faith can have on academic success.

Several headteachers were identified as having a strong sense of moral purpose, a calling that went beyond closing learning gaps and increasing opportunity. Such headteachers were not just concerned with the provision of education but with caring, serving and supporting in line with the Catholic ethos. In one school in the sample, the inspection report stated that:

They show a strong determination to provide a holistic approach to education, underpinned by great care and genuine love for the pupils. A staff governor eloquently said “No child gets left behind”. They are resolute in their quest to continue to provide an excellent Catholic education and to serve the community.

(S70, 2018)

Inspectors recognised that Catholic schooling provided more than an education underpinned by faith, but where faith was first and central.

Reports highlighted schools that were places of care and compassion, places for all

individuals to thrive. A large proportion of inspection reports identified a school compassionate school culture and the importance of relationships. Furthermore, this was a priority for some headteachers and school leaders who were outward-looking. Several schools in the sample noted how the Catholic ethos of a school was evident in the leadership culture of working together:

The senior leadership team and head of department promote and bear witness to a genuine culture of trust and partnership, which permeates all areas of the school's life. (S90, 2018)

Staff speak enthusiastically and with one voice about the Catholic values of the school 'which comes from the top' and which inspire them to model forgiveness and justice in their daily work. Staff feel very cared for by leaders who exercise judicious care over all staff ensuring their welfare is a priority. (M10, 2020)

The idea of leading as a team and unifying a community through faith was also a notable feature of some reports:

Pupils go out into the community to campaign for greater street safety to address the challenges young people face. As a result, pupils have raised the profile of young people who are working to limit the impact of social challenges in the area, such as knife crime and youth violence. (S12, 2019)

Leaders and governors are totally committed to the welfare of the whole community. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their role in providing a school that prays and grows in faith and love. (S12, 2019)

Headteachers saw it as their role to protect the community. A small number of heads in inner-city schools lived and worked in their communities, alongside families that they educated; these headteachers worked to protect students in their care. Their efforts were borne out of social responsibility but driven by gospel values.

7.6.1.4 Enabling others

A significant hallmark of 'Outstanding' Catholic leadership, was the promotion of a culture of enabling others which includes a professional equipping, supporting and guiding of staff members:

The headteacher's empowering of staff to take leading roles in the Catholic life of the school has led to wider participation in its provision and evaluation. (S10, 2015)

For leaders in some schools, there was an unrelenting focus on professional development, including inducting new staff to the Catholic faith, preparing teachers for Catholic leadership, and seeking to practically model what this meant within the school.

Leaders ensure that Catholic Life is the first area addressed in the induction process of new staff. Consequently, staff who are new to the school, including trainees, are clear in their understanding of Catholic Life and are enabled to positively contribute to the school's provision from the moment they join. (H10, 2020)

Leadership practices can provide an inclusive culture and are a fundamental part of Catholic leadership. For headteachers living out the Catholicity of the school includes ensuring those who do not share the Catholic faith understand it and it is not alien to them. For example, a 'walking, talking mass' is an example of how staff who are unfamiliar with mass would know

and understand the practice. This activity provides a practical walkthrough and explanation of what takes place during mass.

In the sample of Catholic schools, the continuous professional development of staff included placing importance on the spiritual lives of staff too. Making time to acknowledge the value of personal faith of all staff was also noted in some reports:

By prioritising the staff and what they need, the Headteacher has signalled the centrality of this sacred space by moving the staff briefing there on a Monday morning when staff start the working week with a prayer or reflection. (S30, 2019)

For headteachers, the empathy and compassion required to prioritise this was an extension of their charism (Grace, 2012). For such headteachers, leading went beyond setting the strategic direction of the school but it was about leading to enable others to demonstrate an outworking of gospel-inspired relationships. Headteachers who chose to lead in this way were living out gospel values and extending the mission of the Catholic Church.

7.6.1.5 Prayer

The prioritising of prayer by Catholic headteachers was identified in many inspection reports. Headteachers who reinforced the value of prayer indicated to the school community the importance of prayer life:

The provision for private prayer and whole school liturgical celebrations reflects the deep spirituality of the chaplain and senior leaders. (S12, 2019)

Catholic headteachers prioritised the spiritual needs of staff. This was a notable theme

across the Catholic school reports, that strengthened the Catholicity of the school and acknowledged the personal faith needs of those in the school community:

Staff prayer is an integral part of all school activity, is creatively planned and is an inspiration to the whole community. (S20, 2018)

To build the confidence of all members of staff to lead meaningful worship at the start of the school day. (S30, 2019)

In addition, times of prayer were often designed to be inclusive:

A programme of prayer at staff briefing sets the tone for the day and is led confidently by a variety of staff members. (S60, 2019)

The focus on prayer as valuable and central to the life of the school was achieved by intentional leading, a modelling and prioritising of it 'Prayer punctuates the day' (S50 2016). Prayer was acknowledged as central to the life of many Catholic schools. Leading prayer confidently was another way for headteachers with faith to express their faith in the workplace. The personal prayer life of a school leader, the commitment to prayer across the community and the crucial role that leaders play in prioritising, valuing and making prayer an active part of the school experience was noted in the inspection reports:

Leaders have a secure knowledge of how to plan and lead prayer. This is, in no small way, because of the role modelling demonstrated by the headteacher, his deputy and the person in charge of Catholic Life. The headteacher is an authentic witness as to how to worship God and live by the principles of faith. Staff and pupils alike value his shepherding and cherish the encouragement he gives them. (H10, 2020)

7.6.1.6 Developing the faith life of others

Building a Catholic community where staff are given time to pause and reflect was highlighted as valuable by the inspectorate:

Staff retreats are a particular feature of this school and, although voluntary, are well attended and appreciated. (O10, 2018)

But more than that, allowing for and encouraging the flourishing of staff and students was considered by one inspector as beneficial:

Staff and pupils are helped to grow in faith through an impressive enrichment programme. Throughout their time at {the school} pupils participate in retreats at [.....] and [.....], as well as engaging in numerous days focused on values and ethos. (O10, 2018)

Such prioritising of the faith life of the staff and students by a school leader also signalled the value of faith in the life of the school. By allocating time to developing the faith life of others, school leaders ensured the Catholic faith was central to the work of the school.

7.6.1.7 Leading in times of challenge

Some inspection reports addressed the challenges for leaders of church schools, including knowing how to lead well in situations of conflict, grievance and issues of capability. Leaders who managed these difficult situations well, did so by treating people with compassion and kindness, keeping the Christian values at the heart of what they did, treating others with Christian love:

Whilst the school's current Ofsted judgement has necessitated immediate and impactful actions, these have been done with compassion and integrity. (S30, 2019)

In summary, this sample of Catholic school inspection reports offered an acknowledgment by the inspectorate of headteachers' actions as leaders in leading Catholic schools. These actions captured the idea of living out and modelling Catholicity. The reports highlighted that these leaders held and prioritised the Catholic faith as central to the life of the school. This was achieved as mentioned by their actions but also their focus as a headteacher. The reports provide an insight into the school culture that has been established and suggest some leadership priorities which include the prayer life of the school, the faith of staff and enabling the staff community.

7.6.2 Church of England schools' inspection sample

Church of England schools differ from Catholic schools in their appointment of headteachers. Potential candidates applying for headship in a Church of England schools are required to be supportive of the Christian faith. They are not required to have personal faith. However, the sample identified clear evidence of Church of England school headteachers having personal faith and the impact of that on the whole school community:

The Christian commitment, inspirational leadership and relentless determination of the headteacher, along with her dedicated staff, creates and sustains a school in which all can flourish and attain strong academic success. (R2, 2019)

The school inspectorate acknowledged a lived personal faith of headteachers in a large sample of the Church of England school inspection reports. Leaders had faith and were

willing to articulate that in their leadership role:

A passionate Christian headteacher who believes in empowering others has enabled the staff team in this school to flourish. (D1, 2017)

The strong spiritual leadership of the headteacher permeates school life. (T1, 2015)

The headteacher provides inspirational, challenging and supportive Christian leadership. (S1, 2020)

Some reports used a different language that suggested the headteacher in the school they were inspecting did not have personal faith. Often these reports stated that the headteacher understood the Christian faith and could articulate the Christian vision of the school (S2, 2018; N1, 2017).

7.6.2.1 Embodying Christian values

The Church of England inspection reports identified a large number of headteachers who not only had an understanding of, or support for the Christian values of the school, but who were confident in articulating and communicating those Christian values in the school. Inspection reports identified headteachers as setting an example, living out Christian values; emulating the values of the school in their leadership:

Strong leadership of the recently appointed headteacher, who is described by all as living the Christian vision. (S1, 2020)

One headteacher who exhibits servant leadership inspiring all his staff to approach

everything they do with compassion and love. (A2, 2017)

Inspectors were able to highlight examples of servant leadership in practice and briefly attest to its merit in terms of its impact both in the school and within the wider community:

He speaks with a passion for the welfare and future of the community that emanate from his own deeply held Christian beliefs. (S2, 2018)

The clear Irenaeus-inspired Christian vision, consistently promoted and lived out by all leaders, including governors, gives rise to strategies that have an outstandingly positive impact. (S5, 2017)

The servant leadership model being lived out by headteachers in Church of England schools was also acknowledged by the inspectorate:

The headteacher and senior leaders model humble, servant leadership striving to be the presence of Christ in the school community and beyond. (M1, 2018)

The headteacher models this through servant leadership inspiring all his staff to approach everything they do with compassion and love. (A2, 2017)

There was a clear acknowledgment of the evidence and impact of servant leadership (M1, 2018), but what was not stated was exactly how in a practical sense servant leadership was enacted or achieved. A limited sample of the Church of England inspection reports detailed the practical ways effective leadership was achieved:

Leaders, including governors, believe they have a duty to use their expertise and experience in the service of others, stated by one member of staff as, “what you have been given is not just for you”. (S5, 2017)

Stating the practicalities of serving and servant leadership would be useful for fellow leaders

in further understanding such practice.

Knowing the practical essentials of this model of leadership allow for it to be appreciated, cascaded and disseminated as valuable practice. Highly successful leadership is not left unstated, but similarly it is not always fully explained:

The head teacher's capacity to lead, enable and serve is excellent. She strategically engages the school with the local church and the wider community, developing a sense of pride amongst parents, staff, former students and students, which raises aspiration in students. (S6, 2018)

A possible reason for the absence of this kind of detail acknowledged in an inspection report, is likely, although not wholly, the duration of time Section 48 inspectors spends in school and the brevity of the reports themselves. Inspectors of Church of England schools are advised to arrive at the school no earlier than 8am and leave the school by 6 pm (Church of England Education Office, 2019). During this time an inspector is looking at many areas of school life, and the leadership of the school is only part of that.

7.6.2.2 One church school

A small number of inspection reports provided details of Christian leadership approaches. One academy's leadership was extensively documented, exploring in greater depth the breadth of the leadership and its impact:

The executive director holds a strong Christian faith and this ensures the integrity with which the academy is led. He has overseen the embedding of the Christian vision in all campuses since his appointment. Central to this has been the

appointment of the chaplain who has been instrumental in this vision. (N1, 2017)

In the same report, other aspects of the leadership (2017) were noted as being of merit, with examples of note-worthy leadership actions. These included not only appointing a chaplain but also, sustaining the prayer life of the school, inducting members of new staff and having an important presence in the school. In the same school, leadership was reinforced in a multifaceted way, through succession planning and:

A distinctively Christian understanding of the LIGHT values (love, inclusivity, goodness, hope and truth) is deeply embedded and shapes policy and practice. (N1, 2017)

There was significant consideration given by the school leadership to the faith life of the school:

Priority is given to the time allocated for worship, including in the secondary phase where examinations and administrative matters are not allowed to interrupt the daily rhythm of worship. (N1, 2017)

The value of tending relationships was part of the headteacher's vision for education:

Tireless efforts to build relationships with individuals and communities result in good levels of attendance (N1, 2017)

[The headteacher] constantly forges partnerships at local, diocesan and national level. (N1, 2017)

The impact of this extended beyond the school:

The academy, therefore, continues to be the catalyst for change in local communities inspired by the Christian commitment of its leaders. (N1, 2017)

What was captured was a practical sense of how the headteacher had established a Christian school culture and the way that this had been achieved. Knowing how leaders

achieve a Christian school culture provides an understanding of church school leadership and the priorities of the headteacher. The example of this school leader is like that of Catholic school leaders highlighted earlier in this chapter. The strength of their leadership in leading a faith school emerged because they prioritised the faith life of the school.

7.6.2.3 Prayer and opportunity for spiritual reflection

For some Church of England headteachers, the inspection reports suggested a school culture had been established in which prayer was central to the school's practice. Prayer was inclusive and invited those without faith to be offered time for personal reflection thus contributing to the overall sense of well-being felt in some school communities:

There are staff, student and parent groups all contributing to the rich prayer life of the school. (S5, 2017)

Prayer lies at the heart of everything the school does. It is central to all staff and governors' meetings, and this has had a positive impact on staff wellbeing.

(M1, 2018)

Regular times of spiritual reflection for all staff. (A2, 2017)

Prayer is established in the daily life of the academy and at its core is Morning Prayer in the chapel. This is attended by a few staff but known to all as a time when the community and individuals are held before God. (N1, 2017)

Additionally, in the same school, the routine of prayer formed part of the school's regular practice which not only benefited those having faith, it also had a positive influence on the

school community:

Termly Eucharist for staff is well attended by those confident in their own faith and of no faith because of the loyalty and respect that has grown for the chaplain and the Christian character of the academy. (N1, 2017)

What is evident in these reports are schools led by headteachers who encouraged a culture of prayer and where faith in the workplace was permissible and of value to those who shared the Christian faith and arguably to those who did not.

7.6.2.4 Community, values and a place where God is known.

Articulating, expressing and prioritising Christian values is key to establishing and maintaining the ethos of a school. Church schools that are by their nature inclusive and teach gospel values of love and compassion for those of all faiths remain valuable and vital for communities. This was captured in a number of inspection reports:

The headteacher provides inspirational, challenging and supportive Christian leadership. He has worked with the community to articulate the biblical roots of the longstanding, inclusive Christian vision. (S5, 2017)

Leaders are passionate about articulating, living out and promoting the 'with love and learning' vision. (S6, 2018)

A school culture that is 'rooted in Christianity, where people matter'. (R2,2019)

The practicalities of what it meant for a headteacher to demonstrate and exhibit gospel values was also featured in a number of inspection reports:

Strong leadership, which combines high expectations with compassion. (D1, 2017)

Leaders' sensitive consideration of staff workload feeds into practical decisions which reduce stress and aid well-being. (T2, 2019)

The needs of no individual are missed and the 'fullness' of school life is closely monitored. (R1, 2019)

Leaders' sensitive consideration of staff workload feeds into practical decisions which reduce stress and aid well-being. (T2, 2019)

Such leadership was concerned with care and compassion for those in the school community. Central to that was the well-being of staff whose needs were prioritised. Where leaders' thoughtfulness regarding the well-being of staff was noted, however, it would be worthwhile knowing exactly how that was achieved:

One member of staff said that he had been challenged to change his own approach to behaviour management by the firm but compassionate approach of the headteacher. (S5, 2017)

Being able to speak about and communicate the school's Christian values is not to be underestimated. Speaking out is instructing; it is a directing of the school and conveys a tone and mood for the community. Perhaps for headteachers, this is a ceaseless task, of not just understanding and articulating, but a relentless articulation of values to ensure a Christian culture is embedded across the school. An acknowledgment of this was captured in some reports:

The depth of the Christian ethos and the extent to which every interaction focuses on the intrinsic worth of each individual leads to outstanding progress and personal development for pupils and adults. (D1, 2017)

Through its Christian vision to be compassionate, reflective, inclusive, supportive and transformative, the leadership creates a hospitable community in which all feel included, valued and supported. (S4, 2019)

The strong, insightful leadership of the headteacher has ensured the Christian character permeates the life of the school. (S2, 2018)

A culture of community and living well together was built through times of worship. Worship was an opportunity strengthen the school body and build relationships in a coming together of the staff and students. It was an intentional drawing together in faith: space for God was created in the school calendar.

The measure of the school's success as a Church of England high school is captured by a parent who states "this school and its ethos allow God to come in and transform lives". (S2, 2018)

Staff training days always include an act of worship and there are optional Eucharist services for them. (S5,2017)

Adults are equal worshippers alongside pupils and provide excellent role models creating a real sense of joy and enthusiasm for the occasion. (N1, 2017)

Supporting the faith of staff was central to the church school identity. Staff development, well-being and care were seen as central to achieving flourishing. Several inspection reports told of the inclusive and intentional way that flourishing was achieved, for example through the induction, training and development of staff:

New staff, including support staff, are inducted well into the Christian life of the school, and yearly professional development on the Christian foundation is embedded into the school calendar. (M1, 2018)

New staff are quickly caught up in the ethos so everyone pulls together and relationships are harmonious. (R1, 2019)

Staff and governor training with the Diocesan Director of Education has given a new momentum to how the academy articulates its Christian vision. (R1, 2019)

Inspectors noted that headteachers build community by ensuring Christian belief and practice is not alien to their staff and by incorporating regular, explained Christian practice and development as a core part of school life. This was offered to staff, not imposed.

7.6.2.5 Knowing the value of professional development

Professional development and the upskilling of others in readiness for church school leadership was another pertinent feature in a number of inspection reports:

The school is actively committed to the professional development of all staff, including senior staff as potential church school leaders. (T1, 2015)

The idea of succession planning to lead church schools was also evident,

The school prepares teachers well for church school leadership. (M1,2018)

The school is actively committed to the professional development of all staff, including senior staff as potential church school leaders. (T1, 2015)

Maximum use is therefore made of training in aspects of Christian leadership. (S2, 2018)

The idea of preparing staff for Church of England school leadership is similar to what inspectors identified in Catholic schools, in which there is a keen sense of preserving the Catholic education through a more rigorous consideration of professional development and a firmer offer of this development for potential leaders. While the reports did not always state what the professional development was, they did indicate a prioritising by headteachers of a school-wide underpinning of Christian values through providing such training. Thus, suggesting the development of staff not only for the immediate benefit of the school, but for the wider church school mission and community. The emphasis on staff development sought to contribute to a school culture in which the needs of individuals were sought to be met.

7.6.2.6 Working in partnership

A strong feature of Church of England schools identified by the inspectorate was the value placed on partnerships. These enabled the headteacher to strengthen and further uphold the school's Christian culture and values. The Christian culture of the school was additionally sustained by looking beyond the school itself. One school was described as an:

Outward-looking academy led by an executive headteacher who constantly forges partnerships at local, diocesan and national level. (N1, 2017)

Leaders are passionately and proactively developing the school within, and for the community. (p.1)

The working relationship with the local church and diocese was very common in the sample of Church of England inspection reports. This was also true in the Catholic inspection reports. Many reports mentioned how positive relations were fostered by the headteacher for the benefit of the school and the wider community. Additionally, the presence of local clergy in the school to affirm and support the faith life of the school was a notable feature in some school reports:

The clergy and headteacher give the deeply held Christian vision the highest priority. (B1, 2019)

It is clear in the sample that Church of England inspection reports offer a valuable insight into their leadership and the practical ways in which headteachers lead. While the priorities of Church of England schools headteachers were similar to those of Catholic school leaders. The inspection reports suggest that like Catholic headteachers, Church of England heads also seek to provide a clear and distinct approach to leading a church school that includes strong models of compassionate, gospel-driven leading.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the leadership of church schools through the lens of the church school inspectorate. It discussed expectations about leadership in both Catholic Church schools and Church of England schools and highlighted practical examples of how headteachers lead from Section 48 reports. While these inspection reports may not reveal the detailed aspects of school leadership *per se*, they identify some leadership practices enacted by headteachers in church schools in England. The documentary analysis of these inspection reports showed that while there are clear similarities in the leadership of Catholic and Church of England church schools, there are also fundamental differences. For some headteachers, there was an earnest commitment to the faith life of the school and to living that out either by sharing their personal faith, or by demonstrating a commitment to clearly articulating church school values. Inspectors identified leaders who demonstrated a responsibility for the future of church school leadership. These inspection reports are significant because they offer a discourse about church school leadership practice. These forty reports contain examples of headteachers advocating, modelling and living out Christian values. There is evidence of leaders adopting a servant leadership approach, of prioritising the faith life of staff and tending to those relationships. What was most notable was leaders who had a personal faith that was lived out and expressed: where leading was a vocation. For some headteachers, there was also a recognition of charism in their leading.

