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Have you gone to Galilee? Spiritual and religious formation for Catholic school educators in Western Australia

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Have you gone to Galilee? Spiritual and religious formation for Catholic schools educators in Western Australia

Abstract

This paper explores the personal and professional perceptions of twenty-two Catholic school educators in Western Australia who participated in a spiritual and faith formation program called Galilee. The paper initially outlines the background of the program followed by a review of the literature that focuses on five concepts: people are spiritual and religious beings; a desire to belong; the place of prayer; a journey of faith; and spiritual and faith formation. The research methodology is then provided. Specifically, the research was based on qualitative and quantitative data derived from an on-line survey. The results are reported in four sections. The first section concerns the personal impact of the Galilee program on participants. In particular, was the program valuable in developing a sense of confidence in participants' own faith efficacy? The second section describes the professional impact the program had on participants' confidence to promote spiritual and faith formation in their school communities. The third section reports on ways the program could be enhanced. The final section afforded participants an opportunity to make any further comments regarding the Galilee program.

Introduction

Nationally, Catholic education systems “have identified the need for systematic, developmental and well-resourced programs for the evangelization and spiritual growth of school, system and other community members as a priority” (National Catholic Education Commission [NCEC], 2017, p. 5). Central to this priority is the formation of Catholic school educators (Congregation for Catholic Education [CCE], 1982, para. 60). In an increasingly secularised society, the demographic profile of Catholic educators in schools has changed. No longer are teaching priests, brothers and sisters present in schools who had religious formation as part of their training (CCE, 2007, para. 27). Today, Catholic educators are drawn from the laity with limited adult religious formation (CCE, 1982; NCEC, 2017).

While the proportion of Catholic educators nominating as regularly practising their faith remains high, most of these educators are middle aged or are soon to retire. There are also increasing numbers, of mostly younger adults, who practise irregularly or in different ways (NCEC, 2017). If Catholic schools are charged with contributing to educating young

people towards the Catholic faith (Vatican Council II, 1965, para. 8), then there is a concern that future teachers and leaders may not “be able to give what they do not have” (NCEC, 2017, p. 3; Neidhart & Lamb, 2016). The religious formation of lay educators and leaders in Catholic schools then has become a high priority (CCE, 1982; NCEC, 2017) for which Catholic school systems need to respond (Franchi & Rymarz, 2017). One possible way to address the need for religious formation of lay educators and leaders in Catholic schools is through the Galilee spiritual and formation program (CIWA, 2017a) to build and renew the ‘spiritual capital’ (Grace, 2010).

The Galilee Program

The focus of the Galilee program is “to assist in the ongoing spiritual and faith formation of aspiring and current leaders in Catholic schools” (CIWA, 2017a, p. 2). The program draws upon the inspiration of the post-resurrection account: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me’” (Mt. 28:10). The program provides the opportunity for participants to take the challenge of an inner journey – “*Have you gone to Galilee?*” – to find Christ in their lives and, in turn, deepen their relationship with God, self and others. The inner journey focuses on participants exploring those moments of personal change or *metanoia*, which may have had a profound impact upon their life choices and vocation and where their faith experiences have led them to proclaim the Good News and live out the faith they profess. Galilee encourages participants to develop a greater confidence or efficacy personally and professionally through small group discussion, prayer, self-reflection and adult learning. The hope is that such formation will enable participants to promote a deeper sense of Catholic identity and worldview within their Catholic school communities.

The goal of the Galilee spiritual and faith formation program is to offer participants a community-based program, which is sequential, inclusive of knowledge and has opportunities for prayer, reflection and sharing in order to be transformed into the likeness of God. The program assumes that educators are inquisitive beings who enjoy every opportunity to stretch the mind, to be challenged by new learnings and affirmed in those topics which are foundational to Christian life. To share this knowledge with others in community offers additional nurturance for spiritual and faith formation for all participants. A key to growth is for participants to take the time to reflect on old and new learnings, meaning that individual responses are derived from a greater depth of understanding. It is only when people stop, take

the time to let go and sink into the depths of their being, that they can delight in the inner journey. This journey is where they can gain knowledge and insight in a vast number of topics related to Christian spirituality and faith. The program highlights the need for time to stop, to sink to the depths of the inner being wherein lies the Divine Mystery that participants seek. Particular to this program, going into the depths is somewhat akin to the invitation of Jesus: "Put out into the deep water and let your nets down for a catch," (Luke 5:4). Going to the depths – or, the “process of depthing” – concerns the exploration of the foundations of God, life and the self, and it is in this place that one discovers not only answers but the deeper questions, the answers of which can only be best described in one word: mystery.

The genesis for developing the Galilee program began in 2015 through the work of Dr Margaret Scharf OP (Catholic Institute of Western Australia, 2015), who undertook a review of the literature on the theology and adult formation approaches for spiritual and faith formation programs. From this review, the Catholic Institute of Western Australia (CIWA) developed a program of eight modules based on four key elements: the program was to be developmental, experiential, reflective and evaluative (Figure 1). A trial of four of these modules or ‘Gatherings’ was implemented and evaluated over 2016-2017. The first three modules entail: an introduction to spirituality and the desire for the divine; the integration of faith, culture and life; and differing pathways to prayer. The final module is a weekend retreat experience. There were 15 participants in the trial who included experienced Catholic schoolteachers, school leaders and tertiary educators. As a result of the positive feedback from the trial, a two-year program of eight Gatherings was implemented for mid-2017 to early 2019.

