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The Process and Impact of a Catholic School Amalgamation: A Mixed Method, Single Case Study

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THE PROCESS AND IMPACT OF A CATHOLIC SCHOOL AMALGAMATION: A MIXED METHOD, SINGLE CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This research provides an investigative analysis of the impact of a large-scale change process involving the amalgamation of two long-standing Catholic schools in a capital city of Australia. The study explores how a change process impacted staff, student and parent stakeholders within the initial year of a school amalgamation by examining Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, the physical learning environment, and leadership and administration. The objective is to better understand the process and the impact of the change that took place during the amalgamation, in order to further inform the planning and leading of future Catholic school amalgamations and associated processes, both in terms of student learning outcomes and student self-efficacy. Emerging from a pragmatic worldview, this study captures an insider view of a school amalgamation in detailing the outcomes of actions in reviewing the overall impact of a social phenomenon.

This mixed-methods single case study used an online survey instrument to gather the participants' perspectives on the various aspects of the amalgamation, with their experiences analysed concurrently within a document review process. The study's emerging themes were then viewed through the lens of Kotter's eight-step change framework for further synthesis. Despite the challenging and problematic nature of whole-school reform, and the recognition from all stakeholders of the ongoing need to continue building a combined and fully integrated school learning culture, the study provides evidence of the goodwill that existed within the school community bound by this case study and their commitment to a merged school entity.

Findings from the study reinforce the importance of honouring the charism of the original school founders within the process of developing an explicit Catholic school learning culture;

and how a whole-school focus on student learning and wellbeing within the newly amalgamated College was affirmed by staff, students, and parents. The physical learning environment is also presented as a necessary vehicle in contributing to the educational change process within this case study. The findings present the need to consider a collective form of leadership and are reflected in a proposed conceptual model, promoting a theory to inform future potential Catholic school amalgamations in Australia.

This study serves to highlight the challenging complexities that occur as a result of a school amalgamation and the pressures placed on leaders charged with the responsibility of navigating a large-scale initiative within their unique context. The study concludes by making recommendations to safeguard a Catholic school community's ethos during large-scale reform. This research is significant in this field as it provides a practical understanding of the barriers and opportunities within the nature of school organisational change.

Declaration

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made. The thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated 2018. The research received human research ethics approval from the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval Number 018134S.

Stephen Gough, 2022

Acknowledgements

List of Tables and Figures

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study provides an investigative analysis of the impact of a significant change process involving the amalgamation of two long-standing secondary Catholic schools. The study explores Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, the physical learning environment, leadership and administration, and how the change process impacted staff, student and parent stakeholders within the initial year of a school amalgamation during 2016. The findings from this study will assist in informing future Catholic school mergers and related processes in Australia.

The context of this research is set within a merged secondary school of an urban Catholic parish within a city in Australia. The Catholic school sector in Australia is primarily composed of Catholic diocesan systemic schools, which, together with several independent Catholic schools operated by religious congregations, equates to 20% of all Australian schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020), with each Catholic school expressing and living out their own unique school culture.

While exploring the reasons behind the amalgamation of the two Catholic schools in this study is not a feature of this research, the demographics that bind this case included an increasing urban sprawl on the outskirts of a major city. The establishment of various new satellite suburbs and the new schools that followed to meet the growing and aspirational population of the burgeoning local government area increased student enrolment pressures on the surrounding schools. As a result of these varying economies of scale, and after a period of community consultation, the formal decision to amalgamate the two long-standing single-sex Catholic schools was made.

The proposed amalgamation of the two schools within this study was to reimagine the delivery of Catholic education within an urban parish. The amalgamation presented the school community members with a unique challenge and opportunity to build a new Catholic school culture with newly formed relationships. Consistent with the literature on school improvement that focuses on the challenging nature of leading a large-scale school reform (Dimmock, 2011; Elmore, 2016; Fullan, 2009; Saxi, 2017; Starr, 2014; Thomson, 2010), the amalgamation was not without problems - with difficulties presented as both foreseeable and unexpected challenges. Within the merging of assumed customs, structures and feelings, the central feature of the change was of two separate and unique school cultures combining and how this impacted the change process overall (Hinde, 2004; Priestley et al., 2011; Raywid, 1999; Saxi, 2017; Thomson, 2010). However, there remains limited research into understanding how school leaders can effectively navigate the competing demands of safeguarding a Catholic school community's ethos during large-scale reform while simultaneously building the capacity of others to improve student learning and wellbeing outcomes. The findings within this study emphasised how the importance of understanding the history of the original schools and respecting their significance assisted the two schools to physically restructure and, more importantly, to start the social process of creating a new Catholic school.