This sample of inspection reports possibly raises issues of disparity in this study. It is arguably unreasonable to examine the leadership of a Catholic headteacher for whom having a personal faith is a prerequisite of appointment, alongside a headteacher of a

Church of England school who is not required to have such personal faith. However, what was evident in both Catholic and Church of England schools were leaders who had a strong personal faith and were willing to demonstrate that in the workplace. Headteachers gave faith prominence in their schools' and modelled how it should be lived out - inspectors identified a 'lived' Christian faith for some school leaders. Inspectors recognised there were Catholic headteachers who fulfilled the Catholic Church's mission in extending the Catholic faith through their leadership role. Examples were offered of both Catholic and Church of England headteachers who understand the church school values of their schools and expressed these values in their own actions. This resulted in a sense of vocation and mission in their school. Some headteachers were found to embody the Christian values of the school. In addition, some headteachers were described as articulating the values well, others were identified as seeking to build a school culture through their actions. There were parallels with leaders of Christian international schools who understand, articulate and live out the Christian values of their school.

The chapter explored what is asked of those in church school leadership and considered what that should look like in practice. It explored current thinking about leadership of church schools, acknowledging the potential fragility for church school leadership to remain firmly positioned in the Christian faith. Headteachers' understanding of the Christian faith and the articulation and living out of church school values are pivotal to the future of church schools. They are central to the Christian vision of the school; by their words and actions (Casson, 2021) they affirm it. At a time of increasing secularisation, the continuing challenge for the Church is whether headteachers of church schools fully understand their school's

Christian identity, and what that means for them in practice as they lead. An absence of understanding of the Christian faith, and in turn a lack of ability to articulate that poses a concern for the future of these schools.

The substance and detail of church school leadership practice and specifically the strengths of leadership behaviour are not always stated by the inspectorate when capturing leadership actions. Celebrating these details would be beneficial for current and future leaders (Dell, 2022). The narratives (as evidenced in the inspection reports) of church school leadership are its strength, the individual personal stories are significant and if we do not know them there is a possibility that we will lose them.

This documentary analysis uncovered some notable aspects of church school leadership. There were clear examples of headteachers whose faith ultimately shaped their spiritual commitment and attitude to leading the faith life of a church school. The individual inspection narratives that emerged in these reports offer a helpful insight into church school leadership. The language of an inspection report can fall short of capturing in real and practical terms what living out a Christian vision means. Knowing and understanding more fully how this Christian vision is 'lived out' would only strengthen the current provision being delivered in church schools in England. This thesis now turns to discussing the leadership of Christian international schools alongside the known leadership practices of church school headteachers in England.

Chapter 8 Discussion

This research set out to understand Christian leadership in an international comparative study. Leadership practices of headteachers in Christian international schools in the Global South, were examined, alongside school leadership in both Catholic and Church of England schools in England as documented in inspection reports. The thesis investigated how headteachers establish, articulate and maintain an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith. The interviews and observational research of heads of schools and principals of Christian international schools located in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, highlighted school leaders who use language, experiences and personal faith to articulate the Christian vision of the school. While this is a small-scale study of nine headteachers, it offers valuable experience, insight and understanding concerning the leadership of Christian schools that transcends borders. Christian international schools are a minority in the international schools market and there has been very little qualitative research undertaken about them. More than that, there is a paucity of research that examines Christian international school leadership alongside that of church school leadership in England. This study is a contribution to knowledge because it identifies the leadership practices of headteachers in Christian international school alongside church school leadership practice in England.

This thesis addressed three research questions. The first research question asked *How do Headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith?* The

interview data and findings from observational visits to three headteachers of Christian international schools illustrated many features of highly personable, compassionate leadership that offered a compelling vision of Christian education. These approaches and experiences offer a discourse in terms leadership. The research explored the practical pedagogical approaches of headteachers in establishing, developing and maintaining a Christian ethos. What emerged were some fundamental principles of how a Christian ethos was achieved, through the behaviour, language and actions of these leaders. From this, conclusions can be drawn about future practice concerning the leadership of church and Christian international schools.

The second question set out to understand, *What does future leadership of church and Christian international schools look like? And why is it important?* There were commonalities between the sample of international school headteachers in the study and the documentary evidence from church school inspection reports. These suggest what future practice might look like for the leaders of such schools. The findings shed new light on the idea of spiritual capital as a leadership resource, used not just in a Catholic school context but also in other school contexts. This idea is important in understanding how to equip future leaders as they lead and communicate the faith identity of a school.

This chapter then goes on to answer the third research question *How does the evidence from these examples inform the debate on future leadership policy and practice?* The headteachers of church schools in England, who were considered good or outstanding by the inspectorate, demonstrated similar skills to the compelling leaders in the sample of

Christian international schools. Both sets of headteachers were found to understand and articulate Christian values, and endeavoured to model these values in their leadership practice. These findings suggest several courses of action for leaders of church and Christian schools. Headteachers need to foster an understanding of Christian education, a philosophy concerning the role faith plays in education. They also need to develop a faith language with which to lead. Furthermore, leaders of church and Christian international schools need to recognise the importance of living out and modelling the Christian values of the school in establishing and maintaining a Christian school culture. This chapter now sets out to answer each of the research questions in turn.

8.1 How do headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith?

This study raised important questions about the nature of leadership in Christian international schools and in church schools in England. The findings highlighted the importance of personal faith in leading and how this shaped the headteachers approach to their roles. In some regard, it gave a sense of purpose to the undertaking of the role as headteachers responded to what they saw as a calling on their lives and a sense of mission. The study found that these headteachers approached their role with a spiritual capital that they drew upon in their leadership. This included language, values, beliefs and understanding that shaped their leading and was actively expressed in the workplace (Grace, 2002). In turn this personal belief had an impact on ethos (Donnelly, 2000). For example, relational and compassionate leadership that prioritised social interaction was also evident across the headteachers of international schools and was also something described

by the church school inspectorate. The nine headteachers in the study gave priority to relationships in their capacity as school leaders and this had an impact on school culture. Teacher focus groups gave account of how they experienced school ethos as members of staff. The results of the study found that all nine headteachers had a philosophy for Christian education that was shaped by their personal belief in Christ. Their understanding and expression of this was valuable in having a thought-through language with which to articulate a compelling vision for Christian education.

This supports the research of Donnelly (2000) who sees ethos as being shaped by an intrinsic sense of purpose (p. 151) that shapes behaviour. Bruce described it as a 'heart posture' (Bruce 2). Yet for Bruce his approach was not merely about how he understood ethos but how it was enacted. He sought to live out his inner convictions so that his leadership was shaped by his personal beliefs. In doing so it shaped how he interacted with those in the school community and the value he placed on interrelationships. Headteachers in the research sought to emulate Christ and to reflect Christ in their actions, so that the Christian ethos could be modelled and experienced in the school context. More than policies or workplace activity, a Christian ethos was achieved and driven by the intrinsic desire of leaders to serve God. All participants testified to a personal Christian faith that motivated their actions and decision-making in the work place. It shaped the value that they placed on the nurture and tending to social interactions which they cited as being central to their leading. Of the three headteachers visited, this leadership priority impacted school ethos. It was the objective for their actions and the actions themselves that had an impact

on ethos. These leaders sought to live out their faith and model their actions on those of Christ.

8.1.1 Spiritual capital and Christian international school leadership

The study contributes to our understanding of spiritual capital used by headteachers in schools. Building on the work of Gerald Grace (2002) and extending his ideas of spiritual capital in Catholic schools, this research demonstrated the existence of spiritual capital for leaders in Christian international schools in the Global South. The language, values and experiences that leaders draw on impacts their ability to clearly articulate a compelling vision for Christian education. Although the nine headteachers of Christian international schools in this study were not from the Catholic tradition that Grace (2002) talks of, they all drew on their spiritual capital. This gave them an understanding with which to articulate the Christian identity of the school. They approached their leadership roles as superintendents, heads of school and principals, with a Christian faith heritage and knowledge that equipped and enabled them in their leadership. Such capital provided headteachers with a theological language with which to communicate spirituality in their schools. Spiritual capital is a leadership resource as it provides a language for a leader to articulate a school's Christian vision. It was used by headteachers in Christian international schools in this study to establish a collegiate way of being and to develop unity around a common purpose of Christian education. This supports the research of Noghiu (2020) who identifies the value of a leader's harnessing of spiritual capital leveraged within an organisation to build community.

Headteachers in this research sample individually explained having a language of leading that was steeped in a deep theological consciousness. This capital was personal to them as individuals and used in their professional capacity to steer the faith life of the school. Their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith equipped them. Keith reflected on that in his leadership:

it is so important to be clear in what you are pursuing and how to present that and share that and articulate that with the whole community (Keith1).

This was enacted within the school in their role as headteachers. It was evident in the language that they chose to articulate the vision. It was a resource that they used to uphold and maintain the faith life of the school. Moreover, Christian international schools are places where spiritual capital is exercised by the school headteacher, providing language, experiences and understanding of the Christian faith that reinvigorates the spiritual capital of others (Grace, 2002). The nine headteachers in this study explained making time to build and develop their own spiritual capital as well as that of the staff body within the organisation. Peter talked of aligning himself to a school that had the same values that he had so that there would be a strengthening of his spiritual capital. Such capital provided a unity and a sharing of ideas so that organisational capital was developed and sustained. Alison and Richard both explained how it was unifying, in how they built relationships and established a team through a shared spiritual capital. This was achieved through a shared spiritual language, actions, routines and understanding that provided an opportunity for organisational spiritual capital to be reinforced (Noghiu, 2020; Verter, 2003; Wilkin, 2014). Collective spiritual capital that I observed in the school visits to school AF2 and AE1 was a rich unifying resource for the international school community.

I mean the camaraderie between staff, it is nice to be able to be surrounded people where you know that you share the foundation of faith and so you can erm, there is like a level of trust like what has been said, that you expect, you wouldn't be able to have at other places. Then it opens up conversations that you wouldn't naturally have with other co-workers if you didn't just assume that and know, not just assume but know that these people are here because they love Jesus and they are Christian and they believe in the bible. So that allows you to jump into conversations at a deeper level than you would be at, if you didn't have that shared belief system.

(Teacher focus group AE1)

It allowed for a drawing together and a commonality that transcended nationalities. In turn, the Christian international schools were reinforced and reinvigorated on an individual and organisational level by spiritual capital.

8.1.2 Personal faith and leading schools

My research revealed that, in contrast to previous research of teachers in Catholic schools in Australia, which suggested staff were inhibited in sharing their faith (Buchanan, 2020), headteachers in Christian international schools described leading in school environments where faith was widely shared. The culture of these international schools enabled faith to be shared and discussed. Faith conversations permeated speech and actions. Like Middlebrooks and Noghiu (2010) my findings identified that sharing faith provided unity around the Christian faith identity of the school, and provided a means for headteachers to unite staff around shared beliefs. Personal faith was enacted through a missional expression of their calling across the organisation. Headteachers shared their faith with colleagues in

the workplace on a corporate and a personal level, and this was reciprocated. This had an impact on the ethos of the school. This sharing of personal faith was also evident in two of the Christian international schools visited, where staff shared how faith was central to the life of their school, their interactions, conversations and decisions.

Of the sample of nine headteachers interviewed, each one expressed a deep sense of personal Christian belief. These strong beliefs informed their decision to undertake a leadership role, which was seen as a calling on the headteacher's life, a vocation and a mission (Grace, 2002). The personal beliefs and values of the headteachers interviewed merged with those of the organisation, the school itself. These values were gospel based and centred on the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Holy Bible 1984, Gal 5.22-23). The headteachers in the Christian international school sample said that such virtues underpinned their actions and decision-making as leaders. Their personal faith and outworking of that motivated their approach to the role. This influenced their attitude to leading those in the school. The leadership values that they espoused emerged from a personal faith which they readily shared in the workplace. They explained how they viewed the role as a sense of calling and that their work at the school was a response to that call. They gave examples of how they made decisions in school according to their faith values and in living those out in the workplace.

The personal faith of these leaders and the language and values of their Christian faith shaped the school culture. Headteachers explained that through their personal Christian

faith unity was built and a faith community. In doing so this reinforced the Christian values of the school. Keith explained that it was his belief that his personal faith shaped many aspects of school life:

The ultimate goals of education, how I view individuals and each human or person. Personal faith affects conflict resolution stuff to how we are teaching, to our student outcomes that we have created. I think it affects our behaviour and discipline stuff a lot like the roots or the foundations of that, our mission and vision of the school is totally shaped, I think by our Christian faith. I think it really affects a lot of things that it may not always superficially look different but the heartbeat of a lot of those things are I think are radically different. (Keith1)

Personal faith can also be problematic, when staff expect the school leaders to forgive all things. For example, Alison described a lack of professionalism that one staff member assumed could be ignored because they work in a Christian environment.

People think that they can just be forgiven and have no consequences maybe if there was a problem with how they were doing their job, it like surprises them if there is a repercussion and they think we are not being forgiving or not Christian enough. It is not about like forgiveness or unforgiveness, it is not like there is a grudge you know, but it is still maintaining high standards (Alison3)

Seeing their role at the school as part of a vocation and mission framed the thinking of the headteachers interviewed. They felt there was a calling to the role and in undertaking that role they were living out of their personal values and beliefs. Personal faith shaped leadership styles, priorities and approaches. Chapter four discussed the clear sense of mission that the headteachers had. They talked of a 'calling' on their lives which shaped

their rationale and how they understood their role at the school. One of the questions asked in the interview was *'How does faith influence how you lead?'* (See Appendix 1). Each headteacher interviewed talked of their calling to the role by God (Grace, 2002). This was not only an inclination to do the job well for God but something headteachers believed was ordained by God, and their leadership practice sought to honour that. They explained being upheld and sustained by a personal faith in Christ which framed their thinking and actions. They told of an active faith that formed the basis and rationale of their leadership. It would be wrong to assume that faith shaped all aspects of their workplace behaviour, but equally faith underpinned it and was a motivational factor in what they chose to do in the workplace and the kind of leader that they were.

The nine headteachers described their personal faith as giving them the means to lead. They talked of personal spiritual guidance through the Holy Spirit; a charisma (Grace, 2002; Lydon, 2009) of taking time in prayer, of listening to God and of reading the Bible to equip them in their role. They articulated the view of Christ as their ultimate leadership model and one whose servant leadership they desired to emulate. Central to this was a highly relational approach to leading, this emerged not just because of the leader's personal integrity but a wider desire to work well with others and serve them.

The results of this investigation show that these leaders demonstrated a practical outworking of their own personal faith and spirituality. For example, in their micro-actions of praying with members of staff and listening to staff members' concerns about relatives, (this is discussed in detail in Chapter five). Cumulatively, the beneficial impact that personal

faith conveyed in actions has an impact on organisational culture (Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010). The study found that practically, headteachers made time to live out the Christian vision. They tended workplace relationships and took time to engage individually with colleagues, knowing that these times informed ethos and contentment among staff (Cerit, 2009), and ultimately was an act of service to God. Bruce's leadership which is discussed in Chapter six, demonstrated how he walked around the school site, engaging with staff. He sat with staff, mentored and encouraged them, prayed with them and offered financial support to them during times of need. Bruce's personal faith underpinned his behaviour, and in turn, he formed a compassionate school culture that provided a compelling vision for Christian education.

All headteachers interviewed talked of growing in their own faith. They told how their faith had developed, leading to spiritual maturity and better leadership skills. Achieving success in their roles as headteachers was not simply about their own capability as leaders but as faith leaders too. They explained the faith alignment of their own leadership and their sense of responsibility and commitment to the faith life of staff and students. They explained their sense of purpose to lead the faith life of the school well. The headteachers interviewed saw their role as central in upholding the faith life of the school. Their role was to keep faith central to the purpose of the school, not to diminish it so that it became an annexed part of school life. They acknowledged that living out their personal faith in this way equipped them to promote the faith life of the school and the faith life of others.

The spirited testimonies of headteachers of Christian international schools concerning their leadership highlighted a fervent personal faith and driven commitment to Christian education. They articulated holding fast to their faith in Christ in many aspects of their leadership. Their personal faith drives them with a responsibility to pursue a personal relationship with Christ and to model Christ in their leading. To achieve this headteachers explained giving their time to their personal faith. In Chapter four, Jane described how she woke up early every morning to pray, read the bible and contemplate. Another headteacher spoke of the time he recognised that he needed to invest in his faith.

My hunger for Christ should be growing every year, not diminishing and shows in where I put my time and where I put effort. (Richard1)

All headteachers explained how time for reflection and prayer was part of their daily routine. They how they saw that their faith was strengthened through the private times of prayer and reflection. They described their identity as leaders being rooted in their Christian faith first. Peter explained his understanding of his role in being the headteacher as first and foremost being a 'Christ honouring mission' (Peter1).

In leading the headteachers took responsibility for the spiritual leadership of their schools. They talked of an obedience to that aspect of the role and included in that was a commitment in making sure that their faith was lived out. Their identity is in that role and calling. They saw themselves as 'witnesses', an idea that Grace (p.236, 2002) and Buchanan (p.98, 2020) highlighted as being part of a school leader's role. Headteachers told of how they saw themselves as envoys of the Christian faith in their role as school leaders. This shapes how they view relationships and the leader that they are striving to be. One headteacher described how he saw his role:

I know that even the little things I have like the conversation with the janitor is part of that and it has and it carries with it, additional eternal significance, it is not just a conversation with a colleague or someone who is on my team, we are part of something much bigger, so a sense of mission, bringing value to even the small things. (Peter1)

In Chapter six, another school leader Bruce described how personal faith shaped school culture 'I think our job is to meet them right where they are with the love of Jesus' (Bruce1). Bruce shared his personal faith; he was active in modelling it and was clear to communicate it by living it out. Living out their faith in the role of headteacher was part of what was expected of them. Not just because in undertaking the role they had signed a statement of faith, but in leading they chose to live out their faith in demonstrable ways. Their personal faith and enacting that faith in interactions with staff, parents, pupils and board members was part of their role. This involved mentoring, supporting and coming alongside staff members. Personal faith was evident in practical ways through offering to pray with staff or by meeting a practical need. Headteachers were conscious of their own faith and the role it played in supporting and upholding the spiritual life of the school 'Every Christian education institution should be a spiritual greenhouse (Bruce1). Their personal faith was part of their role in supporting the spiritual lives of others and not separate from it. As such it became a shaping force of their leadership which in turn had an impact on school culture. Personal faith was leveraged as part of their leading and was something that gave headteachers confidence as they saw that their relationship with God equipped them in difficult times.

The research found that when personal faith was at the core of a headteacher's leadership there was a vulnerability associated with that. What was shared by the nine headteachers in

their professional settings was something personal to themselves. In doing so, they forged relationships quickly in a transient community - the community was united by finding commonality through the Christian faith. However, there is also a personal cost to leading in such a way. Headteachers of Christian international schools described the burden of leading well, especially when there was conflict, matters of incompetence or disciplinary issues. Individual headteachers gave examples of how they mentally wrestled with personnel challenges and their desire to make the right decision for the organisation, and also to honour God. There appeared to be a tension for headteachers - sharing so much of their own personal faith in a professional sphere made difficult professional decisions a challenge. While a shared faith in Christ united the staff community, for headteachers it created a degree of vulnerability.

Personal faith was also an important theme in the inspection reports analysed for this research. Headteachers were highlighted by the inspectorate as having a personal faith and especially those headteachers who articulated their faith in the school, making it known. The inspection reports were from schools that were identified as being outstanding or good. A feature of many of them was the personal faith of the headteacher. A consequence of Catholic headteachers' personal faith was often described as having an impact, upholding and emboldening the Catholicity of the school (S20, 2018; S30,2019). Several Church of England schools were described as being strengthened because of the personal faith of the headteacher (D1, 2017; S1,2020). Personal faith of headteachers was described by the inspectorate as something that added to the ardour of the Christian faith identity of the school. Indeed, in some inspection reports there was a direct correlation between the

personal faith of the headteacher and the clarity and strength of the Christian vision of the school. Inspection reports suggested that a headteacher's personal faith provided a strengthening of the faith of the school, as it was something that was lived out and enacted in the school community (H10, 2020; E10, 2019). Headteachers were acknowledged in inspection reports as being living examples of the Christian faith of the whole school, and in doing so brought meaning to the school's Christian values. When expressed in the workplace, their personal faith brought vitality to the Christian mission and vision, enhancing it and strengthening it.

Many Catholic school leaders in the documentary research were identified as having a strong personal faith, which was described as shaping their approach to the role; viewing it as a vocation, a mission to extend the Catholic faith. This was noted by the inspectorate as having marked positive consequences across the school. Parallels can be made between leaders of Christian international schools and several headteachers who choose to undertake the role, accepting it as a role of service, of living a dual commitment to education and faith. The Catholic inspectorate acknowledged individual headteachers who had a personal faith and whose Catholicity was central to their leadership. Inspectors detailed aspects of individual headteacher's leadership that emerged from their faith and its enactment in the workplace. Examples of this were illustrated in Chapter seven and includes H10 (2020) and E10 (2019).

