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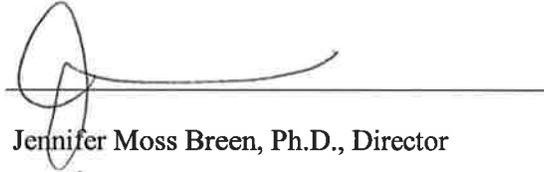
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Jennifer Moss Breen, Ph.D., Director

Gail M. Jensen, Ph.D., Dean

CLERGY PREPARATION FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN A
MIDWESTERN DIOCESE

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By

JASON E. SLATTERY

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial
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Abstract

In the Diocese of Omega, following a long history of local decision making, the parish priest is ultimately responsible for the leadership of a Catholic elementary school. The role of the priest is similar to that of a superintendent in a public-school setting. Priests of the Diocese of Omega are prepared for their responsibilities by the local seminary. The curricular program at the local seminary conforms to the Program of Priestly Formation promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2006). Upon completion of seminary studies and ordination, priests are eligible for assignments that may include Catholic school leadership. This phenomenological study explored the perceptions of 20 interviewed priests regarding how seminary prepared them for leadership in a Catholic school. This study found that priests reported meager direct and indirect preparation in either coursework or formation experiences for leadership of Catholic elementary schools during their time in and following the seminary. These findings informed the development of recommendations focused on ensuring that clergy better understand their leadership role and have access to adequate and necessary preparation for leadership of Catholic elementary schools.

Keywords: Catholic school leadership, Catholic education, preparation of priests, program of priestly formation

Dedication

This work is dedicated to those who have pledged their lives, fortunes, loves, and liberty to fight the good fight and to run the race that together we might keep the Faith (2 Timothy 4:7, Revised Standard Version). For Thomas, Cyprian, Sebastian, Edith, and Solanus that these simple efforts will help strengthen Catholic education that you might learn which fight to fight and which race to run. Persevere.

Acknowledgements

As an undergraduate student, an encounter with the work of John Henry Newman (1848) sparked grateful wonder for me where he observed "God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me that he has not committed to another." Readily admitting the limitations of metaphor, Catholicism was proposed as a lens to see reality more clearly and recognize what God had created me for, much like a spy glass is pressed into the hand of an incipient traveler to the Lamar Valley that they might make out the vast reaches and features that would otherwise be lost in the expanse.

Through this lens, whether an object is near or at a distance, one is able to make out every detail, every flourish, and every splendor. It is the lens through which Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J. gazed up at the heavens and down at the earth and observed "…for dappled things-for skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow; for rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim" (1877, Stanza 1). Through this same lens, Flannery O'Connor drew into focus an all too familiar scene through the fictional character of Asbury, who after accepting the calling card of Ignatius Vogle, S.J. noted "…the priest appealed to him (Asbury) as a man of the world, someone who would have understood the unique tragedy of his death, a death whose meaning had been far beyond the twittering group around them" (1993, p.87). This same lens allowed Dante to draw the eye far beyond those chilling words inscribed upon the gate, "Before me there were no created things; But those that last forever—as do I. Abandon all hope, you who enter here" (2002, Canto 3).

Without the lens what is seen somehow seems under shadow lacking brilliance, coherence, and integrity. Such was the formation and education that I received in the Catholic intellectual and wisdom tradition. This education helped me to see anew and to

catch a glimpse of what lies beyond the horizon of this life in the hope of never flinching. The gift of this lens came, principally, through an integrated Catholic education—studies at Creighton University mark the terminus of the path of formal education that began in 1987.

Edith Stein (1992) reminded that if we choose to see, through the act of reflection, we often can trace the path of Providence magnified in how people and events help guide and shape us. Through an incredible witness to love and care, Mary, my bride, taking her cues from Another of the same name, is a figure without whom doctoral studies, and undoubtedly this dissertation, would have been imagined or realized. I am glad there is a glint reminder on my finger of what was vowed and am eager at the prospect of shifting the hours spent on studies to the true love of my life. We were gifted with four sons and a daughter. They have only known their father as a student, while in the intersecting time some became students themselves. Each played a part in helping with this dissertation from fetching coffee and helping repeatedly realign the table of contents to feigning interest in sections read aloud. These efforts, ultimately, I hope will help contribute to the flourishing of Catholic education for families and children.

Frederic Baraga, who was no stranger to arduous journeys, encouraged that we should, "Especially endeavor to have the true love of God…If you love God sincerely and above all, you will easily fulfill all other duties towards Him. Nothing is difficult, nothing tedious, to a loving heart" (1853). When plumbing the depths of leadership through studies at Creighton University, this quality of a loving heart was a reoccurring theme, initially proposed in the introductory course through the work of Christopher Lowney (2003). Some years ago, I received a call that changed the course of my life and

unmistakably surfaced this dissertation topic. The call came by way of Bishop Andrew

Cozzens in whom I have found a steady and sincere teacher. His motto, Praebe Nobis

Cor Tuum (Lord, give us Your heart), captures the starting point for how he leads.

Through this work, and historic circumstances that are beyond explanation, I had the

opportunity of serving with Archbishop Bernard Hebda. Archbishop Hebda masterfully

teaches leadership by example, Cor ad Cor Loquitor (heart speaks to heart), just how it is

a leader might encounter opportunities and obstacles. It is striking, and perhaps

instructive, that a point of common expression among these three leaders is found in the

one they turn toward to strengthen and guide their own hearts—only Jesus.

Ignatius of Loyola reminded that "love ought to manifest itself more by deeds

than by words" (1987, p. 230). A Jesuit I encountered some years ago described a

Catholic priest as Christ crucified for and to the world. At the time, I lacked both the

maturity and wisdom to glimpse his meaning. Now there is hardly a morning that goes

by when I am not surrounded at breakfast by the chatter of children and the company of

my bride. In these moments there is some reflection on the willing sacrifices made by

priests and religious, who themselves forgo marriage and family life, the very thing that

many find most dear in this world, as a visible sign of confidence that the horizon of this

life is not death (Snow, 2015). The time consumed by family life for me is for a priest

given to bringing forth the sacraments and poured into the various apostolates in the

Catholic Church, which in turn opens opportunities for grace and growth for families—

included among these is the essential work of Catholic schools. As a layman, their

sacrifice and witness grounds faith and moors hope. If priests and religious are willing to

make so great a sacrifice of their lives, we simply must expend every effort to help ensure

they are supported and prepared for the tasks set before them—which is the animating force of this dissertation.

The Dubliners (2008) provided the definitive family anthem during the early years, which came back into fashion through these studies, "Don't Give Up 'Til It's Over." While I wish that I would have possessed the good sense to take them up on it more, my paternal grandparents, the late Hurricane Bill and Jean Slattery, were great patrons of Catholic schools and helped interested grandchildren benefit from attendance. My maternal grandparents, Richard and Mildred Coates, are the most naturally decent, humble, and honest people I have ever known. In the summer of 2018, while staying with them for a spell, my grandfather offered a humbling assessment of my dissertation proposal after leafing through it "well, Jay, it sure looks like a lot of words and paperwork." My parents, Wild Bill and Charlotte, and four brothers are a source of strength. As the eldest, I am grateful to look up to my younger brothers, William and Matthew, each according to the heroic embrace of their vocations, it is among my few inescapable regrets that I have nearly a decade on them both. Tyler and John still have to make their mark on the world—be dauntless.

At the end of any leg of a journey we are often confronted with the reality that there are some who are not here with us, yet without whom we might not have arrived. Like many, I benefited from people mysteriously placed along the way, who ultimately over the passage of time and trial became friends. I take great consolation that before the sight of God it is known just how much two friends, the late Don Briel and James Carbonari, helped me find and stay on the path. Don fleshed Guardini's (1996) description of eternal consciousness and always told me the truth about what was

important in this life. He did not flinch from helping when life turned, as it does from time to time, bewildering. Jim was without a doubt the most hopeful man that I have yet met. Even in his last days, when I was far more interested in understanding how he was feeling and what he was fearing, Jim was keenly interested in everything I was studying. Don's earthly pilgrimage ended in February of 2018 and Jim followed in April. Somehow the solution posed here would have surely benefited from their speculation.

The transformative power of a Jesuit education, and the prospect of expanding my view, drew my eye to Creighton University. Yet, the prospect of attendance was simply beyond reach save for the reception the Presidential Scholarship generously awarded by the University. Through these studies I had the great fortune of good teachers who bore personal witness in exemplary ways to *cura personalis*. Unmistakable among these teachers was the witness of Drs. Watwood and Brock. Dr. Watwood exemplified a scholarly commitment to quality and excellence that benefitted this work in inexplicable ways. He showed me that perhaps patience is indeed limitless. Dr. Brock has lit the way that another generation might see clearly how to fruitfully live a vocation to scholarship in Catholic education. Generously sharing key insights and the perfectly timed word of encouragement, she made the virtue of charity appear effortless. Their lessons inspire and live. Persevere.

Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega are overseen by the parish

priest (Diocese of Omega, 2016). This role may be assigned to any ordained priest in

good standing when or if he is assigned to a parish that includes a Catholic elementary

school (Diocese of Omega, 2016). In essence, the responsibilities of the parish priest vis-

à-vis the elementary school are similar in scope and importance to those of a

superintendent in a public-school setting (Diocese of Omega, 2017b). And yet, the

seminary where most of the priests of the Diocese of Omega receive their training does

not appear to provide preparation of any kind to equip priests for this challenging

responsibility, nor do priests appear to receive any additional formal education or training

in Catholic school leadership after completing seminary studies (Boyle & Dosen, 2017;

Diocese of Omega, 2017c; Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018). The plan and curriculum of

Saint Alpha Seminary is informed and regulated by the Program of Priestly Formation

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). The Program of Priestly

Formation is the framework for the preparation of Catholic priests in the United States for

the responsibilities of ministry (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

Leadership of a Catholic elementary school is often among the responsibilities of

ministry for a priest in the Diocese of Omega. Catholic school leadership does not

explicitly appear in the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of

Catholic Bishops, 2006). The inclusion of Catholic school leadership in the seminary

preparation program for Catholic priests of the Diocese of Omega is an area of growing

local concern (Diocese of Omega, 2017c). This adequacy of preparation is especially

significant today given the profound changes that have occurred in the parish schools in the diocese over the past 50 years. Faced with these historic challenges, Catholic elementary schools, more than ever, need steady and qualified leadership (Belmonte, 2007; Durow & Brock, 2013).

Mirroring trends across the United States, Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega have experienced a complex series of historic and unplanned organizational challenges (DeFiore, Convey, & Schuttloffel, 2009). Organizationally, Catholic elementary schools are centered around a series of fundamentals that contribute to their success: students, families, teachers, principals, pastors, curriculum, and the business model (Frabutt, Holter, Nuzzi, Rocha, & Cassel, 2010; Walch, 2016). The operational environment of the Catholic elementary school historically was marked by consistency in parish support, the involvement of professed religious men and women in roles of teaching and leading, students from families enrolled in the parish, a financial model that relied on fixed costs, and a modest level of diocesan centralized support (Walch, 2016).

Over the last decade the diocese has experienced a loss of 10,464 elementary school students leaving roughly 19,000 parish school students served by 79 elementary schools (Diocese of Omega, 2017a). The precipitous loss of enrollment resulted in school closures, consolidations, and staff changes. As is often the case when there are significant organizational challenges, leadership—particularly that of priests—becomes a primary source of focus (Burke, 2014). While these organizational fundamentals of a Catholic school underwent largely unplanned and reactive shifts, constant through the change is the leadership role of the parish priest in the Catholic school (Ippolito,

Latcovich, & Mayln-Smith, 2008). Facing historic challenges, Catholic schools rely on quality formation of leadership (Belmonte, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

In the Diocese of Omega, the parish priest is ultimately responsible for the leadership of a Catholic elementary school, similar to the role of a superintendent in a public-school setting (Diocese of Omega, 2016). In this position, the priest has complete and final authority over all operations of the school (Diocese of Omega, 2017b). The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2006) in mandating the Program of Priestly Formation provided the explicit foundation for the curriculum of the local seminary (Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018); however, it does not appear to include any instruction or framework for preparing priests for a leadership role in a Catholic school. And yet, within the diocese under study, every priest who has completed seminary studies and is in good standing with the Diocese may be assigned and expected to provide leadership to a Catholic elementary school within his parish.

There can be no doubt that the success of a Catholic school is dependent, to a significant degree, on the quality of its leadership (Boyle, 2010; Ciriello, 1994). Not surprisingly, given this apparent void in the curriculum, concern has been raised by priests and others in the diocese (Diocese of Omega, 2017c)—as well as some researchers (Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Simonds, Brock, Cook, & Engel, 2017)—about this oversight in preparing priests for Catholic school leadership. The concern, in short, is that priests may be systematically unprepared for this important role that they may be asked to take on. This issue is especially salient today as Catholic elementary schools in

this diocese have gone through fundamental and drastic organizational changes over the last 50 years (Diocese of Omega, 2017a; Catholic Finance Corporation, 2017).

With these concerns in mind, this study explored the perceptions of diocesan priests as to how they experienced preparation for Catholic school leadership at the local seminary, and specifically, whether this preparation was adequate. Through the reflections of clergy, this researcher was able to identify opportunities and areas for improvement in preparation for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological dissertation in practice study was to gain a better understanding of the preparation clergy need to be able to effectively take on the leadership of a Catholic elementary school. Through in-depth interviews with 20 priests in a Midwestern diocese, the researcher gained insight through their lived experiences which informed a set of evidence-based recommendations that could better prepare priests for this role.

Research Question

Qualitative studies are guided by a primary or central research question and a set of related subquestions (Creswell, 2014). When devising research questions for qualitative studies, Roberts (2010) noted that central research questions should be broad in order to allow the researcher to sufficiently conceptualize and explore the main idea or phenomenon under study. The following research question and subquestions helped this researcher to construct a rich and in-depth depiction of the experiences of the priests participating in the study with respect to how they were prepared for Catholic school

leadership, as well as their perceptions about the adequacy of this preparation. With this in mind, this qualitative study was guided by the following central research question:

What preparation do priests receive and need for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in a Midwestern diocese?

This central research question then yields the following subquestions:

1. How do priests describe their seminary experience of direct preparation for Catholic school leadership?

2. How do priests describe their seminary experience of indirect preparation for Catholic school leadership?

3. How do priests feel about the adequacy of their preparation for Catholic school leadership?

4. What, if any, additional preparation is needed to prepare priests for Catholic school leadership?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to gain insight into what is needed to adequately prepare priests for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega, and based on this knowledge and their insight, provide evidence-based recommendations that may help improve the experience of preparation.

Methodology Overview

A qualitative approach following a phenomenological design was used to explore the central phenomenon of this study (Groenewald, 2004; Maxwell, 2013) around the experiences and perspectives of priests about their preparation for Catholic school leadership. This qualitative, phenomenological approach was chosen because it allowed

the researcher to explore this phenomenon in depth to gain a clearer picture of what is needed to prepare priests for their leadership role in a Catholic elementary school. Both Roberts (2010) and Creswell (2014) affirmed that a qualitative approach provides the opportunity for researchers to concentrate on the experience of others, which may allow them to be able to view the phenomenon under study from their perspective. Also, this phenomenon was uniquely experienced by the study participants. A set of eligibility criteria was observed that limited the number of possible participants to 80 priests. Of the 80 potential participants, the researcher secured 20 participants; specifically, priests in good standing who were ordained for a Midwestern diocese after having completed studies at the local seminary. All priests in good standing are eligible for an assignment that may include Catholic school leadership. In this study, 18 out of 20 participants were priests actively serving in roles that include Catholic school leadership with 12 of the 20 leading elementary schools.

Definition of Relevant Terms

The following terms are commonly found in the professional practice setting being studied. Some of these terms may not be familiar to the readers, while others are defined here to avoid confusion, as they may be given different meanings, depending on the context and the author (Roberts, 2010).

Archdiocese: This term is often used interchangeably with diocese. In the Roman Catholic Church, territory across the globe is divided into dioceses or archdioceses, which are determined and defined by the Holy See. Archdioceses are entrusted to the care of an archbishop. Dioceses are grouped into provinces ordinarily with an archdiocese providing an additional level of vigilance and care.

Provinces exist to encourage common pastoral activity and coordination among dioceses in a region. There are 32 territorial archdioceses in the United States. The office or role of the archbishop is to teach, sanctify, and govern the archdiocese (Coriden, Green, & Heintschel, Canon Law Society of America, & the Catholic Church, 1983).

Diocese: This term is often used interchangeably with archdiocese. In the Roman Catholic Church, territory across the globe is divided into dioceses or archdioceses, which are determined and defined by the Holy See. There are 145 territorial dioceses in the United States. Dioceses are entrusted to the care of a bishop. The office or role of the bishop is to teach, sanctify, and govern the diocese (Coriden et al., 1983).

Archbishop: Archbishops are nominated and appointed by the Bishop of Rome. Within this role, archbishops are entrusted with the responsibility to teach, sanctify, and govern an archdiocese; this includes ensuring that the priests within their diocese are properly and sufficiently trained. Archbishops have some responsibilities that relate to dioceses in the province that include activities like installing a bishop appointed to a diocese and advising the Bishop of Rome of abuse or neglect in a provincial diocese. They also assign priests to parishes and are the competent ecclesiastical authority for Catholic schools in an archdiocese (Coriden et al., 1983; John Paul II, 1997).

Bishop: Bishops are nominated and appointed by the Bishop of Rome. Within this role, bishops are entrusted with the responsibility to teach, sanctify, and govern a diocese; this includes ensuring that the priests within their diocese are properly

and sufficiently trained. They also assign priests to parishes and are the competent ecclesiastical authority for Catholic schools in a diocese (Coriden et al., 1983; John Paul II, 1997).

Diocese of Omega: This Diocese encompasses a multi-county region of a Midwestern State and is divided into 287 parishes served by a network of 79 Catholic elementary schools. The current study was conducted within this diocese.

Catholic elementary school: This term is used interchangeably with "parish school," and less frequently, with "regional school" or "parochial school." These schools operate by permission of the bishop and ordinarily serve students in grades prekindergarten through 8th grade. Recognition by the bishop is a prerequisite for bearing the name Catholic.

Catholic school leadership: The Diocese of Omega maintains a model of Catholic school leadership that is most clearly expressed in a set of core competencies for Catholic school leaders. The core competencies are divided into three focus areas: Catholic identity, academic excellence, and nonprofit management. When taken together these three focus areas comprise Catholic school leadership in the diocese.

Local Ordinary: Although used less often, this term can be used interchangeably with "bishop" and "vicar general." A local ordinary is another term for a priest or bishop with unique responsibilities and powers according to the norms of the Roman Catholic Church **(**Coriden et al., 1983)

Parish: Dioceses are divided into local churches or parishes, each with designated geographic boundaries or affiliations within the diocese. The bishop assigns a pastor, or parish priest, to care for the parish **(**Coriden et al., 1983). A Catholic school is often a ministry of a parish.

Priest: This term is often used interchangeably with "cleric," "pastor," and "canonical administrator." A priest is ordained by a bishop to the Sacrament of Holy Orders according to the norms of the Roman Catholic Church. When the priest is assigned to the role of pastor or canonical administrator of a parish and school, he takes on the responsibility and authority for the institutions within the parish, including both the church and school **(**Coriden et al., 1983; John Paul II, 1997).

Preparation: This term is modified in one of two primary ways: direct and indirect. Indirect preparation was meant to include coursework and experiences, which while not explicitly concerned with Catholic schools or Catholic school leadership, represented transferable skills that contribute to a participant's readiness for responsibilities. Direct preparation was meant to include coursework and experiences that were explicitly concerned with Catholic schools or Catholic school leadership that contribute to a participant's readiness for responsibilities.

Catholic School Principal: A principal is a woman or man hired by a pastor or canonical administrator on behalf of a Catholic school for the purpose of overseeing day-to-day operations. Principals work under the supervision and

direction of a pastor or canonical administrator. In the Diocese of Omega (2017b), a principal is expected to conform to a set of core competencies.

Program of Priestly Formation: The Program of Priestly Formation lays out the norms that govern and inform the curriculum and procedures used in seminaries throughout the United States for the education and formation of Catholic priests (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

Seminary: The seminary is a school whose specific task is to provide integral formation of future priests. The course of studies and curriculum offered at the seminary is consistent with the norms specified in the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). Similar to graduate theology students and equivalent discipline, seminarians live in community under the direction of a faculty and observe the norms specified in the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). Upon completion of seminary studies, a candidate, or seminarian, is eligible for ordination (John Paul II, 1992). The seminary is under the direction of the bishop. The Saint Alpha Seminary is the seminary for the Diocese in this study.

Solidarity: The Catholic Social Teaching principle of solidarity describes a way of acting that simultaneously promotes of the good of individuals and the good of all through the promotion of a deep care for others (Wright, 2017). For a leader this principle starts with an acknowledgment that others are of an equal worth and value and that from this recognition a person freely places their life at the service of others (John Paul II, 1997; Wright, 2017).

Subsidiarity: The Catholic Social Teaching principle of subsidiarity is rooted in

an understanding that each person has a right to be respected and that each person

possesses gifts to be utilized (Naughton, Buckeye, Goodpaster, & Maines, 2015).

Following this principle, leaders are at their best when they actively draw upon

the manifold gifts of all employees in an organization. Leaders are charged with

creating conditions where these gifts can fully contribute to the good of all (John

Paul II, 1997; Naughton et al., 2015).

Limitations, Delimitations, and Personal Biases

The reliability and validity (trustworthiness) of qualitative studies are subject to

limitations (Creswell, 2014). The focus of this study poses one potential limitation given

the involvement a relatively small and highly specific participant pool consisting of 20

parish priests in the Diocese of Omega. These participants were interviewed about their

experience and perceptions of their preparation for Catholic elementary school

leadership. This study was further limited because the methods, by virtue of the design,

are subjective and not fully verifiable. Further, the researcher cannot be completely sure

that the interviewees answered the questions truthfully or completely, or that the

questions devised for this study produced the desired information.

The delimitations of this study were that it was conducted within one diocese in

the United States, and thus, it cannot be directly generalizable to a wider population (e.g.,

priests in a different region within the United States). Further, this study may evade

replication given that it took place within a small window of time and explored a

phenomenon that will not necessarily stay constant over a period of time. Finally, while

the phenomenon under study is significant today, preparation for taking on leadership

roles, as well as the particular demands of those roles are fluid, thus limiting the possible relevance of the study in the distant future.

Another major consideration was the potential bias of the researcher based on both training and experience in Catholic school leadership. Over the previous 15 years, the researcher has been involved in Catholic education, first as the president of a Catholic school, and more recently, as a curial official for a Catholic archdiocese. Simultaneous to this experience, the researcher completed graduate studies in Catholic education and leadership at two Catholic universities: the Graduate School of the University of Saint Thomas and the Graduate School of the University of Dayton.

However, the researcher has never been a student or employee of the local seminary, nor has the researcher's responsibilities ever included the supervision, review, evaluation, regulation, or assignment of priests. One final consideration is that the researcher's children attend a private Catholic school, although this school is not under the direction of a Catholic priest. Because of his long career in Catholic education, having children in a Catholic school, and his religious beliefs, this researcher has a direct interest in the vitality and viability of Catholic elementary schools in the diocese and beyond, with a sincere hope that Catholic elementary schools will be strong and flourishing well into the future, continuing to serve families and provide quality education for their children. These considerations are forthrightly acknowledged, and yet, the researcher took precautions including the practice of continuous reflection and the keeping of a journal with field notes in an effort to ensure that these considerations did not interfere with the researcher's ability to objectively view and interpret collected data (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010).

