

Directions for Catholic Educational Leadership in the 21st Century – the challenges and the reality

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Title: Making the Edmund Rice ethos a reality. A case study in the perceptions of Queensland principals in Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition.

Abstract: The ethos of an organisation generally resides in its founder and results in a culture unique to that organisation. This case study explored the transmission of ethos in Queensland school, once known as Christian Brothers' schools, now known as Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition. The Congregation of the Christian Brothers, founded by Edmund Rice, has conducted schools since 1802 to provide boys, particularly poor boys with a Catholic education. Since Vatican II numbers of religious have declined markedly raising questions of authenticity now that the schools are led by lay men and women. This research sought to explore perceptions of lay principals in Queensland who have been given responsibility for developing an ethos in line with the vision of Edmund Rice but without the specific formation that was afforded to Christian Brothers. Given this lack of formation in the Edmund Rice ethos, the question of how principals understand ethos and develop a school culture is one that must be asked. These questions are essential if school are to remain faithful to the vision. Given the issues related to the relevance of Catholic schooling in the 21st century, this study explored if it is possible for principals to remain faithful to the Founder's vision in an increasingly complex organisation with the inherent tensions of school leadership.

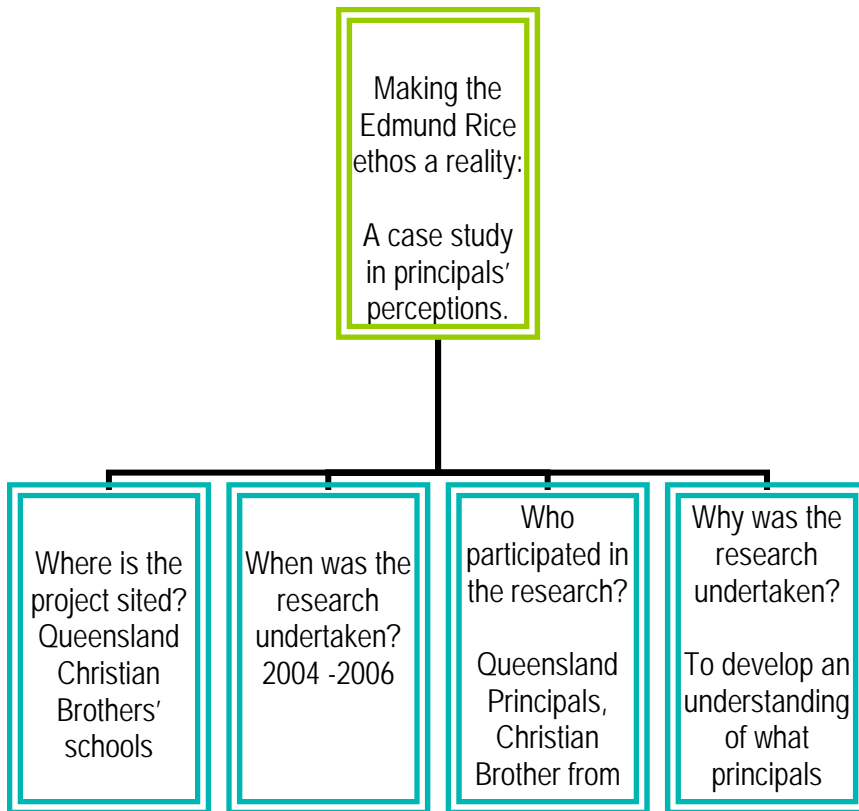


FIGURE 1 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction:

This research took place in Queensland, Australia, in schools known collectively as Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice tradition. These schools were once known as Christian Brothers' schools because they were owned and operated by the Congregation of Christian Brothers, an order of teaching laymen founded by Edmund Rice in 1802 . The order moved to Australia in the late 19th century to begin schools across the country.