8.1.3 Relational School Leadership

Relational leading was central to the approach of the headteachers in Christian international schools in this study. All talked of the value they placed on relationships and of endeavouring to prioritise the needs of staff. Their approach to leadership reflects Ford and Wolfe's (2020) notion of servant leadership, which is concerned with relationships and putting others first (Greenleaf, 1977). Through the modelling, articulating and actions of service to others, interconnectedness is built. It is through the school leader's modelling that workplace culture is established (Lydon, 2021; Martin, 2018).

Bruce, the case study headteacher presented in Chapter six, was precise in his explanation of adopting the servant leadership model. His approach to leading in this way emerged from his Christian faith and his desire to serve and emulate the model of Christ. Bruce's reflections on his own leadership practice offered an example of what servant leadership looked like in a school context. Bruce described instances of compassionate, generous, relational and forgiving practice in his leadership. In practical ways, he gave staff his time, listened to them, ate with them, and in their professional doubts he was encouraging and affirming of them. He was intentional about valuing people over tasks and building individual relationships with all staff at the school.

We used to have gatherings for teachers and staff and when Bruce came, he included all of the service staff which I feel like that changed the dynamics of our school of being inclusive environment. It is not just well this is what we do, so we must be superior to you and even though no one would say that it was kind of the attitude, and so I think that his inclusive nature of valuing each person's role, no

matter what level of education they have or what job they are doing, I think a school leader who is able to publicly value people, I think is pretty excellent. (Teacher focus group. AF2)

The teacher focus group in his school identified the servant leader model as one that they saw enacted by Bruce. They identified the intentional way that he valued all staff and brought them together and being intentional about valuing every member of staff. They told of how Bruce's kindness, financial provision for others in times of need, thoughtfulness and care were all central to his leadership and that this was something that they were appreciative of, as it made them feel valued. Teachers from the focus group at Bruce's school said that Bruce's servant leadership approach had an influence on the school community. It created unity, a relational way of being and valuing people that impacted the school culture.

They care about more than just our teaching performance, even though they value that. They care about are we healthy spiritually, are we healthy emotionally, and those kinds of things. (Teacher focus group AF2)

Servant leadership was described as a model of leadership that many of the Christian international school headteachers aspired to emulate, but acknowledged the difficulties and challenges in putting others first.

For Bruce, there were school-based conflicts that seemed to challenge the servant leadership approach he was trying to achieve, not least the wrangling with the school board alongside other personnel challenges. Despite these, he explained how he sought to value

relationships at every stage, even in disputes and friction. In times of workplace challenges and conflict, Bruce saw that his role required more than servant leadership. It demanded something different of his leadership. He explained how he viewed the servant leadership model – this did not mean being passive when challenges arose. He told of how in difficult times, and primarily for the sake of the school itself, he was able to assert himself, rather than being over-ruled and backing down. Even in those times, he explained how he wanted to honour relationships with all concerned. He described how this was important to him in replicating the model of Christ, but also in his personal relationship with God - Bruce wanted to make decisions that were honouring to God. Similarly, the other eight headteachers interviewed told of their own edification in the process of adopting the servant leadership model. They explained their experience of drawing closer to God in the self-sacrificial approach to leading and recognised the need to draw strength from God to lead in this way. To achieve this, they spent time in prayer, seeking God's will in decision making. Bruce explained how the pursuit of the servant leadership model resulted in his own spiritual growth and refining of his character.

8.1.4 The Servant Leadership approach and burnout

While there was evidence of sacrificial leading and a demonstrative attempt to put others first, in doing so this approach demanded a personal investment that at times seemed to be a ceaseless giving of oneself. Servant leadership often resulted in prioritising others at the expense of one's self. As a result, burnout was a tangible possibility and arguably an inevitability, as such leadership sought to be at the service of others. In my data analysis, I could see a resonance with the findings of Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019), that

ultimately the model of servant leadership is too demanding, all-encompassing and an unobtainable style of leadership. This exhaustion and frustration were acutely felt by the headteachers interviewed especially when those in the school community were in significant need, and more strikingly so in leading during the Covid-19 pandemic (which is discussed later in this chapter). Five of the nine headteachers interviewed felt the servant leadership model had a cost on well-being. This fits with Branson, Marra and Buchanan's (2019) description of the servant leadership model being unfeasible in the long term. Not all heads of school and principals aligned with this view, but some went to great lengths to explain the personal frustrations and difficulties in serving well. These leaders in pursuing servant leadership were not indefatigable. They explained the personal cost to their emotions and sense of self-worth when they felt they had 'got it wrong'. Leading relationally means that as a leader you are personally invested in the school community and in the lives of staff. A consequence of that is being acutely sensitive to the triumphs and the challenges. For headteachers in this study leading and emulating Christ was a privilege and a weight to bear. There was a sense of being weary and exhausted in living out their faith and leading in this way.

Burnout is a significant issue in relational leading; the giving of oneself to a situation, the compassion and empathy required to navigate the support of a colleague, and the sharing of personal faith. In the servant leadership approach, there is a personal cost. The findings of this study suggest leaders in this research believed there to be a self-imposed pressure. They did not try to serve because colleagues were expectant of it, but because it was biblical and a Christlike model they were trying to uphold. Of the nine headteachers interviewed,

five talked of recognising strains on their leadership and burnout was central to that. This finding supports the research of Francis, Village, Robbins and Wulff (2011), who stress the importance of personality in one's ability to manage stress. Headteachers told of their awareness of what they saw as their vulnerabilities, which is in line with the study of Francis *et al* (2011). All headteachers interviewed explained their belief that they were sustained in their work and had satisfaction in their role because they saw it as a calling. Francis *et al* (2011) consider that this is in part linked to personality types, some of whom can more readily endure a position of ministry.

Resilience emerged as a repeated idea in the interviews with headteachers. Some specifically talked of faith offering them resilience in their vocation (Francis *et al*, 2011), of faith being foundational, offering them support and reassurance in times of challenge. All headteachers gave examples of what they saw as sustaining for them in their roles. The evidence from this study highlighted the importance of taking time away from school for rest, often in the form of a holiday, even if it was only for a short time. Headteachers talked of rest as being core to their leadership role, including knowing how to and when to take rest. They talked of renewing one's self, of taking time to re-energise and understanding this as a requirement of their role. They explained the differing ways that they achieved rest and the personal frustrations of not resting when they had needed to.

Prayer and prayer times with the whole staff body, with the senior leadership team or with individuals on staff was another way that they felt supported to fulfil their role. Having an informal network of support was described as being important. This included having

mentors and other heads of international schools, who could offer regular advice and guidance. They identified this as being extremely helpful in assisting them in carrying out their role. Self-preservation and care of self was central to the role and acknowledging one's own capacity, and the self-awareness to prioritise. This was incumbent on headteachers for their success. Several leaders appeared to be acutely aware of their own deficiencies as school leaders and were able to take decisive action to mitigate against that.

Observations of three of the leaders, Patrick, Alison and Bruce described their focus on endeavouring to lead compassionately (Setlhodi, 2019). These headteachers explained how they saw that the school leader set the tone for the school culture by enacting it. If the school expected students to exhibit kindness and compassion, these values should be evident at all times in the actions of a leader. The findings of this research support those of Ford and Wolfe (2020) who highlight similar attributes of compassionate leadership. Such interactions with others in the workplace matter in reinforcing the school's vision to all stakeholders. What was central to the leadership of Patrick, Alison and Bruce was the prioritising relationships and showing care for staff. The results of the observational research support the findings of Ford and Wolfe (2020) who suggest that leaders should be intentional, taking time to foster positive relations with staff (p.22). Connecting with staff and being empathetic was central to the behaviour of Patrick, Alison and Bruce. Of note was their attention to the small actions, the little gestures, sitting and sharing a meal with a staff member and taking time to engage in conversation that was not work-related. Cumulatively these actions established and maintained a school culture that valued people and cared for them.

The study raises important questions about how headteachers use their time, despite their busyness, to build relationships. Relationships in the workplace were valued and not transactional. Some attributed this priority to the context of the country and culture in which their school was situated, and societal expectations of leading in a relational way. While this was not always explained in detail, some headteachers saw leading in a differing culture and across nationalities as necessitating a different more authentic and relational style of leading. There were examples of heads of school establishing themselves as leaders through building relationships not only in school, but in the wider community. This transcultural stance was common for headteachers who sought to facilitate a relational way of establishing themselves within the community and building relationships by spending time with people. Cross-cultural positioning emerged because of the faith of headteachers. They described working in cultures that were different from their own and needing to be relational.

8.1.5 Leading a school in a different culture

All of the nine headteachers interviewed talked about a cultural sensitivity to varying degrees, that shaped how they chose to lead their schools. They demonstrated an Ubuntu leadership stance that sought to build staff teams by fostering interconnectedness (Msila, 2008; Setlhodi, 2019). For example, Keith, the head of a school in a country based in East Africa, explained how his relational approach to leading emerged from his sensitivity and awareness to the local context where he worked. He explained his appreciation of a communal rather than individualistic way of thinking and working (Du Toit, 2005; Setlhodi, 2019), and how through his leadership he sought to reframe his leadership approach to

reflect a collective and relational way of leading. He gave examples of what this looked like, explaining the importance of spending time with staff, not for the benefit of the organisation, but as a way of developing relationships. He viewed those informal, relational moments as central to his leadership role - they were more important to him than efficiency and output. By doing so he saw that it enabled him in his role to quickly build a team and develop positive relations within the community. Keith explained how he took time to meet with people in the community and have coffee with them, explaining that this was culturally what was expected; to sit, drink coffee and not to talk about school-related issues but simply to build the relationship. He described seeking to truly understand a culture that was different to his own and getting to know that culture through listening well and valuing interactions with individuals. He recounted the benefit of this approach and how he had an increased appreciation for the prioritising, fostering and tending of relationships in leading, of listening and of understanding others. He achieved this by making time to spend with people talking to build the relationship. He walked the corridors of his school and spent informal conversation time with staff and often not talking about work related matters. A similar leadership approach was also evident in the leadership of other headteachers. Peter spending time discussing the wedding of the janitor's son (see Chapter five, section 5.2) is another example of this as he chose to prioritise this to further develop relationships, knowing that in the national context, such extended greetings and casual discussions were central to his work.

Bruce's leadership is a further example of this as he explained how he prioritised getting to know parents and the culturally appropriate ways in his school context of doing that when

arriving at the school. He referred to the building of relations by knowing exactly how to greet, either a handshake or 'a three-kiss greeting' (Bruce2). The schools' contexts shaped their leading and not only the strategic decision-making but also the small behavioural gestures with a desire to signal a cultural sensitivity.

Similarly, Patrick (AE1a) in leading his school, told of how he shared the burden of when a colleague's brother had been stealing. He did this by seeking to resolve the situation together, working with the colleague, praying with him and supporting him until the matter was resolved. Catherine told of building connections through talk and the importance of talking to build interconnectedness. Jane, a primary school principal based at a Christian international school in the Caribbean, expressed that in her small actions such as baking muffins for a colleague and writing individual notes of thanks she saw that those workplace relations were enhanced. Headteachers specifically talked about leading in a culture that differed from their own. There was an awareness and sensitivity in their leading that leadership in an African context necessitated prioritising relational ways of leading through talk, spending time and listening. This forges an inter-connectedness, a community of togetherness and that in doing so, builds capacity and a sense of team across the school staff. Another pertinent example of this is in Bruce's leadership who when faced with school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, prioritised making sure staff would receive their monthly salary in cash knowing that banks would be closed. He ensured that food provisions were given to staff, especially the non-teaching staff and that overseas staff were given the chance to be repatriated rather than face the isolation of a lockdown. Such actions while evidence of a leader's care was also how Bruce made decisions that reflected his servant

leadership and ubuntu thinking. He was compassionate towards the collective needs of his staff.

For headteachers of Christian international schools, relationships were key to how they built teams through forging positive relations and establishing a culture and environment that was supportive of the Christian school community. One school director based in East Africa recognised the importance of relationships in his leading:

I try to be as relationally connected with as many people in our community a day as possible, erm some it is just greeting, some it's you know more intentional conversations. (Keith1)

Another established superintendent of a large Christian international school in Africa suggested that prioritising relationships was central to his thinking:

Relationships are important I will say, hey I haven't checked in with this person for a while and I need to do that. (Peter1)

The notion of building relationships quickly and establishing leadership rapidly in an international school context that is fluid was an aspect of this study. Setlhodi (2019), makes the point that the African approach to leadership is foundationally different to leadership styles and approaches in the West. This was expressed by Christian international school headteachers who discerned the prioritising of relationships over tasks.

The initiatives and goals and right, those are secondary here to the relationship. If you don't have that you aren't going to get anything done and so it really has to be pulling back. I am an achiever so it has really taken a while to learn. (Keith1)

In a community that has over thirty-five nationalities from five continents, how we communicate that, expectations, what does community mean, that is radically different to an American, than to a Brit right? (Keith1)

Culture shaped interactions and the value placed on tending relations in the community. Keith a school director of a school in an East African nation said 'culture is everything' (Keith1). He said that leading in this context had been very much about recognising and learning the differences in relational leading 'currency is relationship and investment in relationship' (Keith1).

Headteachers established their leadership, and built teams through the relationships that they forged and how they established a culture and environment that was supportive of those in the Christian school community.

I try to be as relationally connected with as many people in our community a day as possible, erm some it is just greeting, some it's you know more intentional conversations'(Keith1).

Staying relationally connected, like really communicating well with people (Keith1). Headteachers saw the need to value time spent with staff to develop relationships. A consequence of this was that staff felt valued and that their individual needs were recognised. Staff were developed through those relationships, both in their faith and professionally because of informal conversations and interaction. It built interconnectedness, an ubuntu approach to leading and strengthened the school community.

Relational leadership emerges from headteachers' personal beliefs and a desire to model the leadership of Christ. During interviews headteachers told of their belief in the Holy Spirit's equipping, enabling them to undertake the role of headteacher. They saw their work at the school as a life of service and prayer, rooted in a relationship with God to equip them for their professional role. This was evident in the relational way of seeking to meet the needs of individuals. Headteachers described how they were sensitive to the spiritual needs of others, the whole staff body and individual staff members. Headteachers prayed with staff, attended to their needs (materially and financially), and provided mentoring and practical support. Jane explained the way she sought to be attentive and sensitive to the needs of individual staff members. She demonstrated a deep level of compassion through small gestures of kindness.

The focus groups held with teachers in the schools visited for the research uncovered the impact of this caring and people-centred culture. Teachers told how this overall compassionate ethos was positive for mental health and well-being. They articulated an appreciation of working in a school culture where leaders were generous with their time and cared about staff. Practical expressions of compassion that established a culture of care were detailed in Chapter five, emphasising the value of the school leaders who made time to forge, foster and nurture relationships. Furthermore, headteachers recounted being interested in colleagues, endeavouring to listen well and being caring and thoughtful in providing for them in times of need. The evidence from this study suggests that all headteachers prioritised relationships above all other concerns.

All nine of the headteachers told of endeavouring to build relations and to do good deeds with specific purpose; they were living out the biblical model of Christ-like characteristics enacted in their leadership (Lydon, 2009). Headteachers explained leading with a hope that was born out of faith and never stopped believing in a strength, resilience and trust in God. This innate spirituality and desire to serve God well was their motivation in leading. Several headteachers expressed the view that their leading was an act of worship, gratitude and love. Their leading was an outpouring of God's love because of being loved. Leading is worship, it is prayer and a living out of a belief in, and relationship with God.

8.1.6 Leading and having a philosophy for Christian education

Chapter four examined the foundational beliefs, values and principles concerning Christian education held by headteachers of Christian international schools in this study. They explained their approach to leading which was constructed through a lived advocacy of their personal faith in Christ. This was central to their leadership as they exemplified, modelled and lived out their own faith as they led. When asked directly about their philosophy for Christian education, all headteachers had a thought through response; for some it seemed almost rehearsed. Leaders were able to explain a detailed rationale that underpinned their approach to education, specifically concerning how faith shaped school life and experiences. Interviewees were comfortable articulating this philosophy - they had fine-tuned the language used to express it over time to different stakeholders.

All headteachers described a philosophy for Christian education and clearly expressed the Christian belief and identity of the school. They gave varied responses, including the view that God was central to the work of the school, the lives of the students and that He was the beginning and end of education - God is in all things and therefore He could not be removed from academic study. Perhaps Peter had the greatest sense of clarity about how faith and education aligned:

Asking the big questions from a Christian perspective is part one, the second is being intentional about reintegrating faith in the specific subject matter. (Peter1)

Peter viewed God as central to education. He saw the work of educators was to keep God at the centre of our understanding of the world: central to the curriculum and to how others were treated and valued. Leaders told of their school being a 'spiritual greenhouse' (Bruce1), but one in which students were not forced into Christianity 'I think that our job is not to convert or to convince people of Jesus' (Bruce1). While Christian thinking provided a framework for these leaders and schools, it was also central to the values of the school. Headteachers shared experiences that aligned with the Christian faith but were welcoming of those of different faiths and those of none. They saw their ongoing responsibility was to make the Christian faith relevant to students in the twenty-first century.

A personal philosophy for Christian education informed how leaders chose to lead. All decision-making was based on these values and foundational beliefs concerning faith and education. In collecting the data, I wanted to understand the worldview of these headteachers, their biblical worldview, and how they understood the role of God in

education and their school. Importantly, headteachers saw the value that faith played in the life of the school, and of having a Christian faith rationale for themselves as leaders.

One commonality among these leaders was that all nine headteachers had a clear understanding and distinct language of the Christian faith, with which to articulate the school's Christian vision. They expressed clearly a highly confident language for leading and describing the Christian identity of the school, via a well-formed, thought-out philosophy for Christian education. This Christian philosophy was foundational to the values of their school and for the school leaders it emboldened them. They had over time cultivated and curated a language of leading a Christian international school that had been refined. In their leading they had developed their own understanding and rationale for Christian education. This process had provided a clarity of thought about the purposes of Christian international schooling and a language with which to express it. Articulating those values was a necessary aspect of leadership, yet if a leader did not have a Christian vernacular, the Christian vision could not be fully achieved. One could argue that if a language of Christian leadership is 'borrowed' and not fully known and understood, it arguably undermines its substance. This finding supports that of Green and Cooling (2009) who advocate the value of a language of spirituality, which they see as necessary for leaders of Christian schools to communicate the Christian vision of the school. Headteachers talked of actively signposting others as they led, through a clear articulation of their language choices. It was not just having the right vocabulary, it was expressing faith clearly at every juncture, modelling a theological language that reinforced the Christian ethos of the school. The headteachers interviewed lived out their spiritual capital, derived from their personal faith, faith experiences, values

and sphere of belief. What these school leaders depicted, was a model of leadership shaped by a rich resource of spiritual capital and a language of leading that extended the understanding of the Christian faith through a daily articulation of belief. Their language brought clarity and understanding about Christian education in practice. The study captured a cohort of Christian leaders who were creative and innovative in their pursuit of Christian leadership, and in communicating it plainly. Many of them had the confidence of faith and of speech to clearly articulate a compelling vision for Christian education, without fear of reprisals or accusations of proselytising.

The insights gained from this study show that metacognitive strategies are needed to practically achieve a living out of headteachers' vocational calling (Schuttloffel, 2019, p.16). In living out their vocation in the school these leaders were reflective, thoughtful, intentional and self-aware. A common theme across all participants was that they were not carrying out a job for the job's sake, but for a greater purpose; to honour and serve God in the undertaking of their role. This way of thinking was unanimous for all of the nine headteachers. Leaders gave examples of some of the ways their leadership was compelling, as it was a thought through iterative approach to Christian education shaped by context. It was expressed in words and actions and refined. Several headteachers were clear that they used Christ as their model - their ultimate example of servant leadership. Personal faith, relational leading and adopting models, such as the servant leadership approach are useful in understanding how a Christian school culture is lived out by the headteacher. The headteacher's actions, attitude and behaviour in valuing and prioritising the needs of staff was central to establishing and maintaining a school culture that was a compelling vision of

Christian education. In addition, headteachers of Christian international schools described having a clear philosophy for education that was an understanding of the role that faith played in the life of their school and in education. This was a reconciling of the idea of Christian belief and school life and how faith informed approaches to learning.

In summary, headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith because they had a spiritual capital that they drew on as a resource in leading their schools. They had a personal faith in Christ and a sense of calling to the role. This equips them with a faith language, experiences and understanding that they make use of as they led. The headteachers led relationally and had a philosophy for Christian education.