Leader's Role and Responsibility in Relation to the Problem

The underlying concern of this study was Catholic school leadership and whether seminary preparation based on the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) adequately prepared parish priests for Catholic school leadership. While the language generally used in leadership theory does not equivocally correspond to the language of the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), united by their ends there are leadership approaches such as authentic leadership, Ignatian leadership, transformational leadership, and contemplative leadership, that bear some similarities (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Burns, 1978; Lowney, 2003; Schuttloffel, 2013). Moreover, some key leadership areas are relevant to training for Catholic school leadership. These key areas include: (a) a good foundation in the history and philosophy of Catholic education, (b) curriculum and instruction, (c) professional development, (d) communications, (e) crisis and conflict management, as well as (f) other skills required for managing nonprofit institutions (Diocese of Omega, 2016; Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, 2014; Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

The Program of Priestly Formation calls for leadership training as integral to pastoral formation by way of setting out the expectation that priests will be grounded in an approach to leadership that teaches them how to lead a community into movement (action) guided by a vision (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). There does not appear to be an explicit adoption of any one theory or model as a means of satisfying this expectation, which leaves open the possibility of consideration of

approaches to leadership. The framework of the authentic leadership model, as interpreted through an Ignatian lens (Lowney, 2003), warranted exploration vis-à-vis preparation for Catholic school leadership (Puls, Ludden, & Freemyer, 2014). The Ignatian approach encapsulates a deep concern for others, which is consistent with the authentic leadership model's proposition that leaders show a commitment to honest relationships with others that are rooted in a set of moral perspectives and strengths (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). In his exposition of the Jesuit approach to leadership, Lowney (2003, p. 176) noted the Ignatian view embraces "the vision to see each person's talent, potential, and dignity; the courage, passion, and commitment to unlock that potential." Consideration of transformational and transactional leadership theories provided some benefit in arriving at a firmer understanding of how priests express and understand leadership. Consideration for the way that a principal was formed for leadership along with the leadership formation provided to educators in government schools provided some further definition of school leadership. The absence of a language of leadership and direct leadership preparation in the formation of priests significantly limits the applicability of a comparative leadership approach. Guided by the findings of this study, the solution proposed provides optimal guidance and recommendations for supplemental leadership preparation for seminarians and priests that may ultimately better prepare them for leadership of Catholic elementary schools.

Significance of the Study

Although a number of studies have explored the role of the principal of Catholic schools (Canavan, 2001; Cook & Durow, 2008; Cook, McNiff, & Verges, 2014;

Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014; Fraser & Brock, 2006; Wallace, 2000), few studies have looked at the preparation of the parish priest for leadership in Catholic school education, even though they work alongside the principal. In the diocese studied in this research, the parish priest is ultimately responsible for the leadership of a Catholic elementary school. In this position, the priest has complete and final authority over all operations of the school.

Notably, the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) provides a solid foundation for seminary training; yet, there does not appear to be consideration given to training or preparation for the important leadership role that may become the purview of any parish priest should he be assigned to a parish with a Catholic school. In much the same way as the role of the Catholic principal has been studied, so, too, should the role of the parish priest presiding over a parish that includes a Catholic school.

This study provided an important look into possible ways of better preparing priests for leadership gleaned through an in-depth study of 20 priests with respect to their experience and perspective on preparation for the role of Catholic school leadership.

Summary

The preparation of leadership is fundamental to the success of Catholic elementary schools (Belmonte, 2007). Catholic school leadership is among the responsibilities of priests in a Midwestern diocese. Most priests of the Diocese of Omega are prepared for their responsibilities by the local seminary. The program of formation and curriculum of the local seminary (Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018) is determined by the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

There is a dearth of literature that examines the preparation of priests for Catholic school leadership in the United States. The success of Catholic elementary schools relies on good and robust preparation of future leadership.

The purpose of this phenomenological dissertation in practice study was to explore the perceptions of local priests on how the local seminary prepares clergy for Catholic school leadership. This phenomenological study included a sample of 20 voluntary participants chosen according to a set of criteria that wielded a rich and descriptive account of seminary preparation for Catholic school leadership. Participants in this study were clergy of the Diocese who were eligible for assignments that included Catholic school leadership. The primary research question explored: What preparation for Catholic school leadership does the local seminary provide for priests serving in a Midwestern diocese? Reflective of the findings of the study, the goal of this dissertation in practice was to provide an evidence-based recommendation on programs of supplemental coursework in Catholic school leadership for clergy serving in leadership roles in Catholic elementary schools in a Midwestern diocese. Given the central role of priests in leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese, this study has the potential to concretely help improve the quality of leadership, thereby helping strengthen Catholic elementary schools.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study explored the training that Catholic priests received for the important role they may be assigned to as the leader of a Catholic school, which can become the responsibility of any priest who is assigned to a parish that includes a school. A number of researchers, as well as local stakeholders in the diocese under study, have underscored the importance—and even urgency—for further consideration of how Catholic priests are prepared for leadership in Catholic schools (Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Simonds et al., 2017). First, the success of any school is dependent, in part, on good leadership (Marzano & Waters, 2009), and that Catholic schools tend to thrive when the pastor is engaged in the everyday activities of the school (Convey, 1999; Geelan, 2000; Schafer, 2004; Walch, 2016; Weiss, 2007).

Pastors are prepared for their responsibilities by the local seminary. The uniform training program for priests is extensive and is generally accomplished over an 8-year course of study (Ippolito et al., 2008). However, during this period, there appears to be little, if any, attention given to the important role of leadership in Catholic parish schools. In stark contrast, considerable training and preparation are required for the lay leadership role of principal. It is this researcher's belief that the scholarly work on the preparation of lay leadership for service in Catholic elementary schools could inform and illuminate the training that would allow parish priest to effectively lead their parish schools. The following literature review is divided into four distinct sections: the professional practice setting, the role of Catholic education, leadership literature, and the formation of priests. The first section on the professional practice setting looked at the structure,

mandates, and laws of the diocese specifically and the Church generally as they relate to the priest's role as the leader of the parish school. This second section discussed the vision and purpose of Catholic education, which is rooted in Christ's teachings to "go, therefore, and make disciples (teach) all nations" (Convery, Franchi, & McCluskey, 2014; Matthew 28:19; Miller, 2006). The Church holds that education is directly related to human freedom, and that the innate dignity of the human person is lived fully through the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and the ability to reason (Miller, 2006). Finally, this section looks at the Church's position that every child has a right to a Catholic education and that it is the responsibility of the community of families, clergy, and lay leaders to create a thriving school and community under the clarity of vision and purpose as provided by the parish priest (Benedict XVI, 2008; Congregation for Catholic Education, 2015; Miller, 2006).

The third section presented the leadership literature. Leadership literature may have a limited application given the approach to leadership among the participants in this study and what is called for in the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). In this section, three dimensions of the study of leadership will be engaged: theories (transformational leadership and transactional leadership), models (authentic leadership), and expressions (Ignatian leadership) (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Lowney, 2013; Northouse, 2018; Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013). The researcher sought to confirm the seminary's observance of a common leadership model or approach that contributed to the preparation of priests for leadership of Catholic elementary schools. Finally, the fourth section looked at the two leadership roles in Catholic elementary schools: the lay principal and the parish priests. This section

compared the trainings provided for both in their distinct leadership roles. The role of the

lay principal is especially relevant here as it has been significantly studied (due, in part,

to the dramatic transition from religious principals to lay principals) and certainly

provided some valuable input into this researcher's authorship of recommendations for

training parish priests to be leaders of Catholic elementary schools. The section explored

the way that school leaders in this Midwestern State are prepared for service in public

education.

The Professional Practice Setting

This first section looked at the makeup and history of the Diocese of Omega; the

training, guidelines, and documents on leadership roles of parish schools—for the priest's

leadership role as well as the role of the lay principal in the Catholic school—and

discussed the importance of the parish school to Catholic education and Catholic values

and life.

The Diocese of Omega

This study was conducted within the Diocese of Omega. For the purpose of this

study the identity of the diocese was masked. This diocese covers multiple counties of a

Midwestern State and is divided into approximately 200 parishes served by a network of

79 Catholic elementary schools. These schools currently serve approximately 19,000

students that are staffed by an estimated 3,000 professional staff and faculty (Diocese of

Omega, 2017b; McDonald & Schultz, 2017). The Diocese of Omega was established in

the 1800s, with both parish churches and parish schools. The diocese maintains a

provincial minor and major seminary for the formation of Catholic priests. The prime

goal of the core curriculum, which is guided by and aligned to the Program of Priestly

Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), is to prepare priests for ministry (Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018). As discussed earlier, this core curriculum does not appear to specifically treat teaching or school leadership in preparing priests for a leadership role in parish schools (McNulty, 1979; Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018; Witherup, 2012). Yet, any priest who has completed seminary studies may be assigned to a parish with parish schools, which then places him in the position of leadership of the parish schools. Further, participants did not identify supplemental training that was provided to help priests prepare for, and successfully lead, a parish school. Finally, within the diocese, there were neither documents or documentation specifying a set of core competencies or standards for priests assigned to leadership of a Catholic school, nor were there any concrete job description or definition of responsibilities for this leadership role.

With the 168-year history of this diocese, the last 50 years, from 1967 to 2017, have seen the most significant changes (Diocese of Omega, 2017b). In fact, all of the fundamental areas that made up the idea of a Catholic school (parish, principal, teacher, family, priest, religious, business model) noted earlier have undergone profound and rapid change. When one compares the statistics from then to now, a marked contrast can be noted. In many ways, these trends mirror the fundamental organizational change in Catholic education experienced by dioceses across the United States, where many Catholic elementary schools have experienced historic and unplanned organizational challenges similar to this current diocese under study (DeFiore et al., 2009; Diocese of Omega, 2017b). These challenges are shown in Table 1 below and are described here.

Over the last decade across this diocese, enrollment has declined by more than one third—or 10,464 elementary school students: from a high of 64,082 to the current enrollment of roughly 19,000 students (Diocese of Omega, 2017b). In 1967, all students attending parish schools in the Diocese of Omega were enrolled in the parish; today, just over half (57%) of parish school students are also enrolled in the supporting parish (Diocese of Omega, 2017b). The labor force has also changed profoundly. In 1963, 63% of the faculty and staff were professed religious; today, 98% are lay (Diocese of Omega, 2017b). Moreover, over the past five years, the annual rate of turnover of Catholic school principals has reached 14%. As late as 1999, 47 full-time staff worked in the diocesan central office supporting Catholic elementary schools; today, only three staff are supporting the schools in a full-time capacity. Finally, and perhaps the most radical change is the tuition: In 1963, the average parish school tuition was $12; today, it is $6,457 (Catholic Finance Corporation Report, 2017). Notably, most of these changes were unplanned and reflect reactive shifts. Constant, however, throughout this passage of time has been the leadership role of the parish priest in the Catholic school (see Table 1).

Table 1

Comparisons Between 1969 and 2017 in Diocese of Omega

Fundamentals of the System	1967	2017
Number of Elementary School Students	64,082	19,000
Tuition	$12.00	$6,457.00
Elementary School Students in Parish	100%	57%
Central Office Staff*	17	3
School Teachers and Staff	63% religious	98% lay
Number of Schools	157	79

Note. Adapted from the Diocese of Omega (2017a), the Catholic Finance Corporation Report (2017), and McDonald & Schultz (2017). *Full-time employees devoted to schools.

The Organizational Structure of a Catholic Elementary School

Catholic elementary schools are, first and foremost, centered around the Catholic community: the students, families, teachers, principals, and parish priest; and second, they are grounded within the curriculum and the business model (Walch, 2016). Each of the schools within the diocesan system of Catholic elementary schools is overseen by a Catholic priest. Historically, the success of the Catholic elementary school was dependent on the business model, whose foundation was marked by (a) the consistency in parish support; (b) the involvement of professed religious men and women in leadership roles, most notably teaching; (c) students from families enrolled in the parish; (d) a financial model that relied on fixed costs; and (e) a modest level of diocesan-centralized support (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005; Walch, 2016). This parish elementary school model, including the role of local leadership, has remained virtually the same across the 168-year history of the diocese.

One of the primary Catholic social principles is subsidiarity, which places the emphasis and confidence on local control (John Paul II, 1997; Naughton et al., 2015; Pius XI, 1931). Following this model, the Diocese of Omega is highly decentralized. Moreover, this locus of control is also a product of and supported by state statute that requires Catholic parishes to be separately incorporated within the diocese (State Stat. § 315.15, 2017). Following state statute, the local parish corporation is comprised of five members: the bishop, the vicar general, the parish priest (assigned by the bishop), and two lay trustees. Within this context, the parish priest, or pastor, holds a set of rights and

responsibilities, which are both civil and canonical. For practical purposes, the parish

priest serves in the role of superintendent of the parish school, and within that capacity,

he is responsible for the hiring and firing of employees, as well as approval of the budget

and the curriculum. Structurally, with an emphasis on local control and corporate

separation, the parish elementary school is considered a ministry of a single parish or

cluster of sponsoring parishes (Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities,

2014; Walch, 2016).

The Program of Priestly Formation

The Program of Priestly Formation is essentially a set of norms, mandated by the

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2006) for seminaries in the United States

of America, that provides the framework for preparing Catholic priests for active ministry

in the United States, ensuring that future priests are equipped with the skills and spiritual

grounding necessary for priestly ministry (John Paul II, 1992). This is the most up to date

version of the document now in its 6th edition, which was originally published by the

National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) in 1971. In essence, it informs the

curriculum for the local seminary, guiding how priests are prepared for their

responsibilities. The primary focus of the program is to ensure that the seminary

curriculum incorporates the four pillars of formation integral to a priest's development:

spiritual, intellectual, human, and pastoral. Each of these four areas of formation

corresponds with a dimension of the seminarian (human person). The document seeks an

integral formation of Catholic priests wherein each of the four areas are developed in

harmony with the others (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

However, while the priestly identity of a Catholic priest is the same in all places and at all times, the specific responsibilities of ministry vary across dioceses (Oelrich, 2007; Paul VI, 1965; Witherup, 2012). Notably, Catholic school leadership does not appear to be directly addressed in the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

The Saint Alpha Seminary

The Saint Alpha Seminary prepares men for their priestly responsibilities following a curriculum that conforms to the Program for Priestly Formation (Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). The researcher masked the name of the seminary identified by participants in this study with the name Saint Alpha Seminary. The seminary is an accredited institution of higher learning that is recognized and governed by the local ordinary of the diocese. Concurrent to seminary formation candidates for priestly ordination opt to complete a graduate degree in either ministry (Master of Divinity) or theology (Master of Theology) (Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018). For lay students, the seminary offers additional degree options in religious education and pastoral ministry. Beyond graduate programs for degree seeking students, a number of institutes are included under the umbrella of the seminary. At the Saint Alpha Seminary there are institutes of the seminary organized according to specific purposes ranging from biblical studies to catechetical formation (2018). In 2018 the Saint Alpha Seminary founded an Institute for Catholic School Leadership with the goal of meeting the needs of Catholic school leaders through an integrated approach to school leadership designed for laity, priests, and members of religious communities.

The Catholic Model

Catholic social principle of subsidiarity, which maintains the balance between individual freedom, gifts, and responsibility among the many levels of social interaction, places the emphasis on local control where authority can be exercised with competence in achievement of authentic human goods. (John Paul II, 1992; Naughton et al., 2015; Pius XI, 1931). Following the principle of subsidiarity, the Diocese of Omega observes that every elementary school associated with a parish is governed by a priest serving as either pastor or canonical administrator, a position that is assigned by the local ordinary (Coriden et al., 1983). In other words, the pastor, or parish priest, is responsible for the parish, and in the event that the parish includes parish schools, he is fully responsible for them as well. Generally, the pastor hires a principal or head of school for the day-to-day management of the parish school; however, full responsibility for the operation of the parish school always remains with the pastor: All significant decision making is placed in his hands, including the school's curriculum, all hiring and firing, as well as the decision to close the school should it be necessary (Diocese of Omega, 2016; Diocese of Omega, 2017a).

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The Role of Catholic Education

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This second section looked at Catholic education through a review of a series of base principles that anchor and organize the mission and vision of Catholic schools before turning toward application in the role the parish school and requirements for principals.

The Mission and Vision of Catholic Schools

Bryson (2004) emphasized the essential nature of vision and mission in any organization. The mission of an organization captures its deeply held purpose, while the vision for an organization puts the mission into practice clarifying how the organization looks and behaves (Bryson, 2004). Definition of an organization's mission and vision often starts with clarification of its mandate (Bryson, 2004). The mandate of Catholic education is rooted in the expectation and instruction of the Church's founder, Jesus Christ, who said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples (teach) all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Within that mandate, the Catholic Church has sustained its effort over the centuries to provide a Catholic education to families and communities (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; DeFiore et al., 2009). The mission of Catholic education starts first with what the Church teaches about the child and family. The Catholic Church teaches that parents are the first and primary educators of their children (Coriden et al., 1983; Paul VI, 1975b). The child has a right to a Catholic education and where there exists a right there also exists a responsibility (Benedict XVI, 2008). Under the vigilance of bishops every provision is to be made to support parents in the education of children through Catholic schools (Coriden et al., 1983).

The Catholic Church maintains that education is directly related to human freedom, asserting that the human person was created in the image and likeness of God (Benedict XVI, 2008; Miller, 2006). Further, the innate dignity of the human person is brought to its fullness only when the person becomes an authentic subject of freedom, a true reflection of the divine image (John Paul II, 1993; Wright, 2017). This fullness is only possible through acquisition of knowledge and the act of reasoning that allows the

person to grow in understanding, virtue, and wisdom (Convery et al., 2014; John Paul II, 1997). Put another way, the Catholic Church has explained education and learning as a process that we undertake to identify and understand the reality in which we live through an encounter with Jesus Christ (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013; Miller, 2006). In the Catholic worldview, through the use of reason, which governs all human activity, the person has the capacity to encounter the truth and by this experience the end for which the person was created, union with God, the author of all truth (Benedict XVI, 2008; John Paul II, 1997; John Paul II, 1998). It's not surprising then, that the Church places a great value on these attributes, all of which are taught and nurtured largely through formal education (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013; Miller, 2006). The Catholic Church teaches that, through the grace of God, we are aided in our quest for learning and education (John Paul II, 1997; Paul VI, 1975b).

The Catholic Church places a high value on an integral education that seeks to form all dimensions of the human person (Miller, 2006; Paul VI, 1975b). And as stated earlier, the main conduit for Catholic education is the Catholic school (Coriden et al., 1983). This obligation falls squarely on the shoulders of the pastor in partnership with parents (Coriden et al., 1983). The Church views the Catholic school as a community of families, bishops, pastors, principals, and benefactors united around the purpose of helping a child realize and master their God-given talents, become subjects of authentic human freedom, and discover their unique role within salvation history (Frabutt et al., 2010; Miller, 2006). It is the commitment and leadership of all of these stakeholders that create a thriving school and community, under the guidance of the pastor's clarity of

vision (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007; Cook, 2001). That the pastor and principal share a common and clear understanding of the base principles that inform the mission and vision of Catholic education is essential to the health and vitality of the Catholic school (Brock & Fraser, 2001; Cook, 2015; Miller, 2006).

The Importance of the Parish School

The mission of the Church, regardless of location, is evangelization, and the Church views schools as an important tool in this endeavor (Benedict XVI, 2008; Francis, 2013; Paul VI, 1975a). To that end, Catholic education has been provided primarily through the parish school (Walch, 2016). A school is nominated Catholic if it has been so recognized by the local ordinary (Coriden et al., 1983).

Catholic parish education in the local diocese was born out of both mandate and mission (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Walch, 2016). The bishop of the diocese is entrusted with a threefold mandate of episcopal ministry: to teach, govern, and sanctify (John Paul II, 1997; Paul VI, 1965). Thus, when a priest takes on the role of leading a parish school, the bishop is essentially entrusting the priest as well as delegating him to share in the bishop's ministry (Oelrich, 2007; Paul VI, 1965). As such, the priest's assignment to a particular parish or ministry is a decree of appointment, which includes his role and associated responsibility for a Catholic school.

The Code of Canon Law

The Code of Canon Law (Coriden et al., 1983) provides the Church with the basic organizational structure, enumerating both the rights and the responsibilities of all participants in the life of the Church. The Code of Canon Law (Coriden et al., 1983), which is for the Catholic Church is authoritative, legislative, and prescriptive,

encompasses a number of volumes, or series, each reflecting the core organizing principles of the Catholic Church. Book III of the Code of Canon Law (Coriden et al., 1983) addresses Catholic education, underscoring the link between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the ministry of education. While acknowledging that parents are the first and primary educators of their children, the Code of Canon Law commands that pastors of the Church to make every provision necessary for providing Catholic education (Coriden et al., 1983).

Requirements for Principals

Although there are no formal guidelines for the priest's leadership position as head of the parish schools, the local diocese does specify a set of professional standards and core competencies for the principal of a parish school (Diocese of Omega, 2017a). Moreover, the administrative role of principal in this Midwestern diocese must conform to a set of self-determined administrative standards that include a graduate degree in education administration or equivalent field and at least 5 years of experience in education (Diocese of Omega, 2017a). In addition, a Catholic school principal in the diocese must also satisfy a set of core competencies specific to the diocese (Diocese of Omega, 2016). The description of the responsibilities and job description of a Catholic school principal are provided in the diocesan hiring guidelines (Diocese of Omega, 2017a). In stark contrast, this Midwestern state requires licensure only for teachers and administrators in public schools, thus recognizing that nonpublic schools have a right to considerable latitude in determining the requisite skills desired for leadership candidates.

Leadership Literature

The scholarship on leadership theory is extensive (Northouse, 2018). Narrowing the focus of leadership literature for this third section of the study was accomplished through careful consideration of the purpose of leadership in this professional practice setting. When Catholic priests are assigned to a parish with a parish school they assume a pivotal leadership role. Further explored in this section, the precise application of leadership literature in this study presented some unique challenges given the system in which priests are prepared for their responsibilities.

Leadership Preparation in Seminary Formation

The researcher used the language of leadership literature as a way of looking for markers or direct evidence of the use or engagement of leadership (Northouse, 2018). The leadership role of a priest is informed by the goal that the Catholic Church ascribes to the leader, which is to acquaint the follower with the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2015; Hunt, Oldenski, & Wallace, 2000). This particular goal of leadership in the Church, which is often measured in the degree to which a follower freely chooses what is being proposed to them, presents a challenge in direct comparison. A deeply held Catholic belief is that the leader's role of acquainting the follower with the Gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to lead to the follower's transformation (Francis, 2013; Hobbie, Convey, & Schuttloffel, 2010; Paul VI, 1975a).

Following a phenomenological design, which in this study was concerned with generating a rich description of the preparation of priests for school leadership, the relevance of leadership approaches treated in the literature review is related directly to the corresponding recommendations. The perspectives of the priests interviewed in this

study noted a lack of a dominant or defined model of leadership for the seminary, which

significantly limited the direct or even relevant application of other leadership literature.

While not explicitly a model of leadership preparation, and certainly lacking a language

that easily translates into modern leadership theory, the seminary curriculum, which is

modeled on the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops, 2006) is the default program or model of leadership preparation for priests in the

Diocese of Omega.