The founder of this order was Edmund Rice, an Irishman who was born in 1762 and died in 1844. During his lifetime he was a successful business man, husband, widower and father as well as educator and founder of a teaching brotherhood. Edmund Rice left as his legacy a distinctive educational ethos which was carried on by Christian Brothers in their schools. Currently there are very few Christian Brothers in schools. Once their presence was a guarantee of the cultivation of Edmund Rice's educational legacy; however with the absence of Christian Brothers, leadership has been transferred to lay principals. This paper presents findings of research into how lay principals in Edmund Rice Schools understand and accordingly promote Edmund Rice's distinctive ethos and culture in their schools.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

This research problem is embedded in the transference from Christian Brothers' educators to lay educators. When Christian Brothers principally staffed their schools they were responsible for the transmission of the Edmund Rice ethos. They were able to do this because from their reception into the Brotherhood and through teacher training, young neophytes were systematically inducted into a special culture that deliberately developed an ethos reflecting Edmund Rice's educational mission. Indeed, the whole of the life of a Brother was a living witness to the Edmund Rice ethos and the transmission of this specific culture in the schools in which they taught (Kent, 1988).

Edmund Rice began his mission in 1802 to provide poor Irish boys with an education designed to meet both their educational and spiritual needs. In order to staff these schools, he founded a teaching brotherhood. The Brothers came to Australia initially in 1843 but after four years returned to Ireland. In 1868, they returned to begin schools across the country. Since 1868, Christian Brothers have been involved in the education of boys. Currently there is a paucity of Brothers in schools due to the absence of new recruits to the order. In the absence of Brothers, lay staff conducts the schools.

In contrast, the rapid “laicisation” of school leadership has resulted in schools being led by lay principals who have experienced little formation in the Edmund Rice ethos. Yet they are expected to understand the same ethos that the Christian Brother principals have done for the previous 200 years while developing a culture appropriate to contemporary times. The Queensland Christian Brothers’ executive has generated guidelines for the conduct of their schools in accordance with the Edmund Rice ethos, yet there is a lack of clarity about their application. This opaqueness becomes a catalyst in questioning the authenticity of Edmund Rice schools and their leadership.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

2002 marked the bicentennial of the opening of the first Edmund Rice School in Ireland. In the period prior to the bicentenary, especially during the beatification of Edmund Rice in 1996, and in international Congregational Chapter meetings in 1996 and 2002, Christian Brothers and interested laypersons, have attempted to articulate first, the contemporary purpose of the Congregation of the Christian Brothers, and second the direction the order’s schools should take now that Brothers are no longer significant in number.

The various provinces of the Christian Brothers worldwide have published documents which outline their view as to what constitutes the significant features of the schools associated with their order. These include Holy Spirit Province, Western Australia and South Australia, 1997, St Helen’s and St Mary’s Provinces in Ireland, 1999, English Province 1999, and the India Province, 2002. Likewise conferences on the educational charism of Edmund Rice have been conducted in Ireland and the United States. In Queensland, a text entitled *Document on Edmund Rice Education* generated in 1996 outlines characteristics of Queensland schools. Australia wide, a Charter for Edmund Rice schools has been completed and is being implemented.

While these documents outline directions and strategies for achieving outcomes, only two documents, from Ireland and Australia, have reached conclusions by means of empirical research. “The Identity Project” evolved from consultation with all partners in the school communities and sought to identify the core values that shape policies and practices in Christian Brothers’ schools in Ireland (O’Brien & Coyle, 2000). This document was important because of its breadth and academic rigour. The second project, *The Charter for Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition*, was developed as the result of research and consultation with school communities across Australia under the auspices of the National Planning Committee for Schools’ Governance. This *Charter* is currently being implemented throughout the Australian Provinces and forms an integral part of the amalgamation of Australian schools into Edmund Rice Education Australia in 2007.

At a Congregational Chapter held in 2003 in Queensland, Christian Brothers published a document entitled *The Heart of Being Brother*. This document outlined seven focal directions. Of particular significance for schools was the fourth direction, “Educating the Minds and Hearts of the Young”. This section suggested a re-appraisal of the distinctive values of Edmund Rice education and within this the further understanding of what these values might mean for educators.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

An extensive literature review developed a conceptual framework for the study. The conceptual framework evolved during the process of synthesising the literature in the light of the research purpose. Bibliography is attached for the information of the reader. Synthesis of the literature generated three themes that served as to underpin an exploration of the perceptions of principals. Each theme was used to explore the leadership perspective and develop research questions that assisted in focussing this study. The themes are outlined as follows:

- Ethos
- Culture
- Leadership

The literature also generated three specific research questions.

1. What do principals consider are the essential features of the Edmund Rice ethos?
2. How do principals ensure that the ethos of Edmund Rice is an integral element of school culture?
3. What aspects of leadership do principals consider important in ensuring that the Edmund Rice ethos is developed into an authentic culture?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

It is anticipated that the research conclusions from this thesis are important for these reasons.