The physical restructure considered within this study adds to the limited research that appreciates how altering a school's physical learning environment impacts a large-scale school reform change process (Woolner et al., 2018). The study found that the relationship between Catholic school culture, a vision for student learning and wellbeing, and the physical learning environment were the drivers of the school change. The study also examined how a collective

form of leadership within a school reform initiative requires a balance between the transformational and transactional elements (Eckert, 2019; Ni et al., 2018; Raelin, 2018).

The Researcher has 17 years of senior leadership experience, along with prior first-hand experiences of a variety of previous Catholic school amalgamations and restructures from the unique insider perspectives of a school student, teacher, middle-leader, school leadership team member, secondary school principal, and system leader. These experiences have included working in various single-sex and co-educational Catholic schools and acting as a steering committee member, critical friend, coach, and mentor in contributing to other Catholic school change processes. These defining opportunities have informed a practical understanding of organisational change management for the Researcher and reinforced the strong desire for this study.

Throughout the year before the amalgamation, the Researcher concurrently held the separate principal roles at both the former Boys' and Girls' College's and was later appointed as the founding principal of the newly formed merged school entity. Currently, the Researcher works as a principal in an independent Catholic secondary school in a regional setting.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This research provides an investigative analysis of the process and impact on staff, students and parents within a large-scale change process involving a Catholic school amalgamation. This study adopted a single case study design using mixed methods (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 2017) to analyse the embedded units of Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, the physical learning environment, and leadership and administration. The theoretical framework of Kotter's (1996) eight-step process for leading change was used as a

critical post-analysis of the case data findings. The Researcher developed a framework for conceptualising a Catholic school restructure for future decision-makers to consider as part of large-scale school reform.

The amalgamation of two single-sex Catholic schools provided the newly merged community with a unique opportunity to try and achieve 'the best of both worlds' within a newly combined school culture and direction. Through attempting to authentically honour the combined values of the respective religious founders of both schools, the newly formed College took the opportunity to reimagine educational possibilities. In merging as a co-educational Catholic school, the College also introduced a parallel curriculum model that maintained single-sex core learning classes and co-educational experience classes. The parallel curriculum model endeavoured to address the gender gaps associated with boys declining literacy levels (Thomas, 2020; Voyer & Voyer, 2014) and girls' self-efficacy in science and mathematics (Goetz et al., 2013; Stoet & Geary, 2018).

The objective of this case study was to understand the process and impact of the amalgamation on the staff, student and parent stakeholders. The study's secondary goal was to contribute to change management leadership that informs future Catholic school restructures in Australia. The argument presented in this research is that a commitment to a collective form of leadership (Eckert, 2019) that acknowledges the complementary styles of transformational and transactional leadership is necessary for effective organisational reform (Dartey-Baah, 2015; Holten & Brenner, 2015). The active engagement of collective leadership for a whole school community promotes the students as the actual beneficiaries of an educational change process (Ni et al., 2018).

1.2 Justification of the Study

Considering the limited research on Australian Catholic school amalgamations, this case study provided a mode to investigate a contemporary understanding of the entire event, which included the lived experiences of staff, student and parent stakeholders in further adding to the research on school restructures. The study, therefore, contributes to change management leadership, expressly informing Catholic school restructuring processes. Such research and the inevitable implications will further enhance the understanding and development of leadership styles in authentically addressing change management within Australian contemporary Catholic school settings (Stark, 2019).

However, distinctive features further justified this study in contributing to the literature more broadly. The understanding of how a charism of the original school founders can contribute to a Catholic school culture provided a contemporary interpretation of a meaningful conduit for reimagining a new Catholic school culture and identity (Cook & Simonds, 2011; Lydon, 2009; Rossiter, 2013); and more importantly how staff, student and parent stakeholders interpreted this understanding. Such findings have implications for future Catholic school amalgamations between those schools with established Catholic school charisms and highlight how restructuring processes in Catholic schools are different to other schools.