   The Program of Priestly Formation links leadership training and pastoral

formation noting that it is where priests "learn how to take spiritual initiatives and direct

a community into action or movement" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,

2006, p. 81). The text of this section of the Program of Priestly Formation (United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) offers a lens through which leadership might be

viewed for use in the leadership training of priests and leads to four key components

found in the text follow a straightforward formula: initiatives (vision); leader;

community (follower); and movement (action). As there is a gap of endorsement of any

single theory, model or expression of leadership in the Program of Priestly Formation

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), the researcher turned to the goal

of leadership expressed through these four components as a means of viewing leadership

that may help a priest effectively lead. The goal of leadership training envisioned in the

Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) is

relative to the translation of a vision into action.

Application of the Study of Leadership

Within the study of leadership are a myriad of theories, models, concepts, and approaches that are not of equivalent value (Burke, 2014; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013; Northouse, 2018). These ways of understanding and thinking about leadership find their highest expression in theories and models proportionate to how substantiated they are by scholarship (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013; Northouse, 2018). Demonstrated through scholarly research, theories are an arrangement of concepts that help explain and build understanding of a particular phenomenon (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013; Northouse, 2018). Models may be parts of theories that are often grounded in research and practice (Rogers, 2003; Northouse, 2018). As illustrated in Figure 1, if theories and models are higher on the pyramid relative to supporting research, then approaches to leadership, while possibly grounded in some scholarship, are more likely expressions or ways of leading (Northouse, 2018). Figure 1 below provides an illustration of the hierarchy that exists in the study of leadership along with some examples that correspond to the application of leadership literature in this study:

Figure 1

Hierarchy in the Study of Leadership
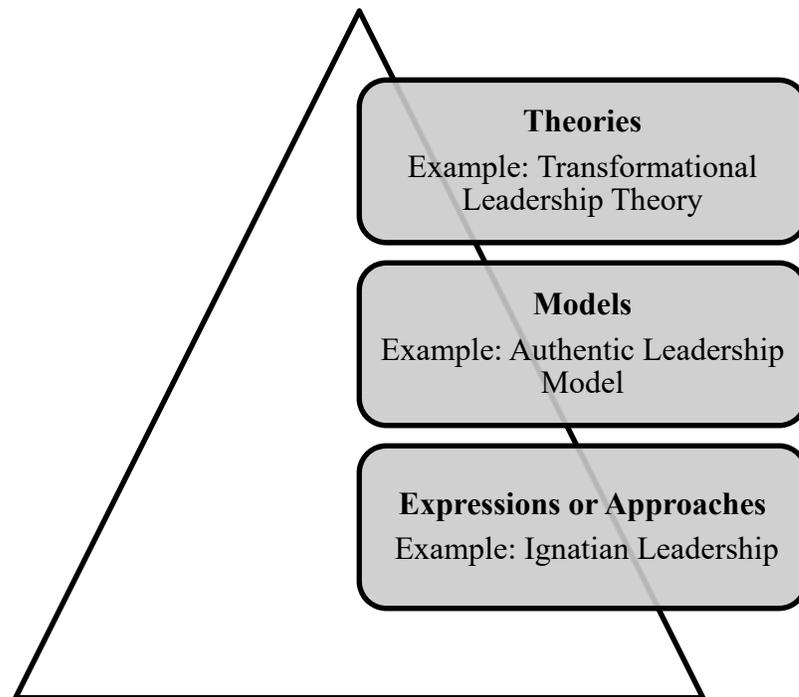
Linking the Study of Leadership to the Formation of Priests

A link between the study of leadership and the formation of priests might begin

with the goal of leadership for priests, which is understood from consideration for how a

priest might move a vision into action (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,

2006). As illustrated in Figure 1, a key component in the study of leadership is found in

the exploration of theories, models, and expressions. There may be value in considering

how a priest leader might move a vision into action through further exploration of

particular theories such as transformational leadership and transactional leadership

(Burns, 1978; Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013) along with a review of the authentic leadership

(model) and some discussion of the relevance of Ignatian leadership (expression) (Avolio

& Gardner, 2005; Lowney, 2003). Respective of the hierarchy underscored by scholarly

research, exploration of these components of the study of leadership may present a value

when considering what leadership preparation might look like for priests. Figure 2 draws

into focus two theories, one model, and an expression through the lens provided in the

four parts of leadership gathered from the Program of Priestly Formation (United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006)

Figure 2

Leadership Training Components from Program of Priestly Formation and the Study of

Leadership Applied

Leadership Components _____ Study of Leadership Applied	Vision	Leader	Community (Follower)	Movement (Action)
Transactional Leadership (Theory)	Receives according to goals, objectives, and plans	Manages tasks and followers according to standards or plan	Motivated by rewards for completion of assigned tasks	External validation through completion of objectives and plans
Transformation Leadership (Theory)	Found in common and identifiable long-term values/goals	Inspires followers to pursue identifiable values/goals	Inspired by leader to pursue identified values/goals	External validation through values/goal achievement
Authentic Leadership (Model)	Guided by internal awareness and identification with purpose	Identification with vision and alignment of moral values	Motivated by leader's commitment to moral values and adoption of the same	External validation proportionate to follower identification with leader
Ignatian Leadership (Expression)	Guided by deeply held spiritual	Espouses virtues guided by spiritual	Committed to everyone leading	Internal and external validation

	purpose (God has a plan for every life)	purpose rooted in love of all people	according their God given talents in their own way	according to reflective practice

Note. Adapted from Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Burke, 2014; Elrehail, Emeagwali, Alsaad, & Alzghoul, 2018; Lowney, 2003; Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016.

These four components from the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) provide the basis for examining possible ways of thinking about leadership (Figure 2) and determining the suitability for inclusion in the leadership training of priests. The inclusion of two leadership theories, one leadership model, and one leadership expression by way of literature in subsequent subsections may illustrate a way for considering how the study of leadership may help satisfy the goal for training and preparing priests for leadership consistent with the text of Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

Transactional and Transformational Leadership Theory

Since early identification by Burns (1978), transformational and transactional leadership remains a topic of significant scholarship (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013). Lowe and Gardner (2000) reviewed 188 cases of published articles on leadership theory. Among the reviewed articles, transformative leadership theory was the most frequently discussed leadership theory (2000). Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Linden, and Hu (2014) examined 752 articles on leadership theory published between 2000-2012 in 10 top-tier academic journals, finding that transformational leadership was the most frequent theory discussed. Burns (1978) proposed that leadership is manifest in one of two forms: transformational or transactional. Either of these forms may provide an approach to leadership training for priests conforming to the needs identified in the Program of

Priestly Formation and practically applicable in a Catholic school setting (United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). Transformational leaders are intensely interested

in change, while transactional leaders are concerned with maintenance of the status quo

(Burke, 2014). Table 2 provides a comparative analysis based on the distinctions

between transformational and transactional leadership proposed by Burke (2014).

Table 2

Comparison of Transformational (Leaders) and Transactional Leaders (Managers)

Comparative Dimensions	Leaders	Managers
Emotional involvement	With the institution and with ideals/vision	With the task and the people associated with the task
Personal life	Expresses commitment to moral values	Examines relationships according to values
Holds people accountable	Convinced of closely held personal moral values	Resists moral perspectives imposed by external pressures
Problems	Create them	Fix them
Appreciates from followers/subordinates	Contrariness	Conformity
Engenders in followers/subordinates	Intense feelings—love, sometimes hate; desire to identify with; turbulent.	Feelings not intense but relations smoother and steadier

Note. Adapted from "Organization Change Theory and Practice" by Burke, 2014. pp. 281-282.

Scholarly research on the attributes and applications of transformational and

transactional leadership are prominent in the field of educational leadership. Oreg and

Berson (2011) conducted a study on the effects of transformational leadership behaviors

among principals and teachers that affected the receptivity of employees to organizational

change. The nature of the change in an organization is often a differentiator between

transformational and transactional leadership with the former concerned with large scale

change and the latter being concerned most with cultures of continuous improvement (Burke, 2014). Schools are often places where continuous improvement is the norm within a largely closed organizational system presenting challenges for leaders practicing transformational leadership (Oreg & Berson, 2011). Bouwmans, Runhaar, Wesselink, and Mulder (2017) found a positive link in the role that transformational leadership played in teachers' engagement in team learning that is directed toward the adoptions of educational initiatives and innovations that are departure from the past practices. Elrehall et al. (2018) examined the role of transformational leadership and the role of authentic leadership in institutions of higher education in Jordan. The study found that transformational leadership produced a positive impact on the employee driven innovations in the organizations, while the authentic leadership model did not appear to have any measurable effect (Elrehall et al., 2018). Transformational and transactional leadership each provide a lens through which to understand fundamental expression of leadership (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013).

The Authentic Leadership Model

The authentic leadership model is based upon a firm commitment to a set of moral values and the ability of the leader to demonstrate that his or her actions are guided by these values (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Fusco, O'Riordan, & Palmer, 2015). This model may provide a way for a priest leader to effectively relate to followers in a way that helps move the Church's vision into action. As shown in Table 3 below, the authentic leadership model relies upon four interdependent leadership characteristics: self-awareness, relational transparency, internal moral perspective, and balanced processing.

Avolio and Gardner (2005) noted that when the authentic leadership model is in place, a clear and honest relationship exists between leader and follower wherein followers are encouraged to mirror and espouse the characteristics of their leader (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Crippen (2012) examined the role of the leader-follower relationship in a school setting, concluded that an authentic and balanced dynamic between leaders and followers contributes to participation all across an organization. Dussault, Payette, and Leroux (2008) studied the transformational leadership of school leaders finding that the practice appeared to have a positive near-term effect on the performance of classroom teachers (followers). While their study did not appear to involve Catholic priests, Puls et al. (2014) considered the relationship between authentic leadership practice and the effectiveness of ministers in their responsibilities finding an increase in the efficacy of ministry through the observance of authentic leadership.

Research on authentic leadership reaches beyond the profession of education. Organizations of different structural configuration have realized a positive correlation between creativity and workflow relative to the commitment of a leader to authentic leadership (Zubair & Kamal, 2016). The practice of authentic leadership, particularly the identification of a follower with the leader's moral integrity, is a source of improvement in employee job satisfaction, performance, and engagement (Azana, Moriano, & Molero, 2013; Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Wang and Laschinger, 2013). Authentic leadership promotes a balanced dynamic between leader and follower, resulting in full participation by all individuals across an organization (Crippen, 2012). We have seen here a number of studies demonstrating the positive dynamics of organizational culture made possible through practice of the authentic leadership model.

However, while the authentic leadership model offers a number of well-documented benefits relative to the needs of Catholic education, there is also a significant risk implicit in the model. This is illustrated below in Table 3 when one looks at the relationship between the engagement of a practitioner in self-reflection and the integration of deeply held moral values (i.e., relational transparency). That is, the organization may be compromised or the mission may be hindered if the quality of the reflection (Kotze & Nel, 2017) and the individual's moral values do not align with the purpose of Catholic education.

Table 3

Summary of the Authentic Leadership Model: Leaders and Followers

Leadership Characteristic	Description	Internal Activity	External Activity
Self-awareness	Reflects on personal strengths and limitations	Seeks continued self-understanding through self-examination	Reflects on personal impact on others
Relational transparency	Expresses commitment to moral values	Examines relationships according to values	Openly offers others insight into thoughts and feelings
Internal moral perspective	Convinced of closely held personal moral values	Resists moral perspectives imposed by external pressures	Demonstrated in ethical behavior and decision making
Balanced processing	Decision making marked by objective evaluation of information	Follows process of evaluation that avoids reliance on deeply held personal beliefs	Encourages followers to continually challenge their deeply held personal values

Note. Adapted from "Authentic Leadership: Development and Validation of a Theory-based Measure," by Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008, *Journal of Management*, *34*, pp. 89-126.

Ignatian Leadership Expression

Leadership in the Ignatian tradition flows from the Jesuit charisms (Lowney, 2003; O'Malley, 1993), which are perceived as a special grace from God that gives the organization or individual a distinct way of living in the world (O'Malley, 1993). While not the leadership model of Saint Alpha Seminary, the way of Ignatian leadership, particularly as it is anchored by the charisms, is an existing means of forming priest leaders for the Jesuits. At the heart of Jesuit charisms is how a leader manifests or express what it means to live for and with others and what it is to have deep care for a person (Geger, 2014; Lowney, 2003; O'Malley, 1993). This concept of living for and with others is central to Ignatian leadership (Geger, 2014). Moreover, the two Jesuit charisms, *Cura personalis* and the charism of living for and with others, are closely related.

Cura personalis specifically places an emphasis on care for the spirit, body, and mind (Geger, 2014). This Jesuit approach considers the hopes, limitations, talents, and proclivities of individuals (Geger, 2014), and it is practiced, first, by how and what leaders see in those they encounter (i.e., their followers). And, in fact, in order to practice this approach, one must first have a deep understanding of others, which is continually enriched by time spent serving alongside them. In so doing, the leader is first acquiring knowledge and appreciation for others and their experiences before seeking to lead them. This practice is rooted in an abiding belief in the innate dignity of the human person (Geger, 2014; John Paul II, 1997).

A leader's adoption of the Ignatian leadership approach is brought into focus through reflective practice (Lowney, 2003; Rosenberg, 2010). Reflective practice, which

involves the careful study and examination of experience, helps practitioners refine their practice of leadership and gain greater insight into others and the human condition generally, which, in turn, help them meet emerging challenges (Jones & Jones, 2013; Rosenberg, 2010).   Furthermore, this practice may be especially effective when leaders root their reflective practice on a fixed set of values, such as the Jesuit charism of living for and with others (Fleming, 2008).

The Ignatian Pedagogy Paradigm (IPP), which is informed by Jesuit charisms, is a framework often used in the crafting of curriculum and formation opportunities for candidates in a range of professional practice settings that rely heavily on the practice of reflective practice (Caruana, 2014; Van Hise & Massey, 2010). Coiro, Lating, and Thomas (2014) proposed infusing one aspect (reflection) of the Ignatian Pedagogy Paradigm (IPP) into practice. In their study, graduate students self-reported an increase in their understanding of reflection as a pedagogical tool after one year in their program. In a related study, Malthouse, Watts, and Roffey-Barentsen (2015) explored situated reflective practice (SRP) in the workplace to prepare individuals for anticipated change. Malthouse et al. (2015) commented that the act of reflection aided in adoption and integration of organizational change.

A third relevant study on IPP was conducted by Day (2000), who explored the pressure on school principals to meet governmental standards. Day (2000) offered several types of reflection for leaders to employ that would help them to balance the stringency of a set of standards with a broader perspective on the whole. This researcher found markers of Jesuit charisms present in the data gleaned through interviews with participants.

The Formation of Priests and Catholic School Principals

Clearly, the success of a Catholic school—any school—relies heavily on the ability of the leader (Weiss, 2007). And as pointed out by Boyle (2010), the quality of the leadership is dependent, to a degree, on preparation. There are two leadership positions in parish schools: the pastor and the principal (Brock & Fraser, 2001; Schafer, 2004). While in some instances, the pastor might serve as the principal, the principal would never serve as the pastor. The preparation and training of these two positions are starkly different. On the one hand, pastors are trained through the seminary, which bases it curriculum on the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). Lay principals, on the other hand, have very distinct job requirements as noted earlier; namely, a graduate degree in education administration or equivalent field and at least 5 years of experience in education (Diocese of Omega, 2017a).

As discussed above, the seminary curriculum for the formation of priests is based on the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). This work is divided into themes representative of each of the four pillars of formation: human, intellectual, spiritual, and apostolic (John Paul II, 1992). The harmonious development of these dimensions or pillars, using an integrated approach, is the objective of the seminary formation in preparing a priest for ministry. The duration of course of study and formation is generally 8 years. This researcher found one study, conducted by Boyle and Dosen (2017), wherein the researchers reviewed 38 syllabi gathered from 18 institutions in an effort to gain knowledge on how seminaries prepare priests for service. One important finding was that the course of study, for the most part, ignored any preparation or training for working with or leading Catholic elementary

schools. Based upon the findings of their study, which identified gaps in exposure to Catholic schools, Boyle and Dosen (2017) called for additional research on the preparation of clergy for Catholic education.

The Catholic School Principal

Over the last 30 years, the Catholic school principalship has undergone a dramatic transformation. Most notably, principals have shifted from being 97% religious to 96% lay (DeFiore et al., 2009; Grace & O'Keefe, 2007). This shift occurred based on the convergence of significant changes in the society at large and within the Catholic Church itself (DeFiore et al., 2009). The shift brought with it the need for scholarship on the role of the lay principal in a Catholic school. Resulting literature on the Catholic school principalship is broad and rich, with a range of thematic dimensions, including preparation (Boyle, 2010; Cook & Durrow, 2008; Cook, et al., 2014; Hunt, et al., 2000), enrichment (Ciriello, 1994; Hobbie, et al., 2010; Schuttlofel, 2013), retention (Durow & Brock, 2013; Fraser & Brock, 2006; Schuttlofel, 2003), and succession (Canavan, 2001; Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014).

These studies have shown that a veritable patchwork of pathways for attaining the job of Catholic school principals exist across the United States, irrespective of state and local requirements (Schuttloffel, 2007). One noteworthy study looked at the need for careful planning for retention strategies taking into consideration the numerous factors that have led to high turnover (Durow & Brock, 2013). These extensive scholarly works also established the importance of ongoing enrichment of the lay leadership in the mission of a Catholic school (Schuttloffel, 2012).

Schuttloffel (2007) explored challenges in the Catholic school leadership related to preparation, formation, and retention identifying two critical factors weighing on the profession of Catholic school leaders. The first factor is related to movements in education toward greater standardization and unification under the banner of improving school outcomes (Schuttloffel, 2007). The movement toward standardization, particularly, seems to reduce the opportunity for dynamic and creative efforts at the local level of leadership that contributed in the past to greater levels of satisfaction and interest among Catholic school leaders (Schuttloffel, 2007). The second factor noted by Schuttloffel (2007) was the crisis of leadership in the American Catholic Church, especially related to the decline in active and practicing Catholics and the wake of harm created by the sexual abuse scandal that broke in 2002. It would be difficult to argue that the sexual abuse scandal and the leadership crisis that created it has lessened since her study was published in 2007.

Not surprisingly, many of these studies underscored the relationship between good preparation and successful Catholic schools (Boyle, 2010; Ciriello, 1994). While admittedly limited in its direct application given the implicit differences between priest and lay principal, when taken as a whole, this literature provides important insight into the challenges faced by the Catholic school principal as well as the strengths that help principals to better perform their job. Highlighting some of the literature around the Catholic school principal provides a glimpse of the gaps that exist in scholarly literature on the formation and important work of priests. The importance of these themes was codified in the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012).

Public School Preparation in a Midwestern State

According to the 2017 Diocesan Schools Report (Diocese of Omega, 2017a), 63%

of Catholic school principals in the Diocese of Omega possess a state issued license in

public school administration. While the Diocese of Omega does not require a state

license for service as a Catholic school principal, the prevalence of this state issued

credential is significant. Through a series of statutes and rules, this Midwestern State

provides a vision for school leadership that is captured in the preparation framework of

core leadership competencies (State R. § 3512.0510, 2017). This Midwestern State's

prescribed and compulsory core competencies for school leadership are relatable to the

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (State Association of School

Administrators, et al., 2011). The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders are a

system of standards and benchmarks that provide the basis for quality preparation,

training, hiring, and evaluation of school leadership candidates in the United States

(Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2017). Table 4 below illustrates the 16 areas of core

leadership competence for school principals along with an example of a demonstrable

skill. Undergirding the 16 areas of core leadership competence are 100 distinct and

assessable skills that a leadership candidate will be prepared for during the course of their

preparation for the role as a public-school leader (State R. § 3512.0510, 2017).

Table 4

Summary of Core Leadership Competencies for all State Public School Leaders

Area	Core Competencies	Example of Demonstrable Skills
A	Leadership	Demonstrate leadership by collaboratively assessing and improving culture and climate of school

Table 4 (continued).

B	Organizational Management	Demonstrate an understanding of organizational systems
C	Diversity Leadership	Demonstrate an understanding of and recognition of diversity, and respond to needs of diverse learners
D	Policy and Law	Develop, adjust and implement policy to meet local, state, and federal requirements and constitutional provisions, standards, and regulatory practices
E	Political Influence and Governance	Demonstrate ability to involve stakeholders in the development of educational policy
F	Communication	Demonstrate an understanding of conflict resolution and problem solving
G	Community Relations	Demonstrate the ability to build community consensus
H	Curriculum Planning and Development for the Success of all Learners	Demonstrate an understanding of the urgency of global competitiveness
I	Instructional Management for the Success of All Learners	Demonstrate the ability to design appropriate assessment strategies for measuring learner outcomes
J	Human Resource Management	Demonstrate knowledge of effective personnel recruitment, selection, and retention
K	Values and Ethics of Leadership	Demonstrate understanding of and model democratic value systems, ethics, and moral leadership
L	Judgment and Problem Analysis	Reach logical conclusions by making quality, timely, decisions based on available information
M	Safety and Security	Demonstrate understanding of procedural predictabilities and plan variations where possible
N*	Instructional Leadership	Demonstrate the ability to understand and apply school-wide literacy and numeric systems
O*	Monitor Student Learning	Demonstrate the ability to create a culture that fosters a community of learners
P*	Early Childhood Through Grade 12 Leadership	Demonstrate understanding of developmental needs of children of all ages

Note. Adapted from "The Evaluation of State School Principals," by State Association of School Administrators, et al., 2011, pp. 11-13. *Denotes competency area specific to school principal.

Through administrative rules, this Midwestern State requires that all public-school principals and superintendents hold a state issued license (State R. § 3512.0300, 2017). The state board of school administrators ensures that the competencies of school leadership derived from statute are basis of the school leadership preparation programs (State Stat. § 112A.14, 2017). The state board of school administrators approves state licensure programs at universities and maintains a list of institutions with approved preparation programs (State Board of School Administrators, 2018). Approved preparation program in the state where the study was conducted, provide preparation through coursework and practicum that are aligned to state leadership competencies for public school principals and superintendents. Candidates for public school leadership apply directly to the university programs for preparation.

When preparation is complete at an approved program, the candidate applies for licensure directly through the state board of school administrators. In addition to, or as part of participation in an approved preparation program, candidates for public school leadership will have completed: (a) 60 credits beyond a bachelor's degree with at least a graduate degree that included the state school leadership competencies; (b) hold a valid teaching license issued by the professional educator licensing and standards board; and (c). complete 320 hours of field experience with a licensed administrator (State R. § 3512.0200, 2017). The set of state competencies for school leadership apply only to public schools. Nonpublic school, such as the Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega, are not obligated to follow the requirements.

Comparing the Formation of Priests with the Preparation of Lay Principals

The successful partnership between the parish priest and the principal in Catholic schools is key to the success of the school (Belmonte, 2007; Brock & Fraser, 2001; Schafer, 2004; Weiss, 2007). The fact that they both have leadership roles in a Catholic school provides a starting point for a comparative analysis between the training and preparation that each receives (Schafer, 2004; Weiss, 2007). As noted earlier, the parish priest in the Diocese of Omega appeared to receive little training for this important leadership role. Conversely, the lay principal receives significant training, preparation, and enrichment, and moreover, is required to secure advanced degrees, among other requirements for the position. The Catholic school principal's requirements and training are based on careful planning combined with consideration for local documented norms around professional standards and core competencies (Cook & Durow, 2008).

<center>**Summary**</center>

This chapter looked at the literature surrounding the Catholic parish priest's leadership role in Catholic elementary schools. Most notably, although this role is hefty, and equivalent in the Diocese of Omega to a superintendent of public schools, no direct training or preparation for this role was offered at the local seminary, nor did there appear to be specific provisions provided in the Program for Priest Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). Further, over the past 50 years, the Diocese of Omega, where this study occurred, has witnessed a drastic change in its Catholic schools, including a dramatic drop in enrollment, coupled with an exponential increase in tuition (Diocese of Omega, 2017a; Catholic Finance Corporation, 2017). In addition, both

faculty and school principals, who were once overwhelmingly professed religious are now mostly lay women and men.

