

A Framework for Sustainable Leadership in Broken Bay Catholic Schools Br Tony Whelan, Dr Michael Slattery, Dr Helen Cannon

Introduction

Leaders in Catholic education, like leaders everywhere, face challenges that result from a new socio-political and cultural context, characterised by extreme pluralism, profound technical innovation and globalisation. Leaders need a repertoire of skills that includes: articulating, negotiating and creating a realistic vision; enabling others in the organisation to be part of the vision, share leadership and to act autonomously and with confidence; challenging the status quo and taking risks; being authentic and credible; and building organisations that are generative and based on trust and ethical relationships.

Layered over and through the challenges faced by all leaders, however, are some challenges that impact on leadership particularly because of our Catholic context. In addition to the usual challenges of leadership required of any leader, the Catholic school leader has the extra challenge of leading a faith community in a time of profound change within the Church. Some of the changes that are influencing Catholic schools include: the move from religious to lay leadership; a crisis of values in society; a growing marginalisation of the Christian faith as a reference point; and the decline in participation in worshipping communities.

This leadership framework has been designed to assist all those in leadership in Broken Bay to operate as effective agents of the Church's mission in education, to provide leaders with clarity about the mission and purpose of Catholic schools and to assist leaders to build a strong Catholic culture that is at home both in the Catholic tradition and the challenges presented by its contemporary expression. The framework has been designed support a model of contemporary Catholic leadership that is visionary, hope-filled, transformative and committed to building and sustaining authentic relationships.

Frameworks for Leadership

Many organisations already use frameworks that have been developed for educational leaders, for example, *Standards Framework for Leaders* (Education Queensland, 1997); *Catholic Schools Leadership Framework* (Catholic Education office, Sydney, 1998);

National Framework of Competencies for School Leaders (Australian principals associations professional Development Council, 2000). Most of these are performance standards frameworks which attempt to identify the key competencies required within a given role. Emerging research, however, suggests that the complexity of leadership calls for something beyond a generic set of competencies.

Stephenson (2000) argues for a clear distinction between 'competency' and 'capability' in leadership development. He believes that:

Competency is about delivering the present based on past performance; capability is about imaging the future and bringing it about. Competency is about control; capability is about learning and development. Competency is about fitness for (usually other people's) purpose; capability is about judging fitness of the purpose itself (p4).

Writers such as Stephenson have argued that the uncertainty and complexity of the work of leaders requires an artistry that is unlikely to emerge from the acquisition of a set of generic competences. Leaders are more likely to face unfamiliar problems and unfamiliar contexts and this reality requires use of leadership capabilities.

Stephenson (1992 p.1) maintains that "capability depends much more on our confidence that we can effectively use and develop our skills in complex and changing circumstances than in our mere possession of these skills". He defines the concept of capability as:

An all round human quality, an *integration* of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding *used appropriately and effectively* – not just in familiar and highly focused specialist contexts but in response to *new and changing* circumstances (Stephenson, 2000, p2 – italics in original).

The assumption underpinning the concept of capability is that leaders not only need to be competent at their jobs, but they also need to be capable human beings who can use their skills and competencies confidently, logically, and with good judgement and wisdom. Some of these key capabilities are emotional maturity, practical wisdom, passion and courage, collaborative commitment, contextual awareness, change mastery and discipleship. Leadership capabilities include a combination of attributes, qualities, skills and knowledge that enable a person to perform to a high standard in new and changing circumstances (Spry, 2004; Duignan and Marks, 2003; Duignan, 2006). Given the complexity of the work of leaders and the changing context in which schools must

operate, a contemporary leadership framework needs to be based on an in-depth understanding of human nature and of the values, ethics, and moral dimensions inherent in human interaction and choice.

The Broken Bay Framework for Sustainable Leadership

The Broken Bay Framework was developed as a result of a two-year consultative process across the diocese that involved principals, assistant principals, religious education coordinators and middle leaders. A *Framework for Leadership in Queensland Catholic Schools* (Spry, 2004) was used as the basis for the initial discussion. This document was chosen because it attempted to combine competencies and capabilities in a framework for leadership development. Leaders in Broken Bay had already expressed a preference for a comprehensive framework that was more representative of the work of leaders than a narrow, competency-based framework.