1. This study gave participants the opportunity to articulate their perspectives on ethos, culture and leadership as it inspires their role as school leader. This is important because principals, as designated leaders, are charged with the continuation of the Edmund Rice ethos, so this study will generate data showing what they perceive their role to be.
2. This research allowed for an understanding of the diversity of ways in which the Edmund Rice ethos is developed in differing contexts. The schools chosen for this research form a discrete group. While these Queensland schools are collectively known as Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition, they are varied in many ways: history; size, tradition, student population, location. The complexity and variety of this group of schools is significant because it affords the opportunity to examine the commonalities and differences between schools, thus enabling a full picture of the ways that principals understand ethos and develop ethos into school cultures in differing contexts.
3. This research is significant for the governing bodies responsible for these schools at this time and into the future. . An understanding of principals' perceptions of ethos, culture and leadership may provide valuable insights to those responsible for the future direction of this particular group of Catholic schools, concurrent with a critique of the schools' present direction. This is a significant purpose because of the impending moves from to the national governing body to be known as Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA).

4. On a personal level it is my expectation that this research may serve several purposes. As principal of a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition this study will provide me with an understanding of how other professionals undertake their work. It will also provide my leadership with direction and information while concurrently serve as both personal and professional reflective practice.
5. One final benefit may be gained for principals of Catholic schools from different traditions. Data gathered during this case study into the perceptions of principals may be useful in providing insights for those schools who seek to retain connections with their religious founders especially in the areas of ethos, culture and leadership.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in this study are nine of the ten principals who lead Edmund Rice schools in Queensland currently and one of their numbers recently retired. The selection of Queensland principals is a logical progression determined by historical, contemporary, and even geographic factors.

It is fortunate for this study that the principals chosen have wide experience in leadership, not just in Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition, but also in other Catholic schools both systemic and religious, as well as in State government schools. This diversity of experience encourages a broad perspective from which to explore the issues of ethos that formed the parameters of this study. It was equally fortunate that the researcher and the participants had developed a rapport which allowed for full and frank discussion of the research questions.

The Executive Director of Queensland Edmund Rice schools and a member of the Province Leadership Team, a representative of the Christian Brother's were willing to be part of this research, ensuring that "an adequate number of participants "are available to explore the research problem from a variety of perspectives" (Merriam, 1998, p.64). The Executive Director was interviewed in a semi-structured dialogue, and also took part in the focus group exercise, while the member of the Province Leadership team took part in the focus group exercise. The table below outlines the phases of the data collection.

TABLE 2: DATA COLLECTION PHASES

1. Documents selected for analysis: School newsletters, Christian Brothers' documents, the Charter for Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition.

2. Interviews undertaken: Principals (primary participants), Executive Director Edmund Rice Education (secondary participant).
3. Focus group with Principals, Executive Director, and Christian Brother representative.
4. Researcher's observations and reflections.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research were presented in the form of case studies. The following headings for each case are taken from the interviews conducted with principals and form the heading for each case.

1. Case study A

"If the Edmund Rice ethos is about love, when do we say we've done enough?"

2. Case study B

"For me the ethos is a scaffold and a reference point and a bench mark. If you don't have a reference point you can really get lost!"

3. Case study C

"The whole Edmund Rice story is about dealing with people as humans. We've got to keep the human touch."

4. Case study D

"If one person is not living out the ethos, this puts the system back ten paces."

5. Case study E

"For a school to genuinely have the ethos, it has to be totally inclusive."

6. Case study F

"It's acknowledging a range of people and the gifts these people have. It's in the diversity of relationships."

7. Case Study G

"It's about reaching out to the poor with an understanding that if you come from a certain background, even if it's affluent, you still need a certain level of care and support."

8. Case study H

“It’s about developing right relationships for the reasons so clearly expressed in our story.”

9. Case Study I

“It’s about caring with our eyes open in our contemporary context”

10. Case study J

“Hope is dearest to my heart, resilience, optimism. It’s the most important commandment – Be not afraid.”

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The process of data gathering generated a number of themes around the three key research areas. The following table outlines the themes that arose from the research.