This study also adds to the ongoing debate for-and-against either single-sex or co-educational schooling (Fitzsimmons et al., 2018; Mael et al., 2005; Pahlke et al., 2014; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016). The findings of this study suggested that a parallel curriculum model catering for both single-sex core learning subjects and co-educational experience classes has merit in not only supporting student learning and wellbeing outcomes (Hart, 2016; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016) but also in acting as an effective ingredient to a cultural change process. Equally, the impact of the

physical learning environment in contributing to the change process was also reinforced and contributes to the gap of literature in this field (Woolner et al., 2018).

Using a case study design is consistent with the importance of identifying each Catholic school setting as unique. The investigation and reporting on the real-life interactions between events and human relationships (Cohen et al., 2011) captured valuable insights to inform other such interventions (Yin, 2017). Overall, this study identified how two separate and long-standing school communities expressed their grief for the previous school entities' closure while being open and willing enough to combine for a newly combined school paradigm.

1.3 The Research Question

Coleman and Thomas (2017) refer to a current international reduction in recently published contextual case studies that detail organisational change. With there being a dearth of literature on Catholic school amalgamations and recent Australian Catholic school restructures, this study explored a contemporary understanding of a Catholic school change process as a lived phenomenon through two primary research questions that guided the study. The initial research question addresses the impact of the change process:

- What was the impact of the amalgamation of two single-sex Catholic secondary schools?

In determining the impact and the factors that assisted or hindered the merging of two Catholic schools, the following sub-questions that informed the initial research question are as follows:

- What was the impact on Catholic school life and culture within the change process?

- What was the impact on student learning and wellbeing within the change process?

- What was the impact on the physical learning environment within the change process?

The second primary research question further guided this study in providing insights for future school change processes:

- What can be learned from leading a Catholic school restructure?

The theoretical framework of Kotter's (1996) eight-step process for leading change provided a lens to this question. Kotter's eight-step model allowed for a critical post-analysis of the case data findings, inclusive of both the process and the impact of the change process on the key stakeholders during and as a result of the school amalgamation.

1.4 Methodology

These research questions were investigated through a single case study exploratory design (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 2017) within a pragmatic mixed-methods paradigm (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Mitchell, 2018) and reported in a narrative form (Costley et al., 2010; Chavez, 2008). This study aimed to investigate the casebound impact of a Catholic school amalgamation. The mixed methods used to gather data included an online survey instrument that collected quantitative and qualitative data and analysed them concurrently within a document review process (Bowen, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007). The research was conducted as a historical review and secondary analysis of existing data in order to mitigate bias and conflict of interest and ensure the protected confidentiality of individual participants (Smith et al., 2020).

The data was collected directly after the amalgamation by an external consultant and was analysed by the Researcher to evaluate its impact on the school community. Permission was granted to utilise the secondary data set. The Researcher conducted the data analysis and

identified the study's emerging themes and significant findings within the study context. The pseudonym for the name of the merged Catholic school entity throughout this study is the College. Based on the findings of this study, the Researcher created a framework for conceptualising a Catholic school restructure. This framework further justifies the significance of this study. It serves as a tool for supporting future whole-school reform and is promoted as a contemporary theory for organisational change within the Catholic school sector.

1.5 Thesis Structure

This chapter introduced the study by briefly explaining the context, purpose and the researcher's interest in the study. Through justifying the study by outlining the various gaps in the literature, the research questions were then provided before an overview of the methodology. Chapter 2 presents a literature review of the relevant and interrelated categories of this study: Catholic school life and culture, vision for student learning and wellbeing, physical learning environment, and leadership and administration. These categories of interest inform and contextualise an understanding of a contemporary Catholic school amalgamation. The chapter then concludes with a critical review of the theoretical framework of Kotter's (1996) eight-step process for leading change to understand Kotter's eight-step model as a critical post-analysis tool in critiquing the impact of organisational change.

Chapter 3 details the methodology used in this research. In outlining the pragmatic theoretical perspective of the study, the case study design and mixed-methods are justified, and the collection and analysis of case data are defined. The results and findings chapter (Chapter 4) presents three individual case stakeholder reports representing the study's casebound students, staff, and parents. Following this, the emerging themes from the case data are outlined before a

thematic analysis of the stakeholder data. Chapter 5 concludes the study by revisiting the

research questions, including applying Kotter's eight-step model as a critical post-analysis tool in

critiquing the overall impact of the amalgamation. Finally, Chapter 6 explains the implications of

this study and suggests recommendations for further studies in this area.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical synthesis of the literature relevant to this case and provides a guide to inform the research presented in this study. Each section progresses by focusing on the identified categories: Catholic school life and culture, vision for student learning and wellbeing, physical learning environment, and leadership and administration. While each of these are presented as individual sections, they are not linear in concept. Instead, they are interdependent in their contributing impact on key stakeholders due to the school amalgamation inherent to this research. The first four sections of this chapter can be considered an expression of the 'what' was transforming within the amalgamation. While the fifth section on leadership is a comment on the 'how' within an Australian Catholic school setting's contextual character. The first five sections of this review represent the embedded subunits of analysis.