This chapter was divided into four sections: the professional practice setting, the role of Catholic education, leadership literature, and the formation of priests and principals. These sections explored the importance that the Catholic Church places on education followed by a comprehensive look at the priest's training and position as leader in Catholic elementary schools. The seminary offers a comprehensive eight-year program to prepare one for the priesthood. However, the seminarian appeared to receive little explicit training on Catholic school leadership, which has been underscored by many—researchers and local stakeholders alike—to be a significant area of opportunity in their training. One important source for clarifying the needs of the priests to lead schools is through the literature on the lay principal of Catholic elementary schools, as the requirements for their position are extensive. This section considered a possible relationship between the Program of Priestly Formation's (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) call for leadership training and four potential leadership approaches: the authentic leadership, the Ignatian leadership, the transformational leadership, and the transactional leadership. The following chapter will present the methods used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Effective leadership is fundamental to the success of Catholic schools (Belmonte, 2007). Ultimately in the Diocese of Omega, where this study was conducted, leadership rests in the hands of the parish priest. However, as has been noted, there appeared to be a gap in the formation of diocesan priests for this important role. Further, although many studies have been conducted on the role of the principal in a Catholic school, there is a dearth of research on the leadership role of the parish priest as the principle authority of the Catholic elementary school. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological dissertation in practice study was to gain a better understanding of the preparation priests need to be able to effectively take on the leadership of a Catholic elementary school. This chapter will outline how this study was conducted.

Research Question

As noted by both Creswell (2014) and Roberts (2010), qualitative studies are guided by a broad primary or central research question that allows the researcher to conceptualize and explore the main idea or phenomenon under study. The key issue explored in this dissertation is the preparation that priests receive, if any, and whether they believe they are adequately prepared to take on the role of leader of a Catholic school. With that in mind, the following primary research question and subquestions guided this research:

Primary research question: What preparation do priests receive and need for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in a Midwestern diocese?

This primary research question then yields the following subquestions:

1. How do priests describe their seminary experience of direct preparation for Catholic school leadership?

2. How do priests describe their seminary experience of indirect preparation for Catholic school leadership?

3. How do priests feel about the adequacy of their preparation for Catholic school leadership?

4. What, if any, additional preparation is needed to prepare priests for Catholic school leadership?

This research question and these subquestions helped to construct a rich and in-depth depiction of the experiences of the priests participating in the study with respect to how they were prepared for Catholic school leadership, as well as their perceptions about the adequacy of this preparation. The participants' experiences and insights helped the researcher to provide evidence-based recommendations on possible areas of improvement.

Research Design

A qualitative approach using a phenomenological design was used to explore the central phenomenon of this study (Groenewald, 2004; Maxwell, 2013): the experiences and perspectives of priests about their preparation for Catholic school leadership. This qualitative, phenomenological approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to explore this phenomenon in depth to gain a clearer picture of what is needed to prepare priests for their leadership role in a Catholic elementary school. Both Roberts (2010) and Creswell (2014) affirmed that a qualitative approach provides the opportunity for

researchers to concentrate on the experience of others, which will allow the researchers to view the phenomenon under study from the participants' perspective. This current phenomenon under study was uniquely experienced by the participants in this study. Thus, this method allowed the priests participating in the study to describe their experiences and perspectives as they related to preparation for Catholic school leadership. From their narratives, the researcher was able to identify strengths, gaps, and weaknesses in their Catholic school leadership preparation. Based on the phenomenological design of this study, data were collected via semistructured; face-to-face interviews with 20 priests. A more in-depth discussion of the interview protocol follows in the section on data collection tools.

Participants/Data Sources

The primary data source for this study was gleaned from face-to-face interviews with 20 priests. Of the 20 participants, 19 attended the same seminary in the Diocese of Omega. During interviews it was discovered that one participant started studies at the local seminary before completing studies at a seminary in Europe. The responses of this participant did not vary from other participants and data from the interview were included in the findings. Currently, the diocese is served by 365 priests, including those who are retired. Following the recruitment criteria, 80 priests were eligible for this study.

In determining the appropriate sample size for this study, the issue of saturation point was considered (Groenewald, 2004; Roberts, 2010). Saturation is the point at which no new themes emerge in the description of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). Groenewald (2004) noted that in a phenomenological design, saturation is confidently reached at between two and 10 participants. While saturation

may occur at a lower threshold, Mason (2010) noted that the mean number of participants—based on 79 reviewed phenomenological studies—was 20. With this consideration, as well as the general homogeny of seminary preparation provided by the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), the researcher concluded that 20 participants for the current study would likely exceed saturation in the emergence of new themes. It appeared to the researcher that saturation in this study was reached at 14 participants and the additional six interviews added nuance to the findings.

Second, eligibility criteria were established. In this case, the criteria were straightforward, given that the participants graduated from the same local seminary. While every priest in good standing is eligible for an assignment that involves Catholic school leadership, some of the study participants were priests actively serving in Catholic school leadership, thus ensuring a balance of perspectives on the role of preparation. Thus, the following criteria were applied to all 20 participants. The participant:

- completed his studies and earned a graduate degree at the local seminary since 2006;
- was an ordained priest serving in the diocese;
- resided within the multi county territory of the diocese being studied;
- was in good standing and active status according to the norms of the diocese.

The rationale for these criteria was supported by the emphasis of the study question, which limits participation to priests who completed studies at the local seminary. With respect to the first criterion, priests ordained before 2006 received their training prior to the scope on the Program of Priestly Formation (United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). This factor is of importance as it increases the likelihood of greater homogony and stability in the curriculum at the seminary across the span of time from which participants studied brought about by the same overarching Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). The criteria likely helped ensure that training across that period of time was consistent, which would be further supported in participation reflection on their experience of preparation.

Findings for this study resulted from semistructured interviews with 20 voluntary research participants. Creswell (2014) noted that phenomenological studies often consist of three to 10 participants, while Morse (1994) advised at least six participants. An invitation was sent to 79 potential participants and 29 priests responded to the letter. Adhering to the study design, 20 participants were scheduled for interviews at their respective offices based upon the order of response. The interviews followed a protocol that was modeled for a phenomenological design and lasted an average of 60 minutes. All interviews were recorded by electronic device and recordings were reviewed prior to transcription. Following the interview, transcripts were generated using a transcription service called Rev.com. Participant identities were anonymized prior to loading files into Rev.com. As illustrated in table 5, masking followed a simple system of assigning each participant a code name. Participants were not made aware of their code name. Further masking was accomplished through assigning candidates to a range of ordination years. No code name coincided with the given name of participants. Table 5 captures the self-identification of participants with Catholic school leadership and delineates those with

technical responsibility for a Catholic elementary school (pastor/canonical

administrator/other).

Table 5

Study Participants—Code Name and Basic Information

Name	Ordination Range	Self-identified as Involved in Catholic School Leadership	Responsible for Catholic Elementary School
Bede	2006-2010	Yes	Yes
Raymond	2006-2010	No	No
Leo	2006-2010	Yes	Yes
Simon	2006-2010	Yes	Yes
Albert	2006-2010	Yes	Yes
Anselm	2006-2010	Yes	Yes
Cosmas	2006-2010	Yes	Yes
Ignatius	2006-2010	Yes	Yes
Dominic	2006-2010	Yes	Yes
Francis	2006-2010	No	No
James	2010-2015	Yes	Yes
Anthony	2010-2015	Yes	Yes
Cyril	2010-2015	Yes	Yes
Basil	2010-2015	Yes	Yes

Table 5 (continued).

Gregory	2016-2018	Yes	No
Jerome	2016-2018	Yes	No
Damian*	2016-2018	Yes	No
Brendan	2016-2018	Yes	No
Isidore	2016-2018	Yes	No
Patrick	2016-2018	Yes	No

Note. *Damian was the only participant to complete graduate studies at a seminary other than Saint Alpha Seminary.

Participants were 20 priests that met the eligibility criteria: (a) completed graduate studies since 2006; (b) ordained a priest for the Diocese of Omega; (c) resided in the diocese; and (d) was in good standing and active status according to the norms of the diocese. All participants completed undergraduate and at least one graduate degree. Nineteen participants completed graduate studies at Saint Alpha Seminary. A Master of Divinity degree was completed by 17 participants. Nine participants completed additional graduate studies ranging from law to engineering either prior to or following completion of seminary studies. One participant, Damian, started at Saint Alpha Seminary, but completed graduate studies in Europe. The majority, 18 participants, self-identified as serving in a role that involved Catholic school leadership. Of the 20 participants 12 were serving as pastor or canonical administrator of a Catholic school. Eight participants were either parish vicars or served in executive administrative roles. Participants in the study ranged in ordination classes from 2006 through 2018 with a fairly even distribution across the 13-year period. No participant indicated prior study or experience in school leadership. Nine participants had never attended a Catholic elementary or secondary

school before being assigned to a role that involved Catholic school leadership. All participants completed the interview protocol and consented to electronic recording. No participant provided the researcher with any ancillary documentation or discrepant information during or following the interviews.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through semistructured, opened-ended, face-to-face interviews with each of the participants. These interviews are a central instrument in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013), and for the purposes of this study, provided the basis for exploring the phenomenon under study. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to plumb the depth of the participant's experience about the phenomenon (Bevan, 2014), as well as permit flexibility such that the researcher can clarify any distinctions in responses (Noonan, 2013). As noted by Bevan (2014), questions were constructed in the lexicon and vernacular of the subject. The interviews spanned a duration of 50-75 minutes.

The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was ensured by masking their identities and using a number to identify each interview recording and transcript. The numbers were converted to code names for purposes of data reporting in the study. No participant was made aware of their number or code name. In addition, all data collection materials were secured in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office. Further, the computer holding the electronic data was password protected.

The researcher developed an interview protocol for this study (Appendix A), which guided the interview (Castillo-Montoya, M. 2016; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The

protocol specified how the interview was conducted and the content of the questions. The researcher used the same protocol for every interview.

The protocol included three stages: contextualization, apprehension, and clarification (see Table 6). In the contextualization stage, the researcher asked the interviewee questions about his background (e.g., How would you describe your duties or responsibilities as a priest? What preparation or training did you receive for these duties or responsibilities?). The second stage was the apprehension stage. Here the researcher asked the participants to describe their view of what leadership is and how they believe a priest leads. The final stage is the clarification stage. Sample questions included: Please describe for me the ideal Catholic school leader? Do you have any insights into areas of training or preparation for Catholic school leadership that might help priests in their responsibilities? The researcher made every attempt to avoid leading the participant with any additional questions or distinctions, which allowed for the emergence of themes between the participants' responses (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The researcher procured approval for the interview protocol from the dissertation committee before the data collection process commenced.

Table 6

Summary of Structure for Phenomenological Interview

Stage	Description of Participant Activity	Description of Researcher Activity	Sample Question
Contextualization	Questions assist participants in reconstructing a narrative of their general experience	Record description of participant experience	"Please tell me about your experience at the local seminary…"

Table 6 (continued).

Apprehension	Questions help participants provide descriptive narrative of the particular phenomenon (i.e., preparation for Catholic school leadership)	Record description of participant experience; begin noting where clarification may be helpful	"Please describe your experiences at the local seminary that prepared you for leadership in Catholic education…"
Clarification	Questions in a semistructured format are intended to clarify and make distinctions about the particular experience of the phenomenon	Through active listening, record description of how participant responds to distinguishing questions	"You have noted that while at the local seminary you studied…" "How might you …"

Note. Adapted from "A method of phenomenological interviewing," by Bevan, 2014, *Qualitative Health Research*, *24*, pp. 138-143.

While some researchers are divided on how systematic and formulaic interview

questions are best used and constructed in a phenomenological study, there is broad

consensus about the goal of the interview (Bevan, 2014; Englander, 2012; Giorgi, 1989;

Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994), which is to produce rich descriptions of the

phenomenon under study from the perspective of participants' reflection on the

experience (Bevan, 2014; Creswell, 2014; Englander, 2012; Roberts, 2010). One

essential aspect of phenomenological research is the important role of reflection on the

participant's experience (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; Sokowski, 2000). Through

reflection on their experiences, participants provide the researcher with their own

personal lens through which the researcher may gain greater focus and clarity on the

phenomenon under study (Bevan, 2014).

Finally, Creswell (2014) and Roberts (2010) recommended the use of several approaches for enhancing the validity of the findings. For this study, the researcher took steps to ensure the validity of findings through: First, the researcher acknowledged the role that bias may play in interpretation by including direct and reflective comments in the reporting of findings (Creswell, 2014). Second, in an effort to ensure the quality and validity of the collected data, the researcher sent a copy of the interview transcript to the participant for member checking, offering each participant the chance to edit his responses, approve as presented, or withdraw from the study (Creswell, 2014). Third, as a means of balancing the validity of selected themes in the findings, the researcher included negative or discrepant information that would alert the researcher to any contradictions among the emergent themes (Creswell, 2014). The use of these multiple approaches helped ensure that the findings were trustworthy (Roberts, 2010).

Data Collection Procedures

Data for the study were principally collected through open-ended, semistructured face-to-face interviews with each participant. As noted above, every effort was made to ensure that these interviews followed a uniform interview protocol (Appendix A). The step-by-step procedures are enumerated here:

1. The researcher obtained an IRB approval to begin the study before beginning the recruitment process.

2. The researcher then contacted the diocese to request permission to use their list of clergy to recruit participants. Of the 365 priests in the diocese, 79 proved eligible for the study. To be eligible, participants must be ordained, currently serving in the Diocese of Omega, be in good standing, and have graduated from the local seminary since 2006.

A total of 29 priests responded to the participant invitation and 20 priests were included based upon their order of response to the invitation.

3. The researcher sent a letter to all eligible priests (Appendix B) inviting them to participate in the study. This letter outlined the study and specify that participation was voluntary and confidential and that the participant may withdraw from the study at any time or choose to skip any question that he did not wish to answer.

4. For those who expressed interest in participation, the researcher scheduled an appointment for conducting the interview at the participant's office.

5. Prior to the interview, the participants were provided with a Bill of Rights for Research Participants (Appendix C). The participants were asked to sign a consent form before the interview began (Appendix E). The researcher then explained the purpose of the study, the research methodology, and respond to any concerns or questions prior to commencing the interview. The researcher offered to accept and review any written materials that the participant might share.

6. The interview was recorded by electronic device and lasted for roughly an average of 65 minutes. The interview was open-ended and semistructured, thus allowing the interviewer to clarify any distinctions. The interview was guided by the interview protocol and interview questions (see Appendix A).

The researcher followed a six-step data analysis process (Creswell, 2014) that started with transcription of the 20 interviews. First, all interviews were transcribed. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the transcripts were identified by number only in order to mask the identity of the participants. After transcription the participants were given a code name for the purpose of data reporting. Code names were carefully chosen

to avoid the names of study participants. In addition, all data collection materials were

secured in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office. Further, the computer

holding the electronic data and any other electronic devices was password protected. In

an effort to ensure the validity of the collected data, the researcher sent a copy of the

interview transcript to the participant for member checking, offering the chance to edit

his responses, approve as presented, or withdraw from the study. Three participants

opted to amend their transcripts.

Then the researcher began coding the data following the process proposed by

Tesch (Creswell, 2014, p. 198). The researcher used the Atlas.ti as the primary means of

recording coding. The researcher reviewed all of the data three times in an effort to grasp

general meaning. A second reviewer was asked to review the coded transcript. The

coded data were examined and grouped by description and emergent themes. The themes

were reviewed with the goal of shaping a narrative description of the phenomenon and

identification of possible connections between the themes (Creswell, 2014). Finally, the

researcher offered an interpretation based upon the analysis and recommendations for

supplemental training of pastors to lead Catholic elementary schools.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher received IRB approval (Appendix F) before beginning the

recruitment process. The researcher recruited the participants following a purposive

sampling using a homogeneous technique (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010). To that end,

the researcher contacted the diocese, which maintained a list of priests and their contact

information. Notably, this list is organized in such a manner that allowed the researcher

to determine who was eligible for the study. When contacting the diocese to request

permission to use the list of clergy to recruit participants, the researcher provided a letter from the vicar for Catholic education of the diocese acknowledging the study (Appendix D).

With this list in hand, the researcher sent a letter to all eligible priests (Appendix B) inviting them to participate in the study. This letter specified the nature of the study, outlined what would be asked of each participant who agreed to participate in the study, and it specified that participation was voluntary and confidential and that the participant may withdraw from the study at any time or choose to skip any question that he does not wish to answer. No participant withdrew and participants answered all questions. The researcher enclosed a copy of the letter procured from the vicar for Catholic education on Diocesan letterhead that acknowledged the occurrence of the study (Appendix D). This letter from the vicar for Catholic education also underscored the voluntary and confidential nature of the study. As the participants were all priests in good standing with the diocese and no longer students at the local seminary, the researcher believed that participation in this study presented little risk of either exposure (e.g., should they be critical of the seminary) or discomfort due to what may come up during the interview process. The initial 20 participants were chosen in order of their response to the invitation with 18 of the participants identifying as actively serving in roles that involve Catholic school leadership.

A primary ethical concern was that participants might have mistaken participation in the study as a form of evaluation or recommendation of individual participant preparation for Catholic school leadership. This concern was met by clearly laying out the goal for the study and by taking any questions they may have about the researcher's

role. Underlying this consideration was the role of previous acquaintance or familiarity

between the researcher and participant. This impression could have influenced both their

decision to participate and the quality of responses in the interview setting.

One final area for ethical concern was that the priests solicited for this study could

have read into the letter an implicit expectation of participation. They might have also

incorrectly assumed that the local ordinary was also in some way involved in this study.

In fact, in the researcher's role as director of diocesan office that supports Catholic

education, the researcher reports to the Vicar for Catholic Education. The Diocese of

Omega signaling acknowledgement or encouragement of this study by way of letter was

an important step in addressing the distinction drawn between the independent scope of

the research and the diocese (Appendix D). This concern was further addressed through

consistent emphasis on the role of voluntary and confidential participation of participants,

along with the observance of definitive steps to protect the anonymity of participants.

Summary

This chapter outlined how this qualitative, phenomenological dissertation in

practice study was conducted (Groenewald, 2004; Maxwell, 2013). The study focused on

gaining a better understanding of what preparation priests receive and need for leadership

of Catholic elementary schools in a Midwestern diocese. A phenomenological design

allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon of preparation through the reflection

of participants on their experience. This study yielded the participation of 20 priests

chosen through purposive sampling. The sampling technique included a set of eligibility

criteria relative to the population. The primary means of data collection was use of

individual semi-structured, open-ended, face-to-face interviews that followed an

interview protocol. Interviews occurred at the participant's place of work, were recorded

by electronic recording device, and were transcribed through utilization of a transcription

service (Rev.com). As a means of improving validating including acknowledgement of

bias, use of member checking, and inclusion of discrepant information. Data were

organized and analyzed through coding supported by Atlas.ti producing a number of

essential themes (Creswell, 2014; Morris, 2013). Through this phenomenological design

the researcher gained a clearer view of how participants were prepared for Catholic

school leadership in Catholic elementary schools, while identifying gaps in preparation

that informed the solution proposed in chapter five. This study design allowed the

research to describe essential themes and offer analysis, which will be explored further in

chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This study explored the preparation of clergy for leadership of Catholic

elementary schools in a Midwestern diocese. The purpose of this qualitative

phenomenological dissertation in practice study was to gain a better understanding of the

preparation clergy need to effectively take on the leadership of a Catholic elementary

school. Data gathered in the study resulted from 20 semistructured interviews with

clergy following an interview protocol. A phenomenological design allowed an

opportunity for participants to reflect on their experience of preparation, offering a

glimpse into the overlooked and unexamined (Griorgi, 1997). The central research

question that guided this study was: What preparation, if any, do priests receive and need

for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in a Midwestern diocese?

This central research question led to the following subquestions:

1. How do priests describe their seminary experience of direct preparation for

    Catholic school leadership?

2. How do priests describe their seminary experience of indirect preparation for

    Catholic school leadership?

3. How do priests feel about the adequacy of their preparation for Catholic

    school leadership?

4. What, if any, additional preparation is needed to prepare priests for Catholic

    school leadership?

The aim of this study was to gain insight into what is needed to adequately

prepare priests for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega,

and based on this knowledge and their insight, provide evidence-based recommendations that may help improve the experience of preparation.

Chapter four presents a description of the study participants followed by the themes that emerged through coding and analysis of interview transcripts. Accompanying each of the themes is supporting evidence from the interviews. This chapter is divided into 3 sub-headings:

- Data Organization and Analysis Procedures

- Presentation of the Findings

- Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

Data Organization and Analysis Procedures

Data for this study resulted from semi-structured interviews with 20 voluntary research participants. The goal of analysis in a phenomenological design is the identification of essential themes (Morris, 2013). Essential themes are dimensions that illustrate a phenomenon, which often emerge through reflection on the data in a study and the impressions gained by the researcher through interviews with multiple participants description of their life experience (lifeworld) (Bevan, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). For this study reflection on the data centered around the coded transcripts and field notes, which were reviewed on at least three occasions in an effort to arrive at participant meaning and ways to illustrate the phenomenon of preparation. The voluminous data were coded and quotations were identified in Atlas.ti. Then the researcher began coding the data following the process proposed by Tesch (Creswell, 2014, p. 198). The researcher used the Atlas.ti as the primary means of recording coding and analysis in light of the volume of transcripts. Atlas.ti platform allowed for organization and analysis of coded data

through a series of techniques. The researcher reviewed all of the data in an effort to begin to understand the general meaning.

After open coding, the data were broken up through axial coding and other means provided in the software around possible relationships that existed between the open coded data (Creswell, 2014). Next, the coded data were examined and grouped by description and emergent themes. A second reviewer was asked to review the coded transcript. The general descriptions and themes were reviewed with the goal of shaping a narrative description of the phenomenon and identification of possible connections between the themes (Creswell, 2014).

Finally, the researcher offered an interpretation based upon the analysis and recommendations for supplemental training of pastors to lead Catholic elementary schools. Given the focus of the reflective questions in the interview protocol, themes largely were congruent with the central research question and subsequent research questions, which frame the arrangement of themes in this chapter. The researcher noted a remarkable level of consistency between participant responses to questions from the interview protocol, which simultaneously suggested that saturation was reached and provided ample material from which to illustrate essential themes. Participant quotations from coded data were manually extracted from Atlas.ti and organized visually into a series of charts around statements (themes) that captured essential meaning. Given the focus of the reflective questions in the interview protocol and the consistency of participant responses, essential themes were largely congruent with the central research question and subsequent research questions, which frame the arrangement of the presentation of the findings in this chapter.

Presentation of the Findings

A phenomenological design allowed for the exploration of the preparation of priests for Catholic school leadership through their experiences and perspectives. Reflection, particularly, on the experience of participants through their personal lens is illustrative bringing forth deep and complex meanings (Bevan, 2014). The interview protocol set the stage for reflection on preparation starting first with situating the participant in the context of the exercise, which was concerned most with their experience of preparation for leadership of a Catholic elementary school in the most general sense, before turning to examine areas of direct and indirect preparation. Direct preparation was broken into two broad categories reflective of how participants described seminary: (a) graduate coursework; or (b) experiences such as seminars or other activities beyond coursework. Direct preparation was concerned most with coursework or experiences where participants recalled specific course titles, objectives, assignments, or experiences that were explicitly about Catholic education/Catholic school leadership. The focus was kept as broad and general as Catholic education in an effort to avoid word or idea confusion with the option in the semi-structured interview of narrowing the focus based upon response.