8.2 What does future leadership of church and Christian international schools look like? And why is it important?

This research set out to investigate the leadership of headteachers in Christian international schools and to consider this alongside current leadership practice in church schools in England. The documentary analysis of Section 48 inspection reports from the Church of England and Catholic schools delineated some pertinent points about church school leadership. It gave reference to examples of leaders' individual expertise in 'good' or 'outstanding' schools. The details of those leadership approaches, signal to other school leaders and stakeholders aspects of leadership that are valued and of merit. There were examples of compassionate servant leadership and of lived faith in which the headteacher was willing to share their personal faith as a witness in the school environment. What is unclear is how a Christian vision for education can be conveyed effectively by a leader who

does not have the experiences or language of faith (Jelfs, 2010; Street, 2007). This is an ongoing challenge in recruiting Christian headteachers to lead church schools. While Catholic schools only seek to appoint practising Catholics to be headteachers, Church of England schools are willing to recruit headteachers who do not share the Christian faith, but who are supportive of it (Holmes and Pratt Adams, 2021). The shortage of candidates for headship who have a personal Christian faith means that it is sometimes necessary to appoint non-Christians into these roles. With this in mind, there is a justification for thinking that the Christian identity of these schools will be more of a challenge to realise than for Catholic schools and Christian international schools.

Leaders who do not have a Christian faith are not able to draw on their spiritual capital as they lead. In short, while Christian distinctiveness may take on differing forms, there has to be parameters of understanding and a way of supporting headteachers in their theological understanding of leading schools, so that the Christian identity of church schools can be clearly articulated and is not diminished.

The culture of church schools in England should be distinctive and headteachers should endeavour to forge a culture that is not only Christian but affirming, supportive and encouraging (Church of England, 2016). How leaders prioritise relationships which are developed and engendered to prioritise Christian values is important in establishing a compelling vision of Christian education. Leaders are individuals and schools are unique places with their own sense of identity, character, culture and purpose. For leaders of church schools, this aim relates to practically how they allow time and space within those

contexts to articulate their personal vision for education and lead with humanity and humility, with faith being an intrinsic part of their sense of moral purpose. While an inspection framework does not easily capture this complexity, it is important to recognise examples of leaders who articulate a compelling vision for Christian education through their expression of those beliefs. To evaluate this fully, the inspectorate would have to deepen the focus of their scrutiny during inspection visits, which would necessitate longer inspections. The details of the leadership language and philosophy for Christian education in leading schools theologically rooted in a Christian vision would be useful to acknowledge in a comprehensive manner. Inspectors would have to look beyond the legislated areas of collective worship and the quality of the denominational education to fully appreciate the breadth of impact of such headteachers. Inspection reports in this sample did not, or only partially stated what the micro activity of leading a church school well looked like or practically how that was achieved. Knowing how Christian vision, theology, language and service are lived out and modelled in practical terms by the headteacher of a school would be beneficial. Such examples would inform stakeholders, allowing them to understand the exact nature of highly commendable leadership, thus ensuring that it is maintained, developed and extended. Arguably, inspection reports do not consistently identify, quantify, or truly recognise details of school leadership and the essence of what leaders do.

The selection of inspection reports illustrated that by their design, inspection criteria capture aspects of practice of church school leadership. They do not always state the details of practical actions and approaches of highly effective school leadership: the everyday interactions of headteachers, spoken and unspoken, their utterances, signalling and

behaviour that shape a school and a school's culture, and are of significant importance. It may be overly burdensome for the inspectorate to identify, pinpoint and celebrate best practices when their role is to validate and document the impact of such. Some of these reports offer glimpses of the features of strength in church school leadership, but they do not always offer a comprehensive view of it. The Section 48 reports provide a valuable detailed account of church school leadership that signal practical ways the inspection criteria are lived out. These examples contribute to our understanding of approaches to church school leadership.

Commentators have identified that due to the constraints of neo-liberal parameters and demands of stakeholders (Hand, 2002; Worsley, 2013), there are additional challenges for church school leaders in England. These leaders do not necessarily have the agency to operate as a Christian leader might wish to, as stakeholders may not support Christian values. Despite this and because of it, arguably there is a greater need to ascertain the right language of spirituality that is Christian, yet also inclusive, valuing and respecting those of all faiths and none but is invitational.

The following sections further seek to answer the question concerning the future leadership of church and Christian schools. The next section discusses the idea of language and leading a Christian or church school, it then moves on to consider the future of Christian international schools and postcolonialism.

8.2.1 Communicating the Christian vision; the importance of language in leading

The findings of this study suggest that a headteacher's ability to articulate the Christian values of their school are central to the future of church and Christian international schools. Developing a leadership language of spirituality and a language that is based on a clear theology impacts a school's Christian distinctiveness, ethos and culture. This necessitates a fundamental grasp of the theological beliefs of the school and then, in turn, a language to articulate this aspect of the school's character. This can only be achieved through training and equipping headteachers to develop their spiritual capital as they lead these schools. Headteachers need to be supported to have a theological understanding and language with which to lead. This includes a spiritual understanding of church school leadership and a confidence to communicate it well. If a school leader does not have the knowledge, understanding and experience to communicate the Christian identity, then this has implications for the Christian identity of the school. Clarity of language used by the headteacher in communicating the Christian values of the school is essential. One church school inspection report acknowledged:

The articulation of these roots has been lost so the vision's anchor in Christianity is no longer made explicit for all to understand. (T3, 2016)

This comment highlights the need for clarity in articulating the Christian mission and vision. A commitment by the headteachers to develop the right language to express the Christian identity of the school is required. In the documentary research of church schools, examples were captured of headteachers who articulated clearly the school's Christian vision and values in their language and modelled it in their behaviour. It is necessary to accept that leaders of church and Christian schools need to be more resourced to have a deep

understanding, ecclesiastical knowing and theological language. It cannot be assumed that school leaders have such spiritual capital (Grace, 2002). Both the Catholic Church and the Church of England need to protect the Christian character of their schools and shore up the theology and Christian philosophy for education of their headteachers.

The language of leaders to articulate the Christian vision is essential. Understanding and being able to express the vision of the school is part of a headteacher's advocacy of it and reinforcement of those values. Equipping leaders with a language of the Christian faith and a language of spirituality is necessary to empower them as leaders of Christian schools and church schools. Green and Cooling (2009) identify a lack of a shared language of spirituality and Christian distinctiveness, which they see can limit the discussion of it. This interpretation of the findings shows that the spiritual leadership of schools is important and getting the language right in articulating the school's spiritual identity is key to providing a compelling vision for Christian education.

8.2.2 Christian international schools and postcolonialism

As discussed in earlier chapters, considerable criticism has been levelled at international schools relating to their history of emerging as a product of colonialism (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021; Keller, 2015). The literature review highlighted concerns levelled at international schools such as the Western education that they offer and the fact that they are often staffed by expatriates. As such these schools are seen as Anglo-American schools and not international. A limitation of this research is that it examines the leadership of

Heads of schools and principals in Christian international schools of private institutions who are part of that neo-political framework. Christian international schools are further open to criticism in that they are fee-paying and perpetuate elitism for those who have the means to access them. Indeed, their continued existence, critics argue, means that they represent sustained colonialism and continued cultural hegemony (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021; Gibson and Bailey, 2022). This research would suggest that their arguments are not invalid as the headteachers in this study were predominantly from the U.S. In addition to that the nine schools in this study all provided schooling that utilised an Anglo- American curriculum or a variation of that.

In this research, headteachers recognised that families chose to send their children to international schools for many reasons and not necessarily because they were Christian. Headteachers suggested that parents wanted access to an international education and wanted the quality of education that they saw the Christian international schools offered. They acknowledged the diversity of beliefs held by the families who chose a Christian international school as a schooling option. Catholic and Anglican faiths are both represented in Christian international schools alongside those who are evangelically Christian, those who are nominally Christian and those of other beliefs. International schools have been criticised for being elitist and for being the education of the privileged. They are seen as creating an educational dichotomy that many see as unhelpful. Yet what is of note is the sustained popularity of Christian international schools and the gradual shift in the school population, as wealthier national families seek to access this type of education, in preference to national school education (Bunnell, 2022; Hayden and Thompson, 2008).

By their very existence, international schools are seen as a rejection of the local culture in preference for what is considered to be a more aspirational Western education. These schools often operate independently of the national education standards and policies, unlike their national counterparts. They are schools that are by name international schools however, the curriculum is primarily Western, largely being Anglo-American, but appealing because they offer a school experience and qualifications that equips students to access universities in the West. However, this research of Christian international schools supports that of Hayden and Thompson 2008, as the demographic in these schools is changing. There is a growing proportion of national families choosing this kind of schooling option (Hayden and Thompson 2008; Hayden and Thompson, 2010) as a desirable schooling option. This was reflected in the cohort of Christian international schools in this study.

While all of the nine schools were international as they had many nationalities represented in their student body, the schools had a majority of national students attending the schools. It is true that these schools were initially established to meet the needs of expatriates as they were set up to provide a Western education for the children of missionaries, however, this is no longer the case. While missionaries have continued to access these schools, Christian international schools have become increasingly popular with national families. This is largely because of the curriculum offered that parents find appealing, as previously mentioned.

The findings of the thesis do not dispute that international schools are a legacy of colonialism. Indeed, many still continue to promote direct Anglo-American cultural hegemony through their Western curriculum and staffing (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). Christian international schools could be viewed to be perpetuating continued colonialism; as by their existence, they are limiting the national culture and constraining it. It is because of this that Christian international schools can never fully be postcolonial. Arguably, postcolonial thinking should not be concerned with eradicating Christian international schools, because of the legacy of whiteness that they represent, if they are deemed useful to national families. Moreover, if they provide access to elite universities around the world because of the curriculum they offer then their value is important. What is necessary is a shift from being 'White' schools (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021), this transition is essential.

Cultural hegemony through Christian imperialist education is shifting though, both in cohort and leadership of these school communities. This is reflected in the staff of these schools, see Appendix 8. This development in Christian international schools should not be dismissed. Indeed, Christian international schools are evolving from what they were. This is evident in the range of nationalities of teachers at the school. Seven out of the nine schools had teachers from more than ten different nationalities. In terms of the leadership of the schools, six of the nine headteachers were white Americans, see Figure 1 in Chapter three. To claim that these schools are abandoning Western characteristics and becoming wholly international, would be incorrect as much of the curriculum offered is still Anglo-American and the leadership is still Western.

In agreement with Keller (2015), the findings of this study found that international schools are moving to a second phase - post-globalisation, postcolonial, and are emerging in a way that is a reframing and redefining of them. This new second phase is not without concerns, but includes a morphing demographic of senior leaders, teachers and students, including an attempt to curate a curriculum that is more international. In all of the schools in this study, the largest cohort of pupils were from wealthier national families (Hayden and Thompson, 2008; Keller, 2015). The findings support those of Keller (2015) who notes the emerging market of wealthier national families who are becoming (if they are not already), the dominant parent group. Making assumptions about the white bias of these schools is valid, but there is a danger in doing so as it does not necessarily capture the changing landscape of international schools. That is not to negate the valid points about colonial roots and Gardner- McTaggart's (2021) judgment that international schools are not international but 'White International Schools' (p.16). While this argument is not incorrect, it is arguably more nuanced than this. To make assumptions about such schools being either 'White international schools' or 'Global' schools (Garder-McTaggart, 2021, p.16), is to label them as 'white' when, in fact, they are not. A failure to acknowledge the complex and changing nature of international schools and the changing nature of the staff and students on roll means that such changes are not readily recognised or endorsed, but ignored in the categorising of them.

Leaders in the study acknowledged the complexities in leading international schools. Keller (2015), also noted the skilled leadership necessary to navigate the trajectory of these schools through postcolonial thinking. This included building bridges and creating unity in international communities that seem polarised, all of which was an ongoing aspect of the

role. Headteachers told of leading with sensitivity and forging international schools that served the needs primarily of the host country. The Christian international school headteachers in this study viewed their leadership role as bringing together an international community. In their leadership role, they had an obligation to do that. Keith articulated in part the complexity of it:

In a community that has over thirty-five nationalities from five continents, how we communicate, expectations, what does community mean, it is radically different to an American school or to an English school, right? So, you put up one fence on this campus in a certain spot and it could be civil war because it breaks the definition of community that someone has in their head, that hasn't ever been communicated right. (Keith1)

One of the challenges Keith identified for international school headteachers is the central issue of being able to 'bridge boundaries across cultures,' (Keller, 2015, p.913) as one of many aspects of the leadership role. Keith articulated part of the challenge of leading international schools that are truly international. He identified the importance of communicating well as part of the ongoing challenge. He, like other headteachers in this study saw as part of his role, the need to build a unity of understanding and thinking; one that is sensitive to other cultures while drawing them together in achieving the school's educational mission.

The leaders of the schools in this study are in many ways not just leaders of schools but of complex school communities. A large-scale study of international school leaders by Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013) suggests that leaders of international schools demonstrate a valuable cultural intelligence that 'enables individuals to understand diversity and interact in

a culturally sensitive manner' (Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013, p.840), and it is perhaps this that is the most essential for headteachers in an international school context to get right. Headteachers provided examples of how they had made mistakes and were open about how they had not always demonstrated such awareness or sensitivity to working in an international school context. Keller (2015) talks of 'opposing perspectives' (p.913) in international schools and the challenge for leaders to manage those. These opposing values are born out of diversity resulting in the complexity of differing expectations and demands from stakeholders. It is important to acknowledge this as it is a significant aspect of international school leadership, trying to understand and assimilate lots of cultures, values and beliefs while articulating a trajectory, on behalf of the school. It is an awareness of the wonderful tapestry of working in an international context and yet the complexity of navigating cultures and relations within it. Headteachers gave examples of how over time managing the demands, expectations and assumptions of an international community strengthened their leadership.

Of the nine headteachers in this study, the ethnicity of three was non-white. All three of these leaders explained their understanding of their background and identity in assuming what have historically been positions undertaken by Anglo-American headteachers. One head of school told of his experience of teaching and his background that gave him insight and enabled him to lead well in an international school context:

I feel blessed to have experienced that with my twenty-one years in the U.K. and also being a native African. (Patrick1)

Another explained how his own experiences informed how he was focused on developing and encouraging others:

I have been a minority my whole life and I have especially been a minority in the white evangelical space. (Bruce1)

At times I was the minority in the room because they needed a minority in the room, or I would kind of hit like a glass ceiling because I wasn't white. (Bruce1)

Bruce's experiences shaped the school he was trying to create. He told of intentionally seeking to equip national staff for leadership positions in the school, including identifying someone who could take over from him as head of school. He told of his frustration in working with the school board to consider who might replace him as part of his succession planning. Preference had been mooted for an Anglo-American head of school. Bruce went on to explain how some national parents and board members at the school wanted an international head of school and not someone who was a local hire:

Five out of our six board members are East African, they just laughed it off. (Bruce1)

Specifically, they requested a white American head of school to take over as the next head of school. This finding, while surprising, is in line with the research of Hayden and Thompson (2010), which suggests the inclination is for international teachers as opposed to national hires. This highlights that parents, board members and other stakeholders prefer 'Western-trained' teachers (Hayden and Thompson, 2010, p.91). It seems that there is a sense of colonial legacy that for some parents, who preferred a white leader as they perceive this as a route to access a more elite education. Such assumptions, it seems, emerge from

aspirational values that drive this thinking, as such appointments are incorrectly viewed as better.

International schools are in a time of transition and this is important to recognise. Those who continue to malign international school education (which includes Christian international schools), choose to articulate time and again the narrative that is critical of an Anglo-American ideology, that they view these schools as perpetuating. However, consideration needs to be given to the changing nature of these communities as they are becoming more like 'Global schools' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021, p.16) in the education that they offer. In doing so, an ongoing priority must be a greater emphasis on staff training that equips, supports, and enables all teachers (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). The rethinking of these schools must include making space for national headteachers to be appointed to lead these international schools. For educators in the field of international schooling, there needs to be an expectation of this change and a signposting to those schools that achieve this. While these schools do offer an education to wealthier privileged families, it is important that international schools offer parents a choice. What is arguably pertinent to the criticism of these schools is the idea of cultural assimilation of national families, who perpetuate privilege and elitism, previously only accessed by international expatriate families.

Christian international schools are complex and vary considerably. Making assumptions about them poses a challenge when each school differs from the next and is shaped by differing contexts within each country. Within this complexity, headteachers in this study

forged ways to lead. They gave examples of leading during civil unrest and in countries recovering from war. They recounted details of leading a diverse teaching staff and managing expectations of families and students from differing backgrounds and faith beliefs.

For current leaders of international schools, the changing cohort of students (from expatriate families to more national families), needs to be acknowledged, embraced and reflected in the staffing and curriculum provision of these schools. While the complex postcolonial context of Christian international schools was not the focus of this study, it would be inappropriate for this thesis to be written and not acknowledge the international school context in which these headteachers are leading.

8.2.3 Complexity and challenges in Christian International school leadership

Another complex matter for headteachers in this study was that of hiring staff. In employing an international staff, the annual problem was whether a member of staff would stay at the school or relocate. This created a fragility for leaders as it was not always easy to maintain stability in the curriculum offering. Gardner-McTaggart (2018), acknowledges the ongoing challenge:

Transience is a real, debilitating problem for international schools. For leaders in this educational context, alignment with organisational values, and empowerment for permanence may be more apt than anywhere else in education. (2018 p.160)

His concerns were articulated by headteachers in this study who saw staff leave sometimes suddenly and relocate back to their home country. Alison recounted one experience that illustrated the challenge:

We had teachers that broke their contract in the middle of the year for fairly self-serving and unnecessary reasons, the way that they went about it was pretty selfish and left school in a pretty bad position. (Alison2)

The transience of staff and leaders brings with it a fragility that can weaken a school considerably. Coupled with that is the issue of not always being able to easily replace staff and this was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the tenure of leaders in this research was varied, with three of the nine headteachers having been in post for over ten years while two of the leaders had been in post for only one year. Long-serving headteachers were also aware of the impact of their own departure from their position and the challenges that would bring for the school.

Conflict with the school board was cited as one of the challenges faced by headteachers in this study. School boards are complex with alliances and parental interests by serving members that can at times, have a lack of understanding and be combative (Benson, 2011; Gardner-McTaggart, 2018; Hayden and Thompson 2010). This can also be born out of cultural misunderstandings, and selfish interests contributing to the complexity of leading such a school:

It has been so hard with the board and so yes, are the board bad people? No, do they love Jesus? Yes, do they want the best for this school? Yes. Like are they misaligned in how they go about it in my opinion? Yes, but like are they seeking to

come in and change me or my leadership? No. Are they asking me to do things that I can't say yes to? No. (Bruce2)

Bruce articulated a frustration with his school board, this was shared by other headteachers in this study and was the biggest source of conflict for those leading the school. Gardner-McTaggart (2018) suggests that wrangling with 'fickle boards' (p.160), is an ongoing demand for international school headteachers. This was found to be true for headteachers in this study of Christian international schools who identified the complexity of working for a school board made up of parents and mission agencies that seek to micro-manage and become involved in the day-to-day decision-making in the school (Hayden and Thompson, 2010). Boards exerting authority in such a way diminished headteacher confidence, caused frustration and resulted in an impasse. Board involvement in the minutiae of day-to-day school life hindered provision rather than allowing leaders and schools to flourish.

In summary, this section addressed some of the issues that emerged from the research concerning the challenges of leading a Christian international school. It identified the changing nature of international schools and the importance of a headteachers communication and ability to navigate cultural differences and sensitivities with skill and compassion. It acknowledged too the changing landscape of Christian international schools and the need to recognise and support this shift to ensure that these schools represent national and international leadership. In this way, they would better serve national families choosing this schooling option.

8.3 How does the evidence from these examples, inform the debate on future leadership policy and practice?

The challenge for headteachers of church and Christian international schools is to understand the value and relevancy of the Christian faith in their schools in the twenty-first century. Headteachers need to have a deep knowledge of the Christian faith and its value in education and then be able to articulate that. For current and aspiring headteachers, encouraging a comprehension of church and Christian school leadership, values, language, experiences and theology is of central importance.

8.3.1 Leading and understanding the school's Christian identity

Having a philosophy for Christian education, and a rationale regarding the role faith plays in the life of the school is essential. This finding supports that of Sullivan (2006) who suggested that Catholic headteachers needed to develop such a thinking about their own role too. Having a clear philosophy for Christian education is necessary to clearly express the Christian vision of the school and to lead others. Headteachers need to be equipped with an understanding of Christian education and ensure that they have a coherent philosophy for it. In formulating this, it provides them with a rationale that is foundational to the Christian mission and vision of the school.

8.3.2 Leading and articulating the vision and values of the school

The future leadership of church and Christian international schools needs headteachers who have the necessary understanding and language to lead a Christian school. The language

that headteachers use and their knowledge of theological language must be a priority. Otherwise, schools cannot remain theologically rooted. The equipping and enabling of school leaders is crucial, especially if there is an absence of faith experience or faith formation (Grace, 2016). For some leaders, this will necessitate developing a language of faith. This includes developing their own theological language acquisition as a church or Christian school leader. It is necessary for headteachers to have a theological and spiritual language in order to lead a faith school, so that the mission and vision of the school can be clearly articulated to stakeholders.