The final section of this chapter introduces the theoretical framework of Kotter's (1996) eight-step process for leading change. The intention of applying Kotter's eight-step model is to allow for a critical post-analysis of the case data and the impact the change process had on the key stakeholders both during and as a result of the school amalgamation.

This chapter presents an expansive scope of the relevant literature that is fundamental for the reader to fully appreciate the context within the change process, resulting from the school amalgamation central to this study. The literature selected for inclusion in each section provides a basis for considering the implications for change management within future Catholic school amalgamations in Australia as well as provide considerations in the planning phase of establishing new Catholic schools in the future.

2.1 Catholic School Life and Culture

Authentic Catholic schools are founded on the person of Jesus Christ and enlivened by the gospel to be a deliberately distinct point of difference in providing a holistic education for young people (Cook & Simonds, 2011; Heft, 1997; Sullivan, 2001). This point of difference lies within the Church's mission of Catholic schools having a responsibility to be a primary source of evangelisation. Such a view is expressed by the Congregation of Catholic Education, which has the overall pontifical responsibility for Catholic schools. As the ecclesiastical authority, it is stated through *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1998, n. 16): "the Catholic school is not reserved to Catholics only, but is open to all, those who appreciate and share its qualified educational project."

Such a position presupposes three different evangelising contexts within Catholic schools: staff and students who have never known the Christian message, staff and students who are active within the Christian faith, and staff and students who have lost a sense of their faith. The importance of Catholic social teaching and the preferential option for the poor and marginalised expands on the outward nature of Catholic schools educating in faith, and in so doing, further defines the central purpose for Catholic schools (Groome, 1996, as cited in McLaughlin et al., 1996).

Since the 1830s, the various founding religious orders of Catholic schools within Australia have attempted to respond to the evangelising mission of Catholic school life and culture aligned with the accepted values and norms within societal times (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Braniff, 2007; Lydon, 2009; Rossiter, 2013; Schneiders, 2000). Pope Paul VI identified this mission in the 1965 Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life: *Perfectae Caritatis*. This decree was in response to changing societal times. While it identified the

universal principles of living a Christian life, it also strengthened the sense of individual and unique characteristics associated with the original inspiration of the various Christian communities.

Within an ever-increasing secularised society, the sociological challenge for Catholic schools' is centred around cultural identity and relevance. Young people in their search for a personalised understanding of spirituality and religious meaning (Franchi & Rymarz, 2017; Rossiter, 2010; Tacey, 2000) has led to a progressive weakening of formal religious practice (Dixon et al., 2013). Such a cultural shift presents ongoing and challenging implications for Catholic schools, teacher training courses, and the Church more broadly; in ensuring the effective formation of current and future teachers within Catholic schools can authentically address the purpose of educating in faith and in nurturing an authentic Catholic school culture (Franchi & Rymarz, 2017; Gleeson et al., 2018; Miller, 2006; Overstreet, 2010). Within the context of broader societal change, Catholic school leadership formation and succession becomes an ongoing challenge in maintaining a Catholic school character and ethos (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). While religious vocations have significantly diminished over recent times (Rymarz, 2016), the recent generation of Catholic school principals has generally relied on being grounded and informed through both their direct and indirect experiences from parish members and school-based religious congregations. Therefore, the future generations of Catholic school leaders will arguably have limited experiences of lived-religious norms to call upon within their faith leadership responsibility (Grace, 2002; Neidhart & Lamb, 2016).

Within an increasingly secularised challenge, the term 'charism' can be seen as an explicit expression and vehicle for Catholic school life and culture. Given the increasing secularisation of Australian society (Singleton, 2015), Catholic schools, in responding to a

meaningful point of difference, have needed to define their role more specifically. Schneiders (2000) identified a heightened interest in charism through her analysis of Vatican II readings, which in her view led "not only to a deep reflection on the founding inspiration and unique identity of various groups but also to considerable confusion, and even disillusionment in some quarters" (p. 283).