Using the Queensland Framework as the starting point, diocesan leaders embarked on a series of seminars and workshops to find the words and structure that would best express diocesan beliefs about leadership. Opportunities for reflection, critique and robust discussion were facilitated over a two-year period. The Queensland Framework was progressively modified and refined to reflect the growth in thinking and wisdom of the school leaders. This process occurred with advice from Dr Gail Spry from the Australian Catholic University who led the development of the Queensland framework. Leaders were committed to the project and agreed that ultimately the framework should underpin not only their formation and professional learning, but also their position descriptions, performance appraisal and contract renewal processes. Such sweeping changes demanded time, resources and authentic partnerships across all levels of leadership within the diocese. What emerged from this lengthy, dynamic, challenging process was *The Broken Bay Framework for Sustainable Leadership* which is described in more detail in the following sections.

The Purpose of the Framework

Leaders in schools require preparation and ongoing support that goes beyond competency training to broader frameworks that support the development of leadership capabilities. The Framework for Sustainable Leadership in Broken Bay Catholic Schools

attempts to combine the competencies required of leaders along with the capabilities necessary to lead school communities in complex and changing circumstances. Capable leaders can use their skills and competencies confidently, logically, and with good judgement and wisdom. The Broken Bay Framework supports leaders to be formed, informed and transformed.

A Description of the Framework

The framework is divided into five domains of leadership, namely, religious leadership, educational leadership, human resources leadership, organizational leadership and collaborative leadership. These domains represent the competencies required of leaders. The mission, personal, relational and professional capabilities are in the centre to demonstrate the centrality of capabilities to leadership and to demonstrate the way in which capabilities and competencies come together in wise leaders.

The domains and capabilities and underpinned by a Catholic Worldview and the diocesan commitments to pastoral care and evangelisation surround the diagram.



Figure 1: The Broken Bay Framework for sustainable Leadership

The Five Domains of Leadership

The five domains are populated with the leadership competencies related to each particular domain. The competencies for each domain are listed below:

Religious Leadership

Leaders ensure that primacy is given to evangelisation and faith formation in an authentic Catholic community by:

- promoting the mission of the contemporary Catholic Church
- giving witness to the Gospel
- fostering the spiritual life of the school community
- providing leadership in the religious education curriculum
- making the religious dimension explicit in all facets of school life
- promoting parish/school/parent partnerships
- giving leadership to ritual/celebration/liturgy/prayer/retreat programs
- ensuring a strong sacramental life
- implementing pastoral care policies and programs
- facilitating service to the broader community
- building religious leadership density.

Educational Leadership

Leaders ensure the existence of an optimum learning environment that provides for outcomes in curriculum, quality teaching and learning, assessment and co-curriculum activities by:

- promoting deep and broad learning for all in relationships of care for others
- developing and promoting an educational vision
- ensuring student learning outcomes are promoted and advanced
- fostering cohesive diversity in teaching and learning
- developing and implementing a balanced curriculum
- building on the past to create a better future
- facilitating effective teaching practice
- ensuring appropriate assessment and reporting processes
- facilitating the management of learning resources
- developing the school as an authentic professional learning community.

Human Resources Leadership

Leaders develop positive employer/employee relationships, promote a collaborative culture and build a sustainable future by:

- developing recruitment and selection processes based on clear criteria, appropriate involvement of stakeholders, and diocesan requirements
- deploying, managing and supervising staff to ensure optimum delivery of services to students
- managing workplace practices including compliance with industrial instruments
- developing effective orientation and induction programs for new staff
- ensuring all requirements of the Institute of Teachers are met
- implementing performance appraisal processes
- advancing succession planning initiatives at all levels
- renewing people's energy, trust and confidence

Organisational Leadership

Leaders develop a strategic vision that includes wise stewardship of resources, implementation of efficient and effective administration practices and accountability for legal and policy requirements by:

- developing and implementing, in collaboration with the school community, strategic and annual plans
- adhering to legal, statutory and school system requirements
- ensuring protocols and systems are in place for the management, security, retention and storage of records
- ensuring effective financial management
- providing for appropriate risk management
- managing property and facilities
- managing enrolments and ensuring forward planning.