This research would support the arguments of Grace, (2016) in writing about Catholic education, who suggests the 'need to regenerate spiritual capital' (Grace 2016, p.48). Headteachers of church and Christian international schools who do not have a personal faith are unable to draw on their Christian spiritual capital. Therefore, they cannot be expected to establish, articulate or maintain a compelling vision for Christian education, because they do not have the resources to do so (theological understanding, experiences and language). For headteachers without faith, or for leaders of church schools who have little or no experience of church, it cannot be assumed that they are able to draw on their own knowledge and experiences, or utilise a spiritual capital that does not exist. If the language of the school leader lacks clarity, then it weakens the faith identity of the school. Supporting the spiritual and theological understanding of headteachers is necessary as Christian schools raise headteachers of the next generation in terms of equipping them to have a faith framework for leading.

From Autumn 2022 and Autumn 2023 respectively, both the Catholic Church inspectorate and the Church of England inspectorate are operating under new inspection frameworks. As of September 2023, the new SIAMS inspection framework raises some important challenges for leaders. These include that school leaders understand and have a language for leading a school with a Christian vision that is theologically rooted. (Church of England Education Office, 2022) To achieve a theologically rooted vision is to understand it, have the language for it and articulate it (Jelfs, 2010). Robust policies and a paper trail cannot hope to achieve this - the onus lies with the school leader. School leaders will therefore need a language of leading, and will need to be offered support in developing their own spiritual thinking to achieve this. If there is a deficiency in the theological language of the headteacher in not knowing, experiencing or understanding faith well enough to lead a school rooted in faith, the Christian identity of these schools is less secure. This thesis supports the findings of Johnson, McCreery and Castelli (2000) and Jelfs (2010), who suggest that a headteacher's theological and philosophical clarity is necessary to sustain the Christian identity of the school.

Church schools must be inclusive places and value the differing beliefs of all in the school community. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, being inclusive does not mean lessening Christian language. This can result in imprecise language that is not distinctly Christian and cause confusion regarding the school's identity. The faith parameters that leaders establish are essential in setting the boundaries of a school's foundational beliefs and theological rootedness. The clarity of this is useful even if it does not appeal to all stakeholders.

8.3.3 Leading and modelling the Christian faith

The headteachers of Christian international schools were exacting in describing the role of the Christian faith in the life of their school. In stating this they also told of leading in a relational way, that sought to make their schools inclusive and hospitable for all. There were examples of headteachers of church schools examined in the sample who sought to prioritise relationships within the school, the flourishing and the well-being of staff, including their spiritual well-being. Headteachers need to be equipped to live out and exhibit Christian values in their leadership as part of their commitment to Christian education. This includes making time to keep relationships and flourishing central to their leading (Cooling et al, 2016; Swaner and Wolfe, 2021). Headteachers should recognise that leadership of Christian schools can be learned and that the narratives of the leadership of others are helpful and powerful in shaping future leaders. Creating spaces and opportunities for shared leadership successes within and across church school communities is vital. The challenge for headteachers in England is to look for examples of Christian leadership that extend beyond themselves, including how international colleagues in Christian education in the Global South offer an enticing look at Christian leadership.

The three headteachers visited as part of the research, demonstrated how they utilised tacit knowledge to lead. This knowledge permeated into their behaviour, routines and actions, having been accumulated over time. Such leadership knowledge is not always communicated or articulated, but is evident through being. Bruce sought to always explain his actions and reasoning to those he was leading, to give a commentary for them. He was conscious of modelling a certain approach to leading and explaining that knowledge to

others. This was a valuable leadership approach. Bruce supported future leaders by being conscious of his own leadership; he mentored and coached his staff by modelling and facilitating their understanding of his leadership.

8.4 Leading and the COVID-19 pandemic

This investigation did not set out to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the leadership of Christian international schools, but it was impossible to ignore, as it directly affected all aspects of school life. At the time of collecting data, schools were closed, in line with national government guidelines. Christian international schools suffered difficulties in recruiting staff, reduced student numbers and associated financial losses. During the data collection headteachers told of how the pandemic had taken a toll on teaching, attainment and behaviour. All heads of schools and principals referred to it, and how it had impacted their role at the school and that their leadership had been altered by it. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic also shed light on the relational care offered by these headteachers. Several headteachers told of how they offered care and provided for all their staff, even though the school itself faced financial uncertainty.

Bruce's experiences as a school leader during the COVID-19 pandemic were documented in Chapter six. These findings captured some of Bruce's choices that were compassionate and selfless, and demonstrated his faith and a lived experience of servant leadership. He made sure that support staff had enough food supplies and provisions. He decided to withdraw large sums of money from the bank prior to bank closures, to ensure that staff could be paid in cash. He gave expatriate staff a choice about whether they wished to return to their

home country or not. Bruce also took the decision to reduce his own salary, to help the school financially. Fundamentally, the school and staff benefitted greatly from his leadership actions.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused financial challenges for international schools as online schooling was not a satisfactory option for some families. Other families lost income, making it impossible for them to pay school fees. Leaders told of making bold financial decisions based on unpredictability. Actions included not filling teaching vacancies and asking staff to take a pay cut to shore up the school's financial stability during the pandemic. Staffing uncertainty was a significant issue for international schools, because leaders were not easily able to fill positions as most countries' borders were closed to expatriates for indefinite periods of time.

Further challenges for international school leaders included caring for staff, providing support for staff who lived alone and the repatriation of staff who were vulnerable. This was an additional challenge when borders were closed, flights were limited, and it was necessary to work through an embassy. The challenge of online learning was burdensome when some countries did not have reliable power. Also, families did not necessarily have the means to facilitate screen learning with the associated costs of internet and laptops. As governments restricted movement, online schooling was adopted by most international schools that found ways like many schools, to unite the community through e-learning, virtual school art exhibitions, online social events, such as whole staff prayer gatherings, parent webinars, zoom mentoring and live-streamed chapel. In some form or other, school still took place, albeit online.

The third research question addressed in this thesis posed how the evidence informed the debate on future leadership policy and practice. The research suggests that headteachers of church and Christian international schools need to have a clear theology for education. They need to have an understanding of the role faith plays in their school, and be able to articulate that to stakeholders. This section also identified that future leaders need to model leadership practice that prioritises relationships, and in doing so establish a school culture of compassion.

8.5 Conclusion

As a leader of a church or Christian school, having a philosophy for Christian education and living that out matters. If as a leader, the philosophy for education is about prioritising others, this impacts a school's culture. What united all nine headteachers of Christian international schools was the importance of their Christian faith and how that faith was lived out in the undertaking of their role. Their faith informed their thinking, actions and language. They expressed their faith in words and in their relationships with others; this established a compassionate community (Middlebrooks and Noghiu, 2010). Headteachers saw their role at the school as an enacting of their personal beliefs, one of calling and vocation. Faith played a significant role in their leadership as they were 'witnesses' of the Christian faith in their schools. This is similar to the studies of Grace (p.236, 2002) and Buchanan (p.98, 2020) who identified educators who enacted their faith in schools. In the research of Christian international schools headteachers similarly were examples of educators who articulate and model their personal faith in a professional sphere. For the headteachers of Christian international schools, their work was a missional expression of

their faith. The documentary research and the interviews with nine headteachers show that a philosophy for Christian education impacts a school culture when it is embodied and lived out through a school leader's behaviour, actions and attitude.

The evidence from this study captures examples of headteachers' attitudes and behaviour in leading Christian international schools. It looked beyond church schools in England to consider what can be learned from colleagues overseas. The study examined church school inspection reports that highlighted 'outstanding' leadership. Many of these headteachers knew the Christian identity of their school, articulated it, and modelled it in their leadership. Inspection reports cited leaders who did this, because of their personal Christian faith. The details of this leadership are highly valuable. Moreover, for leaders of church schools there is the need to make room for faith. It should not be absent, as that is to negate an integral aspect of the lives of many. For leaders, modelling that faith and spirituality matter and is at the heart of inclusivity. The culture of these schools acknowledged faith and spirituality, and made it permissible, while at the same time recognising that those who shared or had differing beliefs had equal value. Modelling respect and valuing faith in this way develops a tolerance for faith in education, that we want to nurture in society (Grace, 2009). There is a need to sustain a theology for Christian education through school leaders' Christian vision for education, and to make space for the spiritual sphere in schools (Sullivan, 2006). To achieve this all headteachers of church schools and Christian international schools need appropriate support and professional development.

The interviews and analysis in this research project reveal that the language with which leaders choose to articulate the faith and spirituality of these schools is fundamental to the school's Christian theological rootedness and identity. While the Christian faith may not be upheld by everyone in a school context, faith is useful in understanding and critiquing the world (Sullivan, 2006). Faith is a protected characteristic (Bloom, 2023). So, while church schools are not necessarily distinctly or singularly Christian, they should ultimately be allowed to retain their Christian distinctiveness, at the same time being compassionately inclusive, valuing and respecting all faiths. Central to the role of these school leaders then is an understanding of the Christian faith and the ability to articulate this vision. It is headteachers who live out their Christian faith or have a depth of experience and theological knowledge and a language to draw on, that make for more authentic leaders. It is these leaders who have the capacity to maintain a compelling vision for Christian education through understanding, articulation and lived examples of Christian leadership.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The thesis set out to explore how headteachers establish, articulate and maintain a school ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith. There were two strands to this study. The first strand investigated the leadership of a small sample of nine headteachers of Christian international schools located in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. The second strand situated that understanding alongside how church school inspectors in England interpret school leadership by examining forty church school inspection reports.

This research is an international comparative study that adds to the body of literature on the leadership of Christian international schools. It examines the leadership of these schools alongside the leadership of church schools in England. It is a contribution to knowledge because it explores patterns and themes in the practice of nine Christian international school headteachers and finds commonalities with church school leadership in England. There appears to be limited existing research that captures the attitudes of educational leaders in Christian international schools concerning how they lead within their school context. The study details rich perspectives of what it is like to lead a Christian international school and the rationale of these headteachers. This qualitative research deepens the understanding of the leadership of Christian international schools by asking what can be learned from the leadership of such schools located in the Global South. By focusing on the practice of these headteachers, the thesis cast light on models of leadership in the field of

Christian international school education that were compelling examples of Christian leadership in schools.

The findings of this study described leadership examples that were highly compelling because they demonstrated a culture that was people-centred and compassionate. Headteachers explained how they tended relationships, valued people and prioritised interactions with colleagues. This is compelling because it is leadership in education that is rooted in gospel values and seeks to emulate the leadership of Christ. The findings from the interviews highlighted headteachers who led in a way that was driven by their personal faith in God. These personal faith experiences and language equipped headteachers with a spiritual capital which animated their leadership. The attitudes, approach and decision-making of these headteachers was underpinned by their personal faith in Christ. What emerged from this study were some commonalities between headteachers of Christian international schools and church school leadership approaches, highlighted by the church school inspectorate in England.

This study has identified three key findings. The first was that headteachers who enacted their personal faith in God, found that faith was pivotal to their leadership in developing and sustaining a Christian ethos in their schools. This personal faith resourced their leadership. It allowed them to harness spiritual capital, drawing on their own faith experiences and language with which they were able to express the school's vision for Christian education. Secondly, having a personal philosophy for Christian education was important in their leadership. This included having a very clear rationale about the purposes of Christian

education and of how faith and education aligned in the learning experiences provided by their schools. This understanding, which adapted and changed over time, gave clarity to the language of their leadership, and to the articulation of the mission and purpose of their school. The third notable finding of this study was that the Christian international school leaders interviewed led relationally, and sought to model their actions as headteachers on those of Christ. Christian beliefs were something these headteachers sought to enact. As school leaders, they endeavoured to model the values and culture that they wanted to see replicated in their school. For Bruce this was adopting a servant leadership style of leading, basing his leadership approach on that of service to the school community. This leadership style of service was considered crucial by those at the school who noted the impact of it on maintaining a school culture of care.

9.1 Conducting the research

Chapter two provided an overview of existing literature and research in the field of international schools and Christian international schools, leadership behaviour and practices in church and Christian schools and the leadership of church schools in England.

Chapter three explained the research approach which used multimethods. The first strand of the research included a blend of online interviews, school visits, observations, face-to-face interviews and teacher focus group discussions. The research focused on online interviews with nine headteachers at Christian international schools located in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. It was concerned with identifying headteachers' reflections and priorities in leading their schools. The findings captured leadership practice by inviting leaders to explain

what they viewed to be the most important things they did in a school day. Headteachers described their philosophies for Christian education. They gave examples of how they had endeavoured to model and support the Christian values of their school and how they had tried to model their own behaviour on that of Christ when interacting with staff.

Of the nine headteachers interviewed online, visits were made to three headteachers in two schools, as a follow-up to the first round of interviews. I spent a week with each headteacher, observing their actions and behaviour, and carrying out further interviews. Additionally, I conducted teacher focus groups in these schools with the intention of understanding the teachers' experiences of working there. I wanted to understand more about the culture of the schools, and the impact of the headteachers' leadership on school culture.

The second strand of the research was based on documentary analysis of forty church school Section 48 inspection reports in England, that had been awarded an inspection judgment of good or outstanding. This part of the research examined the language used by the inspectorate to describe the leadership in these schools. It looked at headteachers' behaviour and the leadership qualities and skills identified during the inspections of these schools.

9.2 Research findings

Chapter four examined the idea of a personal sense of calling that underpinned the actions of headteachers. The data suggests that personal faith in God together with a sense of vocation were the driving force for these leaders, which in turn, shaped the ethos and culture of these schools. Headteachers described choosing to see their work as a service to

God and not just as a job. All headteachers interviewed had relocated from their home country to carry out the role of headteacher. They saw their work as fulfilling a mission to share their faith with others, this was central to their role and sense of purpose at the school. The results discussed in Chapter four identify Christian international school headteachers who draw on a rich resource of spiritual capital as they lead. This informed their grasp of the theological foundations and beliefs in their schools. With this insight, headteachers in the sample were able to form a thought-through philosophy for Christian education. This knowledge and understanding equipped them with a language with which to lead. This research illustrated how headteachers leverage their personal faith in their leadership. Their faith not only sustained them but also equipped them. It meant that they had faith experiences which they were able to draw on, an understanding of faith and the language of faith. Headteachers described how they drew strength from God in leading and felt their resilience in leading came from God. They viewed their faith and relationship with God as part of a spiritual equipping and provision, enabling them to undertake the role. Headteachers talked of valuing their own personal faith and of making time to develop their own faith life as part of their ability to support the faith of others.

All nine headteachers in this study expressed a desire to live out their faith and to lead with faith central to their leadership. They talked of being called to the role, of enacting a sense of mission and vocation. Personal faith drove their leadership actions. Headteachers told of the regular routine of praying, reading the Bible, and listening to God as important leadership habits for them in leading their schools. They described how in valuing their faith they tried to make time to prioritise it. Additionally, all headteachers shared their personal

faith with colleagues as part of their professional undertaking, it was part of them and this was not concealed, but openly shared with staff, students and parents. Headteachers explained praying with staff and supporting staff to develop in their faith. This sharing of faith was also evident in the church school inspection sample of reports, in which headteachers were described as making time for staff to grow in their faith through opportunities in school such as prayer time, retreats and mass.

Chapter five explored leadership actions in school and the practical outworking of the faith of the headteachers. Leadership examples described leaders whose compassion and humility sought to emulate that of Christ. A clear picture emerged of headteachers who made a point of honouring people, affirming and encouraging them, alongside pursuing their organisational concerns. Headteachers explained setting aside bureaucratic and institutional matters for the sake of relationships. In other instances, headteachers gave examples of their clear focus on the tending of relationships. Similarly, in the documentary analysis the inspectorate recognised church school leaders whose leadership prioritised the well-being of others and whose kindness and compassion were evident in leading.

Observations of the three headteachers visited supported their accounts of their own leadership. Relationships in the workplace were prioritised by all three headteachers. Some headteachers described working in a culture different to their own. In doing so, they acknowledged the cultural expectations associated with building relationships with those in the school, those in the community and associated stakeholders. They told of the reciprocity of making time to engage in such interactions. Headteachers recounted how

they allocated time to walk the school corridors and engage with staff. These interactions and exchanges were not always work-related but took place as informal conversations. In prioritising this social contact, trust was built and a culture of togetherness was fostered (Msila, 2008; Setlhodi, 2019). The findings from this chapter provide insight as to how, through such actions, community is built by valuing relationships with staff. Headteachers described the merit of building relationships and were intentional about doing this. They explained how they established and maintained a compassionate school community through gestures of kindness, support and care. When asked, all three headteachers attributed this leadership behaviour to seeking to model that of Christ. The results of this research support the idea of Swaner and Wolfe (2021) and Cooling (2016) who advocate for the prioritising of relationships in school communities to achieve relational flourishing.

Relationships were prioritised not because of what individuals contributed to the organisation, but because people themselves were seen to be of value. Interconnectedness and building community through meaningful and sincere interactions was a priority. This is in line with the findings of Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019), whose research describes leaders who seek to understand people. Headteachers of Christian international schools in this study described their leadership as being highly relational. They explained how they sought to foster an interest in the whole person and to care for their well-being. As part of this, leaders acknowledged the value of prioritising the spiritual care of others and were committed to meeting these needs.

Chapter six discussed the servant leadership of Bruce, a headteacher of a Christian international school in sub-Saharan Africa. The evidence from the study suggested a compelling model of leadership that was compassionate, valued people and built community. However, as discussed this is a burdensome model. This finding concurs with the research of Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019). For some leaders, servant leadership is unattainable and impractical. The sample of headteachers in this study strived to emulate the servant leadership of Christ knowing that it is difficult to pursue. Despite this headteachers gave examples of feeling equipped to lead in this way because of their personal faith in Christ, which they saw as enabling them to serve. This was evident in the remarkable ways headteachers made leadership decisions that provided for and served their school communities during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Demands of this leadership approach included empathy with staff, proximity to staff to be able to deeply understand them, and the capacity for the necessary interaction and resources to meet staff's needs. Chapter six found that while servant leadership is a compelling approach, it demands so much of oneself that it is arguably not possible to sustain without significant respite.

Chapter seven returned to the literature concerning church schools in England and then investigated the leadership behaviour of headteachers in church schools in England through the lens of the church school inspectorate. Some of the evidence identified leaders who demonstrated similar leadership behaviour to the headteachers of Christian international schools. The personal faith of the headteacher was a notable feature of some schools. This had an impact on the school ethos and gave life to the Christian mission and vision of the school. Some headteachers were described as servant leaders in their approach, others

endeavoured to foster relationships to achieve 'flourishing' (Church of England Education Office, 2018, p.2). The church schools' inspection reports offer examples of leadership practice that are of value. In part, they highlight the leadership practice of headteachers as they lead church schools. The inspectorate not only provide a description of school leaders but also comments on the impact of such practice. Further research of such faith-driven leadership, highlighting approaches in this style of leading would be of value in further understanding current practice in church schools in England.

Chapter eight provided a discussion of the research in light of the research questions and suggested how evidence from the examples of church school leaders and Christian international school headteachers could inform the debate on future leadership policy and practice. It concluded that headteachers of Christian international schools and church schools are more equipped when their own personal faith experiences give them a spiritual capital with which to lead. This understanding informs the Christian faith leadership of schools. Furthermore, the nine headteachers interviewed at Christian international schools had a thought through philosophy of Christian education that they expressed with clarity. Their understanding of the role that faith plays in education and their ability to articulate that to stakeholders brought clarity to the mission and vision of the school. Chapter eight also discussed the implications of adopting a relational way of leading and its impact on a school's culture. This chapter suggested that when a headteacher establishes a school ethos by fostering positive relations with staff and by spending time tending to relationships, a compassionate Christian school culture is built. Chapter eight also highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the headteachers of Christian international schools - school

leaders were compassionate, they cared and provided for staff at their schools during the crisis.

9.3 Contribution to knowledge

The study identified headteachers of Christian international schools who all had a clear theological understanding and faith language with which they articulated the Christian values of their schools. The multifaceted roles of these headteachers included actively maintaining the faith identity of their schools. Each school was unique and how leaders curated a Christian school culture and communicated that is a central part of this thesis. The findings of this study suggest that headteachers in Christian international schools and church schools are agents of faith and how they understand and undertake that role in school is fundamental to the Christian culture of the school being a credible one. This study found that adopting a leadership persona and leading and supporting the educational trajectory of the school was paramount for headteachers of Christian international schools. Christian education was not just demonstrated via the subjects taught in school but through leaders themselves, who were responsible for communicating and modelling biblical values and Christlike attributes in their day-to-day interactions with colleagues and students. It was through these conversations, exchanges and their actions that a compelling vision for Christian education was formed.

Building on the work of Grace (2002, 2016) a major finding of this study was that of a headteacher's spiritual capital and that these leaders of Christian international schools drew on their own spiritual capital as a rich resource for the leadership of their schools.