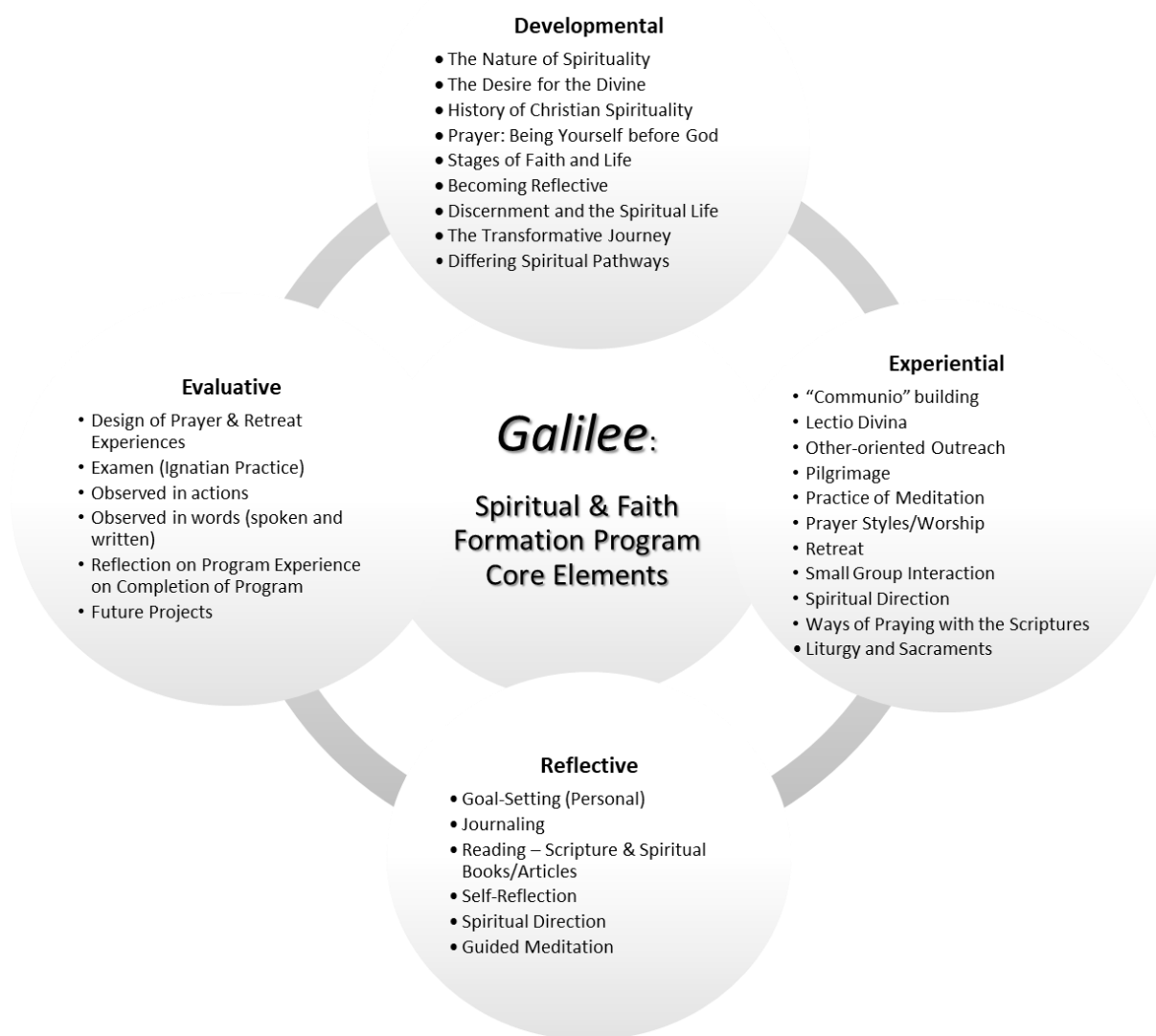


Figure 1
Core elements of the Galilee program

The current program runs over two-years consisting of eight weekend Gatherings (CIWA, 2017a). As was the case for the trial, the Gatherings are designed for experienced educators, those aspiring to become school leaders and for established leaders. Those participating in the program are expected to write a personal statement of commitment to attend the entire program. This statement is affirmed by their school Principal. Six of the Gatherings are scheduled over a Friday early evening and all-day Saturday and the other two are live-in retreats from Friday early evening to Sunday lunchtime. Table 1 outlines the schedule of topics and key themes for the first half of the two-year 2017-2019 program. Participants who complete the program are eligible for credit in the Master of Education

(Religious Education) and Master of Education (Leadership and Management) degrees at The University of Notre Dame Australia. The focus of this research project is to explore the impact of the four Gatherings in the trial and the first half of the two-year program on respective participants.