While the emergence of religious orders explicitly articulating their distinctive religious charisms could be seen as a post-Vatican response to supporting the ever-increasing laity of staff within Catholic schools, the concept and definition of charism have biblical origins through the writings of St Paul and his reference to charism being both inspired and bestowed on from God: "The gifts are varied, but the Spirit is the same" (1 Corinthians 12:4). This theological origin of a charism is seen as a direct gift from the Holy Spirit and an enacted expression of faith as defined within the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

> Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit
> which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building
> up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world. (Catechism of the
> Catholic Church, 2019, #799)

Pope John Paul II, in outlining how the principles of Catholic social teaching are to be a lived truth within society, further expanded on the role that a charism plays in the Church's ministry of teaching (Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, 2006), which aligns to the concept presented by Cook and Simonds (2011, p.321) that "charism has an outward orientation" that benefits not only the modern-day Church but society more broadly. Such a view is attuned to what Grace (2010) described as a sense of 'spiritual capital' that combines a theological understanding with

"a personal witness to faith in practice, action and relationships" (p.120). In other words, it is the gift of a charism that provides a means to transmit a Christian life in both words and actions.

Within the Australian context, such a transmission of the faith originated in the early years of settlement when Catholics sought to establish their own faith-based Church community schools so that by the 1870s, there were up to 122 Catholic primary schools in New South Wales alone (Kavanagh & Pallisier, 2014). In defying the government's 1882 Public Instruction Act of pronouncing that education is compulsory, free, and secular, the Australian Catholic Bishops called upon Religious Congregations from across the world to address the ever-growing desire for Catholic education in Australia during this period. Between the 1800s and 1960s, the religious congregations, mostly from overseas, established Catholic schools at a time when there was no government funding available (Luttrell & Lourey 2006). Some of the pioneering religious orders establishing themselves in Australia during this period included the Dominicans (1831), Jesuits (1848), Sisters of St Joseph (1866), Christian Brothers (1868), Marist Brothers (1872), Loreto Sisters (1875) and the Franciscans (1879) (Kavanagh & Pallisier, 2014). These religious orders drew upon the inspiration within their charism, which was borne out from the founders of their respective congregations in establishing their own Catholic school identity and cultural characteristics. Many of the original founders of Catholic religious congregations, including Blessed Edmund Rice (Christian Brothers, Ireland, 1802), St Marcellin Champagnat (Marist Brothers, France, 1817) and St Mary Mackillop (Sisters of St Joseph, Australia, 1866), responded to the social circumstances of their time in meeting the basic educational needs of societies' poor and marginalised. In describing how the development of these communities established their own individual religious expressions, Schneiders (2000) explains:

Ongoing and deep narrative developed through the community's history with all its

> myths and symbols, outstanding events and persons, struggles and triumphs, projects
>
> and challenges, that a group has been developing from its origins to the present, that
>
> has become the inner heritage of each member down through the years, giving them
>
> shared vision. (p.288)

In defining such shared characteristics, the cultural school symbols, stories, rituals and liturgies complemented the curriculum content in nurturing a community of faith and service for those times (Convey, 2012, as cited in Gleeson et al., 2018).

Because this study intends to test if the process of blending both of the founding charisms of the original two Catholic schools was a fundamental component within the change process of school amalgamation, there are other counter views to consider. For example, Rossiter (2013) described how school charisms can "maintain some sense of historical continuity with the distinctive spirituality and mission of their founding religious orders" (p. 12). Such a view is consistent with Lydon's (2009) examination of the Salesian religious order in highlighting the importance of a specific charism providing a means to transmit and support a school's Catholic life and culture. At the same time, Lydon (2009) acknowledged the challenge of transmitting these charisms into the future and cites Groome (1998), who claimed that "If the foundation charisms [of religious institutions] cannot be broken open among teaching colleagues, there will be no alternative but to call it [the Catholic education project] off" (p. 51).

The future of Catholic schools is also the focus of an Australian publication by Kavanagh and Pallisier (2014); in encouraging the formation and nurturing of Catholic school charisms, they present a provocation of whether Catholic schools will even be Catholic in 2030. Literature supporting the transmission of a specific Catholic school charism is, however, opposed by Braniff (2007), who through his findings concluded that "the analysis, elucidation and

dissemination of the charisms of the founders of the various religious orders have been a veritable 'growth industry' for the last twenty-five years" (p. 24).