Headteachers had a knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and their own faith experiences, with which to draw on as they led their schools and this was evident across all nine headteachers, and in the documentary evidence of church school inspection reports. This spiritual capital was leveraged by school leaders and was something that they drew on as they communicated the vision of the school. In the schools visited there was an ongoing regeneration of spiritual capital (Grace, 2002) through the school culture that was established, articulated and maintained by way of the language, actions and behaviour of the headteacher. Spiritual capital enhanced their leadership. My research concurs with Lydon (2021) that the preservation of ethos relies on leaders modelling values and having the language to express it. Headteachers of Christian international schools in this study, described drawing on their spiritual capital and, in turn establishing, modelling and articulating a culture of faith experiences that perpetuated the capital of those in the school community. This resource of knowledge, experiences and understanding of the Christian faith had an impact on leadership decisions made in the workplace. It shaped interactions and became a different kind of leadership - faith in action.

The personal faith of headteachers was evident in some of the inspection reports analysed. In those reports the school's faith was validated because it was enacted by the headteachers. While vocation was central to the leadership of the nine headteachers leading Christian international schools, it was also evident in the documentary analysis of church schools. Some leaders were identified by the church school inspectorate as living out their 'calling'. Personal faith in Christ had a direct influence on how they viewed their role at the school. All nine headteachers described their role as a calling and this was evident in the

demonstrative way that they lived out their faith in their schools and embodied it in their language and actions (Donnelly, 2000).

The findings of the research also highlight headteachers' personal philosophy for Christian education. Their understanding of the purpose of Christian education is of central importance in being able to articulate a language for Christian education. Headteachers communicated a developed philosophy for Christian education and had the confidence to express their thinking and understanding. This involved a carefully thought through understanding of the role that faith played in the educational sphere, not just in learning and in pedagogy but in their own leadership. The parameters of this included thinking about how schools can be inclusive and distinctive in the expression of their Christian faith. There was a clarity with which all nine headteachers could explain their philosophy for Christian education. They knew what they believed education to be about and could express that. Having a clear personal grasp of their personal philosophy meant that when headteachers articulated that, it was explicit and compelling because it was deliberate and well-considered.

In addition, this research found that despite bureaucratic and organisational demands, headteachers in Christian international schools demonstrated commitment to relationships (Cooling et al, 2016; Swaner and Wolfe, 2021). Headteachers prioritised being compassionate leaders and demonstrating humility. Living relationally and not becoming consumed by the busyness of leadership at the expense of relationships seemed counter-cultural but in doing so the headteachers of Christian international schools in this study

described seeking to model for the school what mattered. It set the tone for the culture of the school that compassion for people and their well-being was of utmost importance.

9.4 The implications for the leadership of Christian international schools and church schools in England

The Christian international schools visited as part of the research sample were what Gardner-McTaggart (2021) identified as being 'Global Schools' (p.16). The schools included teaching staff from many nationalities working together. The schools were neither wholly Western nor other, but complex, multinational and multi-layered organisations with approaches to Christian education that provided a broad and rich experience for the student body.

The findings of this research support that of previous literature regarding international schools that acknowledges the challenges for headteachers of these schools which include conflict with the school board and a high turnover of staff (Benson 2011; Hayden and Thompson, 2008; Linton, 2015). There is a growing demand for these schools and affluence means that those who are accessing them are increasingly from national families rather than just expatriates (Caffyn, 2010). While it may seem that international schools are a product of colonialism, this research finds that they perhaps offer a glimpse of postcolonial Christian international school education. Although these schools cater for expatriates and missionary families, this research concurs with Bunnell (2022) and Hayden and Thompson (2008) that national pupils now form the majority in these schools. However, currently, the

leadership of these schools continues to be dominated by white Anglo-American males. The future leadership of Christian international schools has to be one in which the staff composition reflects more fully a cohort of national leaders. This research sought to include headteachers who were not all white Anglo-American males, to highlight their practice. For example, the observations and interviews with Patrick provided insight into his theological expression of leadership as an African Christian leader in a Christian international school context. Future research on the leadership of Christian international schools and leadership behaviour in these schools would be worthy of a larger qualitative study. It would be useful to expand these investigations to include leaders from differing ethnic groups to capture and highlight the changing nature of those in positions of leadership in these schools.

Understanding how headteachers lead in international contexts is useful to inform current provision in church education in England. Looking beyond the provision in England and extending that thinking and learning across boundaries and borders is of value. Headteachers of church schools in England for whom faith is not central to their leadership, or leaders who are not supportive of the faith of the school are of concern in both Anglican and Catholic communities (Dell, 2022). If there is an absence of faith or faith experiences, it could be assumed that a headteacher does not have a spiritual capital on which to draw from in the leadership of their school. If a school leader does not have experience of, or knowledge of the Christian faith, yet is supportive of it, there is an imperative to equip such leaders with a theological language, understanding and experiences with which to lead. The headteachers of Christian international schools in this study all had a personal faith in God which they believed gave them the ability to carry out their role. They saw their personal faith as being of significant value in leading their schools; it provided them with the means

to lead and compelled them as school leaders. Personal faith meant that headteachers in Christian international schools viewed their role as a service to God and adopted a leadership approach that was intentional and thoughtful in seeking to honour God. This was an authentic approach to leadership and allowed headteachers to have an impact on those in their school communities. Church school headteachers in England need to have a professional understanding of the role that Christian faith plays in education. Communicating this understanding of faith in an inclusive way is a necessary part of leading these schools. This can be achieved through faith training and equipping and signposting to headteachers who do this well.

Headteachers in English church schools may find it more difficult to readily express their personal faith without fear of being accused of proselytising. The government's independent review *Does Government 'do God?'* identified the value of faith as a valued component in society to leverage positive change (Bloom, 2023). Faith is recognised as a protected characteristic and, as such, headteachers of church schools and those in Christian education are in a position to defend, protect and advocate for the Christian faith and beliefs. Therefore, faith cannot afford to be overlooked in the training and equipping of headteachers of church schools.

9.5 Recommendations

The research offered examples of leaders, who through various means discussed, offered a compelling vision for Christian education. These findings contribute to our understanding of the leadership of Christian international schools, as the sample demonstrated leaders who

understand, articulate and seek to live out their personal faith in undertaking the role of headteacher. Thus, recommendations emerge for leaders of church schools in England who wish to achieve a compelling vision of Christian education. The evidence from the Christian international school sample informs the debate on future leadership policy and practice. Enabling and equipping headteachers to provide effective theological and spiritual leadership in church schools is paramount. The findings suggest that we cannot presume that church school leaders have spiritual capital from which to draw. Headteachers need to be informed and equipped enough to make the right choices as school leaders and be enabled to maintain their school's Christian identity. Headteachers need to be fully adept with a language of leading to articulate the Christian mission and vision of the school. Having a philosophy for Christian education and a clear understanding of the role and purpose that the Christian faith plays in the school is central to developing such a language. Where headteachers do not have a spiritual capital with which to draw on this needs to be recognised and supported through a substantial equipping of language, and a theological understanding to furnish headteachers with a rationale for leading.

Recommendation 1

The thesis finds, based on the evidence of the research, that if headteachers are to be the vision bearers of Christian education then they need to have a theological understanding of it and be equipped to articulate it. Headteachers in this research who led Christian international schools had an understanding of the Christian faith, drawing on their own spiritual capital which allowed them to establish, articulate and maintain a clear and compelling vision for Christian education. This study found that headteachers who have a

clear theology and philosophy for Christian education have developed a language with which to communicate and lead this aspect of school life. Headteachers need to be able to articulate their school's Christian vision clearly. They need to know and communicate the Christian values of the school and have a language and literacy of belief and theology with which to express that. The clarity of this vision is significant, as it sets the parameters of the faith life of the school. How this is understood and expressed impacts the whole school community and stakeholders: staff, students and parents. Headteachers need to be equipped with an understanding and a spiritual literacy that enables them to discuss faith and belief in schools. When there is no guarantee that headteachers have a spiritual capital with which to draw, provision needs to be made to help headteachers develop an understanding of Christian faith and belief.

Training for headteachers should prioritise enabling them to develop an understanding of the role that faith and belief have in church school education. The leaders of Christian international schools in this research, had developed a philosophy for Christian education that was thought through. In the same way, headteachers of church schools need to develop a similar rationale and be able to then articulate the role of faith and belief in their schools. There is a complexity for headteachers of church schools in navigating how they choose the right language of theology in diverse and multifaith contexts to express a church school's identity. Being able to have the right language to discuss and express faith as they lead is of significant importance in providing for spiritual formation taking place in church schools. Without this understanding and ability to express it, church school leadership is arguably diminished (Jelfs. 2010). The onus lies with leadership training and provision at the

Diocesan level for headteacher development and support. Additionally, the Church of England and Catholic Education Service must offer the necessary and specific professional development. A suggestion for how this might be achieved would be to equip headteachers with a theological understanding and support to develop a language of church school leadership as part of the NPQH programmes. This training should also highlight exemplars of Christian leadership.

Further opportunities to enrich understanding would be beneficial via ongoing professional learning communities to address this area of leading. It cannot be assumed that headteachers are able to draw on their own spiritual capital (Grace 2002; Grace 2016). Instead, a training priority must be the ongoing support and development of headteachers' understanding of how to lead a church school. This provision must develop and refine existing training to provide school leaders with an understanding of church school leadership. Doing so, will enable headteachers to develop a philosophy for church school education and a language with which to articulate the church foundation and Christian identity of these schools.

Recommendation 2

Church school inspection reports do not tell the whole story of leadership in church schools as they are limiting for a number of reasons: the experience and knowledge of the inspector, the time the inspector spends in school, what is noticed and what is chosen to be captured or omitted in the written description of the school. Inspection reports do not

contain an exploration of personal faith or the detailed minutiae of the spiritual leadership of church schools. Yet church school inspection reports offer rich examples of church school leadership. Signposting the details of micro leadership actions and behaviour and celebrating them would be of value to future leaders. Such micro aspects of leadership are key to understanding how a headteacher builds school culture. The Section 48 inspectorate in England, would serve church schools well if it identified examples of leaders who understand, articulate and live out the Christian mission and vision in their schools. The significance of highlighting school leaders who do this well and detailed examples of their leadership would provide a compelling vision for Christian education.

Perhaps inspection reports cannot hope to capture the extent of or fully reflect what is happening in practice, but unless what is successful and effective is made explicit then it cannot be truly understood and disseminated. For the Catholic schools' inspectorate and the Church of England inspection body SIAMS, appreciating and acknowledging the characteristics of effective leadership validates church school leadership, by capturing examples, detailing and celebrating them. The strength of leadership and of leadership behaviour is not always stated by the inspectorate. A clear level of detail delineating a leader's practice would be a worthwhile addition to inspection reports, thereby identifying highly skilled leadership practice in church schools. A natural progression of this research would be specific case studies that provide further insight into leadership practice.

Recommendation 3

What is perhaps worthy of further consideration beyond church school reports, are examples of how a personal philosophy for Christian education can be developed by a leader and lived out by headteachers. Leaders who have formulated a rationale for the role that the Christian faith plays in their schools, and who understand how, on a micro level, this shapes school culture would also be worthy of further study. Future research possibilities include providing case studies of how headteachers attend to Christianity in the leadership of their schools. Of specific interest would be the micro details of their leadership: how they use time, listen to staff, spend time with staff, the importance of personal faith, how they use resources of spiritual capital and charism. Understanding these concepts will be necessary for the future of church schools. Paying close attention to Catholic and Church of England headteachers and highlighting their leadership behaviours would contribute towards strengthening church school leadership. For headteachers who do not have Christian faith, it would shed light on the practices of those who do.

Recommendation 4

There is an ongoing discourse for leaders of Christian international schools associated with the changing nature of these schools, and the transition period that they are in. The findings highlight the changing nature and complexities of Christian international schools and the postcolonial debate associated with the leadership of such schools. Further research is required into the leadership behaviour and practices of colleagues who lead Christian international schools in non-Western settings. In doing so this would offer a broader perspective of what it is like to lead a Christian international school.

9.6 Conclusion

My academic journey began because of my own experiences in leading a Christian international school in sub-Saharan Africa. I started by asking questions about Christian leadership, wanting to understand how a headteacher establishes, articulates, and maintains a school that offers a compelling vision for Christian education. The thesis sought to ascertain how headteachers fulfil these essential aspects of their role and how the practice of headteachers in Christian international schools in the Global South could inform leadership practices of church schools in England.

The findings acknowledged headteachers that had an understanding and language with which they articulated a clear philosophy for leading Christian international schools. The research identified headteachers of Christian international schools who sought relational methods of leading, including adopting a servant leadership model. This leadership approach by prioritising human interaction and interrelationships further established and maintained a Christian culture in their schools. Additionally, the research sheds new light on the idea of spiritual capital for both church school leaders in England and Christian international school headteachers. The findings provide insight as to how such capital is leveraged and renewed by headteachers within their school communities to preserve a convincing vision for Christian education. Education in Church of England and Catholic schools is still developing and facing new challenges in changing times. A detailed and renewed focus on equipping leaders and headteachers is vital to ensure their quality, continued existence and impact for the students and communities of tomorrow.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Headteacher interview questions

1. What influenced your decision to become a Head of school/principal?
2. What are the most important things you do in a school day?
3. How does faith influence how you lead?
4. What is in your opinion key to becoming an effective Christian Principal/head of school.
5. What in your opinion does highly effective leadership look like?
6. What would you say are your top three or four priorities as you lead this school?
7. What is your philosophy for Christian education?
8. Who or what has influenced how you lead? A previous colleague, literature on leadership, further study, professional development?
9. Describe your leadership style? How do you seek to lead etc.
10. How important is it to you that you equip others to lead? How do you achieve this?
11. What external factors influence or shape how you lead?

Appendix 2: Statement of faith

As Christians we believe and accept ...

1. The revelation of God given in the Old and New Testaments and confess the historic faith of the Gospel which they contain. These outline Christian faith which should result in mutual love and a practical compassion and concern for all.
2. The sovereignty and grace of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in creation, providence, revelation and final judgment.
3. The divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, their trustworthiness and authority in everything related to faith and conduct.
4. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, begotten by His will through the Holy Spirit.
5. The universal sinfulness and guilt of fallen humanity, making each individual subject to God's wrath and condemnation. Sin is rebellion against God and unbelief in His sovereignty.
6. The sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ on a cross, as the sole grounds of redemption from guilt and freedom from the power of sin and from its eternal consequences.
7. The justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.
8. The illumination, regeneration, indwelling and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.
9. The priesthood of all believers, who together form the universal church, the Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and which is committed by His command to the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world.
10. The tangible expression of the Body of Christ in and through the local church.
11. The expectation of the personal, visible return of Jesus Christ in power and glory and the ascension into glory with Christ of all believers.
12. The resurrection of the dead and eternal life granted to all that trust and believe in Jesus Christ.

Appendix 3: Table of interviews and system of referencing

Pseudonym	School	Online Interview	School Visited	Face-to-face interview	Teacher Focus Group Interview
Keith	AF1	Keith1	No		
Richard	WA1	Richard1	No		
Peter	AE3	Peter1	No		
Bruce	AF2	Bruce1	Yes	Bruce2 Bruce3	AF2
Alison	AE1	Alison1	Yes	Alison2 Alison3	AE1a
Patrick	AE1	Patrick1	Yes	Patrick2 Patrick3	AE1b
Catherine	WA2	Catherine1	No		
Sheila	AM1	Sheila1	No		
Jane	MR1	Jane1	No		

Appendix 4: An example of coding the school inspection reports

Research question one:

How do headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith?

Research question three:

How does the evidence from these examples inform the debate on the future of leadership policy and practice?

Headteacher actions – specific identification of particular leadership practice/how it is practiced/ achieved.	
Code Group: Prayer	Code Group: Supporting the faith life of staff
Code: Praying alone/personal prayer life Code: Praying with a team Code: Praying with the whole staff/ staff body Code: Praying with whole school Code: Prayer throughout the school day Code: Prayer central to school life	Code: Enabling staff spiritual reflection Code: Providing prayer spaces Code: Retreats for staff Code: Worship for staff Code: Faith and new staff
Code Group: Leadership presence	Code Group: Enabling others
Code: Prioritising relationships with staff Code: Proximity to staff Code: Servant leadership Code: Communicating Christian values	Code: Focus on professional development Code: Building partnerships Code: Sensitive to the wellbeing of staff Code: Staff induction Code: Building a team Code: Modelling values

Appendix 5 Example of Coding from Church school Inspection reports

Code Group: Prayer

Code: Praying alone/personal prayer life

The provision for private prayer and whole school liturgical celebrations reflects the deep spirituality of the chaplain and senior leaders. S12

The quality and variety of opportunities allows staff and pupils to develop their own personal prayer life. S12

This is exemplified by the headteacher who leads the school by living out the school prayer; of acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly. S20

Code: Praying with a team

The headteacher leading the senior leadership team on an annual retreat for 2 days of prayer and fellowship. S20

Leaders have a secure knowledge of how to plan and lead prayer. This is, in no small way, because of the role modelling demonstrated by the headteacher, his deputy and the person in charge of Catholic Life. The headteacher is an authentic witness as to how to worship God and live by the principles of faith. Staff and pupils alike value his shepherding and cherish the encouragement he gives them. H10

The Headteacher is passionately committed to a Catholic school that deepens the faith of each member of the community through prayer and worship. With senior leaders, he ensures that the example of St _____ prayer is at the heart of what the school does. S12

Code: Praying with the whole staff/ staff body

A weekly prayer group nourishes the adults who attend. T2

Prayer lies at the heart of everything the school does. It is central to all staff and governors' meetings, and this has had a positive impact on staff wellbeing. M1

Leaders and the chaplain in particular have constantly emphasised the inclusive nature of worship by inviting those present to engage in prayer. N1

Formal and informal prayer permeates the life of the school community. S6

Opportunities exist for staff to engage in prayer and reflection. A10

For the past three years the college has developed and leads a one-day retreat for staff with the focus on personal reflection, prayer and spirituality. A10

Leaders and managers encourage pupils and staff in prayer and support them in preparing and leading communal prayer. M10

All Staff briefings begin with a prayer. S13

New staff are fully inducted into the 'Catholic Life of the School' and receive training on how to lead prayer that is reverent, respectful and reflective. S12

Leaders place the highest priority on the professional development of staff and provide an extensive range of CPD opportunities, for example, INSET entitled 'Supporting the 'Catholic Ethos and Creative Prayer and Reflection'. S12

During staff briefing there was a whole staff prayer. S70

Staff prayer is an integral part of all school activity, is creatively planned and is an inspiration to the whole community. S20

A programme of prayer at staff briefing sets the tone for the day and is led confidently by a variety of staff members. S60

Staff prayer, staff training and the school environment reflects the mission and identity S40

staff start the working week with a prayer. S30

Code: Praying with whole school

Pupils speak of their value of prayer provision and its positive impact on their lives. R2

Creating spaces for prayer and worship that are accessible and support individuals in their relationship with God. S2

Pivotal contribution made by prayer and worship to the school's Catholic Life. C10

Leaders have a secure knowledge of how to plan and lead prayer. T10

Senior leaders introduced a second school-wide act of Collective Worship at 12:10 each day, so that they can be confident all pupils experience prayer whilst at school. T10

The school provides opportunities for prayer and worship across the school. S30

Pupils are given rich opportunities to develop their potential and they are supported in their faith journey through prayer and liturgy. S20

An active prayer group. S40

Code: Prayer throughout the school day

All major activities begin with an act of prayer. B1

Prayer is a part of everyday life. S13

Leaders and Governors are fully committed to supporting prayer life and Collective Worship so it becomes an integral part of daily life at the school. T10

Opportunities for prayer are planned. S13

Prayer is a daily event. S12

Prayer punctuates the day, the school prayer being said at the beginning of the day and in every lesson. S50

Daily prayer plays an important part in the life of the school. S20

Morning Prayer takes place daily attended by staff and pupils. S20

Contemporary and traditional approaches to prayer. S40

Code: Prayer central to school life

Prayer is a natural and frequent part of everyday school life. B1

Pupils and adults understand the central importance of prayer. B1

Prayer is established in the daily life of the academy and at its core is Morning Prayer in the chapel. N1

The centrality of prayer has a significant impact. S6

Staff, student and parent groups all contributing to the rich prayer life of the school. S5

Prayer is an important part of everyday life. B20

The Headteacher regularly reports to the Governing Body on Collective Worship, prayer life and the 'Catholic Life of the School'. T10

Eucharist and prayer are at the centre of school life. T10

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. M10

Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school. S13

Collective Worship and prayer are at the heart of school life. S12

Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school. S11

Prayer is prominent. S70

The school prayer is central to the mission of the school and is the bedrock upon which they build and develop their relationships. S20

School prayer demonstrates the Catholic nature of this school. S20

Appendix 6 Example of Codes and Code Groups from the Stage 2 research

<p>Research questions</p> <p>a) How do headteachers establish an ethos that provides a compelling vision of Christian faith?</p> <p>b) In leading a school, how are relationships fostered, developed and valued to engender Christian values?</p> <p>c) What can we learn from international colleagues, in terms of leadership and building positive relations within a school setting to build capacity?</p>	
Code Group: Servant Leadership actions	Code Group: Proximity in Leadership
<p>Code: offering practical help,</p> <p>Code: enabling and equipping,</p> <p>Code: building a team,</p> <p>Code: leading and loving,</p> <p>Code: selflessness,</p> <p>Code: compassion as action,</p> <p>Code: vulnerability,</p> <p>Code: praying with colleagues,</p> <p>Code: conflict and sadness.</p>	<p>Code: walking and talking,</p> <p>Code: inquisitive language and non-work conversations,</p> <p>Code: engaging with the school community,</p> <p>Code: daily activity and interactions,</p> <p>Code: being available,</p> <p>Code: walking corridors,</p> <p>Code: articulating the vision,</p> <p>Code: mentoring,</p> <p>Code: sharing food,</p> <p>Code: leading prayer,</p> <p>Code: worship</p>
Code Group: Leading and Healing	Code Group: Developing others
<p>Code: leading in a post-Covid world,</p> <p>Code: leading post-trauma,</p> <p>Code: leading within the context of civil war and national conflict.</p> <p>Code: leading for the wider school community,</p> <p>Code: prioritising the health and well-being of others.</p> <p>Code: leading well and terminating contracts.</p>	<p>Code: CPD,</p> <p>Code: unplanned support,</p> <p>Code: listening,</p> <p>Code: encouraging and using praise,</p> <p>Code: developing the spiritual life of others,</p> <p>Code: leading people closer to God,</p> <p>Code: honouring,</p> <p>Code: providing opportunity for others to lead,</p> <p>Code: bestowing trust,</p> <p>Code: promotion and success of others.</p> <p>Code: fostering aspirations.</p>
Code Group: Personal Faith Journey	Code Group: Leading beyond one's self
<p>Code: career and background,</p> <p>Code: calling,</p> <p>Code: stewardship,</p> <p>Code: discerning the holy spirit,</p> <p>Code: work ethic,</p> <p>Code: not feeling equipped to lead,</p> <p>Code: wider aspirations,</p>	<p>Code: not a career,</p> <p>Code: sense of purpose,</p> <p>Code: for the greater good,</p> <p>Code: reflecting,</p> <p>Code: sharing the gospel with the world.</p> <p>Code: kingdom work,</p> <p>Code: charity activity and global thinking,</p>

Code: personal cost, Code: surrender, Code: sense of personal worth, Code: burnout, Code: rest and renewing, Code: personal prayer, Code: personal development, Code: stepping down from the role.	Code: compassion for the wider world, Code: personal aspirations, Code: bearing the school's vision and values.
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Appendix 7 Transcript meeting with Peter at AE3 school

Meeting carried out 19th Feb 2022 via video MS Teams

CG: Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and for completing the consent form and sending that through to me. Just to remind you that I will be recording this video call as part of the research. Thanks again for making time to talk to me. If you are ready, let's get started. What influenced your decision to become a head of school?