Table 1:

First half of the Two-Year Program (2017-2019)

2017	
Gathering 1	<i>Introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine</i> We are spiritual beings as well as human beings, and within each person is a desire to connect with an-Other, someone beyond ourselves, and yet at the same time at the core of the self.
Gathering 2	<i>Common threads: The tapestry of Christian spirituality</i> Foundational background as to the complexity of the Catholic faith community today. What is the history of Christianity, and how has that story been shaped by Catholic spirituality, and the many spiritualities of those who live the various ways of the Gospel?
2018	
Gathering 3	<i>Integrating faith, culture and life</i> An exploration of the nature of the person, fully human, fully alive and who gives glory to God. Life is comprised of a number of “threads” which are intertwined, each impacting upon the other. At the heart of it all is the God-thread, God’s presence weaving and uniting each of us into an integrated whole.
Gathering 4	<i>The Retreat experience (Prayer)</i> Time on the weekend retreat will be spent in personal reflection and prayer after some input, as well as opportunities for small group sharing and prayer together. Reflections may include the use of art, music, meditative walking, silent meditation and Lectio Divina. Celebration of the Eucharist and spiritual direction will also be available.

Participants in both the trial program and the two-year program were predominantly female educators in Catholic schools. While the majority in the trial program were located within the Perth metropolitan area, most who attended the two-year program came from outside the metropolitan area. Four participants were required to fly in from their regional location to attend the program. Overall, participants were involved as school leaders in their community. A few participants came from non-school backgrounds and these people were not invited to respond to the survey. A summary of the background of Galilee participants is shown in Table 2.

Table Two

Background of the Participants in the Galilee Program (n=28)

Background	Trial Program (2016-2017)	Two-Year Program (2017-2019)
Gender		
Females	10	12
Males	5	3
Total	13	15
School Location		
Metropolitan	8	5
Non-metropolitan	2	7
Non-school Location	3	3
Total	13	15
Context		
Experienced class teacher	5	0
School leader	4	13
Tertiary educator	4	2
Total	13	15

Review of the literature

Five concepts in the literature underpinned this research into ways the Galilee program has an impact on the spiritual and religious formation of Western Australian Catholic school educators. These concepts are: the notion that people are spiritual and religious beings; a desire to belong; the place of prayer; a journey of faith; and spiritual and faith formation.

The Galilee program is based on the Christian understandings that people are spiritual and religious beings and the inherent need for conversion (metanoia) or “change of heart” that comes from encountering the divine (Paul VI, 1966, Chapter 1, para. 9). As attributed to Teilhard de Chardin’s philosophy for a deepening conscious awareness of the human person, “we are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience” (BrainyQuote.com, n. d.). It seems that human beings are attracted to some “One” other than the self, because their primary reality is that they are spiritual beings. The desire for God is within each person (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003, para. 27) because God takes the initiative of longing to be in union with people and, indeed, all of creation. On this point, the Second Vatican Council pointed out, “the root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already

invited to converse with God” (Vatican Council II, 1965, para. 19). The Council emphasised that “man would not exist were he not created by God’s love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator” (para. 19). This desire or longing to belong can lead people to the awareness of the need to belong to a group, to a community of like-minded and like-spirited people.

The Christian faith experience involves an immersion into the life of the Trinity, a life graced by faith as it is lived in relationship to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003, para. 260). This dynamic relationship calls people to reach out beyond themselves to others (and creation), so that they may enflesh the loving communion, or ‘communio’, of the Triune God (Vatican Council II, 1966, para. 19). In other words, faith experiences lead people to a lifestyle, which is unique to each person, yet because the Author of all human experiences is the God of Love, they all share that same Divine reality in their lives. Hence, “if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:12b-13 [NRSVCE]). A person’s spirituality is unique and personal, and at the same time draws the person towards a journey of faith shared by others, which may be understood at a deeper level as the person matures (CCE, 1982, para. 60).

Key to this journey of faith is formation in prayer in the lives of believers who seek the Divine Mystery. Prayer is related to the relationship that people long to deepen between God and self. They desire both the “how to” and the practice of talking to God in their own unique ways. Learning to appreciate the value of prayer and making prayer a daily practice is both a personal and public action. It also stems from the realisation that the One who has desired each person from the beginning takes the initiative in the connection process. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explained it thus:

The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003, para. 2560).

Further, the Catechism indicated, “Faith is man’s response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life” (para. 26).

A program that supports a journey of faith would ask each participant to consider two questions, “How do I respond to the call of God?” and, “How do I open myself to be filled with the light of faith?” For Christians, the answer lies in following Jesus, believing in him, and witnessing to him. The conversion moment (*metanoia*) may come with a personal encounter of Jesus in a person’s life, but the outcome of that encounter is a constant “yes” to be like him in the world. The aim of a spiritual and faith formation is to invite the participant to appreciate that, above all, Christian faith is, “conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 53). Faith entails a personal encounter with Jesus Christ that leads to discipleship. This call to discipleship demands an ongoing commitment to think like Jesus, to judge like Jesus and to live as Jesus lived (Jn 14:6). In such a manner “the believer unites himself to the community of disciples and appropriates the faith of the Church.” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 53).