Braniff (2007) believes there is a level of confusion between the concept of a charism instead of an educational vision and argues that preserving a traditional charism of the founding religious orders is more about nostalgia than educating in faith. However, underestimating or devaluing a Catholic school charism can arguably increase the risk of Catholic schools becoming a "one size fits all" community, a concern expressed by Neidhart and Lamb (2016) about Catholic school leadership. The specific charism of the religious founders who established Catholic school communities in the past can provide the Catholic school leaders of today with a meaningful spiritual framework for expressing and enacting a mission and vision which provides students and staff with a common story, tradition and unifying language. Pope John Paul II, in writing to the religious orders in his exhortation, *Vita Consecrata* (1996), encouraged a new perspective of the various traditional charisms and their institutes; "The participation of the laity often brings unexpected and rich insights into certain aspects of the charism leading to a more spiritual interpretation of it and helping to draw from it direction for new activities (p.55). In more recent years Pope Francis (2014) also emphasised the importance of a charism being a broad gift that is integrated for all people to share:

> The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelising Church with different
> charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the church. They are
> not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safe-keeping;
> rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn
> to the centre which is Christ and then channelled into an evangelising impulse.
> A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability

to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God's holy and faithful people for

the good of all.

Such a view is advocated by Cook and Simonds (2011) in their presentation of a practical framework in which to view Catholic life and culture within contemporary Catholic schools, and one which is centred upon the organisational principle of relationships. Such a framework presupposes what it means to be an authentic Catholic school. It provides explicit guidance to students and teachers in building relationships with self, God, others, the local and world community, and creation. The work of Cook and Simonds (2011) reinforced the importance of relationships when they reported that "Catholic educators who embrace the concept of relationship building as the organising principle for their schools will embark on a process of educational change" (p.323).

But while a relational focus preserves the original mission for Catholic schools to educate in faith through providing a way forward for Catholic schools to continue flourishing into the future (Grace, 2002; Groome, 1998; Lydon, 2009); there are also examples where those responsible for leading previous Catholic school amalgamations chose not to honour the founding religious school charisms and, in some cases, selected one over the other (Luttrell & Lourey, 2006). Such decisions on the very fabric of a Catholic learning organisation directly impact the culture of a Catholic school, and in turn, the staff who work in the school and the students who learn and are pastorally cared for. While this section examined the missionary reason for Catholic schools, it also underpins the following section with its focus on examining the literature on student learning and wellbeing.

2.2 Student Learning and Wellbeing

The ongoing debate over single-sex education versus co-education is a polarising topic that parents, educators and policymakers continue to grapple with. This section reviews the related literature within this debate to inform the case data presented within this study. Further, this section also reviews literature on the inextricable links between student wellbeing and the impact this has on student learning outcomes and examines the growing need to address gender gaps in education. After considering a wide range of research on these topics, the reader will be better informed of the vision for learning and wellbeing that was introduced as a result of the school amalgamation central to this research.

The voluminous research findings between the advocates claiming a variety of student academic, sociological, or self-efficacy benefits for either co-education or single-sex schools are well documented (see Dix, 2017; Fitzsimmons et al., 2018; Harker, 2000; Mael et al., 2005; Pahlke et al., 2014; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016; Yates, 2011). Academic research is inconclusive in providing a definitive answer about whether single-sex or co-educational schools provide a better overall education. The multitude of varying and contextualising explanations for-and-against both co-education and single-sex education, some of which include school culture, traditions, as well as biological, socioeconomic and academic factors, make this a challenging and complex area to consider. Such a dynamic is highlighted by Mael (1998), who commented on the shifting attitudes to both single-sex and co-education within Australia over a thirty-year period. Mael (1998) argued that educational initiatives within this area of research have varied in their direction according to the societal attitudes and beliefs of the time. From experts being opposed to single-sex schooling in the 1970s due to a perception that this type of schooling reduces girls' aspirations, through to the opposition of co-education in the 1980s due to a belief that boys were

somehow diminishing the achievement of girls. Further highlighting this fluid argument, Mael (1998) commented that "in the 1990s, a new issue has been the possibility that single-sex schooling gives girls advantages over boys and harms boys by limiting their classroom access to more academically successful girls" (p. 119).