Indirect preparation included transferable skills and was broken into two broad categories that were congruent with how participants reflected on their seminary experience: (a) graduate coursework; or (b) experiences such as seminars or other activities beyond coursework. As with reflection on direct preparation, the focus was kept very broad and followed a line of thinking that perhaps there were courses or experiences that while not explicitly about Catholic education/Catholic school leadership

were viewed by participants as a form of preparation all the same. The final dimension

that emerged was around what priests viewed as necessary or needed in preparation for

leadership of a Catholic elementary school. This final dimension was situated in what

forms of preparation would be of value and most ideal means of delivery, but were

largely not received in their experience of preparation. Essential themes emerged

through reflection on coded data and field notes. Themes were organized by frequency

and congruence of meanings captured in Table 7.

Table 7

Essential Meaning of Themes

Comparative Dimensions	Direct	Indirect
Adequacy of Preparation for School Leadership	General participant reflection on how they viewed their explicit preparation for Catholic school leadership	General reflection on the adequacy of preparation for Catholic school leadership in ways that were not identified as explicit
Coursework	Participants identified specific courses that were explicitly concerned with preparation for Catholic school leadership	Reflection on specific courses that while not explicitly concerned with Catholic schools, participants identified as a form of preparation (transferrable skill/learning)
Experiences	Participants identified specific experiences (seminars, service opportunities, etc.) that were explicitly concerned with preparation for Catholic school leadership	Reflection on specific experiences (seminars, service opportunities, etc.) that while not explicitly concerned with Catholic schools, participants identified as a form of preparation (transferrable skill/learning)
Preparation Priests Identified as Necessary for leadership in Catholic schools	Explicit preparation with assessable objectives in the form of coursework and experiences	N/A

Thematic data yielded from coding the results of semi structured interviews is arranged according to the following essential themes:

- Adequacy of Seminary Preparation for School Leadership

- Direct Preparation: Coursework

- Indirect Preparation: Coursework

- Direct Preparation: Experiences

- Indirect Preparation: Experiences

- Preparation Priests Need for School Leadership

Adequacy of Seminary Preparation for Catholic School Leadership

Within the description of seminary life emerged reflection on the gap and absence of explicit or direct preparation for leadership of Catholic elementary schools. Participants provided a rich description of their experience of preparation. The influence of the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) seemed apparent as a framework for how leadership is understood or impressed upon priests and how priests appeared to approach schools. Dominic recalled, "I know that the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), at least when I was going through, would talk about the four dimensions that were necessary for priests to be formed: the spiritual, the human, intellectual, and pastoral." James relayed:

> Well, it's (the seminary's day) is very much ordered around the pillars of
> formation, from the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of
> Catholic Bishops, 2006), the spiritual aspect of life that's meant to lead and to
> guide all the other aspects. Daily prayer, of course, Mass, communal prayer,

Liturgy of the Hours, as brother seminarians. Human formation, a lot of the

times, is the day to day rubbing shoulders with others. Also brought on in some

ways in formation meetings with a mentor priest, a formator. A lot of that, though

is simply meeting together as a floor meeting, is "Nobody's doing the dishes,

we've got to step it up." Little things like that. Interacting with other

seminarians. Also, and encouragement, to take care of our bodies, and the human

aspect as well. Academics, in some ways, seems like the priority, even though

it's clear that the emphasis is meant to be on the spiritual. The day to day

anxieties center around academics, classes, homework, studies. On a practical

level, trying to keep up with the readings and the day to day tasks, but also,

obviously, trying to integrate it so that it can be used and provide a foundation to

move forward as a priest. Pastoral formation, I think, our seminary did a

particularly good job with a program where we go out to parishes once a week. It

really helped me, personally, to be incarnated in the life of the diocese, to get to

know a couple of the parishes much better, to get to see the priest in action, to

work alongside the priest, to take some small leadership roles in the parish.

While Francis noted (of his experience of seminary):

…largely that I was a graduate student who attended prayer," he offered that the

seminary now is a place where "the man—individual—takes ownership of his

own formation. The man himself needs to be integrating the four dimensions of

his own formation, so that means bringing to the Lord in his prayer, where he's

being called to grow. That means being vulnerable with himself, with the Lord,

and with the formation faculty about where his weaknesses may lie, and then to

begin to work on first the desire, and then the concrete steps needed to grow in

those particular areas—whether they be human, intellectual, spiritual, or pastoral.

Patrick recalled that beyond the academic year the seminary provided in:

> …summer a couple months of spiritual and pastoral ministry where we were
>
> assigned to a nursing home or to a hospital. The following summer (for him) is
>
> Spanish immersion summer, so seven weeks in Mexico, and about nine days
>
> down in Venezuela, they don't do that part anymore due to the political situation.
>
> And then, a week-long class called rural ministry which took place half at the
>
> seminary and half at a retreat center and sort of going out to farms.

Consistent with other participants, Patrick observed that there were:

> …pastoral experiences at teaching parish, times of prayer, and then other
>
> meetings that are focused, you know, on our formation, whether it be spiritual
>
> direction or meeting with our priest formator. Sometimes we'd have academic
>
> advising or just general formation every Wednesday (conferences or sessions).

The experience of community life, which was identified as meaningful by 18

participants as an integral part of the overall culture of formation in the seminary, seemed

to present along to different lines represented by Anthony and Ignatius. Anthony stated,

"There's not real community life in the seminary. It is bachelors who live under the same

roof…there's no real strong vision of community life and that follows out into the

priesthood." Ignatius described a "…focused community life, not just thrown together

like in a dormitory, but bonded together for a common purpose, as you say, akin to the

military, that very process of living in community I would say was helpful."

A vision for leading a Catholic school seemed to be impressed upon participants by the seminary formation program itself. Some observed that the vision of seminary formation laid out in the Program for Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) was too broad. Cyril noted, "You feel a bit overwhelmed because there's all these great priorities and great things that need to be done. And the problem is that if you do all of them, you're going to be in seminary for a decade." Gregory observed that "Catholic leadership is…taking responsibility for the formation of our children in the person of Christ, to help them to develop holistically: mind, body, and spirit. And whatever various roles that we are, whether it's the principal, whether it's the teachers, I think all of us have a piece to play in being the leaders in our Catholic schools to help lead these children to Christ and the true, the good, and the beautiful." Cosmas reflected:

> …with respect to Catholic schools, in seminary, I would say I got no direct proximate preparation for working in a Catholic school. I don't believe we had any workshops or day or talk that focused on that topic, nor did any of my classes touch on it. Remotely (indirect preparation), all of the human formation and the studies in some way bear on that, to the extent that the seminary helped strengthen my faith. That was also helpful."

Seventeen of 20 participants offered sentiments during the interview that reflected a theme of intense gratitude for their time in formation at the seminary and were affirming of the overall experience of preparation for the priesthood. Participants appeared circumspect in expressing gratitude for their seminary formation while pointing to self-identified areas of opportunity and weakness. Themes and experiences emerged

through reflection on direct and indirect preparation. When reflecting on the overall

adequacy of seminary preparation for Catholic school leadership participants offered a

series of insights. Raymond offered:

> I don't think that I am going out on a limb by saying that the Saint Alpha
>
> Seminary did not prepare us at all in any way, shape or form, to assume
>
> leadership of Catholic schools. Anything that did occur would have been a
>
> generic becoming a Catholic leader of pastor in a parish, but even that training
>
> and education was severely limited in scope.

James explained "Recognizing that a lot of priests don't have a direct role in Catholic

education so that probably why it wasn't focused on…and certainly in hindsight I think it

would be a greatly valuable thing." Leo stated that "…it was just a matter of so much

being stuffed in and there would be another course that would be added or something, but

these courses never really had anything to do with what's going on in the field." Albert

reflected:

> I guess it's troubling to me that here, as a seminarian, we give more information
>
> about ourselves than in any other profession in the world, and there seems to be
>
> very little connection to what's shared and what's forced out of us and what's
>
> taught us, and then how we use it in the end. I was taught to be a theologian, not a
>
> priest.

Basil noted that "Faith formation was the focus because that was when seminarians had

time set aside in their schedule to go, was for Wednesday night. It was very hard to get

out (of the seminary) during the school day to go to a Catholic school." Gregory

explained, "So to have a piece in the formation puzzle where there's actually some

dedicated time to Catholic schools and a guy can have the opportunity to be in them, I think, would be very beneficial." Anthony noted, "I mean, again within the seminary walls, I can rarely think of any conversations about Catholic education." Anselm observed, "Recalling my six years of seminary (pre-theology), I can't recall anything that was specific to leadership in a Catholic school." Brendan explained:

I mean, specifically, in terms of providing leadership for a school, I would say the seminary didn't provide too much specifically in terms of how a priest might specifically act out in a certain sense, that living embodiment of Christ he's been given through sacramental ordination; how that specifically then filters into what he needs to do administratively in terms of running of a school. I don't know of anything about my seminary experience as such that really helped equip me for leadership of a Catholic school.

Reflecting on the overall adequacy of preparation for Catholic school leadership Dominic offered:

I cannot think of anything explicit. The most I could say would be the formation they gave us to help us be secure in our priestly identity could have an influence on how a priest operates and works to influence any institution…Which could be applied to a school setting.

Drawing upon what he has witnessed among those who studied alongside him in the seminary that was echoed by other study participants, Raymond observed:

…by and large it's been done, only according to you thrust a guy in and see if he sinks or swim. Some develop a knack for it and some don't. The track record of

Catholic education, I think, speaks for itself that guys are ultimately ill-equipped and more often sinking than swimming.

In summary, participants related a rich and detailed description of the rhythm and composition of seminary life reflective of the four major pillars of the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). An important factor in considering the overall adequacy of their seminary experience was the importance of preparation for priestly responsibilities that would include leadership in Catholic schools. The language used by several participants, which specifically evokes dimensions of integrated Catholic education (formation of mind, heart, body, soul) appeared consistent with both the principles of the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishop, 2006) and what the Catholic Church has provided that would a leader's vision for Catholic education (Miller, 2006; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988).

Direct Preparation: Coursework

A majority, 17 of 20 participants, answered questions about coursework in similar ways concluding that there was no direct coursework in Catholic school leadership. Participant description of coursework that provided direct preparation for Catholic school leadership was remarkably consistent in the identification of a few possible examples. Francis noted, "There was no course proper." Basil remarked, "Certainly not Catholic school leadership." Gregory affirmed, "There is not to my recollection (any coursework)." Isidore put it this way, "There wasn't a course devoted to that (Catholic schools)." When asked if there was a specific course or courses that focused directly on Catholic schools Dominic shouted "No" and offered:

It (Catholic schools) was something that was spoken about at various times. We

certainly didn't have a course on that (Catholic schools). There were various

teachers that would speak about that in more of the pastoral care subjects.

Raymond replied "There was no course whatsoever that focused on Catholic schools in

my time at Saint Alpha Seminary." When asked the same question several participants

referred to a course on American Church History. Cyril offered:

It's not like there's a class on Catholic schools or the history of Catholic schools.

There's a little bit on that in a history course that we take on American Church

History, but that's largely focused…I hate to say it, on the Protestant

understanding of American history.

Jerome recalled, "I do realize that in our American Church History class we spoke a

decent amount about the history of Catholic education." Gregory reflected:

I'd say the biggest piece came in our second year of theology. We took a class

devoted to faith formation and catechesis. And really, I'd say the most helpful

piece that we received from that (class) in regards to Catholic education would

have been that we had a couple professors from the education department of the

University come and speak to us about how to craft a lesson plan and how to

manage a classroom.

Anthony noted that "We had one class. I think it was maybe third theology (this is a way

of describing the third year in a four-year program of formation). It was called

administration, and it wasn't the best class." Patrick observed:

I believe that we had a one credit class where different priests and sort of teaching

experts were brought in to sort of form us on how to understand Catholic schools.

They taught us how to build lesson plans, how to work on disciplining students.

That is what I remember about that class.

Isidore, after reflecting on his response, offered, "One class that we had on American Church History, that was really insightful for how important Catholic schools are in the American Church and the role they (Catholic schools) played."

In summary, while participants provided detailed recollection of dimensions of courses and specific lessons that were taught in courses, participants struggled to recall any specific coursework that explicitly or directly prepared them for general work in Catholic education or specific responsibility for leadership of a Catholic elementary school. Participant recollection of coursework, much like their reflection on experiences in subsequent sections, appeared consistent with the research of Boyle and Dosen (2017) where they reported on a review of seminary curricular programs from seminaries (it does not appear that Saint Alpha Seminary participated) across the United States concluding that mention of Catholic schools in curriculum was scarce.

Indirect Preparation: Coursework

Participants consistently described the seminary experience as a four-year program of integrated experiences and coursework that were intended to shape a candidate. Within that experience of preparation participants were asked to reflect on coursework that while not explicitly concerning Catholic schools may indirectly helped prepare them for Catholic school leadership. Some participants connected coursework that they looked to as indirect preparation. Several participants viewed a course in parish administration as instructive in understanding how to lead in a Catholic school. Patrick offered, "The parish administration class sort of got at some of the financial and decision-

making aspects of not only parish life but also schools." Basil observed, "We had a business administration class that spoke a little bit as far as leadership and from a business perspective." James recalled a "January class, a couple of weeks long where we looked at the National Directory for Catechesis. Another course on the RCIA with an eye that we would be teaching it." Jerome reflected:

> One thing that I think was important was being involved with teaching religious education during my seminary time. And so that was at least partly transferrable in the sense of knowing how running classrooms work and that type of thing.

Cyril drew a connection between school leadership and the family when he noted:

> There's a lot of these things. The biggest one is we take a course on marriage and family life, that you know, and you understand how the family plays a role in education and in the church.

Several participants reflected on a course they had taken on Blessed John Henry Newman and education. Anselm offered a lengthy description of the course:

> …but after kind of getting into what John Henry Newman said, (I) realized that Catholic education is so much more than providing a place for people to be able to talk about the faith, but you can really see how education should be transformative to be able to really have a real impact on the person's being, on their outlook on life, on who they are, being able to become a saint, a great virtuous citizen in the world, so I think that really changed my perspective, learning about what he (Newman) had talked about saying that education isn't just about putting knowledge in your brain, but can really have that formation of the entire person.

In summary, while there was a notable absence of frequency from one participant to the next, some participants identified courses that indirectly contributed to their preparation for Catholic school leadership through reflection on particular dimensions and specific aspects of content offered in coursework taken during studies in the seminary.

Direct Preparation: Experiences

Separating direct preparation in the form of coursework that was specifically geared toward Catholic schools, participants were invited to reflect on any direct preparation in the form of experiences that were explicitly concerned with Catholic schools. Five participants described experiences of direct preparation in the form of seminars or formation sessions. Anthony recalled, "I remember one. We had a formation session, and there was a priest that was doing formation session on a Wednesday morning. Gave a couple of talks or something." Cyril recalled the role that seminars played in seminary life as a way of teaching and forming, "So we had a series of guest speakers that came in and talked about…we kind of had a general overview… provided by pastors of parishes with schools." Anselm described spending an extended period of time at a Catholic school in a parish, "I was able to enter into the life of the school up there and get a decent sense of what it looks like, day in and day out, but it was just three weeks." Cyril related a direct experience at Maryknoll in England "…which is kind of the British version of the Catholic catechetical."   Damian noted:

> We were given the sense that schools take care of themselves…I cannot think of
> anything direct about Catholic schools, and personally I find that to be an

enormous omission on the part of my formation or enormous something I am

lacking as a priest because I didn't receive much.

Some participants reflected on experiences of direct preparation from the

perspective of how the participants engaged the seminary environment namely an

emphasis on what was described as a self-motivated formation. This self-motivated

formation seemed to be apparent in how participants arrived at a definition or approach to

Catholic school leadership. Possibly the product of the regular habit of reflective practice

that is woven into the method of the seminary, participants appeared to have an acute

awareness for the strengths and limitations of their seminary formation as a means of

preparation for their responsibilities.

Participants presented different views of how a priest provides Catholic school

leadership. The self-reported roles and responsibilities of 18 of 20 participants included

Catholic school leadership. Every participant offered a unique perspective with one

common meaning among them: priests are responsible for the maintaining the Catholic

vision and mission. Dominic proposed starting with a common definition of leadership

being "…the ability to lead a group of people to accomplish a specific goal or task.

Guiding the intellectual and formation of students with a Catholic worldview, towards the

fullness of who they are as made in the image and likeness of God." Francis offered:

I suppose generally leadership would be working with a group of people to

advance a particular mission or goal, an in particular in a Catholic school then

would be the goal of education in a Catholic context, and ideally helping form

those children not only in basic education, but also in the Catholic faith and how

to live one's Catholic faith.

Simon linked leadership to purpose when he observed:

> So not only is Catholic identity important, the sacraments, learning our Catholic
> theology, and helping them get to heaven, but also academic excellence. That
> these children are taught and helped develop in their ability to succeed, to do well
> in the culture in a way that helps them have great jobs in the future, that helps
> them deal with the culture in a way that is informed, and their conscience is well
> formed in order to live moral and healthy lives and give to the culture and society
> a beautiful example and witness to God's love in the world.

Jerome observed that priests lead by "…primarily ensuring that the faith is properly
passed on and taught, as well as providing vision, as well as working with qualified lay
leaders who do…would ordinarily do more of the academic work." Several participants
appeared to link the role of a priest in Catholic school leadership with the responsibility
for providing vision. Albert offered:

> Catholic school leadership would be to provide a local vision in keeping with the
> diocese's vision for Catholic education and to procure the necessary resources for
> that vision to flourish, which includes students, teachers, principals, volunteers,
> benefactors, and to have the skills for that so that that vision can come into being
> and so that children can be formed in the Catholic understanding of the world that
> God has created.

Brendan relayed that "…Catholic school leadership as providing for the school a vision
to ensure that the education that goes on in the school is in keeping with the tradition of
the Catholic church…" Raymond explained:

Ideally you want a team of the people that are of the same mind, of the same

vision. If it's just up to the pastor trying to keep his school Catholic, he's going to

fail. If it's just up to the principal trying to keep his or her school, it's going to

fail.

Across the participants 8 of 20 described with considerable variation the work of

a priest in relation to that of a school principal. One participant, Bede noted:

…my role is to work with the principal, recognizing that we all have different

gifts…I think it's all what we even talk about in Catholic solidarity and

subsidiarity…trusting people to do their jobs…just being cognizant of what's

going on and supportive of the principal, you always have a united front. The

principal has a degree in education and a degree in school administration and has

experience and has worked in schools.

Several participants emphasized the importance of the relationship between priest and

principal. Isidore observed the importance of building "…a relationship between priest

and principal because that can also be, that can be great and that can be dicey." Leo

asserted the importance of developing:

…a better relationship between school leadership and pastors…I've seen as a

priest an almost universal tension between priest, pastors, and school management

and that's not helpful to schools. It's not helpful to the parish, and especially in

terms of transition just a lack of trust or a lack of common vision.

Gregory observed, "Without principals, we're going to be lost." Patrick noted that the

school leader is "…charged with the task of forming the next group of leaders in the

church, forming those young persons in faith and not just in faith, but all subject matter

for that matter." Participants drew a link between the vision for Catholic education and the role of the principal in helping bring that vision into reality. Brendan underscored the importance of "…how to then provide the overall leadership and vision of how that's to be acted out by the principal and his or her faculty." Anthony noted that "the principal and the teachers and staff really grasp what's the vision of a Catholic education." Participants were concerned that school principals are formed in a way that helps them understand how to share in and apply the vision of Catholic education. Reflecting on school principals, Anselm wondered:

> Catholic school leadership should in a way, be someone who is willing to lead others towards Christ. They (Catholic school leadership) should be able to have that as their main focus or the lens through which they do everything, so if they're doing particular things, particular tasks around the parish or even within the school, they should be having that mindset, is what I'm doing in my leadership allowing the kingdom of God to be built up at this particular school?

In summary, participants related a series of experiences that they identified as a form of direct or explicit preparation for leadership in a Catholic elementary school. These experiences of direct preparation appeared to take several distinct forms each with respective levels of impact based upon the depth of description. Participants described formation sessions or seminars that focused explicitly on linking the role of the priest to maintenance of the mission/vison of the school. Participants spoke of their direct experience in the seminary as contributing to their understanding of differences in roles and responsibilities between the priest and staff like school principals. The final

dimension that emerged in this essential theme of direct preparation is the role of the teaching parish program, which will be treated in the next section.

Direct Preparation: Teaching Parish Program

The teaching parish program at Saint Alpha Seminary was mentioned by 18 of 20 participants. The teaching parish program was generally a four-year assignment that placed a participant in parish life for an experience that sounded like mentoring and internship. Participants provided description of the strengths and gaps in the teaching parish program, while underscoring the role that a mentor pastor played in their direct preparation through experiences for leadership of Catholic elementary schools. The experience, ordinarily, placed a seminarian at the same parish for all four years of study. The sheer frequency of participant comment on the teaching parish program warranted a subset within the experience of direct preparation. Francis summarized the teaching parish program:

> …is where you're supposed to develop relationship with your pastor and he is supposed to let you in on a lot of things that were going on in the parish. So, it was meant to be a kind of mentoring, learning experience, and so my first few years were very good and then my second few years there were lacking as the pastor had changed and he didn't want much to do with me.

It did not appear that the teaching parish program followed a particular unified written form of expectations for participant or mentor pastor, Francis noted, "It was recommended, however given the variety of parishes the things in the program can't be absolutely explained." Gregory recalled:

…we receive the assignment at the beginning of our first year (of four years) of

theology studies and we hold on to that assignment throughout our entire time

there. Due to pastor changes or other circumstances, a guy might transfer to a

different role.

Patrick described the mechanics of the program:

…so, on average I was going there once a week, plus once a month for weekend

Masses. And there's a different focus each semester it was sort of faith formation,

another semester it was RCIA…my teaching parish didn't have a school, but I

was going to the faith formation sections.

When reflecting on the semesters James added "…one was visiting the sick. One

was preaching. And so, each semester had a different focus. I don't recall there being a

particular focus for the schools, probably because not every parish had a school." As

participants reflected on the teaching parish program they appeared to become more

aware of their lack of engagement with Catholic schools through that experience. Some

participants linked the teaching parish program to leadership preparation, Anthony noted

"almost no training in leadership (in seminary) …to become a leader of human beings. I

mean, the closest thing would be your teaching parish committee meetings that you're

supposed to lead once a month." Bede recalled "…we go out into a parish, I was at Saint

Alpha parish for four years, but that parish did not have a school." Jerome reflected that

"I would say I did not receive a lot of training about leadership of a Catholic school. I

was assigned to a teaching parish that had a K-8 Catholic school and I was involved in

only minor ways with that school." Anselm noted, "My teaching parish was a parish that

didn't have a parochial school, so I didn't get any experience by going out to the teaching

parish program." Raymond observed:

> Even at my teaching parish, which is where you could expect some introduction
>
> to Catholic schools. There was a Catholic school at my teaching parish, but the
>
> pastor had minimal involvement with the school and none of my time in the
>
> teaching parish program was devoted towards the school.