The outcome of any spiritual and faith formation program then is the gradual unfolding and opening of the person’s interior life to such an extent that the interior life has an impact upon the external life. The interior life is visible in the way people live their daily life in relationship to God, self and others, and in the choices they make each day, conscious of the ‘Whom’ that is at the core of their being. At the Second Vatican Council, the Church Fathers proclaimed to the people of God that they are all called to holiness, “...in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: ‘For this is the will of God, your sanctification, [1 Thess. 4.3]’” (Vatican Council II, 1964, para. 39). Successive popes have renewed this call during their papacy. Most recently, Pope Francis (2018, para. 11) highlighted the importance that “each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts..., rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them”.

The process of formation in holiness or ‘sanctification’ is thus a life-long journey, where people move deeper into their experiences of their relationship to God, self and others. As people move towards union with Christ, they may be inspired and unsettled by the action of the Holy Spirit. In reality, their holiness or ‘spiritual life’ becomes visible to the world “by living ... lives with love and by bearing witness in everything [they] do, wherever [they] find

[them]selves” (Francis, 2018, para. 14). At some point, there comes the acknowledgment, stated with Saint Paul, “I live; no, it is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:19). The inward journey can be fraught with highs and lows, successes and failures, joys and suffering, a spiritual consciousness that can challenge the core of one’s being. Pope Francis advised, “When you feel the temptation to dwell on your own weakness, raise your eyes to Christ crucified and say: ‘Lord, I am a poor sinner, but you can work the miracle of making me a little bit better’”. As he pointed out, “in the Church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness” (Francis, 2018, para. 15).

Traditionally within the Catholic Church, spiritual and faith formation programs were solely for priests and consecrated religious. However, this formation or ‘call to holiness’ is for everyone (Francis, 2018, para. 10; Vatican Council II, 1964, para. 39). Consequently, such formation programs should also be a permanent and ongoing feature of educators’ professional experiences in Catholic schools (CCE, 1982, paras 59, 65, 68; Hackett, 2010). The formation should be characterised by an integration of all aspects of human formation (including the spiritual) with religious (or faith) formation (Benedict XVI, 2009, para. 6).

The approach to formation needs to be distinct from professional learning, to begin from the human spiritual life experiences of participants and towards an engagement of ‘praxis’ with their faith journey (CIWA, 2015, pp. 2-3). The praxis is designed to allow participants to go deeper, to become conscious of God’s presence in their lives, to converse with God and experience metanoia, “... a profound transformation of mind and heart; it causes the believer to live that conversion” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998, para. 55; Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003, paras 153-154). Furthermore, the approach to formation should encourage a “spirituality of communion” among the participants as they travel the journey of the program together and for those in their school communities (John Paul II, 2001, para. 43).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the research project was to investigate the perceptions of Catholic educators about the impact of the Galilee spiritual and faith formation program on their personal and professional efficacy. In light of the purpose of the research there were three primary research questions. These are:

1. What are the perceptions of Catholic school educators about the impact of the Galilee program on their personal efficacy?

2. What are the perceptions of Catholic school educators about the impact of the Galilee program on their professional efficacy?
3. What are the perceptions of Catholic school educators about how the Galilee program may be improved to have an impact on the personal and professional efficacy of Catholic educators?

Significance of the research

This research is significant as, at present, the literature pertaining to the spiritual and faith formation of lay educators is evolving (Gowdie, 2017; NCEC, 2017). The article attempts to contribute to this body of work by exploring the extent to which the Galilee program has had an impact on participants' spiritual and faith capabilities and, in turn, whether the Galilee program provides the personal and professional efficacy participants require to lead Catholic school communities into the future. Moreover, given the embryonic nature of the Galilee program, the research gives participants the opportunity to voice their concerns, questions and hopes in their journey of integrating faith and life so that the program can be better attuned to respond to participant needs (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 152a).

Research Participants

The participants in this research fall into two categories, those who undertook the trial Galilee program between 2016 and 2017 and those who enrolled in the two-year Galilee program from mid-2017 to early 2019. A total of 22 people from a maximum of 28 who undertook the two Galilee programs participated in the research, 11 from each category. The majority of participants were female, taught mainly in the metropolitan region, and exercised a degree of leadership in their workplace.

Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective

The research project used a constructivist epistemology incorporating both a qualitative approach with quantitative descriptive statistics (Crotty, 2015). A constructivist outlook to research is based on understanding the world of human experience, a world that is shaped through human interaction with people and objects (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins & Peng, 2014). Constructivism is often associated with Interpretivism (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), where the goal of interpretive social science is to understand the complex world of lived experience from the viewpoint of those who live it. Interpretive inquiry strives to

discover what is meaningful or relevant to people being studied and attempts to gain a feel for their social reality (Newman, 2006). Essential to the notion of symbolic interactionism, a specific theoretical perspective within interpretive social science is the positioning of oneself in the setting of those being studied, of considering situations from the viewpoint of “the actor”. Procedurally, symbolic interactionism directs investigators to take, to the best of their ability, the standpoint of those studied (Crotty, 1998). Consistent with a symbolic interactionist perspective, the current study allowed the researchers to explore the perspectives of participants who were involved in the Galilee Spiritual and Faith Formation Program.