Peter: Yes, so there are two answers to this there is an immediate answer and that is nothing influenced me other than, there was a need and the school reached out to me. So, it wasn't something that I had planned on doing it wasn't part of my life, career trajectory. But the school needed someone and I was willing to step in for a short term but if you pull back a little bit further there is a whole host of reasons why I accepted that and why it ended up being a good fit. And so very quickly those would be my belief in the value in what the school is about its mission and its purpose, I believe in that deeply and that is why I came as a teacher and my conviction about its significance, potential impact of the school which only grew when I was a teacher. So, I already had a general commitment to international Christian education and third culture kid education and to country AE3 in particular so I was already on board. Yes so, I think that would be the general piece, that when it opened up, I was willing to step in and as I stepped in all the other pieces became important here.

CG: Great so a number of combining factors really was part of that I see in your answer, erm that is specific to the country _____, because you were not head of school somewhere else before that, am I right in thinking that?

Peter: That is right, the furthest that I had been up in terms of the hierarchy would have been department head or I think I was relatively, how old would I have been when? That would have been about, in my late thirties I guess when the need arose and I was there to step in so...

CG: Great, yes yes. So, my next question is about what the most important thing is that you feel that you do in a school day, what you think the most important thing is. It might be a number of things that you do in your school day?

Peter: Yeah, I thought that was a really interesting question, I wrote down a couple of thoughts and what I'll probably do on these answers is I'll probably refer to my notes occasionally. So, I'll say a very practical answer to that question is starting the day with a clear sense of what's ahead of me in other words my to-do list for the day and so that is very practical part. Here is what the day erm looks like and there is a step before that too and that is when I am creating the to-do list, I am thinking which things are most aligned with the, which are the most important for the mission and purpose of the school so some things I'll say no too because other things take precedent so that would be a very practical starting off. You know I want to have a clear idea of where the day is going, what are the most important things that I need to accomplish that day. And those are informed by the bigger picture things and that is what I see as most about the job as a whole and these are not in order priority necessarily but one thing that I definitely prioritise is erm anything that relates to a public expression of the school's mission and purpose, erm so whenever I am called on

to communicate the school's vision and mission on whether it is to a smaller group of staff or to parents or the students, I prioritise that because I don't think that there are too many things that are more important than a clear articulation of the, of why we are doing what we are doing. If people don't have that sense of then we are just another school and just another school is still important but I think that is important for any organisation the reminder of why what we are doing is important and that that is understood by the whole community and that is a high priority for me so if there is ever a chance for me to do that and I seek out chances to do that then that would be a priority and second would be and I am not particularly good at this but it is really important to me and that is I am looking for ways to encourage and empower the leaders that are under me. Everything you know if I send a clear and compelling vision at the end of the day I can't do, it is pointless even trying to do most of the things that we do well and so that is going to be done by the people on the next level down or the level beneath that and so whatever I do to and this goes further back too, it goes to hiring, (laughs) the right people. But assuming that we already have the team that we have, then it is how do I encourage them? How do I empower them, how do I help them become their best selves in the role and part of that is also mission and vision and clarity and observations and encouragement so that would be another piece. The third would be an I just referenced this a second ago would be, anything having to do with me being the gate-keeper for the school's mission is a very high priority and by gate-keeper I mean things like the hiring process. Erm that is somewhat delegated to the different supervisors, they are the ones who collate the teams but ultimate decision for hiring of professional staff, teaching staff or admin staff is mine to make. Erm it is one that I take very seriously and so even as we are looking at the applications and a principal maybe going through the application and interviewing, I will be an intimate part of that process because

at the end of the day there is no more important job I have than getting the right people to the school, who are aligned with the school and who have the capacities we need. So that would be one gate-keeper function that I prioritise the other would be admissions. You know the analogy that I use would be a sports analogy. You could have a great coach but if you don't have good players or players that are who buy in to the strategy of the team then it is all kind of pointless and that is what admissions is about is making sure that the families who are coming here are coming here for the right reasons, they understand and believe in the mission and erm yes because if we have that piece in place, then we are going to have a sharp parent school relationship, partnership. The kids are going to be more likely to be on board and we are going to be more successful. So that would be another one. There is another one that I have written down here and I can't read it because my writing is so..(laughs) oh erm that is erm my job actually is if you would say, if the board would say what is my most important role it would be to making sure that I am following the board's mandated goals for the school. Erm and so, so board relations and not just board relations but making sure that I closely in-tune with the mission of the school as articulated by the board because at the end of the day that is my job. My job is to implement what their vision is for the school and so anything that is related to any of those four or five things would be high priorities for me.

CG: Sure. I was going to take you back to some of those, because I find all of those really interesting and just to kind of rewind a bit on some of what you said. You talked about erm having a clear sense of what you are going to do that day, I am mean, I am going to ask obvious questions, is that a mental 'to do' list? Is that a written list what does that look like?

Peter: (09mins,17 secs) Yes so basically what I'll do is before I go to bed that night, I'll write down what tomorrow looks like or what meetings I have, what erm and if I have free space in the day which always I try to have as much free time as possible because my role is really in the things that are not meetings, meetings are important but...I'll look at the day in advance the night before and ahhh one I'll sleep better knowing that I have a clear idea of what the next day hands me. And also just to help me prioritise my time, to say okay if I have this meeting and it is an important meeting I need to take thirty minutes to prepare for that and I need thirty minutes afterwards to make sure that I have, that the details or the important decisions are not dropped there but there is follow through. So things like that are just very practical and it is a written list for me.

CG: Okay and then I was going to ask you about the idea of encouraging and empowering erm people that may be in leadership roles or underneath your position and I suppose I am interested in practically what does that look like? If you say that is an important priority for you in your school day, how might I notice that about what you do in order for me to think actually I see that that is a really important thing he values.

Peter: (10mins 44 secs) Yeah and so like I think I said this is something that I think is really important that I don't feel like I do as well as I have seen others do it. Erm but what I do is 'face-time', it is making sure that my leaders, that I am available, that I just check in from time to time and see how you are doing and we'll have that naturally because of meetings anyway but going out of my way to just check in. So, I do that relatively well, the other thing that some people do they really highlight the love languages for their workplace as well and some of my leaders are very good at you know they are gift givers or they love to give encouraging comments. I recoil against that erm because I feels manipulative to me

sometimes, (laughs) erm and you know a very American trait is to just praise everything, we are very good at praise. And to some extent that cheapens the praise too. So what I try to do is limit the amount of over the top praise I am giving but when there is something that is genuinely significant and especially if I see that they aren't seeing that themselves, I do go out of my way to say I see this, that you are doing right now and it is having an impact and you need to know that even if you don't...so that it something that I try to do. We do have our kind of normal cycle of evaluations but really the most important thing is the day-to-day talk, asking how you are doing, what is working, what is not working, are you frustrated, are you encouraged, why? And then listening. Because generally they are going to have the answers for themselves, more than I will, but it is just a matter of giving them chance to express that.

CG: Yes, that is really interesting. Yes, yes. So, when you do that are you walking around the building you said it happens like often because you are in meetings or you might see people then. I mean I am just interested in is there an intentional way that you are moving around a building to do that or do you just think you oh know what you know when I see people I see people?

Peter: (13mins, 09 secs) Yeah, so it's somewhere in between – you know when I said that I am not very good at this, I would like to be much more intentional there is some people that have a written list. I am going to check in with these people every day or at least once a week and on this day and I think there is value to that I really do because erm yeah if you are just spontaneous, and you just let it happen then you are going to gravitate towards people who you just enjoy being with more. Erm and that is not necessarily the best use of your time. Obviously, those relationships are important but every leader that is a part of the

team is valuable and just because you connect better or more easily with one doesn't...so I have to be more intention. So, I would say there is an extent to which I will say hey I haven't checked in with this person for a while and I need to do that, in fact I am thinking of an example right now erm where I haven't checked in for probably a week and a half, two weeks and I need to do that. So, there is some level of intentionality but it is not a written programme that you know, I don't have a check list of all my team and I probably could and should.

CG: Great, okay, just to follow up on another point you said, about answering number two you talked about this idea of a public expression of mission and vision and that was anything to do with that was a real priority for you, so I just wondered if you are able to give any examples of what that might be.

Peter: (14mins, 47 secs) Yes, so I can give a bunch of examples so, you will have staff devotions once a week, Tuesday mornings, so if I am slotted for that, and I seek that out, then I will devote a significant amount of time to making sure that I am not just off the cuff sharing my thoughts for the day but I am really intentional about things that I am seeing in the school and how this fits to our Christian educational vision. So So,,,,, yes, every chance that I have I want it to be about our Christian educational mission and it may be that it is related to my personal growth as a believer as well, but I want to be intentional. So, if I am giving a fifteen-minute devotional on Tuesday morning, I am going to spend you know a couple of hours to make sure that it is not a wasted time because I don't get that much time in front everyone and I want to make the most of it. So that would be one example. Getting a chance to speak in chapel, I'll speak in chapel a couple of times a semester probably. Any meetings that I have with parents, I started off and this is something that I've grown in a lot I

think from the beginning. I used to just kind of say 'Right I've got this meeting,' I'd jot down a couple of ideas on the back of an envelope before I go into the meeting and have a couple of you know thoughts to share. I don't do any, unless it is genuinely a spontaneous meeting, I don't do any off-the-cuff remarks anymore. I know what I want to say, erm not too highly so scripted, but I will have a clear message that I want to get across and I will have put time into making sure that that message is clear and substantial. There is a number of reasons for that, I mean there is obviously clarity of mission, but it is also erm, parents, staff, students, when they hear the leader articulate the vision of the school well, there is a certain amount of I am attached to that and I am proud of being attached to that. And if it is kind of flippant or shallow or erm unprofessional, these are opportunities that can't be wasted for a school leader I think so this is something that I am doing a lot better than I did when I started.

CG: Yes, I think that is a really valuable point actually about those words that one might utter as a school leader in those public forums that it needs to be very very carefully said with a considerable degree of intentionality about I what I want people to understand about what I am presenting and saying. Thanks _____. The next question is about your faith and how you feel it influences how you lead, I know you have talked a bit about that already in terms of thinking about devotions, erm and leading those but I wondered how you feel faith influences how you lead?

Peter: (18mins, 06 secs) Yes, so erm and this would probably be that any Christian would give applied to their workplace if they are deeply committed to living out their faith and so I want my faith to touch and influence every aspect of my life and that would certainly include erm my work. So, what does that look like? Erm my faith has brought me...my career choice was related to my faith, the chance to impact students erm and to be a part of their

spiritual formation as well as intellectual and moral formation, erm I think yes. So, I think my choice of career in the first place was related to that. My choice of _____ erm was related to that because there is, you know there is a lot of great leaders that are doing good work in a lot of great schools, but I didn't want to waste my time in a sense in place that..., no that's not fair, because there is a lot of people who are not aligned with the school missionally, necessarily with the school that they are working at in a spiritual sense erm to me, I wanted to find a school where I was fully aligned and where there would be a minimal amount of tension between what was most core to me and what was most core to the school. And so that is for Christian Education, for me that was a significant piece. So, there is alignment with purpose and mission that was important for me in to bringing me here but also it brings significance and fulfillment even to the little things. Even if I know, even the little things that I am doing at {the school} are for the Christlike or Christ honouring mission then I know that even the little things I have like the conversation with the janitor is part of that erm and it has and it carries with it, additional eternal significance, it is not just a conversation with a colleague or someone who is on my team, we are part of something much bigger, so a sense of mission, bringing value to even the small things and then the desire to make sure that the mission and the means are-(pause) have integrity, that they meet. So, it is not just what we do, it is not just why we are doing it but how we are doing it that matters as well. And so, I want to be walking the faith that I am pursuing in my work so my faith influences my mission, personally and as a school it influences the means by which we pursue that mission. Then in provides meaning and significance to even the small things that we would ordinarily be just mundane and take on significance. I feel like there is something else that I wanted to say on that but I think that's, those are the key points.

CG: Yes. And you talked about a conversation that you might have with someone. You gave me an example of the janitor and I mean, so I just wondered if you would be able to or would mind just sharing what that conversation might look like? If you are saying that is an important part, this is me carrying out what is me living out and being a faith leader. So, for example this conversation, what might that even look like? What would it sound like?

Peter: (22mins, 16 secs) Yes so it could take on a variety of different forms of course and I am thinking of two that just popped to mind, one is conversation that you know in the same way that I said I want to have a very clear idea of what I want to say in a public situation, related to the mission and purpose of the school, well that hat is still on when I'm having a personal private conversation where I am thinking about how can I encourage them in living out the mission of the school, showing them the value of what they do for the mission for the school and for what the impact is having on not just the students but the staff. So that would be one part of it, it is kind of a professional hat or at least a Christian professional hat in those conversations but the other is and this about the means, at the same time we all want to be valued not just for the role we play in our organisation but for who we are as people. So, to the degree that I am asking questions about people's lives, 'how are they doing?', I am thinking about conversations I had with one of our long-term janitors. His step-son, adopted son was married on our campus on Saturday, and so him on Sunday and I was able to say, 'Hey- I heard it was a beautiful wedding,'. I wasn't able to go, my wife was, and 'I heard it was a beautiful wedding and I was able to ask additional questions about that and hear about his step son and their story and again, do I have time to get in to that all the time with every staff, we have 200 staff members and that is not possible. But when there is an opportunity and when I have eyes, so there is two things on that, one do I have a desire to ask those questions in the first place that is important, if I

don't have the desire those conversations won't happen, so that is something that I have had to work on to say you know, 'Lord give me a real genuine interest in the people who serve here as people,' not just as parts of our machine. Have I built in enough time in the day where there is the ability to, to say yes to those moments, so I am not and this is something that again I've got better at but still not good at is carving out some flexibility so that I have the ability to ask people questions and actually listen. So, when I do that, it is showing that person that they matter as a person, not just a piece of an organisation. It is encouraging to them, it would be to me, for sure, it is to me when people take the time to ask about me so, so it's, I guess do unto others as you'd have them do unto you and try to apply that.

CG: Yes, that is really interesting and a great example. Thank you for that. I don't know if you want to say anything else about how faith influences how you lead? You have given me a lot.

Peter: (25mins, 37sec) Yeah, I mean maybe if something else comes up, I'll go back.

CG: Okay. My next question is about what in your opinion is key then to being an effective Christian Head of School, what are they key things?

Peter: (25mins 56 sec) Yeah so, I'll highlight three things some of which I have already mentioned erm one is recruiting and keeping the right people, (laughs) and so I have often said, whatever success we have had here at {the school} is not because I am a great leader but because I have been able to bring the right people in who are great and it is true, it really is. We have an amazing team here and our success is because God brought them through, God used me to bring them to {the school} and I have invested in them and they are the reason why we are thriving to the extent that we are thriving. The right people. The

other is I just alluded to is time. Making sure that is time built in the day to reflect and to plan and to think. Originally, I thought oh the true sign of a great leader is that they are super busy and now I think the true sign of a great leader is someone who feels like they are not busy at all but they are getting things done because they are thoughtful, intentional and there are margins. Building in margins in your day, I think is really really important. Again, that is not necessarily true just for a Christian principal or leader, it is true for any leader. But and in fact both those things are. And then the one that is most specifically related to faith is making sure that I am, in the same way that I talk about margins, is building in time in the day for devotional time and prayer and I would say, I am probably not alone in this, I could and should do more but you can't give what you don't have as you know and if my faith isn't real and growing and honest then my capacity to lead a Christian organisation is going to be hamstrung from the get-go. So, and I recognise that, we say that to our teachers, 'You can't teach and model what isn't there and so, so commit time to, be engaged in your church, and be engaged in an accountability group and your own personal spiritual life. Make sure that is happening and be honest about it, we aren't trying to create this kind of world at {the school} where everyone is like you know, walking around with you know halos. We want it to be, it needs to be real because it is exhausting to try and be something that you aren't so.... Yeah so, I think that's really super important and who you surround yourself with is a big part of that too but anyway those are the tree things that came to mind.

CG: Yes interesting, I think, the time, that idea of margins is really important but also that idea of authenticity.

Peter: (29mins 26 sec) Well you are right, that is a really important piece of Christian school is you can think erm fake or whatever, integrity or whatever it is for a while but eventually and especially within a community like ours, you know we live next to the people that we work with sometimes, we see them you know 365 days a year, well at some point and anyways you cannot be other than you are so you may as well not even try. You shouldn't try to fake it because it is pointless and erm yes and you get past that quickly so that you can get to being real and you walk together.

CG: Yes, I think that there is a lot of growing to be done in that openness and transparency actually, this is me and I have flaws and that's who I am...

Peter: (30 mins 39 sec) If I could add another thing it would sound contradictory to what I just said but it is not, is there is also levels of transparency and levels of healthy transparency and I think that it is important in my experience when we can admit our failures in front of our fellow leaders or teachers or if I have made a mistake or if I have done something wrong, I want to be able to get up and be able to say, 'You know what I got that wrong and that was hurtful,' or whatever, so I think that level of transparency and humility is absolutely and it is hard for all of us but it is important and at the same time, I have seen some people whose entire life is open to the world to the extent where you can like, that's too much for us to know and now I can't see you other than your and so I think that there is a healthy balance to be found in terms of transparency. We should never be other than what we are but the level of sharing should be in line with the level of trust that has been developed and that takes time.

CG: I hear what you are saying. Sometimes there is an over-sharing of information and we don't need to know it. So yes, I hear that difference in your answer. My next question is in

your opinion what does highly effective leadership look like, you might reflect back on leaders that you have worked for or with and think about actually they did this, or I see that this is really important in effective leadership and it might be effective Christian leadership or just leadership in general and I am happy for you to discuss either.