Reflecting on his experience of his teaching parish that was a parish with a school,

Damian echoed:

> I cannot think of anything that actively taught me about what it means as a pastor
>
> or priest to have a Catholic school. I would attend our annual fundraiser at our
>
> teaching parish, at my teaching parish, which I believe was for the school, as well
>
> as the parish…The most direct involvement with the school that I can recall is
>
> attending a fundraiser once a year. The teaching parish program when I was at
>
> Saint Alpha Seminary was rather rigid in that it only permitted us to do teaching
>
> parish activities on Wednesdays, afternoons and evenings.

> Several participants identified an obstacle to direct experience in Catholic schools

through the teaching parish program relative to the lack of alignment between the

schedule of the seminary and school day. Cyril noted, "I was there four years. But the

teaching parish program, it's generally late afternoons and early evenings on

Wednesdays. So generally, school is out by the time that you get there." Gregory

confirmed:

> I will say that I think it's one of the difficulties that we experience, just the fact
>
> that the seminary schedule and a parish with a school schedule doesn't always

line up. For instance, with my teaching parish, the earliest I could get out there on

any given day would be at the very end of the school day.

Two participants reflected on the value of the teaching parish program as a direct

experience that prepared them for Catholic education. One of them, Brendan, put it this

way:

> I had a very good experience at my teaching parish. It varies from guy to guy at
>
> the seminary. It all depends on the parish, the pastor, other factors. I did learn a
>
> lot about Catholic schools from Father Brown. He did a great job of helping to
>
> resurrect the school. Just learning from him about a lot of the challenges that the
>
> school faced…it was a really positive experience during seminary, getting to learn
>
> at a really good Catholic school and from a really great pastor.

In summary, participants related a connection between an experience of direct

preparation with the teaching parish program.

Indirect Preparation: Experiences

Participants related a series of indirect experiences that they identified as a form

of preparation for leadership in a Catholic elementary school. Participants described

specific experiences in seminary community life that served as a preparation for the

practical work of being a Catholic school leader. More than half of participants described

the modeling of what they termed a ministry of presence by other priests that affected

how they showed leadership in a Catholic school. Some related the role that living an

intense experience of being in community with others had on how they were prepared to

relate in their ministry to the principal of the school. Absent in the reflection of

participants was clear evidence or awareness of the application of a particular model or theory of leadership in seminary studies.

Ignatius description seemed to summarize what others had offered:

> …in general, the formation as a priest did involve aspects that touch upon leadership in general…every man in the seminary is called upon in some sense to embrace a form of leadership within the seminary as prefects, or as tending to his floor. So, there's leadership that comes from living in community. You have to take responsibility for your own duties. There was also annunciation, and I think a pretty clear one, of what it is that we were trying to do to lead the people we were trusted to, to green pastures and to a vision of heaven. So, we were given a vision that was also part of the general formation leadership. There are particular skills we were taught, public speaking, leading of meetings to some degree.

Some participants provided some general inferences to indirect preparation like James where he noted, "One that comes to mind is during college seminary teaching faith formation for one year. I believe it was with fourth graders." Jerome recalled:

> …during one of our seminar classes in the seminary we had perhaps one, or perhaps a couple guest speakers come in talking about creating lesson plans. I think it was worthwhile but it wouldn't have been…it was just a surface level one day talk.

Gregory recalled "…part of our second year in our teaching parish program we were involved with other faith formation programs." Francis relayed "…in my day…we had verbatims that we had to do, multiple a semester of various encounters that we had in the parish, although those weren't necessarily on school things, they could be…" Some

participants discussed indirect preparation in terms of what seemed lacking in their experience, Patrick noted:

> I mean, yeah, there wasn't, let's see, we didn't ever have like a practice homily geared for kids (in Catholic schools) in seminary. Then there are directives, especially…well, you know, there's the Vatican for example has expressed the importance of Catholic schools. I would read up on that on my own.

Basil observed:

> …you have to experience it (leadership) before you understand it, and I think that's kind of the way as far as my seminary experience was when you can learn a little bit from a book, but you have to go through hiring and firing in real life before you understand it.

Ignatius captured a theme that seven participants seemed in harmony with:

> …for me it was being in community with people that were very different from myself, and how that connects to the school is that living in that intense community environment you need to deal with more human stuff than necessarily, not certainly curriculum or discipline in the classroom, but how do I interact with an administrator or a teacher that is very good, but who handles things much differently than me, how do I decipher between personal preference and difference of principles?

An experience of indirect preparation that appeared shared by 14 of the participants was a common description of a what they termed a ministry of presence, which was an experience that seemed to translate to an experience of direct preparation. Isidore and other participants described the ministry of presence, which was modeled at Saint Alpha

Seminary, as important for a priest. When reflecting on the application in schools, Isidore noted "I'll be walking around the school and stopping into classrooms, whether it's just briefly to say hello."

In summary, participants offered rich description of how they experienced indirect preparation for leadership of a Catholic elementary school. Participants provided detailed recollection of dimensions of courses and specific lessons that were taught in courses, participants struggled to recall any specific coursework that explicitly or directly prepared them for general work in Catholic education or specific responsibility for leadership of a Catholic elementary school.

Preparation Priests Need

Participants in this study identified a range of training and preparation needed for Catholic school leadership. Table 8 captures summary statements of possible topics of areas of preparation that may assist participant along with an indication of interest frequency.

The areas of interest identified or supported by participants in the study were gleaned from extensive and rich description on particular areas of preparation and possible avenues for delivery. There was strong interest in preparation that integrated elements of classroom experience so long as part of the experience included a reliance on 'on the job training.

Table 8

Participant Identification of Needed Preparation Topics and Support

Identified Preparation Needs for Priests	Number of Supportive Respondents (20)
Nonprofit Management Examples: Finance, human resources, marketing, advancement, strategic planning, legal issues	18
Explanation of Role and Responsibility of a Priest Examples: Appointment letter, position description, description of role, onboarding	17
Interest in Future Leadership of a Catholic Elementary School	17
Church's Vision, History, and Philosophy of Catholic Education Examples: Encyclicals, Council documents, Code of Canon Law, authoritative texts	16
Leadership of Catholic Elementary School Examples: Curriculum, conflict management, role of principal	16
Specialized track for priests with direct responsibility for Catholic school	16
Support for Preparation in the Form of Direct Experience Examples: Mentoring, chaplaincy, teaching experience, inclusion of time in Catholic schools through teaching parish program	15

Participants recognized the centrality of their role in Catholic schools in the

Diocese of Omega.

Albert noted:

The pastor is basically the superintendent of the school, and so I think this is

where I am tempted to say that some degree of specialization can come in,

because once again, you have to be able to rely on your principal a whole lot, but

there's still some basic educational things that are way different than how to go in

a classroom and teach kids.

Anselm observed a concern for "…some sort of leadership training in the seminary or

post-seminary education…" Bede suggested the need for more training around "the

understanding that the school is part of a parish and emphasizing unity." Cyril reflected,

which was a theme mirrored by 9 other participants, that more preparation was needed to

help priests:

> …figure out what is the point of Catholic education in general, because I am not
>
> sure that a lot of priests see the value so much in our parochial schools anymore.
>
> They're (some priests) always depreciative about 'Well what do our schools
>
> actually do."

Participants identified the need for preparation in how to balance the competing demands

between faith formation and Catholic schools. Leo observed:

> Even now I sometimes hear that this competition where somehow, we think one is
>
> more important than the other and of course the faith formation parents will say
>
> 'All you care about is the school.' The school parents I don't think care much
>
> about faith formation, but they see faith formation as a threat.

Basil concluded a need for:

> …better preparation with regards to understanding Catholic school dynamics.
>
> Catholic identity, how to handle parents that say you're not Catholic enough.
>
> How do I handle parents that say you're too Catholic and you feel judged when
>
> you go to your school? That is certainly some formation that I would find
>
> valuable that I could have had when I was in seminary but did not receive.

Cosmas emphasized:

> I think the priest is responsible for proclaiming the Gospel and for ensuring that
> the kids in the school, if the priest is in a leadership role there, that the kinds in the
> school are receiving the Catholic faith in its integrity and in its full vigor in such a
> way that they not only understand it, but are inspired to live it out. He's also a
> vocational presence in the parish, in the school, so he's showing the kids the joy
> of being an ordained minister of God, and hopefully inspiring young men to
> consider the priesthood as a vocation in their life. I would seem him also as
> providing spiritual direction and guidance to the students on an individual basis,
> and certainly celebrating Mass and confession for the students as often as
> possible. Also, more broadly, I would say a priest also has a responsibility to
> examine the curriculum of the school, more broadly, even outside of the religious
> aspect, and to ask the question, is this at least fair to…Is it a fair presentation of
> the facts and of the truth? Does it bias the students against faith or help them or
> just neutral? Also providing a spiritual, fatherly role in the lives of the staff.

Participants identified a need for more training in general school operations along with anchoring in mission, purpose, and history of Catholic education. Eighteen of 20 participants indicated that they would find value in preparation in school operations such as strategic planning, finance, marketing, and advancement. Dominic emphasized the importance of "training in the area finances…how to read a balance sheet, to be able to predict a storm." Sixteen participants noted the lack of a written description of their responsibilities or equivalent document. Joined by 16 other participants, Cyril emphasized the importance of general preparation in mission, history, and vision of

Catholic education. A strong majority, 17 of 20 participants, responded that they would like to remain or become involved in Catholic school leadership. While there was a strong value placed on ongoing training participants were split on when that training and preparation should occur and in what form. Most participants believed that there was little room for modification of the existing seminary experience. Fifteen of 20 priests made some inference that further preparation would be more effective is situated in some form of direct experience and mentoring opportunity concurrent with the role of parochial vicar or spliced into the teaching parish experience. 'Priests learn from priests and principals learn from principals,' was an expression that was used on several occasions by participants. Common among their responses were sentiments of great hope for Catholic schools, while remaining recollected about the challenges. Gregory concluded, "I've just discovered in a very profound way, I think the worth of Catholic education, I just love being in the school myself. So, I think it's very valuable and would, myself, want to grow in it."

In summary, participants provided extensive and rich descriptions of preparation that would help a priest lead in a Catholic elementary school. While noting that the seminary program is difficult to modify without lessening the formation provided, priests provided specific reflections and recommendations on expansion of existing seminary formation and offered insights into where preparation may be beneficial l post seminary. Participants expressed a deep concern for the adequacy of preparation and importance of ensuring that future priests are offered more extensive preparation than they received drawing upon the importance of ensuring the future success of Catholic education.

Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

The findings above explored the experience of preparation of a sample of 20

priests eligible for assignments that included Catholic school leadership in the Diocese of

Alpha. Overall, the findings reveal a gap in the direct and indirect preparation of priests

for Catholic school leadership. There did not appear to be a difference in perceived

preparation between participants assigned to Catholic schools and participants who did

not identify Catholic schools as part of their current assignment (table 5). While using a

different methodology the findings of this study were concurrent with other related

research that found scant preparation of priests for the responsibility of Catholic school

leadership (Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Simonds et al., 2017). Participants did not identify

any coursework that was directly or indirectly geared toward preparation for Catholic

school leadership in either the specific theoretical underpinnings of Catholic education,

such as Canon Law or relevant magisterial documents, or in practical matters of Catholic

school operations such as law, finance, strategic planning, curriculum, or supervision.

Participants strongly identified with the teaching parish program as an opportunity for

hands on work in parish life under the guidance of a mentor pastor. Absent a discernable

structure and set of goals, the value of the teaching parish program appears highly

dependent on disposition of the (mentor) pastor and the relatability of the parish

assignment. Even when a teaching parish assignment included a Catholic school it

appears that the alignment of school and seminary schedules rendered meaningful

participation in the life of the school marginal. It is remarkable that while participants

may have made occasional reference to direct or indirect preparation that contributed to

their understanding of Catholic education, the majority of their references and inferences

were related more to teaching and interacting with students, which further suggests that there exists no discernable means of preparation for Catholic school leadership. Preparation in catechetical, didactic, or dialogical methods appears to be limited to a few hours of seminars. Participants demonstrated an awareness that leadership as a subject or model is not explicit taught in seminary preparation. Additionally, the strong preponderance of support across all but two participants for additional preparation in explicit areas like mission, school finance, and strategic planning is suggestive that these topics were not adequate in preparation programs and experiences.

There appears to be a lack of clear structural elements that might assist a priest in knowing and understanding their leadership responsibilities in Catholic schools including relevant and written position or job descriptions, organizational charts, references in their letters of assignment, or handbooks. Priests did not appear to have access to preparation or resources that would assist them in practical work like the review of curriculum, how to work with a principal or how to manage a board. Participants exhibited a consistent interest in ongoing formation if it is clearly linked to better prepare them to serve and minister. Participants were familiar with the language of reflective practice and self-formation/mastery. Consistent across study participants, whether apparent or realized, is the effect that preparation had on their ability to consistently articulate a vision for Catholic education that is linked to the witness of the priest and mission of the Church combined with a sense of hope difficult to capture in a transcript about the opportunity that Catholic education offers for children and families. Chapter five will explore recommendations for direct coursework, experiences, and resources informed by the reflection of study participants and applied research from parallel fields.

FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Parish priests in the Diocese of Omega are responsible for leadership of Catholic elementary schools that serve over 18,000 students. Priests are formally prepared for their responsibilities by the local seminary. The curriculum of formation and education at the local seminary is informed by the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006; Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018). The success of a Catholic school is dependent on the quality and preparation of those serving in leadership (Boyle, 2010; Ciriello, 1994; Cook & Durow, 2008). Concerns about the preparation of priests for Catholic school leadership have been raised locally by priests (Diocese of Omega, 2017c) and, nationally, researchers have recently began looking more closely at the challenge (Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Simonds et al., 2017). At the center of the concern is that priests are offered scant preparation for this important role in the life of a Catholic elementary school in the Diocese of Omega.

With these concerns in mind, this study explored how priests described their experience of preparation for Catholic school leadership with a focus on understanding the adequacy and need. This study identified gaps in preparation brought forward by participants and highlighted the dearth of literature that exists around the study question. Chapter five summarizes this study and proposes an evidence-based recommendation that is divided into four distinct phases aimed at better preparing priests for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega. The phases are supported by a proposed plan for assessable implementation followed by an exploration of possible implications for research and leadership applications.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological dissertation in practice study was to gain a better understanding of the preparation clergy need to be able to effectively take on the leadership of a Catholic elementary school. Through in-depth interviews with 20 priests in a Midwestern diocese, the researcher gained insight through their lived experiences that helped anchor evidence-based recommendations that are designed to prepare priests for leadership in Catholic elementary schools.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to gain insight into what is needed to adequately prepare priests for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega, and based on this knowledge and their insight, provide evidence-based recommendations that may help improve the experience of preparation.

Proposed Solution

Participant reflection on the adequacy of preparation for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega produced knowledge and insight that guided this proposed solution. Participants described both an absence and an interest in direct preparation for the responsibility of leadership of a Catholic school elementary school, which sounded similar to the descriptions of interests expressed by seminarians in a study concluded by Simonds, et al. (2017) that included seminarian viewpoints on Catholic schools in seminary preparation. Participants in this study described a lack of clarity about the role and responsibility of a priest in the organizational structure of a Catholic elementary school that resembled the commitment of pastors called for by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2005) and reflected sound organizational practice

through clearly defined roles (Bryson, 2004; Burke, 2014). Participants noted a lack of general principles and direct preparation that ground questions of organizational purpose and mission that appeared in agreement with the areas or marks that Miller (2006) outlined when discussing the purpose of Catholic education and the system for capturing Catholic school culture proposed by Cook (2015), for example:

- What is Catholic education?

- Why Catholic education is important in the life of the Church?

- What does the Catholic Church say about the role of the clergy in Catholic education?

- What makes a Catholic school different from other schools?

- How does a priest lead in a Catholic school?

Participants described being underserved in practical direct preparation for the leadership responsibilities that they assumed or may be asked to assume in a Catholic school. Participant description of their seminary experience of direct preparation for Catholic schools were noticeably consistent with the findings of Boyle and Dosen (2017) in their analysis of the curricular content of 18 (out of 46 possible) seminaries in the United States where they noted the apparent absence of clear and meaningful preparation for Catholic schools. Participants identified with the need for practical direct preparation that would help them address questions around the role of the principal, the evaluation of employees, the construction of curriculum, the mechanics of strategic planning, the practice of setting the school budget and tuition, and training how to guiding advancement/fundraising efforts. The areas of needed preparation seemed congruent with dimensions of effective practice captured in a set of standards and benchmarks for

Catholic schools codified by Ozar and Weitzel-O'Neill (2012). Participant concerns

about a better understanding of the role and partnership with the school principal

resembled the findings of Brock and Fraser (2001) and Weiss (2007), especially as this

key shared responsibility positively relates to retention and job satisfaction for Catholic

school principals. Study participants demonstrated an awareness of the role that the

Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006)

provided in informing their preparation for priestly responsibilities. Finally, while there

did not appear to be a study of priests that grounds this finding, participants asserted the

importance of finding new ways to allow priests with interests and gifts to undergo

additional preparation that would equip them for the unique responsibilities that often

accompany assignments to parishes with Catholic elementary schools.

Based upon insights provided by participants, and reflective of relevant research,

the researcher proposes for review by diocesan decision makers and those involved in

seminary formation the following evidence-based recommendations divided into four

distinct and reliant phases:

Phase 1

In consultation with pastors and principals, the diocese should author three key

organizational documents that capture the governance structure and roles of those leading

in Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega:

- Written summary description of the role of a pastor or canonical administrator in

  a Catholic elementary school (to be included with letter of appointment and kept

  on file at the parish);

- Written expanded position description detailing the responsibilities of a pastor or canonical administrator of a Catholic elementary school (to be included with the letter of appointment and kept on file at the parish);

- Written organizational chart exhibiting the key leadership roles and relationships in a Catholic elementary school in the diocese: priest, canonical administrator, bishop, board (where applicable), advisory council (where applicable), faculty and staff (to be included with the letter of appointment and kept on file at the parish).

Once these documents are prepared, diocesan staff in the office of Catholic schools or office of parish support would likely be better equipped to provide priests assigned to explanation and training on the written summary and position description for priests assigned to Catholic school leadership roles. Further, it is recommended that the Bishop of the Diocese of Omega share with the Rector of Saint Alpha Seminary these written documents, which capture diocesan expectations for priests serving in Catholic school leadership roles.

Phase 2

The Diocese of Omega through the Office of the Vicar for Catholic Education should request from Saint Alpha Seminary the formation of a joint study committee tasked with evaluation of how existing coursework and experiences provided during formation serve as direct preparation for leadership of a Catholic elementary school and align to key responsibilities identified in the drafting of written descriptions (phase 1). This joint study committee (mandated with a limited term of 6 months) should consist of membership along the following lines: a staff member from the office of Catholic schools (diocese), a staff member from the office of clergy services (diocese), the dean

(seminary) and a vice-rector (seminary). The study committee would be expected to make regular (monthly) written reports on activity with the expectation of arriving at a conclusion within six months of inception. The study committee might organize its work and report on findings in the form of a simple audit requesting that the seminary validate the alignment of key areas of leadership identified in phase 1 to existing courses and experiences at the seminary. Reflective of the written description of the position, job, and organizational chart, the diocese should design an audit of existing coursework and experiences provided for future priests with toward identifying where and how direct preparation occurs. Table 9 provides a basic structure for how a review might be constructed:

Table 9

Rubric for Review of Existing Curriculum for Alignment with Responsibilities of Priests for Leadership of Catholic Elementary Schools

Topics Related to Catholic schools where direct preparation might occur	List and provide commentary on existing coursework that examines
Church's Vision, History, and Philosophy of Catholic Education	(Narrative from the seminary.) Examples: Survey of Church documents that treat Catholic education and how candidates reflect upon/integrate thinking
Explanation of Role and Responsibility of a Priest for Catholic school leadership	Examples: Appointment letter, position description, description of role, onboarding process, teaching parish

Table 9 (continued).

Leadership of Catholic Elementary School	Examples: Leadership training or model, change management, curriculum, conflict management, role of the principal
Principles of Nonprofit Management	Examples: Finance, human resources, marketing, advancement, strategic planning, legal issues
Support for Preparation in the Form of Direct Experience	Examples: Mentoring, chaplaincy, teaching experience, inclusion of time in Catholic schools through teaching parish program
Teaching Parish Program	Examples: Number of hours spent in Catholic schools, description of responsibilities while in Catholic schools
Interest in Future Leadership of a Catholic Elementary School	Examples: Are there ways that the seminary identifies/encourages candidates with particular interest/gifts for future leadership of Catholic schools; How does the seminary engage candidates

Phase 3

This phase divides along two basic lines that are both relative to findings and activity related to direct preparation in the previous two phases: actions for the seminary based upon the results of the review and actions for the diocese based upon the response

of the seminary. If it is the case that the review of the seminary aligns with the findings of

this study, which noted scant direct or indirect preparation for the responsibility of

Catholic school leadership, the diocese should encourage the seminary to respond

according to its needs. Reflective of the response from the seminary on the alignment of

existing coursework and experiences (that would treat existing and future seminarians), it

is recommended that the diocese conduct its own assessment of its own processes and

procedures used in the assignment of clergy to roles that include leadership of Catholic

elementary schools (this action would begin to engage existing and future assignments of

clergy). Part of that assessment should include consideration of the topics identified in

the proposed review (Table 10) or even an adaptation of the interview protocol used in

this study (Appendix A) are applied in the assignment of pastors and canonical

administrators for responsibilities that include Catholic schools. While phase 3

ultimately is concerned with raising awareness and engaging the challenge of how to

adequately prepare priests for their responsibilities, the next and final phase provides the

diocese with a practical way of proceeding that is tailored according to the researcher's

familiarity with the existing processes and procedures for the assignment of priests and

canonical administrators used in the professional practice setting.

It is strongly suggested that the findings of the review of seminary preparation

and review by the diocese be reported to the United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations. This may be among the

tasks of the study committee proposed in phase 2. While this study was limited to the

participation of 20 priests of the Diocese of Omega ordained since 2006 that studied at

the Saint Alpha Seminary, any confirmation by the diocese of gaps in preparation for

Catholic school leadership likely have some relationship to the Program of Priestly

Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). The findings of the

diocese, accompanied by the work of scholars on a parallel question (Boyle & Dosen,

2017), may provide some valuable insight that could influence future revisions, which in

turn has the potential of strengthening the preparation of priests for their important

responsibilities.

Phase 4

Recognizing that a viable and vibrant parish is one that hosts or sponsors a

Catholic school, the diocese should create a track system where candidates discern with

the diocese their interest and suitability to serve in a role that might include Catholic

school leadership. Priests in the diocese are generally assigned to two three-year terms as

parochial vicars under the supervision and guidance of a pastor. Candidate interest in

Catholic school leadership might be surveyed in the fourth year of formation (deacon

year) prior to first assignment. The diocese could assign parochial vicars who are in their

second three-year term and disposed to leadership of Catholic schools to complete a

certificate in Catholic school leadership at the Institute for Catholic School Leadership at

Saint Alpha Seminary. The Saint Alpha Seminary describes the purpose of the Institute

as three-fold (2018):

> (1) to impart to school leaders the vision and mission of Catholic education and
>
> the practical skills needed to transform schools into vibrant faith-learning
>
> communities; (2) to develop professional administrative skills needed to run
>
> complex, non-profit Catholic institutions in the 21st century; and (3) to provide
>
> training for current and future pastors who are responsible for Catholic schools.