Collaborative Leadership

Leaders develop an inclusive and collaborative school community based on trusting relationships and mutual respect by:

- integrating the values of the Gospel into relationships, communication and decision-making
- sharing leadership responsibility, accountability and decision-making among those directly concerned with specific tasks
- networking with neighbouring schools and the local community to share knowledge and resources
- demonstrating sensitivity, compassion and forgiveness
- inspiring, motivating and engaging the school community

- appreciating and using positively the diverse personal gifts of members of the school community
- fostering the *shared wisdom* model of governance
- responding to diverse community needs
- promoting the school in the community
- ensuring the school operates as part of the local parish and diocesan Catholic community.

Capabilities for Leadership

These leadership capabilities represent an integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding. These capabilities assist leaders to identify areas for personal and professional learning.

Mission Capabilities

- building a community of disciples
- committing to work collaboratively to extend the Kingdom of God
- developing a deep understanding of a Catholic Worldview
- committing to a personal journey of faith
- developing scriptural and theological understanding
- being attentive to the paschal pattern of the life of the school community

Personal Capabilities

- developing self-knowledge
- displaying imagination and vision
- showing confidence, optimism and resilience
- exemplifying honesty and integrity
- integrating work and personal life
- seeking spirituality

Relational Capabilities

- demonstrating emotional maturity
- honouring feelings in self and others
- displaying a trusting disposition
- cultivating productive working relationships
- demonstrating highly developed/depthed interpersonal communication style
- being hopeful and inspiring hope in others

Professional Capabilities

- inspiring a communal purpose and vision
- generating curriculum and pedagogical imagination
- being contextually aware and responsive
- engaging in strategic thinking and planning
- demonstrating sound organisational and fiscal management
- focusing on outcomes and accountability

A Catholic Worldview

The framework recognises the importance of religious and spiritual leadership within Catholic schools, and the centrality of the place of evangelisation through pastoral care. The *domains* and *capabilities* within religious and spiritual leadership reinforce the concept that Catholic schools exist to educate and form young people in Catholic discipleship, offering them experiences of following Jesus as members of the Catholic community. The framework assumes that “the educational activity is not simply a human activity; it is a genuine Christian journey in faith. It is within this environment of faith that children are offered an education that develops the whole person, and education in being Catholic. (Walker, 2004 p4)

In order to achieve this, leaders in Catholic schools draw out and articulate ways in which to contribute to the formation of young Catholic disciples. The framework assumes that the pedagogical and pastoral decisions within the Catholic school are founded in the Gospel and offer students the experience and knowledge necessary to develop a distinctive Catholic way of being in and seeing the world. That distinctive way is called a ‘*Catholic Worldview*’. The framework also acknowledges the importance of building spiritual leadership density in Catholic schools so that leaders qualify as “architects of Catholic culture” (Cook, 2001) to translate the “grammar of Catholic schooling” (Jacobs,1997) into actions that symbolize the values embedded in the Catholic schools purpose.

A Catholic Worldview underpins each domain of leadership and centres the Mission, Personal, Relational and Professional capabilities within the framework. As such, it requires leaders to “envision their professional work on at least a par with their ministry God has called them to provide the members of the school communities” (Jacobs,2005,7). In this way, spiritual leadership is understood as a broader form of service to the school community through which leaders engage with one another in a collaborative effort of constructing formative communities of disciples.

The theological underpinning of the framework is located within a ‘call to the heart’ through prayer and the adoption of a Catholic Worldview mindset. Catholic leaders are expected to be the custodians and animators of the mission of the Church. They

articulate through a ministry of leadership, and model through discipleship and service. As such, Catholic leaders develop a public articulation and ministry of leadership through self confidence and awareness, evangelizing, and living out a Catholic Worldview.