Methodology

Intrinsic case study, which formed the methodological structure of this research, involves exploring one particular case for its own sake, where there is no expectation that results have implications for other case studies (Greenaway, 2011). Specifically, the focus of this study is on the effectiveness of the Galilee Spiritual and Faith Formation Program to improve the personal and professional efficacy of those Catholic teachers who undertook the program. The research method used to collect the data was an online survey (Appendix 1) consisting of 17 qualitative and quantitative questions divided into five sections: introduction; the personal impact of the Galilee program; the professional impact of the Galilee program; suggested improvements to the Galilee program; and concluding comments. The qualitative survey questions focused initially, on how the Galilee program had made an impact on the participants both personally and professionally. Further, participants were invited to consider in what ways the Galilee program might be improved to better enhance participants’ professional and personal efficacy via open-ended questions. The quantitative questions required participants to offer their perspective to various aspects of the program using Likert scale and ranking items.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was the approach used to examine the data from the seven qualitative questions in the survey. Berg (2007, p. 303) defines content analysis as “a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings”. Specifically, the researchers used an interpretative format as described by Miles and Huberman (1994) to analyse the data: data collection, data reduction, and data display and conclusion drawing/verification. That is, the

researchers selected segments of language that reflected participants' views on (a) the Galilee program and (b) ways it might be improved. These segments were displayed under appropriate headings. The quantitative data from the 10 quantitative survey questions were displayed using percentages and column graphs.

Results

The results are reported in four sections. The first section concerns the personal impact of the Galilee program on participants. That is, whether the program had been valuable in developing a sense of confidence in participants' own faith efficacy. The second section describes the professional impact the program had on participants' confidence to promote spiritual and faith formation in their school communities. The third section reports on ways participants believed the program could be enhanced. The final section afforded participants an opportunity to make any further comments regarding the Galilee program.

Personal Impact

Participants strongly identified the personal impact of the Galilee programs, with 20 of the 22 participants (90.9%) responding positively to the question on personal impact, and 12 of these participants (54.5%) selecting the top options of either "a great deal" or "a lot". The activities that had most impact on the participants were, in order, the facilitator presentations, prayer times and mentoring groups. Participants also proposed two other personal impact factors: "building a sense of community" and "time for reflection" (Figure 2).