TABLE 3 THEMES FROM RESEARCH FINDINGS

Q1: What do principals consider are the essential features of the Edmund Rice Ethos?	Q2: How do principals ensure that the ethos of Edmund Rice is an integral part of school culture?	Q3: What aspects of leadership do principals consider important in ensuring that the Edmund Rice ethos is developed into an authentic culture?
Values based education	Social Justice initiatives	Leadership for cultural change
Liberation	Developing spirituality and a sense of the sacred	Prophetic and spiritual leadership
Diversity and Inclusivity	Providing flexible options for a diverse range of students	Principal as role model for authentic leadership
Found in right relationships	Development of structures and formation experiences to support ethos.	Student centred leadership
Developing community		
Excellence in teaching and learning		

RESEARCH QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

This section presents in summary form the findings of the three research questions listed above.

Research Question 1

The first research question sought to discover what participants consider are the essential features of the Edmund Rice ethos. It aimed to discover how participants describe this particular ethos defined as the fundamental spiritual characteristics of a culture. The question asked:

What do principals consider are the essential features of the Edmund Rice ethos?

Principals stated that they considered the essential features of the Edmund Rice ethos to be found in the Gospel stories, the story of Edmund Rice and the history and traditions of the Christian Brothers. Principals articulated that it was their responsibility to ensure that ethos is promoted at all appropriate opportunities. They also affirmed the articulation of these core values in documentation such as the Charter for Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition and through recent research regarding Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers. The viewpoint was that for the most part this ethos is not at risk while it is at the forefront of principals' thinking. Principals attest to the resurgence in interest in Edmund Rice as a result of his beatification in 1996 and

acknowledge that lay leadership is in a better position to promote the values of Edmund Rice education now that they are explicitly stated and do not merely reside in the person of the Christian Brother.

Principals affirm the articulation of ethos as an organisational reference point to ensure authenticity; however there were concerns that this ethos is a recent invention and may be designed to serve the needs of the organisation rather than to ensure that these fundamental values are a reality rather mere rhetoric. There was a sense that it was important not just to pay lip service to ethos but to have it realised in the development of relationships and a sense of community which liberates its members through quality education in a values based educational framework.

Principals articulated that they consider formation in this ethos is important. In their reflections they related that at the time of their appointment as principal, an induction process in ethos was noticeably absent. This caused some issues for them and they expressed a view that a planned process of formation was essential if this ethos is to be continued. Principals stated that it was their personal philosophy and experience in leadership, both in Catholic and Government schools that enabled them to manage this lacuna in a positive way.

Research Question 2

The second research question sought to discover how principals ensure that the ethos of Edmund Rice is an integral element of school culture. It aimed to ascertain the variety of ways that ethos is realised in the school culture in both planned and ad hoc ways. The question asked was:

How do principals ensure that the ethos of Edmund Rice is an integral element of school culture?

Principals used their insight into the essential features of ethos to ensure that it was integrated into their particular school's culture. The role of the principal in determining the culture of the school community was considered crucial to the extent that principals used planned processes when necessary to change entrenched communal attitudes if

they were perceived as being out of alignment with the stated ethos or to support those attitudes which they perceived as contributing to the ethos.

Principals affirmed that it was important to have programmes which explicitly addressed the development of ethos and to ensure that these programmes positively addressed areas of concern. One example was the wide variety of social justice initiatives that exist in these schools and principals stated that this was one means of create an awareness of the ethos. One problematical issue which arose through this question was the enrolment patterns of this group of schools. Some principals questioned whether a culture authentic to the Edmund Rice ethos is congruent with what could be perceived as exclusive enrolment policies and the whether the existence of so called elite schools ran counter to the ethos.

A primary area that principals articulated that they struggled with was the development of the spiritual aspect of school culture especially in boys' schools though others perceived that the sense of brotherhood that exists makes spirituality easier to develop. One means that this issue was overcome was in the use of other members of the College Leadership team especially the Mission role and principals affirmed their need for continued support for this aspect of culture.

As part of an organisation across Queensland, principals affirmed positive elements of the organisational culture though one aspect which impinged on their ability to fully develop an authentic culture was the issue of finance. Principals perceived that there were times when the ethos of diversity and Inclusivity was at odds with the financial focus of Edmund Rice Education and reflected that there were occasions when the organisational culture militates against schools that enrol disadvantaged students.

Research Question 3

What aspects of leadership do principals consider important in ensuring that the Edmund Rice ethos is developed into an authentic culture?