As noted in chapter 2, the audiences for the Institute are laity, religious, and pastors engaged in leadership and governance of Catholic schools. The Institute has aligned its certificate offering to the core competencies of the Diocese of Omega for Catholic school principals (Diocese of Omega, 2017b). The Institute offers a 19-credit graduate-level certificate in Catholic school leadership that can be completed within 24 months with two four-week on campus residency requirements in successive summers, which is often the ideal window for priests to be away from the parish. With the first cohort designated for the summer of 2019, this endeavor has the potential to considerably shape the formation and training of priests of the Diocese of Omega. Its inclusion in the seminary structure also provides the opportunity for a more natural and organic response to the findings of the review proposed in phase 2. The graduate level certificate is a mix of theory and practice, includes the following courses:

- Fundamentals of the Catholic Faith for Catholic School Leaders;

- Catholic School Leadership I;

- Applied Catholic School Leadership;

- The History, Philosophy, and Mission of the Catholic School;

- Non-Profit Leadership for Catholic School Leaders;

- Catholic Schools and School Law;

- Catholic School Leadership II.

It is important to note that the certificate in Catholic school leadership includes a reliance on an active mentoring model that would connect a priest with gifted pastors and principals throughout their experience. Completion of this certificate could be a prerequisite for the eventual assignment of a priest to the role of pastor or canonical

administrator with responsibility for leadership of a Catholic elementary school. This prerequisite would provide the diocese with some objective criteria to help guide decisions about pastors of parishes with Catholic schools.

Support for the Solution

Consistent with a phenomenological approach, the set of recommendations on the direct preparation of priest for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega is primarily grounded in the findings of the study (Griorgi, 1997; Groenewald, 2004). The recommendations identified in phase 1 start with a set of key organizational leadership pieces that includes position descriptions, job descriptions, organizational charts and ancillary training (Bryson, 2004). The need for these key organizational leadership pieces was directly identified by participants in this study. Sixteen of 20 participants noted that they did not receive a written description or explanation of their responsibilities. When asked how they came to understand their responsibilities, three participants noted that it came by way of oral tradition. Ignatius observed that while not including leadership in Catholic education:

> The closest we got was a handbook that we were given developed by the diocese, by the parish services team, which served as a way to introduce the new pastor to the parish, and it was a listing of staff, their job descriptions, some of the major apostolates connected with the parish. That was the extent of it.

Organizational theorists identify these organizational pieces as fundamental to health and vitality of organizations (Bryson, 2004; Burke, 2014). It was remarkable to find that these key organizational leadership elements simply do not exist. Phase 2, which asks the diocese to conduct a simple topic audit of seminary offering, reflects an effort by the

researcher to recognize the limitations of this study. While participants in this study did

not identify coursework and experience as direct preparation for leadership of Catholic

elementary schools, phase 2 will verify whether direct preparation in the form of

coursework and experiences are offered. Seventeen of 20 participants observed that there

was no direct preparation for Catholic school leadership in the form of coursework, while

five participants identified direct preparation in the form of experiences. Phase 2 would

help give a more complete and up-to-date view of preparation. While every participant

expressed gratitude for their time in seminary studies, Raymond captured a sentiment

shared by a majority of participants, which could be addressed by implementation of

phase 2:

> I don't think that I am going out on a limb by saying that Saint Alpha Seminary
>
> did not prepare us at all in any way, shape or form, to assume leadership of
>
> Catholic schools. Anything that did occur would have been a generic becoming a
>
> Catholic leader of pastor in a parish, but even that training and education was
>
> severely limited in scope.
>
> The goal would be giving the pastor the terms, the tools, the skills necessary to
>
> assess those skills in others, to gather around himself those people that actually
>
> have some management, some experience, some administrative gifts to actually
>
> implement. But he (the pastor) needs to have the vision for what Catholic
>
> education is, and what it can be. Then, truly rely on the people that are experts in
>
> this (Catholic education) to bring it to fruition.
>
> Phase 3 is intended to help both organizations recognize the needs that exist for

the direct preparation of priests for these leadership roles in Catholic elementary schools

(which is critical to how change might occur in Table 12). While silent on explicit preparation for Catholic school leadership, the Program for Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) squarely identifies leadership formation and development under the fourth pillar of pastoral formation. Whereas there may be elements of leadership theory in the approach of Saint Alpha Seminary, reflection on the data from participants did not yield anything resembling a systematic approach or even a course in leadership theory. The essential focus of the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) is the formation of a priestly identity within a candidate. The section of the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006, p. 81) dealing with the topic of leadership stated:

> Leadership development: Pastoral formation means that seminarians learn how to take spiritual initiatives and direct a community into action or movement. That leadership also includes a dimension of practical administration. The pastoral formation program should provide opportunities for seminarians to acquire the basic administrative skills necessary for effective pastoral leadership, recognizing that programs of continuing education and ongoing formation will be necessary to equip newly ordained priests to assume future responsibilities as pastors. Additional leadership skills include an ability to manage the physical and financial resources of the parish, including educating parishioners about the gospel value of stewardship, and an ability to organize parochial life effectively to achieve the goals of the new evangelization.

The Program of Priestly Formation provides a sieve through which to sort leadership approaches where it noted that leadership training should focus on how best to prepare a leader to move a community into action (movement) guided by a vision (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). As this solution includes coursework and experiences in Catholic school leadership by way of a graduate certificate, it is reasonable to conclude that leadership approaches that are consistent with this instruction for leadership training would be acceptable. Further this section of the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) links leadership with practical skills upon which parochial life rests that would include schools. Notable in this section is the assumption that there exists a need for continuing and ongoing formation beyond seminary studies, which may provide further support for the approach proposed in phases 3 and 4. Perhaps because of this focus, it is notable that while insisting that leadership formation occur under the pastoral formation pillar, the Program for Priestly Formation (2006) does not seem to embrace or identify a particular leadership model, mode, or expression that resembles what scholars in the study of leadership have identified as transformational leadership (theory), transactional leadership (theory), authentic leadership (model), or Ignatian leadership (expression) (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2009; Burns, 1978; Dinh et al., 2014; Lowney, 2003; Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013). As noted in chapter 2, these four approaches to leadership seemed to align or at a minimum did not seem to conflict with the instruction in the Program for Priestly Formation on leadership training for priests (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).

Phases 3 and 4 seek to directly engage the need for leadership training in the course offering, which include three courses in Catholic school leadership both theory and applied. Consistent with the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) this approach provides priests with preparation in leading consistent with the vision and mission of the Catholic Church along with equipping for the practical needs of the parish ranging from training in finance, human resources, and legal issues. Phase 3 may help address the concern raised by Albert when he noted of leadership preparation at the seminary:

> …and certainly, they were (it was) very minimal. There may have been some experiences in house jobs that would be quasi-leadership training, but nothing comparable at all to what we're having to deal with out (here) as priests.

This approach would counter the experience described by Francis when reflected:

> While I was in seminary, the vision of the priesthood that was presented and articulated was not one as a priest as a leader but rather one who collaborates with others, but not necessarily the one who leads (anything), and so the repeated message that was passed on to me was that don't worry about if you don't know what to do as far as administration or leadership, you can let other people do that.

After noting other preparation for other assignments that involved leadership, Gregory affirmed "…to have a piece in the formation puzzle where there's actually some time dedicated to Catholic schools and a guy can have the opportunity to be in them, I think, would be very beneficial."

Further, phase 3 is intended to engage the issue of filling gaps that might be found in the review called for in phase 2, while also drawing more attention to the need being

addressed in phase 4. Phase 3 is contingent on agreement with the notion that all priests

in formation should receive some form of direct preparation in the Church's emphasis on

and vision for Catholic schools (Miller, 2006; United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops, 2006). While participants were united in the need for direct preparation and

experiences, there were varying positions on where on the continuum of priestly

formation this might occur. Dominic provided a rational for the inclusion of preparation:

> Then that has to be done in seminary, at the seminary time because the comments
>
> and attitude of even the associate, the parochial vicar, will have direct impact on
>
> the school, because the parochial vicar is in the school. The parochial vicar will
>
> be talking to the parents. The parochial vicar will be talking to perspective
>
> parents. The parochial vicar will be encouraging and speaking to the current
>
> teachers.

Gregory observed:

> At least in this diocese, the way that the academic year unfolds, there's a period of
>
> time in January. And I think that could be a helpful piece to give a more formal
>
> period where a man is, during his time of formation, is actually in a school for a
>
> couple weeks, and can experience the different grade levels, have some
>
> conversation with the principal or the pastor, and just how Catholic schools work,
>
> how Catholic education works, and to experience that. Because, for instance, like
>
> me, this was my very first year in a Catholic school.

Francis concluded:

> I want to make a very strong argument for formation in Catholic school leadership
>
> ought not be done at the seminary level (before ordination). It would absolutely

be best, I would say, to have a comprehensive program. One through the

mentorship of their (parochial vicar) first pastor. But that would require training

for these pastors who receive associate. But to not send men to priests who we

know are not gonna be good mentors, who will not show them what a budget

statement looks like, who will actually show up at parish council meetings, school

board meetings, all those things. And then debrief with them…afterwards and

talk about what happened, and why we're doing what we're doing…

Seeking to strike a middle ground between the strengths of these positions, while

engaging themes across all participants in this study, Phases 3 and 4 forecast ways of

engaging existing coursework and experiences offered at the seminary in an almost

introductory way that corresponds to what participants in this study expressed a need for

direct preparation in two core areas of leadership development: (a) purpose of Catholic

education including areas such as mission, vision, and history of Catholic schools; and

(b) nonprofit management including finance, strategic planning, human resources, and

legal issues. The Catholic Church is explicit in the purpose of Catholic education (Miller,

2006; Paul VI, 1975b; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) and in binding

its clergy to support and direct schools (Coriden et al., 1983). The Church, particularly in

the United States, has a history of Catholic schools that is an essential element in

understanding the work of parishes today (DeFiore et al., 2009; Walch, 2016). There

exist core areas where those in leadership have a responsibility to guide and direct that

include supervision, finance, strategic planning, and legal issues. While some of these

core areas of leadership development are common for school principals, there exists a

parallel need for work with priests given their responsibilities for Catholic elementary

schools that will be explored the stakeholder section. The approach proposed in phase 4 is supported by a thematic desire that emerged for more integration and practical engagement with Catholic school leadership. Brendan put it this way "But another area in which I think overall was lacking was sufficient time for reflection, and just to let certain concepts sort of sink in and permeate your entire person."

Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Solution

From the standpoint of organizational systems both the seminary and the diocese most closely resemble closed (hierarchical) authority systems (Burke, 2014; Coriden et al., 1983; Hatch and Cunliffe, 2013; Rogers, 2003). Rogers (2003) observed that leadership (the leader) is the catalyst for an innovation in an organizational authority system. Following this line of thinking, the primary stakeholders that would need to support this solution are the bishop and diocesan administration along with the seminary rector and seminary administration. The solution proposed in this study could be explored and implemented with the support of the bishop and diocesan administration. The phases of the solution were built with this audience in mind and based upon what the researcher has learned from experience working in the professional practice setting. The solution is described with simple and straightforward language that considered existing systems of decision making and levels of staffing. Time and experience in the professional practice setting has taught the researcher that the key decision makers, particularly bishops, appreciate proposals and solutions to challenges that are clear, concise, and grounded in a systematic rational informed by the Catholic Church's wisdom tradition.

If leadership were to consent to the solution proposed in this study, there are three primary areas where direct support and resources would be needed both to aid the solution and impede any obstacles. First, the solution is heavily reliant on the availability and disposition of existing staff for the activities of research, drafting, and assessment. Leadership would need to ensure that staff are fully briefed on the object and goals of the solution and have an opportunity to engage their own views of the importance of providing direct preparation of priests for leadership of Catholic school leadership. Given especially existing demands on an already limited staffing resource it would be important to ensure that they are afforded the time and resources to complete their work. Second, rooted in the description of preparation provided by research participants, the solution was built with contingencies, such as the findings of the review proposed in phase 2, which allow for adjustment and modification of existing course offerings and experiences. While not as intensive as the proposal of new courses in a graduate school program, even the modification of existing course offerings and experiences require a significant investment on the part of leadership in insuring that change is implemented. Finally, the creation of a specialized track or specific training, as proposed in phase 4 would require significant support from diocesan leadership.

Leadership in this organizational system has the means and responsibility to establish and ensure that priests are well prepared for and supported in the responsibilities that they will be assigned to carry out (Coriden et al., 1983; Paul VI, 1965; United States Council of Catholic Bishops, 2006). Leadership has a compelling interest in ensuring that resources are aligned to support the work of Catholic education in the diocese (Benedict, 2008; Coriden et al., 1983; Miller, 2006; Paul VI, 1975b). The competence of

ensuring that priests are adequately prepared for their responsibilities (the work of

preparing priests is entrusted to the seminary) and assigning them to responsibilities that

include leadership of Catholic elementary schools is solely in the hands of diocesan

leadership (Coriden et al., 1983). A product of this study and its findings is the

opportunity of helping diocesan leadership understand the preparation that priests receive

and need for leadership of Catholic elementary schools

      As a leader, the researcher has a keen interest in ensuring that Catholic school

principals are aware of the phases and changes found in this proposed solution.   Catholic

school principals are a key stakeholder that would be directly affected by the

implementation of solution proposed in this study.   The success of a Catholic school is

heavily reliant on the relationship between the principal and pastor (Brock & Fraser,

2001; Schafer, 2004; Weiss, 2007). The training of the Catholic school principal is

distinct from the training that is described in phase 4, which provides the opportunity for

complementarity between the roles rather than redundancy. Catholic school principals

undergo training that is heavily aligned to their responsibilities (Diocese of Omega,

2017b; State Board of School Administrators, 2011). The Catholic school principal is

evaluated by a priest or canonical administrator (Diocese of Omega, 2016). It would

seem particularly important for a Catholic school principal to have a clear understanding

of the specific role and responsibility that a priest has for a Catholic school.

      Clear definition and alignment of roles and responsibilities helps ensure that

leaders can lead and organizations can flourish (Murphy et al., 2017; Naughton, et al.,

2015; Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012). Participants described how the emphasis on self-

mastery and reflective practice (Day, 2000) in the seminary directly contributed to their

preparation for leadership in Catholic elementary schools. This emphasis on reflective

practice may be a point of common ground with school principals. Participants spoke of

their direct experience in the seminary as contributing to their understanding of

differences in roles and responsibilities between the priest and the school principal, which

is underscored by the importance of ensuring that the roles are separate, distinct, and

complimentary (Brock & Fraser, 2001; Schafer, 2004; Schuttloffel, 2007).

An additional factor for consideration is how best to leverage existing offerings at

the Saint Alpha Seminary. Central among these offerings is the teaching parish program,

which was mentioned with frequency by participants. The teaching parish program was

generally a four-year assignment that placed a participant in parish life for an experience

that sounded like mentoring and internship. Participants provided description of the

strengths and gaps in the teaching parish program, while underscoring the role that a

mentor pastor played in their direct preparation through experiences for leadership of

Catholic elementary schools. The potential importance of the teaching parish program in

terms of identification and cultivation of talent is treated in parallel scholarship that

focused on practices in leadership succession planning that relied heavily on two primary

components: the role of a mentor figure and the staging of experiences that allow the

candidate to assume some moderate level of leadership responsibility (Boyle, 2010;

Fitzgerald & Sabatino, 2014). While the solution proposed in phase 4 includes formal

coursework that is enriched by mentoring in Catholic school leadership, it would seem

that a more thorough review of the teaching parish program given the duration of four

years could provide a priest with an extended opportunity to observe and hone leadership

skill.

A key stakeholder in this proposed solution is the Institute for Catholic School Leadership at the Saint Alpha Seminary (2018). The researcher was involved in the initial founding and organization of the Institute for Catholic School Leadership. A primary offering of the Institute for Catholic School Leadership is a 19-credit graduate certificate in Catholic school leadership that can be completed over 14 months. The primary audience for this Institute consists of lay, religious, and priests interested in better preparation for Catholic school leadership (Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018). The focus of the institute is on the formation and training of leaders preparing them to provide a vision of integrated Catholic education. The certificate in Catholic school leadership is directly designed to satisfy what the Program of Priestly Formation identifies as important in leadership training for Catholic priests (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). The foundation of the program's formative method appears to rely on a combination of aspects of the four pillars treated in the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) and Contemplative Leadership Practice (Schuttloffel, 2013). Table 10 below provides a description of the course titles and summaries of courses offered as part of the certificate that are geared toward helping equip and train a leader.

Table 10

Adapted Description of Courses in Catholic School Leadership Certificate

Course Title	Description	Credits
Fundamentals of the Catholic Faith	The course explores the essential elements of the Catholic Faith with a particular focus on familiarization with the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person, call to holiness, pursuit of happiness, and the integral relationship between faith and reason. Participants will hone communication skills to better explain the essential elements treated in the course.	2
Catholic School Leadership I	The course explores Catholic Church's vision and mission of Catholic education and applies the fundamentals of organizational theory and structure. Participants will become familiar with leadership principles and the key responsibilities of Catholic school leaders. Participants will master the theory and practice of strategic planning and propose key performance indicators for school operations.	3
Applied Catholic School Leadership	Through an 'on the job approach' and mentoring, this course integrates theory and practice in the school setting in: academic excellence, organizational management, student achievement, constituent relationships, budgeting, and strategic planning.	2

Table 10 (continued).

The History, Philosophy, and Mission of the Catholic School	This course examines the origins and philosophical principles of Catholic education along with surveying its history, particularly in the United States. Participants will explore the Catholic intellectual tradition and its role in a pluralistic culture. Participants will become more familiar with the key partnerships that help provide success: bishops, pastors, parents, and teachers.	3
Non-Profit Leadership for Catholic School Leaders	This course explores various dimensions of non-profit leadership that intersect with Catholic schools including: non-profit school finance, advancement oversight, human resources, resource management, board management, marketing and communications strategies, and enrollment management.	3
Catholic Schools and the Law	This course examines the application of canonical and civil laws in Catholic schools. Participants will explore how to handle topics such as conflict resolution and personnel issues in a consistent and sound manner.	3
Catholic School Leadership II	This course provides experience and best practice in classroom management, parent management, foster a culture of continuous improvement, sustain a learning environment rooted in the Church's mission and vision for Catholic education and maintenance of a high-quality faculty.	3

Note. Table is adapted from the course descriptions of the Certificate in Catholic School Leadership, Saint Alpha Seminary, 2018.

Potential Barriers and Obstacles to Proposed Solution

Barriers to the proposed solution within the professional practice setting are considerable, while at the same time the hierarchical structure of the Diocese of Omega supplies the potential for change and uniform adoption of the solution. Potential barriers would be different for each of the four proposed phases of the solution.

The first two phases of the solution are heavily reliant on existing staff, which underscores the importance that leadership of the diocese are willing to allocate the resources. Staff would need to understand that leadership fully embrace and expect that the phases of the solution would be implemented. Leadership would need to request regular updates on progress. In Phase 3, which depending on the findings of the audit of preparation for Catholic school leadership, there may exist a need for modification of existing course offerings or at minimum the emphasis of particular topics within existing courses, may present considerable resistance. It is of note that there exist fairly straightforward examples from the study that highlight how greater alignment of coursework with an objective about Catholic education might be accomplished without creating new coursework. Participants, for example, noted that they took a course in Canon Law, however they also offered that the course did not engage the sections of the Code that treat Catholic education and schools. Several participants observed that they took a survey course on documents of the Second Vatican Council, but noted that the single document on Catholic education, Gravissimum Educationis (Paul VI, 1975b), which lays out the Catholic Church's vision for schools, received no review or mention. The seminary is an accredited institution and subject to various levels of state regulation related to coursework and degree programs. The seminary dean would be best positioned to decide where there is room to modify existing courses and where aspects of phase 3 may require a more formal process relative to the norms of the accrediting body. Resistance in the faculty would likely be inversely proportionate to the insistence of seminary leadership on change.

Phase 4 may present significant challenges for adoption given the assumption that the diocese has an interest in providing post graduate specialized training for clergy, which today typically only exists in the professional practice setting when associated with particular roles. For priests serving in the diocesan tribunal as judges there is what appears to be an informal track that exists leading to specialized training and competence in Canon Law. For priests serving in seminary roles that include faculty appointments or those assigned to faculty roles at colleges or universities there is an informal track for terminal degrees in various disciplines from sacred theology to literature. For priests serving in a military chaplaincy there appears to be a modification of assignment allowing them to participate in training, exercises, and deployments. While there presently does not appear to be a track that includes additional graduate study for priests assigned to pastorates, there is what appears to be an informal observance that a priest will serve two three-year terms as a parochial vicar at two different parishes under a pastor. While there are these informal tracks of specialization in the professional practice setting, phase 4, which asserts that a priest would complete a certificate program in Catholic school leadership prior to assignment as pastor of a parish with a school is a novel notion in the creation of a formal prerequisite.

Financial/Budget Issues Related to Proposed Solution

Potential costs associated with the proposed solution correspond to each of the four phases. Costs would be the responsibility of either the diocese or the seminary relative to involvement in each phase. Recognizing that both the seminary and the diocese have finite resources, the first three phases of the solution are highly reliant on existing staff. Even the allocation of existing staff to new tasked activity carries with it

some uncaptured expense, which could be forecast by the finance office of the respective

organizations. Phase 4 of the solution carries with it a fixed cost for a priest's

participation that is determined by the seminary. Beyond this fixed cost is an

undetermined expense for the administrative work of identifying and processing potential

candidates for the specialized track. Compensation for priests is fixed according to a

scale set by the diocese. Care would need to be taken to ensure that participation in

graduate studies does not present a financial hardship for priests.

   Table 11 summarizes the activity associated with each phase in the proposed

solution along with the rational for calculation of costs. There are intangible expenses,

which are not accounted for in this proposal. For example, if a priest participates in the

Catholic school leadership program the candidate will spend ten weeks over two years in

classroom studies, which is a potential loss of time in their assignment at a parish or

institution. It is unclear whether these calculations of intangible expenses are ever

completed by the diocese or parishes where priests are assigned.

Table 11

Illustration of Rational and Potential Costs Associated with Solution

Phase	Description of Activity	Funding Responsibility	Cost
1	Staff align roles, responsibilities, and organizational chart	Diocese	Determined by diocesan finance office allocation formula for time and resource

Table 11 (continued).

2	Staff conduct audit of existing preparation and analyze findings	Diocesan and Seminary	Determined by diocesan finance office allocation for time and resources
3	Staff modify existing preparation for seminarians based upon findings from audit (if applicable)	Seminary	Determined by seminary finance office according to formula for time and resources; may require the addition of faculty
4	Participation in Catholic school leadership certificate program for specialization of priests	Diocese	Following costs set by seminary for participation in Catholic school leadership certificate: $28,000 per participant

Assuming leadership's decision to proceed with adoption of the proposed

solution, a time study would need to be completed in order to understand how best to

allocate existing staff resources for completion of the first three phases.   In the seminary

and the diocese, both the decision to proceed with a time study and the decision to

allocate staff resources rests respectively with the bishop or rector given the hierarchical

structure of the organization. When approaching phase 4 of the solution, the costs of

implementing a specialized track for preparation of priests for leadership of Catholic

elementary schools would require a considerable and ongoing investment of resources.

Funding of priestly formation and training is ordinarily born by their respective diocese.

A possible budgetary source for participants would likely be the ongoing clergy

formation fund for the Diocese of Omega, which would require the consent of the bishop.

A further consideration that may be part of a cost-benefit analysis relates to the value of

investing in training priests. It is notable that the retirement age for clergy is 70 years old

and based upon the assumption that a priest would have likely have completed the phase

4 training by age 35 it is reasonable to state that the training benefit would be realized by

up to 35 years. Requests for funding would need to follow the ordinary budgeting cycle,

which creates a lag of at least one fiscal year between the decision to adopt the solution

and the enrollment of candidates in the Catholic school leadership certificate (Phase 4).