Peter: (33mins 13 sec) You know I don't think I am going to say anything particularly profound in this because the things that I'll say are the same that you will probably hear from most people and it is a repeat of some of the things that I have already said too so I'd say, one having a clear sense of purpose and mission, so if a leader is not clear not clear about what the purpose is then it is going to be very hard to have an effective school, you are certainly aren't going to get anywhere. Well, you'll get there but by the grace of God, but not... So, I think a clear sense of mission and purpose, the ability to thoughtfully articulate, so not just having the mission but the ability to thoughtfully articulate erm that mission in an inspiring way and that doesn't necessarily mean, you know there are some people that are very charismatic in personality and communication, but that is not what I mean. If it is done well the person doesn't need to be a you know, a Barack Obama, to be an effective leader. So yes so, clear mission, clear thoughtful articulation of that mission, and active and thoughtful recruiter of talents, like I said before, you can be a great coach but if you don't have a skilled team, there is only so much you can do. And then I would say too, benchmarks or assessment, so this is what we want to accomplish, well how do we know when we have accomplished that and what are some clear benchmarks that will help us assess our success as a school. So that's, whether that's a strategic plan you know deadlines, or various goals, I think those a really important, those can be a hinderance sometimes, where you get so focused on there is no flexibility or there is, just kind of checking off boxes, but at the same time I don't think...Great ideas get lost when there is not regular

accountability and this is something that I have learned, I think that I was very very poor at it when I started, I am less poor at it now but I am not great at it. Also being aware of your faults and flaws and finding people who can help to hopefully fix those too but helping people who can fill the gaps in your own capacity so that the institution can thrive. So, I guess awareness of strengths and weaknesses and building on your strengths and finding people who can fill the holes. So those are things that come to mind for me.

CG: Great. I won't keep you too long on this Peter, but this idea of those deadlines and benchmarks. Practically can you give me an example of how you would do that then in your leadership, what would that look like?

Peter: (36mins 42 sec) Yes so, the places that we have done that the best, is when we have had a very clear strategic plan and we've had a variety of ways that we have gone about that over the last twelve years but erm when we know like I'll use one strategic plan as an example so we broke down our five major goals for the next three years and so what is that going to look like. We broke that down in to multiple pieces and we broke that down and then we said okay, what is a reasonable timeline for each of these pieces and who is the point person, who is responsible for that piece being done. So erm that was an example of where we had that in front of us all the time and at every leadership team meeting. We would spend a little time say was there is there a deadline coming up in the next month, where are we at on that are we on track and that accountability of using that kind of chart of deadlines, was really helpful for us. Like I said a second ago, it could also be a hinderance if you felt like you know what, that goal that specific goal is no longer relevant or it is not helpful in the way that we thought and you feel like it was on our list so we need to check it off, there needs to be some flexibility and there needs to be you know of course, but. That is

an example of where we were very regimented in breaking things down, we haven't done that with all of our tool to the same extent but erm, I am losing track of where the question started though.

CG: I was asking you about how that benchmarking worked, because we were talking about like effective leadership and you said that actually that's been really useful having those deadlines.

Peter: (39 mins 16 sec) Let me add something else that I thought and is probably even more important that I hadn't originally thought of. So, I have mentioned internal strategic plans we've created or goals within our leadership team, the most effective means of getting things done, valuable things done in our experience has been external accountability and there are two main sources of that so erm, partly because when it is internal accountability there is relationships involved and that means oh I was really busy, okay fine, we will get it to you the next time or you know, whatever it may be. But when there is external accountability and it is not personal, so let me give you two examples. Our accreditation cycle. A lot of times, people feel like they have to have a strategic plan, that they are creating out of scratch and it is fighting for space with the accreditation goals that the whole school has created and it is almost like you are filling...(pause) everyone should have a strategic plan so we have to create one. Well, your accreditation goals are already built into your strategic plan, that you can build on and that is something that you know that you going to have report on and erm your accreditation is contingent on doing these things well. So having a strong external accountability is also a good thing, it makes it less personal, it makes it less kind of it is just no, this is a task we are doing together and erm, that is one example of external accountability. For _____ the best accountability we have is our

board policy governance structure and I do not know how familiar you are with policy governance, but that to me is the number one most important external accountability because what the board is, the way it is set up is the board governs by policy, it says here's the mission and vision that we as a board have chosen, for the school our end statement and then we have all these policies that if they are done well will get us to that mission and vision. And those policies are what we call executive limitations and so the board basically says here is the area, let's say its, I won't get into the minutiae, let me go back a second I am being too wordy. So, policy governance works this way, there is a river and a boat in the river and you have a destination at the end of the river, okay. In this analogy, the school is the boat and the captain of that boat is the superintendent, okay and the board hires the captain to get the boat from where they are to the destination. The board's only job other than hiring the captain, is to create the banks of the river, okay. So, you can do whatever you want, to get to that destination as long as it's within the banks of the river. It is not okay for you to take the boat out and walk along the ground for a while or to run ahead with a car. You need to stay in the river and within the banks of the river. So that is the external accountability, so every board meeting, I will have to report on three or four different areas of policy, you know maybe it is erm on staff relations, or quality of life for staff, maybe it is going to be academic success or asset protection, let's say, do we have proper insurance and financial planning, whatever it may be. The whole school, everything the school does fits within these policies and I have to report yes, we are in compliance, meaning here's evidence that we are doing the things that you want us to do, that is getting us to the mission. And it is amazing how effective that is in reminding me, yeah this is really important, I haven't thought about it for the last two months but we have a board meeting coming up in a month and I need to be able to report that we are doing something about

this and it is important and it just had dropped down the priority list and so, I know if I don't show up to the board meeting with something that is not just saying that we are doing this but I have evidence to say that we are doing this, that then they rightly will hold me accountable. So, the policy governance structure for me as a leader has been unbelievably helpful and er I could go on and on about that, but that has been really helpful.

CG: Okay that is a really interesting answer, thanks Peter. So, let's move on, question 6 is I think where we are at which is what are your top three or four priorities as you lead this school. You have already touched on them and I know you will be repeating them and in a way my questions all kind of merge and overlap a bit but feel free to say it is this this and this, it is up to you. Your priorities then as you lead this school.

Peter: I will just kind of give you bullet points here because they are repeats, one ensuring the Christian mission, that there is alignment to the Christian mission, that would be a top priority, that we have a clear idea of where we are going and that we are everything is focused on that mission. Second erm would be and this is kind of a repeat but applying that mission to changing circumstances, we have to be nimble too and t is gonna look quite different, pursuing our mission today, looks very different than pursuing our mission in 1970. Circumstances have changed, culture's changed erm, our facilities and capacity has changed so that would be the second piece, is just being aware of circumstances and so that you can effectively pursue that mission in a changing world. We talked about accountability and making sure that there is erm and ways to demonstrate whether we are achieving our mission and I haven't been specific about this but our alumni are our product and so, and this is something that we are working on a lot, but I don't know of any school that actually does this well and I think that it is so important, and so critical but I don't know a school that

does it well and that is having significant and regular follow up with our alumni and saying what are you doing, in terms of your life and career and why are you doing it and that is related to faith formation and just career. When we look at our mission which is to inspire and equip each student to develop their God given gifts for Christlike service in a world community, you want to say are our alumni living out their lives in a Christlike service to the world community. And of course, that can be defined fairly broadly but there is still, that would be another thing I would say a top priority is cultures looking at the product and say does it match your mission and that is super hard to do, the further they get away from {the school} the less you know direct connection there is and less legitimacy maybe there is but that is super important and so we are working on that. I think that would be it.

CG: Yes, I think the alumni point is a really valuable one though and that is what it is all about right, have we achieved what we set out to achieve and how do we measure that and there are lots of different ways we measure it as schools. But what you say, actually to go back to those to those people is really important and to give them a voice in that.

Peter: (48mins 38 sec) One other quick side note on that is that it is a lot of work to do that, because alumni is spread out all over the world and keeping track of them is hard but sometimes it is discouraging too, people make life choices and it is different from what you would hope they would make and even different from the trajectory that you had thought that they would have been on sometimes. So, I think sometimes we don't look into things because we don't want to know the answer but that's not a good enough reason not to. The other thing that is hard too though, that I think is really important is, is some type of benchmark, or some type of, Scientists talk about a control group, I don't know of any I think ACSI is trying to do this and they are making progress on it, a study that basically says,

your typically American Christian school, this is what is happening, or typical erm you know North American or European Christian school, this is what is happening with the graduates, I don't know of anything that we can compare ourselves to, if we could just say this is what we are seeing and right now with impact of culture, what we are seeing is, yes in some ways it is encouraging, but it is not, do we have 100% of our graduates, you know going on and living lives that are honouring to God and clearly aligned with our mission, no we don't. And so, but if we had a benchmark to say well this is what the typical, well even a public non-Christian school, this is what their lives look like and this is what {the school} alumni look like, that would be really helpful, because otherwise you are interpreting it in related to your ideals which are not going to be met and that is just discouraging, so.

CG: Yes, yes. Interesting. So, the next question Peter is about your philosophy for Christian education, I know that you have already talked about it.

Peter: (50mins 57 sec) Yes so this is the one I could go in lots and lots of detail so I am going to be very concise, so my philosophy of Christian education is not, is in four categories for things that I think are really important to Christian education, erm and there are sort of different philosophies of Christian education that overlap and are all important and I just read an article in the last month, that has been incredibly helpful to me because I have had all these ideas in my head but it was a very clear distillation of these things so one is, you know we talk about erm Christian worldview, so I see that as the philosophy piece of Christian education, asking these fundamental questions I think that is an important part of Christian education is questions like what does it mean to be a human being, what is a primary problem, is there life after death, these big picture questions I think are integral to Christian education and need to be addressed, second is related but separate and that is the

integration of faith and learning meaning in particular content areas, so I think every you know there has been some people that have said, 'Well, integration, faith and learning your', how do they put it, 'God is already a part of the content, all truth is God's truth,' you don't have to reinsert God to Physics or Maths or whatever, but I think that is true, but the point is education for the last 150 years has been intentionally separating faith from learning and our teachers are all trained in a world where you are expected to not bring faith into...it is supposed to be scientific in this kind of old school sense of the term, but so we have to retrain ourselves and say no, this is Physics, God created physics and we need to be intentional about how that makes physics more understandable or interesting or so that would be the second piece, so philosophy, worldview, asking the big questions from a Christian perspective is part one, the second is being intentional about reintegrating faith in the specific subject matter and that is a job for teachers in the classroom, so is the worldview piece, the third is something a bucket, called formation, and that is spiritual and moral formation, it is also part of a Christian educators task. So if we say the first one is about kind of why, the big why questions, the second is about what content, the third is about how, that is how we do things, sorry I am kind of getting to my fourth one, but the idea that formation like spiritual formation, moral formation erm and intellectual formation should be all intertwined in a Christian school in a way that gives life to each of those pieces, that I really feel sorry the more I think about secular education is how, how vacuous it is because you are intentionally separating things that provide life and meaning to these things that are really interesting in the content. So formation and that is about things like intellectual virtue for instance, that is a significant part of Christian education that doesn't fit nicely into the box of worldview or integration but is the 'how to' like it is the who you become, I shouldn't say actually let me go back, I am putting the, if we say that worldview is

about the why, the big whys, and integration is about the what, formation is probably better said about the who, who are you becoming as a person, so that would be the third piece and the last would be the how, so I should have used the how later. The how would be the craft of teaching, so there is a guy named David Smith, who is a professor at Calvin College and he has written a book I am going to forget the name of it, I think it is called *On Christian Teaching*, but it basically talks about how the craft of teaching can be done from a specifically and intentionally Christian perspective in other words, how we create our, how we use the time in the class, how we discipline, how we set up... There can be particularly Christian ways of the craft of teaching that we often times don't think about, we just say teaching is teaching, good teaching is good teaching and that is true, good teaching is good teaching. But there are specific ways that Christians because they are Christians and their goals are going to be slightly different from a typical classroom, they are going to set their classroom up differently, they are going to discipline differently, they are going to use their time differently. And so, I think that that piece of craft is also an important part of philosophy of Christian education, that maybe hasn't been thought through a lot yet that I would add and I would say that I need to do a lot more thinking on it as well, so this book *On Christian Teaching* is one that I am only half way through but it has been really really helpful.

CG: Yes, and you mentioned an article as well, is that from that book?

Peter: (56mins 53 sec) No it is not and I wish that I had it here in front, I will send you that article.

CG: Great.

Peter: (57mins 1 sec) It has been like, it is one of those articles that you read and say, why didn't I read this ten years ago because all the pieces are there, it is just put together in a way that was so.

CG: Yes, brilliant, thanks I find all of that detail, there was a lot of it, but I get it and I understand what you were explaining. Peter, I am aware of the time and I am happy to keep going but I am just conscious that you've got time and that I am not, because I have got a few more questions. Are you okay for time? I have got four more questions.

Peter: (57mins 46 sec) I am good for another probably ten or fifteen minutes.

CG: Sure, okay let's race through, that's great, thank you. So, the next question is about who or what has influenced how you lead?

Peter: (57mins 57 sec) Yes, so this is funny, because I didn't go in to, I didn't get into this because I had planned to be a school leader. And so, a lot of people who kind of that, they feel that sense of calling from an early age, they are reading the leadership books, they are watching people closely, I didn't do that. I kind of came into it through the back door and realised how important and valuable it is and how some of my gifts are a good fit for this and so I have kind of learned on the job in a way that maybe others haven't so in terms of professional development, I have a PhD but it is in History. It has nothing to do with education. Not at least directly. But I have done a lot of reading, just on your typical leadership books, I found that helpful. Some of them are kind of your cliché leadership authors you know. The Maxwells, the Steve Covey's and yeah that has been really helpful. But I think that the most valuable things for me have been watching the leaders under me lead their teams well and learning from the people under me ironically. I have learned as much from them as I have from anyone because I see things that they do well that I don't

necessarily do well and I have been able to glean from their experience and their gifts. So that would be one. And then colleagues, fellow heads of schools, there's been, in fact some of the people that I might have mentioned to you earlier, just getting together regularly with them, you know probably, once every month or two we'll have a google meet or a zoom meeting and we will just talk about what we are doing, erm and what we are struggling with you know, in our schools and just hearing how people process that. I have learnt a tremendous amount just from walking alongside people and hearing how they've er responded to things, so it is kind of the real life in the trenches learning. That is the most valuable, but some of the lessons are lost if you aren't doing the big picture reading too, I think those books have given me a framework, to or to use the educational-ese, it has given me the scaffolding to build, the lessons that I would be learning from real life, some of those would have been lost if I wasn't also complementing that with leadership reading. Would I benefit from er doing in Master's degree in educational leadership, yes. I think I have a lot I could get out of that but I haven't done that yet.

CG: Okay, that's helpful and an interesting point about leaders that are also in your peer group but also those below you. I think it is a really interesting point and a valuable one. You have already talked about your leadership style Peter I don't know if you want to say anything else, more about your leadership style and how you seek to lead? I think you have given really good examples.

Peter: (1hr 01min, 28 sec) I wrote down here mission drive, empowering of other leaders, seeking to be inspiring and again not in terms of character or charisma but in terms of content and one thing that I haven't mentioned that is really important and it is a personality trait even more than erm, and that it being a consensus builder and being

collaborative and so part of that is because I came into the role feeling like, I don't know what I am doing and so I need a team with me to work this out together and so, and as the quality of the team around me grew, I just continued to lean on the wisdom and perspective of those around me, in part because it spreads out, shares the weight of responsibility although at the end of the day I need to be able to answer for any decision that we make. But yes, I just found tremendous value in, in listening and seeking to come to a consensus as a team. There are very few examples that I can think of where I have made a decision that I felt was out of the consensus, but I just felt such a strong conviction that I said no I am willing to accept the consequences of this, even though I know that team is not on board. It has been very rare, but I have done that a few times and I don't regret those because the conviction was such that I said, no sometimes leaders do need to make decisions that, and they need to go out ahead and stick their neck out at it and hope that the others come along. In general, I find strength in diversity of perspectives and in a team moving forward together.

CG: Yes interesting, that idea of being a consensus leader, a consensus builder, yes, I see that, yes and quite powerful when you are taking that team with you, I think, that people feel that they have a voice on it. Really important. We are getting just about nearly to the end, not quite, but my penultimate question is about, how important it is that you equip others, how important is it to you that you equip others? You have already talked about equipping and upskilling and I wonder, if you could say any more about that or practically what that might look like?

Peter: (1hr 04 mins, 12 sec) Yes so I just wrote down 'very', how important is it, 'very', (laughs) but I also wrote down and I referenced this before this is something that I don't feel

like I do as well as other leaders that I have watched do it, and er and so I guess I'd say, there are two words that often times combined or seen as synonymous and I see them as quite different, one is equipping which is the word you use and the one is empowering and so my philosophy tends to be and there is weaknesses in this for sure, is I want to hire, recruit and hire the best highly capable people that I can and then get out of the way so that they can do their work to some extent and that is kind of cop out because we are all growing, none of us are the finished product and it is a responsibility of the leader to equip and help grow the leaders under them and I think that is absolutely true but my perspective has tended to be hey, you have been hired for this role and you are very capable, and until you show me otherwise, I am just going to turn you lose. And again, I am not saying this is the right answer, but that tends to be the way that I have done it because it tends, because it is all showing confidence in them. (laughs) I think you can do this, no you don't need to get my approval of every little piece of minutiae because I trust that you are going to make a good decision and if you are not sure, then come and ask for my perspective and when I give you my perspective, you don't need to go the direction that I am suggesting necessarily, unless it is a mission central issue and then they definitely need to come to me anyways. But sometimes there are times when people have made, leaders have made under me, decisions that I feel oh my goodness. I am going to have to pick up the pieces on this because that was er, and that was an opportunity for me to say, you know what, you stepped out, you made a decision, and in that case, you got it wrong, I get it wrong sometimes, let's talk about the process, that is a way equip in terms of giving a sounding board for you know reflection, but yeah I think that would be super important, I don't think that I do it that well, I tend to be kind of, I think you can do it, so go do it and talk to me if you need to.

CG: Yes, but interesting that idea. The fact that the head of school has confidence enough to say I trust you to do, is very powerful.

Peter: (1hr 07mins, 26 sec) Let me say one other thing that I just thought as you were saying that, because I was agreeing with your summary there and that is, a lot of times when I encourage, especially if it is a young leader at _____, I will say, I trust you to make the call and I am going to back you up on your call, but if you are uncertain, if you want get my perspective, get my perspective. And I will tell you what I think, as much as, sometimes parents say well I want the kid to make a decision, but kids still want to know what the parents think even if they don't you know. And it is similar thing and because I also, it is easier for me to support them in the decision when I agree with their decision, it is easier for me to support it and so they can move forward with confidence, knowing that I have their back on it. So basically what I say to a new leader is if it is a small decision, then take the risk and go with your gut and get your team on board of course but, you don't need, if it is a big decision and you want to know that I am going to be in your corner for sure, or make it easier for me to be in your corner, then run it past me and as you make those decisions more often, then you are going to need to do that less and less because you are going to know the answer.

CG: Really interesting, my last question _____. You have already talked about this, in fact you have talked about what I was thinking of without me saying it, which was about, what external factors influence or shape how you lead and you have talked about ACSI and you have talked about the board, and actually those were what I was thinking of and you have given good examples there of both and how they do that, so I don't know if you want to say any more about that, but just to invite you to do that.

Peter: (1hr 09 mins, 44 sec) Yes so I would just have one other category and that is just the general broad category of external circumstances writ large like I am think of Covid, I am thinking of in _____ you know potential for terrorism and security issues that felt much bigger ten years ago than they do know but they are still there and then really the most significant external threat to the school that has shaped how we have lived and moved forward has been the culture, theological and culture wars in north America and western Europe, in terms of what does it mean to be a Christian and so these, in a general category of they do shape our context a significant amount and er they do shape the way we lead in terms of reacting to those things and it goes back to having a clear sense of mission and core values and beliefs, because those things are easy to handle when you know who you are and you know what your purpose is. So, they still do shape the day to day quite a bit. So, I know that wasn't quite where you are going with that question...

CG: But they are external factors, yes sure. Thank you. There is a lot, you have said a lot, I have written a lot, but I have captured it all as we have recorded it so that is great. I am going to pause the video now.

Appendix 8 Table of Christian international schools and school data

Head teacher	Designation	School	Location	Number on roll	School age range	Curriculum	Teaching Staff nationalities	Student nationalities	Number of years the school has been open
Keith	Director	AF1	Africa	300	4-18	U.K. and U.S.	13	30	70
Richard	Superintendent	WA1	Africa	285	4-18	U.S.	12	44	55
Peter	Superintendent	AE3	Africa	625	4-18	U.S.	12	50	75
Bruce	Director	AF2	Africa	330	4-18	U.S.	11	30	20
Alison	Middle school principal	AE1b	Africa	280	11-18	U.K. and U.S.	11	31	10
Patrick	High school principal	AE1a	Africa	280	11-18	U.K. and U.S.	11	31	10
Catherine	Head of School	WA2	Africa	100	11-18	U.S.	7	Not available	30
Sheila	Junior School principal	AM1	Asia	700	4-11	U.S.	12	23	90
Jane	Junior School Principal	MR1	Caribbean	655	4-18	Local and U.S.	7	Not available	55