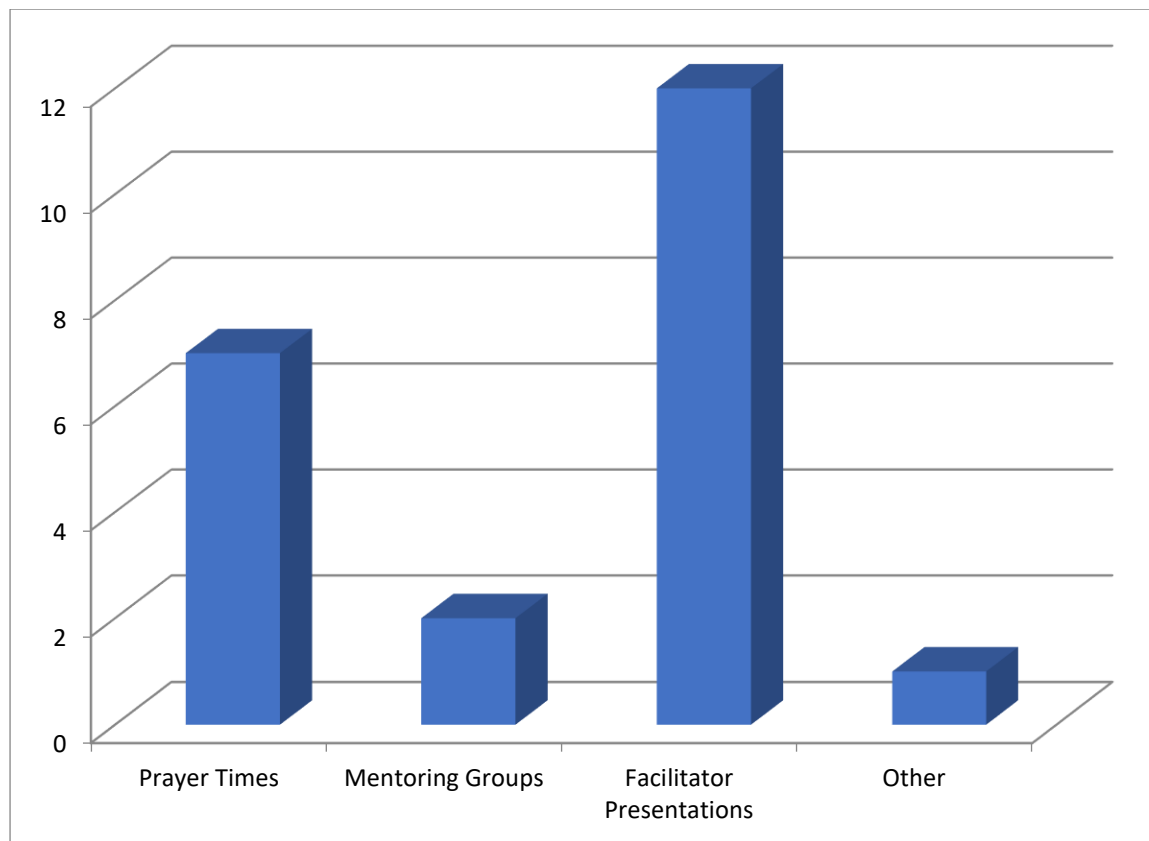


Figure 2

Activities impacting participants personally

The 11 participants who undertook the Trial 2016-2017 Program, ranked the personal impact factor of the four Gathering themes as follows: the retreat experience (prayer); being yourself with God; introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine; and, integrating faith culture and life. Participants who undertook the 2017-2019 Program, ranked the personal impact factor of the four Gathering themes as: the retreat experience (prayer); Christian spirituality; integrating faith culture and life; and, introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine.

A total of 21 participants (81.8%) responded when asked in what ways the Galilee activities and topics had made a difference to them personally. Participants commented favourably on the opportunity that the Program gave to reflect and deepen their own spirituality and faith. Comments included: “The opportunity to stop, reflect and make room for God to nurture my own spiritual journey”; “really made me look within myself and ask questions about my faith, my work and my abilities”; “It has made me want to develop and learn more about my faith and to further build my relationship with God”. Participants also

remarked on the opportunity, as one person explained, “to share, develop and grow in faith/spirituality with a like-minded group”.

Professional Impact

Participants also strongly identified the professional impact of the Galilee programs, with 19 of the 22 participants (95.4%) responding positively to the question on professional impact, and 10 of these participants (47.3%) selecting the top options of either “a great deal” or “a lot”. The activities that had most impact on the participants were, in order, the facilitator presentations, prayer times and mentoring groups. Participants also proposed three other professional impact factors: “networking and socialising with new people”, the value of “readings” and the availability of reflective activities (Figure 3).