Legal Issues Related to Proposed Solution

The proposed solution is a set for recommendations that involves the modification

of existing coursework, policy, and procedure. There exist no foreseeable legal issues or

challenges in the proposed solution. Given the level of responsibility that a priest in the

Diocese of Omega bears for a Catholic elementary school the recommended coursework

and training may provide a tangible benefit in improved competency in the leadership

and management of the corporation, which in turn has the potential of influencing the

outcome of school issues that have the potency for litigation (human resources, finance,

etc.). Legal review in the professional practice setting would be triggered if the solution

amendment or creation of diocesan policy or norms. The process of legal review would

produce a memo from diocesan counsel for the bishop identifying particular concerns that

would require remedy prior to implementation of the proposal.

Change Theory

The proposed solution is an innovation that would require adoption by an

organization. Both the seminary and the diocese fit Rogers (2003) description an

authority organization (Coriden et al., 1983). In an authority organization an innovation-decision is made requiring agreement by the individual or select group of individual responsible for an organization (2003). Through the adoption of this proposed solution organizational change is realized through the creation of a new way(s) of preparing priests for school leadership. Following the thinking of Rogers (2003), and integral in the ordering of the phases included in the proposed solution, Table 12 illustrates a process that the diocese and seminary might follow to ensure adoption of the solution:

Table 12

Change Process in an Authority Organization Relative to Proposed Solution

1	2		3	4	5
Agenda-Setting	Match	D E C I S I O N T O P R O C E E D	Redefine/Restructure	Clarify	Routinize
Leader identifies organizational challenges that may require a change	Leadership connects the organizational challenge with the change		Organizational structures are altered and modifications are made	Link is drawn between the organization and the change	The change become normalized in the organization
Diocese identifies or confirms gaps in preparation of priests for leadership of Catholic elementary schools	Diocese recognizes the proposed solution (four phases) as a way of helping ensure priests are prepared for responsibility of Catholic school leadership		Diocese ensures that the organization understands and implements the four phases of the proposed solution including requesting the participation of the seminary in the areas identified in the proposed solution	Priests receive updated descriptions of their roles and responsibilities for leadership of Catholic elementary schools and opportunities for preparation	Priests benefit from direct preparation for Catholic school leadership during seminary studies and opportunity for a track that would prepare them for responsibilities that include Catholic school leadership

Note. Adapted from the "Five Stages in the Innovation Process in Organizations" by Rogers, 2003, p. 421.

Implementation of the Proposed Solution

This section will explore considerations that may influence successful adoption and implementation of the solution proposed as a result of this study. At the core of implementation is an effort to ensure the progress toward adoption is guided by a plan for assessment that is clear, adjustable based upon changing conditions, and reflective of the distinct phases. The plan for proposed implementation relies upon support for the solution that begins with the perspective of those in leadership roles in the organization.

Implementation and Assessment

The proposed implementation and assessment plan exhibited in Table 13 reflects the researcher's judgment of implementation feasibility for the professional practice setting relative to staffing levels and work flow. The table draws into relationship the primary and contingent factors along with decisions that would likely contribute to implementation and assessment. It is possible, particularly with phase 3, that the timeline for implementation could be extended given the need for collaboration between the diocese and seminary. The formation of a study committee called for in phase 2 could considerably expedite the change process through the creation of a clear and consistent channel of communication and action between the diocese and seminary. Portions of this plan are designed to go into effect following a decision by leadership to proceed with the organizational change (Table 12). Included in Table 13 is a proposed timeline for implementation.

Table 13

Plan for Implementation and Assessment of Solution by Phase

Factors	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Reliance	Support of Bishop	Support of Bishop and Rector	Support of Bishop and Rector	Support of Bishop
Responsible Organization	Diocese	Diocese and Seminary	Diocese and Seminary	Diocese
Summary of Actions	Following their processes staff research and develop organizational leadership tools: roles, responsibilities, and organizational chart	Diocesan staff prepare an review document designed to verify preparation at the seminary that directly prepares priests for Catholic schools	Seminary staff modify existing coursework and experiences incorporating elements and sources of direct preparation for Catholic school leadership	Leadership authors norm requiring additional preparation for roles that involve Catholic school leadership; identifies Catholic school leadership certificate as the primary means of meeting the norms
Group Served by the Change	Existing and future priests	Existing and future priests	Seminarians and future priests	Existing and future priests
Evidence of Implementation	Drafted and disseminated organizational leadership tools; sharing with leadership of respective organizations	Completion of review and sharing of the results with leadership of respective organizations	Course outlines and descriptions of experiences that emphasize direct preparation for Catholic school leadership	Promulgation of norms requiring additional preparation for future pastors and canonical administrators of Catholic schools

Table 13 (continued).

Means of Assessment	Staff interviews with priests to verify if organizational tools match with their experience and need	Review will have shown any content gaps in direct preparation of priests for leadership of Catholic elementary schools	Modifications of existing coursework and experiences will address gaps found in the review	Norms are promulgated and priests are interviewed following completion of leadership
Estimated time from initiation to completion of phase	Approximately six months from point of initiation to publication	Partially contingent on phase 1; Approximately one year to review of findings	Contingent on results of phase 2; project in upwards of 2 academic years for any modification of existing program of preparation	Partially contingent on phase 1 and 2 for validation of needs; roughly six months for norms stipulating requisite preparation and one academic year before initial group of parochial vicars begin

Building Support for The Proposed Solution

The plan for implementation and assessment would benefit from a strategy that seeks to actively build support for the proposed solution. This study found a nearly uniform interest and openness across the 20 participants in the opportunity for improved preparation for leadership of Catholic elementary schools, which is a strong indication of how a change might be received by other priests ordained since 2006 in the Diocese of Omega. It is difficult to estimate how priests in the broader population might respond to the proposed solution, however there exist avenues for diocesan leadership to test interest and resistance including two stable groups: the presbyteral council and the college of

consultors. Neither of these groups decide issues related to the preparation of priests, but their role in consultation and advice is extensive and meaningful (Coriden et al., 1983).

The challenges that accompany the work of leading Catholic elementary schools were a source of considerable discussion in the past (Diocese of Omega, 2017c). While there is not a precise way to know where objections might rest in diocesan or seminary staff, concerns could likely be met by a presentation of the challenges facing priests in their role of leadership and inviting staff to reflect on their own understanding of the adequacy of preparation. Keeping the message focused on sparing no effort to help ensure that priests have access to preparation and resources that will help them succeed, and in turn help the organizations they lead flourish, would likely be a message that would help unite stakeholders. This could be accomplished through the thoughtful construction of a joint strategic communications plan for the diocese and seminary that would guide how messaging around the solution and phases would help priests and other stakeholders understand the goal.

Implications

This section explores potential implications of this study and the proposed solution from a number of perspectives. The researcher attempted to look first at practical implications for the professional practice setting before turning to consider potential implications for future research and concluded with reflections on how this study may relate to leadership theory and practice.

Practical Implications

This Dissertation in Practice study identified significant gaps in the adequacy of preparation that 20 priests in the Diocese of Omega received for leadership of Catholic

elementary schools. Exploration of the adequacy of preparation and illustration of needs for future preparation programs has the potential for both short- and long-term practical implications.

The gaps in preparation noted by participants provides a clear framework for addressing practical implications. Given the key leadership role that priests provide in Catholic elementary schools, efforts to bolster and improve preparation may have a direct practical benefit for Catholic schools in a number of ways. First, improvement in the preparation of those in roles of supervision and performance evaluation should help support and direct the work of those who report directly to priests, particularly Catholic school principals (Schafer, 2004). Second, the dimensions of the proposed solution that ground priests in a clear understanding of the vision, philosophy, and history of Catholic education will help priests in their work of explaining the purpose and goals of Catholic education (Miller, 2006; Schuttloffel, 2012). Third, the part of the proposed solution that called for drafting a clear set of roles, responsibilities, and organizational diagram capturing the work of priests that reflects good organizational practice (Bryson, 2004; Hobbie et al., 2010). Consequently, the proposed solution, particularly the dimension that treats the creation of tracks of specialization, may help better match priests interested in Catholic school leadership with training and preparation proportionate to their responsibilities (Boyle, 2010; Caravan, 2001).

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study were consistent with other studies that have explored the preparation of priests for Catholic school leadership (Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Simonds et al., 2017) and may provide avenues for future scholarship. A particular area of focus

within this possible avenue for study might include the suggestion made by participants that some form of track or route be established for priests and a diocese might discern priestly service that would involve Catholic school leadership. Future studies could explore how priests are prepared for (general) leadership through any number of methodological approaches including phenomenology, ethnography and case study. Scholarship could directly examine the Program of Priestly Formation as a possible model of leadership preparation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), which could be explored by way of a grounded theory or case study approach engaging with seminary faculty and administration. A methodological approach could be adapted to work on a longitudinal design that examines the efficacy of the preparation program proposed in the phase 4 of this study looking particularly at the quality of leadership provided for Catholic schools. Another potentially meaningful avenue for future research might include a study that examined the perceptions of Catholic elementary school principals of the preparation and readiness of priests for Catholic school leadership. The design for a study of principals might follow a number of possible methods and a phenomenology or ethnography may be well suited.

A theme in this study that did not rise to the level of treatment due to its direct relevancy was the frequency with which participants stated their belief that attendance of a Catholic school (elementary and secondary) had some effect on the way that priests viewed the Catholic schools. Eleven of 20 participants noted what Cyril summarized when he noted:

> …we need to get priests to realize the value of Catholic schools, because a lot of the men entering formation right now, they're either home schooled or they go to

public school, we have very few men who have actually been in parochial

schools, in formation right now.

This statement is contrasted with an observation made by a participant that:

Those (seminarians and priests) who have gone to Catholic schools have a lot of

anger towards what they haven't been given in their Catholic education. That the

schools that they went to --particularly if they went to a Catholic high school--

that they were not given a Catholic education.

A study of priests examining a relationship between the attendance of Catholic schools

and views on Catholic education may provide deeper and important insight.

While this study focused on a single diocese, and centered on the preparation

provided by a single seminary, the basic elements of this phenomenological design may

be directly applicable in other dioceses as a means of understanding how priests are

prepared for Catholic school leadership. Gaps in literature specific to the professional

practice setting, particularly around the formation of Catholic priests, presented a real

obstacle to advance knowledge and understanding in the field of Catholic education.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

A bias that was forthrightly acknowledged in the design of this study is the

researcher's leadership role in the professional practice setting. The better part of 15

years was spent as the president of a private Catholic school and in diocesan

administration combined with extensive graduate education in leadership related fields.

Despite both experience and education in school leadership, the researcher was

astonished to discover through this study a stark reminder of the importance of sound

fundamental leadership preparation by coming into contact with a study population that

was assigned to leadership roles without the benefit of preparation for many of the predictive challenges they would have to face. Priests by training are practitioners of reflective practice, which seems to have contributed to the length and depth of their responses to questions in this study.

The Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) highlights the importance of leadership development for priests placing particular emphasis on a leadership approach that results in action (movement) accomplished by a community through the direction of a leader rooted in a common vision (spiritual initiatives). This goal of leadership found in the Program of Priestly Formation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006), provided a way to explore a possible link with the study of leadership. In the study of leadership, theories and models are heavily supported and underscored by research and literature (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013; Northouse, 2018). The researcher attempted through a phenomenological approach to catch a glimpse of how leadership formation occurred. The researcher paid particular attention to the application of the study of leadership (Northouse, 2018) through

- the transactional and transformative leadership theories (Burke, 2014; Burns, 1978; Odumeru & Ifeanyi 2013),

- the authentic leadership model (Avolio et al., 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2008),

- an Ignatian leadership expression (Lowney, 2003), and

- a public model for principals (State R. § 3512.0510, 2017; State Board of Administrators, 2018).

Participants did link the leadership of priests to the work of evangelization, thus indirectly drawing a link between their seminary preparation for evangelization as a means of leadership (Francis, 2013; Miller, 2006; Paul VI, 1975a). Through reflection on the participants' definition and description of leadership it became more apparent that they did not identify any particular theory, model, or expression as the definitive means of leadership preparation at the seminary.

It is the position of the researcher that this study, ultimately, affirms the need for the Diocese of Omega, and perhaps the Catholic Church by extension, for the sake of its priests and those they serve, to arrive at a coherent and sound model and praxis for leadership that is moored by its anthropological and theological tradition (Convery et al., 2014; Habiger Institute for Catholic Leadership, 2015; Ippolito et al. 2008; Schuttloffel, 2013). The researcher expected to find an explicit approach to leadership that was taught and modeled for priests during their experience of seminary studies that would have minimally been translatable as a means of preparation for leadership of Catholic elementary schools. In the reflection of participants on their preparation for Catholic school leadership, the researcher caught glimpses of leadership theories, models, and expressions (Northouse, 2018).

Almost universally, participants described their view of how a priest leads in terms that bore striking similarity to Lowney's (2003) description of leadership as being first and foremost rooted in love for others. Participants spoke about a priest's starting point for leadership in language that resembled an expression of Ignatian leadership through what sounded like cura personalis (deep care of the person) and what it is to live for and with others (Fleming, 2008; Geger, 2014; O'Malley, 1993). While replete with

religious language that seemed to speak from a personal sense of mission about leadership, participants often described the leader's relationship to and effectiveness with followers in terms that rang of the authentic leadership model's emphasis on maintaining a set of (ethical) standards and relying on honesty (Crippen, 2012; Puls et al., 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2008;). Regularly, participants references to leadership seemed to follow divergent paths between those who described the leadership of a priest as bearing responsibility for incremental and gradual change in their respective organizations, which sounded like transactional leadership theory, and those priests that echoed sentiments that appeared to resemble transformational leadership theory with subscribers who described their role as bringing revolutionary change to difficult parish and school situations (Burke, 2014; Burns, 1978; Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013).

Common among the participants appeared to be an implicit understanding of some connection between leadership and reflection (reflective practice), which may provide a starting point for future work on a leadership model for priests in the Diocese of Omega (Corio et al., 2014; Day, 2000; Malthouse et al., 2015). These somewhat discordant glimpses of how priests are prepared for leadership in a Catholic elementary school neither describe any single model or theory of leadership nor do they have direct global implications for leadership theory. These findings may underscore the need for a more united and coherent framework for teaching and forming leaders in the Diocese of Omega, which if this proposed solution is effective will help inform future leadership practice.

Summary of the Study

Parish priests in the Diocese of Omega are responsible for leadership of Catholic elementary schools. Priests of the Diocese of Omega are prepared for their responsibilities by the local seminary. The curricular program at the local seminary conforms to the Program of Priestly Formation mandated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2006). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological dissertation in practice study was to gain a better understanding of the preparation clergy need to be able to take on the leadership of a Catholic elementary school. The aim of this study was to gain insight into what is needed to adequately prepare priests for leadership of Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega, and based on this knowledge and their insight, provide evidence-based recommendations that may help improve the experience of preparation.

Priests reported scant direct or indirect preparation for leadership roles in Catholic elementary schools. Analysis of and reflection on semistructured qualitative interviews with 20 priest participants led the researcher to recommend a four-phase solution grounded in the findings of this study. The proposed solution relies on a series of interrelated actions starting with basic organizational planning through an exercise that involves the written clarification and codification of the leadership roles and responsibilities of priests for Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Omega. Following the clarification of responsibilities, Phase 2 calls for a basic subject matter audit of the curriculum of the local seminary with a focus on identifying where preparation occurs for school leadership roles. Based upon the findings of the audit of curricular offerings, Phase 3 identifies subject matter areas identified as important

preparation by study participants and proposes how these areas of direct preparation might be aligned with existing coursework that may be beneficial for all priests. Finally, Phase 4 lays out the framework for a specialized track for future priests who discern an interest in serving in roles that include Catholic school leadership.

Given the hierarchical and closed nature of both the seminary and diocesan organizational system (Bryson, 2004, Burke, 2014), implementation of the proposed solution is principally reliant upon the interest and adoption of the respective organization's leadership (Rogers, 2003). The interest of the organization's leadership in the proposed solution is likely proportionate to how clearly they understand and have confidence in the direct preparation of clergy they assign and appoint to roles that involve leadership of Catholic elementary schools. Evaluation of the first three phases of the plan have elements that are objectively verifiable insofar as documents, processes, and explanations of responsibilities and preparation will exist. Evaluation of Phase 4 would likely require a more longitudinal approach looking at the relationship between participant's completion of the proposed preparation program and performance in leadership roles.

This study contributes to the greater good chiefly in possible two ways. First, while this proposed solution is grounded in findings gathered from one diocese in a single state in the United States, there may be aspects of the solution that are transferrable to other dioceses where priests are in roles that require leadership of Catholic elementary schools. While relying on complex meanings provided by participants in the study along with the significant scholarship in parallel fields, the phases of the solution are purposefully built in a practical manner that would allow those in similar professional

practice settings to experience some ease in adaptation and adoption. Second, quality

programs in Catholic schools are reliant on good leadership, which is the result of sound

preparation (Boyle, 2010; Cook & Durow, 2008). Improved preparation of priests for

their pivotal role in leadership of Catholic elementary schools has the potential of

transforming the leadership situation and thereby the quality of programs in 79

elementary schools that are home to over 18,000 students. These findings drove the

development of recommendations focused on ensuring that clergy have access to

adequate and necessary preparation for leadership of Catholic elementary schools.

Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam!

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Introduction

The interview protocol will begin with an introductory dialogue that is intended to help orient the participant to the purpose and extent of their participation in the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Following the introductory dialogue, the researcher will utilize an ordered set of questions in a semi-structured interview format divided into three stages that correspond to a phenomenological interview design (Bevan, 2014).

Contextualization Stage of the Interview (Bevan, 2014):

1. What year were you ordained a priest? Where did you complete seminary studies?

2. Are you or have you been assigned to a role that involved leadership of a Catholic school? If so, please describe.

3. Prior to study at the seminary did you train or have experience in school leadership? If so, please describe.

Apprehension Stage of the Interview (Bevan, 2014):

1. Please describe your view of what Catholic school leadership is?

2. Specifically, how does a priest lead in a Catholic school?

3. What is Catholic school leadership?

4. Tell me about your preparation for Catholic school leadership:

   a. Please describe a specific example of a way or ways that the seminary prepared you for leadership in a Catholic school?

   b. Please describe any specific courses that focused on Catholic schools?

   c. Please describe any specific experiences in seminary that focused on Catholic schools?

5. Was there other preparation that you received through the seminary that has equipped you for leadership in Catholic education? Perhaps other coursework or experiences that are relatable? Please describe.

Clarification Stage of the Interview (Bevan 2014):

1. Do you have any insights into areas of training or preparation for Catholic school leadership that might help priests in their responsibilities?

   a. Did you experience any preparation in the mission, vision, history or purpose of Catholic education? If so, please describe.

   b. Did you experience any preparation in non-profit management such as strategic planning, marketing, enrollment, or advancement efforts? If so, please describe.

   c. When should this preparation occur?

2. If you are in school leadership, would you want to stay?

   a. If you are not, would you want to move into school leadership?

Appendix B

Participant Invitation

(Date)
Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research study on the preparation of clergy for Catholic school leadership in ████████████████████████████████. Catholic school leadership is often among the particular responsibilities of priests in ██ ████████ with the pastor or canonical administrator serving as the de facto superintendent of parochial and regional Catholic schools.

Participation in this study is limited those who were ordained priests for the ████ ████████ ████████ since 2006 and completed studies at the Saint ████ ████████████████████). I am working towards completion of doctoral studies. This research represents partial completion of the Doctorate in Education at Creighton University (Omaha, Nebraska).

Participation in this study is voluntary and confidential. If you agree to participate in this study, I will conduct a personal interview with you at your office. Completion of the interview will take between 60 and 75 minutes. During that time, I will ask a series of interview questions centered on exploring your preparation for Catholic school leadership. If you permit, I will record the interview electronically for transcription purposes. Your responses in the interview will remain confidential and any information that might compromise your individual identity will not be included in the study. Records related to this study will be kept private and recordings will be destroyed after transcripts are generated (within three months). As participation in the study is voluntary, you may skip any question that you do not want to answer and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Beyond those risks encountered in day-to-day life, I am not aware of any risks for your participation in this study. Participation in the study will not provide you with any benefit or compensation. If there is a beneficiary of the study it will be Catholic education in the ████████████████████████████. The study has the potential of identifying concrete ways to help ensure priests have access to quality preparation and training for the essential leadership role they provide in Catholic elementary schools.

If you have questions resulting from this invitation, please feel at ease in contacting my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Britt Watwood (contact). If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the IRB Compliance Office at Creighton University (Telephone: 1-402-280-2680). Contact with the IRB Compliance Office will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your consideration of this invitation to participate in this study and I hope to see you soon.

Respectfully,

Jason E. Slattery

Appendix C

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.

2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.

3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.

4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.

5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.

6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.

7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.

8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:

   a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.

To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

Appendix D

Letter from the Diocese to Potential Participants in the Study

March 23, 2018

Reverend Fathers,

Peace in Christ be with You.

I am writing to advise you of a qualitative research study that will be conducted in the ▮▮▮▮ of ▮▮▮▮▮▮ during the summer and autumn of 2018. The study will examine the preparation of clergy for leadership in Catholic education from their perspective. Participation in this study will be open to clergy of the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. Participation in this study will be voluntary and confidential.

This research study is the final part of a dissertation for Creighton University (Omaha) being carried out by Jason Slattery. ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ fo ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ It is important to note that Jason will neither be conducting this study as part of his duties for the ▮▮▮▮ nor will his research be subject to review by the ▮▮▮▮ prior to completion.

Please direct any questions about the study to Jason Slattery at jasonslattery@creighton.edu or his academic dissertation chair, Dr Britt Watwood at w.watwood@creighton.edu.

Thank you for your commitment to our work of Catholic education.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

/ask

Appendix E

Acknowledgement of Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.
2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.
4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.
5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.
6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.
7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.
9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
    a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
10. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

I have read and acknowledge receipt of the Bill of Rights for Research Participants:

_____

Print and Sign

_____

Date

Appendix F

Institutional Review Board Approval

Creighton
U N I V E R S I T Y

Institutional Review Board
2500 California Plaza • Omaha, Nebraska 68178
phone: 402.280.2126 • fax: 402.280.4766 • email:
irb@creighton.edu

DATE: July 6, 2018

TO: Jason Slattery
FROM: Creighton University IRB-02 Social Behavioral

PROJECT TITLE: [1286523-1] Dissertation in Practice: Clergy Preparation for Catholic School
                   Leadership in a Midwestern Diocese
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: July 6, 2018

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The following items were
reviewed in this submission:

- Abstract/Summary - JSlattery402 Application for Determination of Exempt Status Observation,
  Survey, Interview .doc (UPDATED: 06/27/2018)
- Advertisement - IRBInvitationLetter.docx (UPDATED: 06/27/2018)
- Creighton - IRB Application Form - Creighton - IRB Application Form (UPDATED: 06/30/2018)
- Letter - IRBLetterfromArchdiocese.docx (UPDATED: 06/27/2018)
- Protocol - IRBInterviewProtocolandParticipantBillofRights.docx (UPDATED: 06/27/2018)

This project has been determined to be exempt from Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects as
per 45CFR46.101 (b) 2.

All protocol amendments and changes are to be submitted to the IRB and may not be implemented until
approved by the IRB. Please use the modification form when submitting changes.

If you have any questions, please contact Christine Scheuring at 402-280-3364 or
christinescheuring@creighton.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all
correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Creighton
University IRB-02 Social Behavioral's records.