The person of the principal was seen to be role model for the ethos though participants acknowledge that it was necessary to share and delegate leadership where appropriate. Principals recognised that their role was not an easy one and the pressures of the position can result in a feeling of isolation and the difficult decisions that have to be

made are akin to walking a tightrope. One means of ensuring that the decision making process is authentic is for principals to return to the core values of Edmund Rice and to use the Cultural Characteristics of the Charter as a point of reference. Even this is problematic at times especially when decisions to exclude students need to be made and when economic rationalism means that important initiatives that would ensure an authentic culture cannot be undertaken on financial grounds. Equally the implementation of the Charter has posed challenges and was perceived as needing development to support principals in their leadership roles.

Aspects of leadership that principals affirmed as important were prophetic and spiritual leadership. This adds additional tension to their leadership role especially as one of the imperatives of prophetic leadership is to be counter cultural and ensure that hard decisions that may be at odds with the school community are made. Principals articulate that there are times when the need to be countercultural can be problematic; however this can be overcome by good communication and formation where possible.

The relational aspect of leadership was considered by principals to be at the core of an authentic Edmund Rice culture. The development of a community which cares for its members and the relationships that developed through student centred leadership was affirmed as important. This leadership model was described as coming from the example of Edmund Rice and was essential for authenticity of Edmund Rice culture.

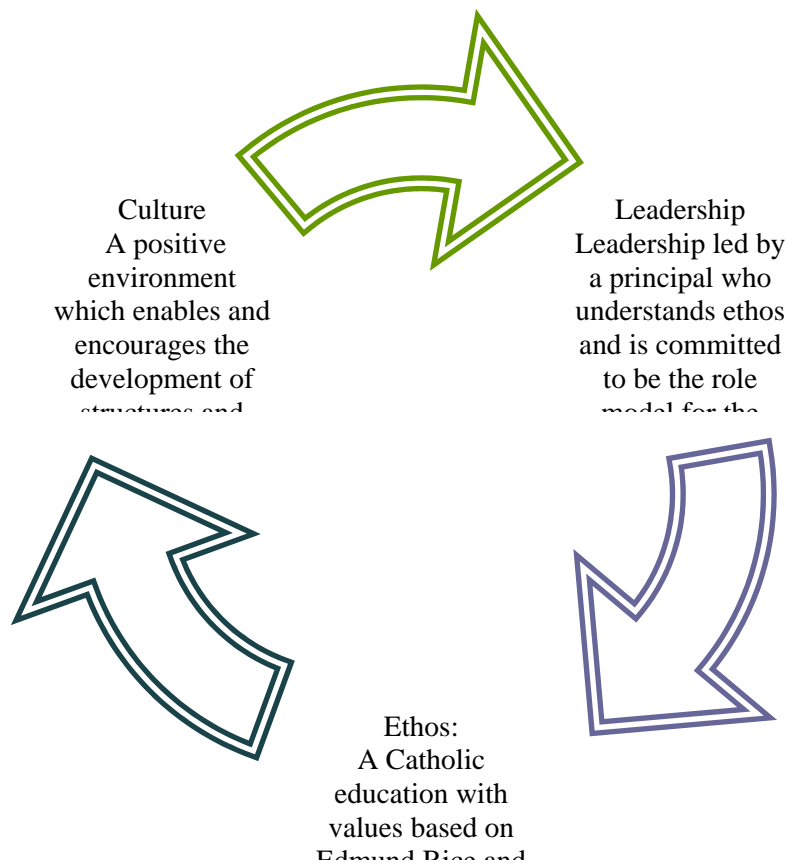
7.5 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The following conclusions represent an attempt to understand how principals in these schools understand ethos and develop this ethos into an authentic culture through their leadership.

The following diagram seeks to explain the relationship between the three concepts and provides a framework for this study's conclusions. These concepts have their origin in the themes articulated by participants and can be summarised as follows:

- Ethos: A Catholic education with values based on Edmund Rice and his educational mission
- Culture: A positive environment which enables and encourages the development of structures and formation experiences to support ethos
- Leadership: Leadership led by a principal who understands ethos and is committed to be a role model for an authentic culture

The use of a cyclical diagram signifies that the three concepts explored in this study are interconnected and together achieve authenticity.