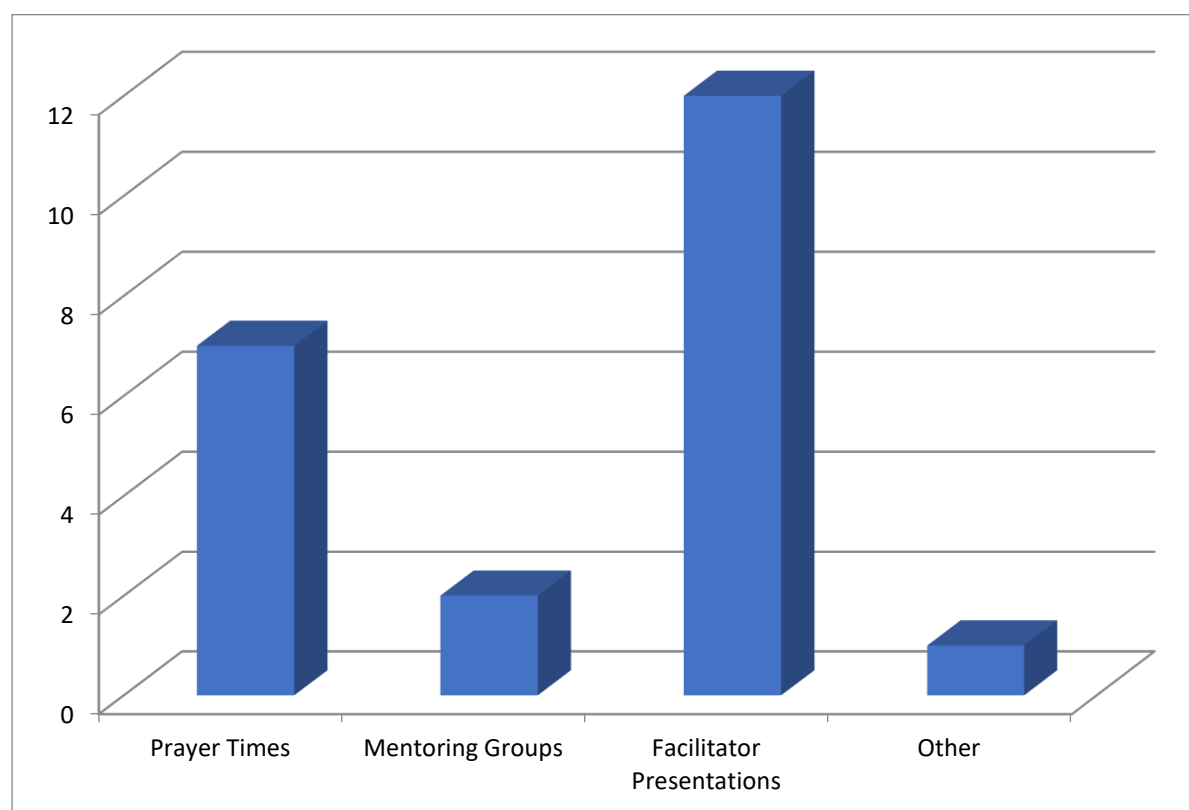


Figure 3

Activities impact participants professionally

The participants who undertook the Trial 2016-2017 Program, ranked the professional impact factor of the four Gathering themes as follows: “Being yourself before God”; “The retreat experience (prayer)”; “Integrating faith, culture and life”; and, “Introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine”. Participants who undertook the 2017-2019

Program, ranked the professional impact factor of the four Gathering themes as: “Integrating faith, culture and life”; “The retreat experience (prayer)”; “Christian spirituality”; “Introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine”.

A total of 16 participants responded when asked in what ways the Galilee activities and topics had made a difference to them professionally. Specially, participants commented that the Program had enhanced their confidence “to nurture and lead faith formation” and highlighted the community aspect of professional learning. Comments included: “The program has given me the confidence to introduce different methods of praying at staff meetings as well as within the classroom”; “The real benefit has been having the time to mix with like-minded professionals and having the opportunity to discuss situations and scenarios, as well as networking within the context of spirituality and faith formation”; “The program is giving me ideas to use with staff at prayer, for retreat day topics, and liturgies.” Table 3 provides a comparison between the personal and professional impact of the program.

Table 3

Comparison between personal and professional impact of the Galilee Program

Personal impact	Professional impact
<i>Ranking of Activities</i>	<i>Ranking of Activities</i>
1. The facilitator presentations	1. The facilitator presentations
2. Prayer times	2. Prayer times
3. Mentoring groups	3. Mentoring groups
4. Building sense of community and time for reflection	4. Socialising with people, having readings, reflective activities
<i>Ranking of Topics</i>	<i>Ranking of Topics</i>
Trial 2016-2017 Program	Trial 2016-2017 Program
1. The retreat experience (prayer)	1. Being yourself before God
2. Being yourself before God	2. The retreat experience (prayer)
3. Introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine”	3. Integrating faith, culture and life
4. Integrating faith, culture and life	4. Introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine

2017-2019 Program	2017-2019 Program
1. The retreat experience (prayer)	1. Integrating faith, culture and life
2. Christian spirituality	2. The retreat experience (prayer)
3. Integrating faith, culture and life	3. Christian spirituality
4. Introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine	4. Introduction to spirituality and the desire for the Divine

Improvements to the Galilee Program

There were a range of responses by participants as to ways the Galilee program could be improved to enhance personal impact. Five out of 17 (29.4%) respondents thought that “the program does not need any improvements”, four (23.5%) thought more time for reflection was necessary, and three (17.6%) would prefer more opportunity for small group discussions. Comments included: “more opportunity for shared retreat prayer would be personally beneficial”; “the course is content rich, which doesn’t always allow time for personal reflection”; “I believe some more small-group time would be beneficial for forming a tight group of people you can trust and talk to”.

Participant responses were quite diverse as to ways the Galilee program could be enhanced to improve the professional impact. For example, one participant believed there was need “for more time for collaborative discussion and data sharing”. As this person explained, “just hearing what other people are doing in their schools with their staff can prompt ideas for the enhancement for faith and spirituality”. Other recommendations included “learning retreat processes”, “modules where we focus on developing student spirituality”, “units dedicated to staff formation” and “include a topic about planning staff retreats”.

Further Comments

The second last question in the survey asked participants whether they would recommend the Galilee program to colleagues in Catholic schools. Participants were strong in their affirmation with 18 out of the 19 respondents (94.74%) stating that they “definitely would” and one (5.26%) indicating “probably would”. The last question on the survey invited participants to make a final observation about the Galilee program. Comments were affirming. Of the 18 respondents, 12 (66.67%) thought the program was “very worthwhile”, a “great initiative” or “loved the whole experience”. In particular, five participants (27.7%)

highlighted the value of having “a community of like-minded people” involved in the program.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Galilee program was designed as an approach to address the need for spiritual and faith formation of lay educators and leaders in Catholic schools, both from a personal and professional perspective. It is evident from the responses of participants in both the initial trial program and the first full program that the Galilee program has demonstrated a potential to meet this need. Participants strongly indicated that the Galilee program had a personal impact on them through such activities as facilitator presentations, prayer times and mentoring groups. In particular, participants acknowledged the occasion for prayer, especially through the retreat experience, the opportunity to explore their own ‘Christian’ spirituality and the subsequent faith journey and formation that prayer and spirituality promotes. Such results are reflective of the literature, which highlights the significance of prayer (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003, para. 2651), the developing of one’s spirituality (Francis, 2018) and the need for faith formation (Benedict, XVI, 2009; Francis, 2018).