A Catholic Worldview is a “comprehensive perception of the universe, revealed to us in Jesus, that provides insights into the meaning of life and how to live it”. (Diocese of Broken Bay,19). A Catholic Worldview is experiencing life through the eyes of the Catholic faith and perceives:

- God as trinity, a communion of persons who love us and invite us to share in their divine life for all eternity.
- The action of the Spirit in the world, inviting and empowering all people to respond to the divine love.
- Jesus as God’s Son, who saved us through his life, death and resurrection, and through whom we enter into the life of God.
- The meaning and purpose of life as grounded in God’s love for us and our response as disciples of Jesus.
- The Church as the communion of disciples that makes present to the world the mystery of Jesus and, through its sacramental life, makes us part of that mystery.
- The presence of God in our daily life, in the Eucharist, in the Sacred Scriptures and in the living tradition of the Church.
- The cross of Jesus in the struggles and hardships of life and approaches them as Jesus did his cross, with trust and confidence in God.
- Each human being as a unique person created in the image of God, having an inalienable dignity that is always to be respected.
- An imperative to proclaim to others the love we receive from Jesus, by loving them as Jesus loves us.
- An obligation to work to create social conditions in which the unique dignity of each person is respected and all human rights protected.

(Walker, in K-12 Religious Education Curriculum2004 p1))

Central to a Catholic Worldview is the call for leaders to Catholic discipleship. It calls for an individual commitment, realised and active membership of the Catholic Church, demonstrated by love, compassion, hope, reconciliation, transformation, prayer, respect for life, and a desire to bring about justice for all.

Professional Learning and Formation

In the framework an attempt is made to capture the importance of professional learning for the formation and on-going support of leaders. The integration of diocesan processes is illustrated in the following diagram:



Figure 2: Integration of Support Processes

In the Diocese of Broken Bay professional learning is viewed primarily as a summary term of the rich ways in which different people learn and the modes through which this learning takes place. This section outlines some diocesan understandings about professional learning and formation. Significant threads of such learning include:

Individual learning: professional learning is essentially about the development and growth of the individual. Therefore each person, each leader takes personal and individual responsibility for his/her learning.

Motivation and ownership: individuals are the only people who can motivate themselves. Hence it is important that we make sense of our learning and in context. Professional learning is concerned with developing expertise with focus ultimately on student outcomes. All professional learning is justified by being aimed at extending and increasing expertise. The way in which this learning will impact on desired practice is only possible when the individual makes the links between the learnings and the beliefs and practices and directs this focus ultimately towards individual student learning.

Developing reflective practice: it is critical reflection on practice and assessment of our own personal professional needs that provides the motivation to access the learning and to persevere in its completion. Importantly the learning is not just an activity but requires space and reflection.

Individual needs and other needs: while individual needs are one of the drivers of motivation in professional learning, other drivers come from members of our schools, community of principals' interests, from the diocesan system and indeed more broadly from the wider educational profession. What matters is that we can see this multifaceted view of learning - individual school, peer support, system and professional community of interest. The role of the diocesan system is to promote and facilitate the opportunities for growth and learning. In evaluation of learning, it is also critical that we all hold ourselves accountable for the effectiveness of the learning. Mere activity without reflection and integration into practice can be wasteful of time and also costly.

Formation: This term is used broadly in the Christian dispensation for that which we need for our personal conversion of heart, for our bonding with the community of faith through Catholic discipleship, and for transformation of our church and our world through pastoral care for evangelisation. As ministers, Catholic school leaders need deeper theological understanding, ministerial skills and a prayerful rhythm for nurturing their own and others faith. They emerge as spiritual navigators. In the diocese the religious, pastoral and spiritual dimensions of leadership have received encouragement and will continue to be strengthened through the leadership framework.

Foundation Statements

Finally, the framework includes three statements that have been agreed across the diocese as foundational to shared beliefs about leadership. The statements are:

Leaders in the contemporary Catholic school ensure that:

1. the school stands as a beacon of hope, enlightening the community with the message of Jesus - a message of freedom, optimism and eternal promise.
2. leadership is visionary, hope-filled, transformative and committed to building and sustaining authentic relationships.
3. leadership is centrally concerned with ethics and morality, with deciding what is significant, what is right and what is worthwhile.

Concluding Remarks

The *Framework for Sustainable Leadership in Broken Bay Catholic Schools* was developed as an ambitious, collaborative, dynamic project by leaders across the diocese. The diocese acknowledges the prior work of leaders in the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and the Australian Catholic University and their generosity in sharing their learnings.

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