7.5 Conclusions of the study-a framework

A Catholic education with values based on Edmund Rice and his educational mission

This study concludes that from the perspective of principals the essential features of the Edmund Rice ethos are found in the development of a distinctly Catholic education with values based on the leadership of Edmund Rice and his particular educational mission. The values confirmed by the participants originated in the Gospel story and Edmund Rice story, as well as the history and traditions of the Christian Brothers. Literature confirms that the original mission of Edmund Rice was to provide an education that was based a respectful sense of the sacred; and education for liberation and a fatherly care for the students (McLaughlin, 2007). Principals are endeavouring to ensure that the

schools continue to be faithful to this educational mission however; there were distinct differences in the way this is realised in the individual school context.

This study found that the interpretation of this mission depends to a great extent on the context of each school and principals were constrained by the expectations of their communities. Some schools in this study have student populations with high SES and were described as elite by principals, while others clearly educate students from disadvantaged backgrounds. For Edmund Rice his original mission was to educate poor boys, though boys of all social status were able to enrol in his schools. This is clearly not the case for all schools in this study and enrolment patterns indicate that there are clearly some students are not represented in Edmund Rice schools in 2007. Indigenous students, refugee students and students with disabilities are underrepresented in this study and this is a matter for concern. Principals recognised that there was a need for diversity and Inclusivity as values however, in practice this is still a work in progress with some schools essentially monocultures. The practice of excluding or not enrolling some students on the basis of disadvantage runs counter to both Catholic Social Teaching and the example of Edmund Rice and is a matter that needs to be addressed.

The “Catholic” in a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition is a matter that invites further inspection. This study found that one of the issues for principals is the enrolment of spiritually deprived young people and the strains this puts on this aspect of school life especially in the teaching of Religious Education and the development of an appropriate contemporary spirituality. This is a result of changing family practices and societal attitudes that are well documented; however it is cause for concern if families are enrolling students in these schools without the expectation that they are supportive of Catholic teaching and practice. This is a particular concern for those schools that have flexible structures. More research needs to be undertaken to support staff in these non mainstream schools as well as in the other schools, to engage students in this important aspect of their development in the ethos.

This study concludes that one positive ways that the ethos of Edmund Rice is realised is through the development of positive or “right” relationships. All principals affirmed that it was their intention to create a community where people feel welcome and included. Principals described the development of positive pastoral practices to support young

people throughout their formative years and described how they developed staff to support students. One matter that arises from this is the extent to which these relationships reflect a dominant masculine perspective as was the case when schools were staffed by Christian Brothers or have evolved into a more appropriate contemporary model (Angus, 1988). The conclusion that can be reached from this research is that principals are aware of this issue and have implemented programmes to develop all aspects of student life; this is noticeable in both the curriculum and in co-curricular areas and is a matter for commendation, continuing development and awareness.

Finally this study concludes that excellence in teaching and learning is identified by principals as an essential element of this ethos especially as a means for liberating young people from injustices. Principals acknowledge the importance of ensuring that students are given opportunities to achieve and affirm that this is important for them; whether this develops a negative sense of competition was not a matter for this research however, data gathered leads to the conclusion that students who enrol in these schools are provided with a wide range of opportunities to achieve success. One negative conclusion which can be drawn from this theme is that for some schools the financial situation impinges on the offering of appropriate subjects to some students especially in the more costly areas of Vocational Education and Learning Support. This is an issue that diminishes a principal's ability to provide young people with appropriate support to liberate them from their difficulties. Ostensibly Queensland Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition are connected organisationally; however it is possible to conclude that the schools that are in a more tenuous financial position are more likely to offer education to students with difficulties. From this it is possible to conclude that this is a matter for discernment for both principals and Edmund Rice Education as to whether this approach runs counter to the ethos especially as recent research reveals that for Edmund Rice his schools did not constitute a series of independent schools rather that connection and connectivity were the hallmarks of the original schools.

Culture: A positive environment which enables and encourages the development of structures and formation experiences to support ethos

This study concludes that the way principals ensure that the Edmund Rice ethos is developed into an authentic culture is by the creation of a positive school environment which enables and encourages the development of structures and formation experiences to support ethos. This positive environment is a result of the mixture of elements and experiences that principals promote in their role as cultural leader result in opportunities for social and spiritual growth.