Participants clearly recognised the professional impact of the Galilee program, in particular, through the facilitator presentations and prayer times. They noted that opportunities to pray, reflect, listen and discuss with their facilitators and colleagues enhanced their confidence to work in their school setting. They commented on a greater preparedness to introduce new ways of praying with staff and students, of leading retreat days and conducting liturgies. The literature discusses that a person’s spirituality can draw that person towards a journey of faith shared by others where that faith can develop and mature (CCE, 1982). What this study might well be indicating is that when teachers come together with like-spirited and like-minded colleagues, they can be enthused professionally to share their faith journey in the workplace.

So, did the participants arrive at a metaphorical Galilee? Like the disciples, were they able to re-discover or connect with Divine in the person of Jesus? The responses from the participants do indicate that the experience of the Galilee program had a positive impact on them. In a sense, their experience led to a *metanoia*. However, to what depth this *metanoia* occurred remains unclear or whether a personal change of heart was sustainable. Responses in regard to opportunities for prayer, personal reflection and retreat seemed to indicate a

deepening in personal spiritual and faith experience. Furthermore, the blossoming of the need to converse and share their experiences and ideas with others appeared to be occurring. What was evident was participants' greater confidence in sharing their faith. Did the Galilee program have a professional impact? The answer here is tentative and may need to be explored further when the 2017-2019 cohort has fully completed their program. Nonetheless, the indications are that the participants were becoming emboldened to share their spiritual and faith journey with others, including within their school communities. Such a growing enthusiasm may be the motivation for the expressed desire to network with each other about initiatives in staff formation, especially in regards to staff retreats at their schools.

The Galilee program is a work in progress. When invited, participants did suggest that the program might be enhanced through more reflection time, greater opportunity for group discussion and Gatherings tailored more for professional or workplace needs. At the time of the survey, the 2019-2019 Galilee cohort was halfway through the two-year program and still to complete Gatherings with such a focus. A follow-up survey at the end of the program is proposed with this cohort to see if their suggestions were met. However, what is evident from participant responses is that, overall, they appeared well satisfied with the Galilee program. The program is now linked with postgraduate studies at The University of Notre Dame Australia. Such an action affirms the advice about the need for a program of experiential learning to contribute to professional advancement (Bracken, Dean & Gowdie, 2016). It is anticipated that further research will fine-tune the Galilee program to meet progressively the needs of educators and leaders in Catholic education in Western Australia.

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Appendix 1: Survey Questions

1. Do you agree in answering questions on this survey? a) Yes b) No
2. How much has the Galilee program made an impact on your personally?
a) a great deal b) a lot c) a moderate amount d) a little e) none at all.
3. Rank for 1 to 4 (4 representing the most impact) the following activities on the impact they had on your personally?
a) prayer times b) mentoring groups c) facilitator presentations d) other.
4. If you selected 'other' in Question 3, please state what this activity is:
5. If you attended the 2016-2017 Trial Program, rank from 1 to 4 (4 representing the most impact) these Gathering themes on the impact they had on your personally. Otherwise, leave this question blank.
a) introduction to spirituality and the desire for the divine b) being yourself before God c) integrating faith, culture and life d) the retreat experience (prayer).
6. If you attended the 2017-2019 Program, rank from 1 to 4 (4 representing the most impact) these Gathering themes on the impact they had on you personally. Otherwise leave the question blank.
a) introduction to spirituality and the desire for the divine b) Christian spirituality c) integrating faith, culture and life d) the retreat experience (prayer).
7. Reflecting on the activities and topics experienced through the Galilee program, in what ways have they made a difference to you personally?
8. How much has the Galilee program made an impact on you professionally?
a) a great deal b) a lot c) a moderate amount d) a little e) none at all.
9. Rank for 1 to 4 (4 representing the most impact) the following activities on the impact they had on your professionally?
a) prayer times b) mentoring groups c) facilitator presentations d) other.
10. If you selected 'other' in Question 9, please state what this activity is:

11. If you attended the 2016-2017 Trial Program, rank from 1 to 4 (4 representing the most impact) these Gathering themes on the impact they had on your professionally. Otherwise, leave this question blank.

a) introduction to spirituality and the desire for the divine b) being yourself before God c) integrating faith, culture and life d) the retreat experience (prayer).

12. If you attended the 2017-2019 Program, rank from 1 to 4 (4 representing the most impact) these Gathering themes on the impact they had on you professionally. Otherwise leave the question blank.

a) introduction to spirituality and the desire for the divine b) Christian spirituality c) integrating faith, culture and life d) the retreat experience (prayer).

13. Reflecting on the activities and topics experienced through the Galilee program, in what ways have they made a difference to you professionally?

14. In what ways do you think the Galilee program can be improved to have an impact on participants personally?

15. In what ways do you think the Galilee program can be improved to have an impact on participants professionally?

16. How much are you inclined to recommend the Galilee program to colleagues in Catholic schools?

a) definitely would b) probably would c) undecided d) probably would not e) definitely would not.

17. If there was one more thing you would like to say about the Galilee program, what would it be?