One powerful formation experience that many schools offer is the area of social justice. Schools in varying degrees offer young people the opportunity to take part in Service Learning Programmes designed to develop awareness of the needy in the wider community. This is a matter for commendation and principals report that these experiences are powerful means of developing the emotional side of the young people in these schools. While this is described as having a positive outcome, further research is warranted into the long term results of such programmes and the extent to which such programmes affect the school culture and the young person in a positive sense and for the long term. It is possible to conclude that for an authentic culture to exist; social justice needs to be embedded not just into the overt curriculum but also in the student population base. This may prove problematic for some principals whose community has a narrow perspective in this area; however some principals have attempted to widen their student base and report positive results for the school culture and are to be commended for their leadership. This conclusion invites further examination at organisational level especially given that the Cultural Characteristics of these schools is purported to include enrolment of disadvantaged young people; the extent to which this is likely to happen especially when Edmund Rice Education Australia is established office is a matter for further debate.

Pastoral Care and related structures have been articulated by principals as a means of integrating ethos into the school's culture. The care and concern shown to students was a hallmark of the original Edmund Rice schools though there is evidence to suggest that the way this 'care' was realised when Christian Brothers were the dominant influence in schools in a more disciplinary than pastoral approach (Angus, 1988). The care and concern shown for the students in this study is evident from the data and it is clear that support structures exist to ensure that students are able to remain at these schools in spite of the usual raft of adolescent difficulties. This study found that the tension that

exists for the principals in making decisions in discipline is very real, especially when the knowledge and understanding of the ethos by the principal runs counter to the expectations of the school community.

The development of formation experiences both ad hoc and planned were powerful means of developing a positive school culture. Data gathered has found that the school newsletter is a powerful formation tool and principals are to be commended for the way this document is used. Equally data gathered confirmed that the complexity of schools adds to the importance of the personal or presence aspect of ethos. Principals report that it is in the development of positive relationships with parents and other community members that ensures the development and continuation of a positive school culture. This finding invites exploration as to the extent that the school community is the dominant part of a young person's life. It is possible to perceive that a balance is needed between home, school and community life rather than having the school as the totality of a young person's life.

Leadership: Leadership led by a principal who understands ethos and is committed to be a role model for an authentic culture

This study concludes that principals in this study perceive that it is their responsibility that the ethos of Edmund Rice continues to grow and to develop in their school context. Principals articulated that they were the beginning and the end point as a role model in spite of the difficulties and complexities that this adds to an already demanding position. These aspects of the principal's role are widely supported in the literature and lend weight to the concerns and the demands of this position (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000).

Principals in this study saw their role as the leader of the school in the total sense though all recognised the important of having staff with leadership skills to support them in the development of an authentic Edmund Rice culture. This stance is supported in the literature which suggests that leadership in a healthy school culture is undertaken by the most appropriate person (Lambert, 1995). One position which principals affirmed as a support in this role is the Leadership position of Mission, sometimes known as Director of Mission or Assistant Principal Mission. From this it is possible to conclude that this position now almost a decade in Queensland schools contributes positively to the ethos

and is to be commended. This study concludes that for principals in this research this Mission role gives support at an organisational level for the articulation of ethos into the school culture.

This study concluded that position is also a support for the principals in the continuation of the Edmund Rice ethos and according to several principals is more important than the Finance Director in these schools. One conclusion that can be reached as a result of this study is that finance and the development of bureaucratic structures are considered by principals to have a greater effect on the development of Edmund Rice values than is warranted; this was a matter for tension for a number of principals who perceived that this attitude impinges on their role as both spiritual and prophetic leader in a negative sense.

From the data gathered it is clear that principals have some reservations about the development of bureaucratic structures especially in the impending change from a Queensland based group of schools to Edmund Rice Education Australia. The issues for those schools with financial concerns has not been addressed in this study; however it is possible to conclude that the changes will be watched with interest by those schools whose financial base is not as secure as others. If there were moves to close schools that were not financially viable it would be a question of authentic leadership at a systems level.

One conclusion that can be reached from the data gathered is that principals are a dedicated and committed group of men who lead exciting and complicated schools. The absence of women in leadership was a matter of concern for several principals who articulated their need for a balance across gender roles. In the time since this data was gathered there are now a number of women on College Leadership Teams, however the researcher remains the only woman principal in Queensland and Australia wide there are now three women leading Edmund Rice schools. The extent to which this is determined by this Christian Brothers tradition of male leadership is not the ambit of this research; however it is a matter for concern if the predominance of young men in these schools experience only male leaders and the women are relegated to support positions.