With the increasing popularity of single-sex schooling in the United States during the early to mid-2000s, which was in direct response to Federal government legislation (Dee & Jacob, 2011), Mael and colleagues (2005) conducted a systematic review of single-sex education research. The results indicated that despite the surge of support for single-sex schooling in parts of the United States during these years, there was no advantage or disadvantage for this being an alternative form of schooling for many measured outcomes.

During this same period, South Korea moved in the opposite direction by transitioning single-sex schools to co-education. Lee and Park (2017), through their analysis of this program, found that adding girls to single-sex boys' schools had a short-term detrimental effect on boys' achievement scores; however, after the initial restructure period, there was no impact on boys' overall learning gain in the long-term. The fact that the girls enrolled to each of the schools in transition did not experience a negative effect on achievement scores highlights the sociological differences in genders within this area of study.

If one is to consider the difference in school type concerning academic performance, then the extensive meta-analysis of Pahlke and colleagues (2014) further illuminates this topic. Pahlke and colleagues (2014) analysed 184 studies involving over one and a half million students and found only minor differences in student academic performance between those students attending either single-sex or co-educational schools. When looking at the outcomes of the controlled studies, Pahlke and colleagues (2014) found that single-sex schooling offered very minor

advantages over co-education, with most weighted effect values lower than 0.10; with their meta-analysis study concluding there was limited evidence that single-sex schooling benefited either girls or boys.

These findings are consistent with the research conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (Dix, 2017). The ACER analysed the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data between 2010-2012 in investigating Australian single-sex schooling's impact on student achievement at Years 3, 5 and 7. The NAPLAN numeracy and reading data analysis involved 55 girls' schools, 33 boys' schools, and 2909 co-educational schools in Australia. This study found that single-sex schools, on average, provide no better value-add than co-educational schools in the long-term; however, in the immediate short-term single-sex schools did offer learning gain in comparison to co-educational schools (Dix, 2017).

While within these studies the comparative achievement of learning outcomes between single-sex and co-education schools are narrow, considering specific gender gaps between males and females further broadens this debate. While the socioeconomic status amongst specific sub-cultures within any modern society will have a dramatic impact on the learning aspirations for both genders (Berger & Archer, 2016; Wright, 2017), it is difficult to dispute the increasing gender gap between girls significantly outperforming boys in the attainment of literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing (Alloway, 2007; Disenhaus, 2015; Louden et al., 2020; Thomas, 2020; Voyer & Voyer, 2014). In particular, the analysis of NAPLAN writing data showed while girls' performance was constantly above year-level criteria when averaged over the 8 years, boys' performance was consistently below year-level norms, with boys falling further behind female students throughout the school years. At the same time there is also literature that

highlights socioemotional gender differences. Current research trends identifying girls as having generally negative perceptions of their abilities and self-concept in mathematics and science subjects, despite achieving the same average results as boys, is also an increasing concern (Goetz et al., 2013; Stoet & Geary, 2018). While girls demonstrated generally higher levels of academic engagement and application in comparison to boys, they also reported higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of general happiness while at school (Fink et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2017).

Further gender differences were found in the 2017 *Tell Them From Me* survey, undertaken by the NSW Department of Education's Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. This study captured the surveyed views of 135,000 students in years 4-12 at NSW public schools. Using the results from this survey of students conducted in term one of 2015, the study found a gender gap between girls and boys on most student engagement and wellbeing measures. This study found that girls in NSW have fewer disciplinary transgressions than boys at school and have higher aspirations to finish year 12 and attend university. In contrast, boys demonstrated a greater sense of belonging and a sense of connectedness to their school. The study also found that male students are less likely to feel anxious than female students. This research points to emerging international trends of new gender gaps concerning boys being more likely to be disengaged at school and girls being more likely to lack self-confidence. Such findings are consistent with the previous section of this review (Fink et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2017) and demonstrate the importance of considering gender in student learning and engagement.

As Australian schools continue to respond to the ever-increasing concern of meeting the social and emotional wellbeing needs of children and young people, there appears to be a dissonance between policy and practice (Anderson & Graham, 2016; Berryhill et al., 2009;

Powell & Graham, 2017; Powell et al., 2018). Teachers have commonly associated student wellbeing with negative connotations in addressing student behaviour or mental health issues (Powell & Graham, 2017). Such a perspective is reinforced with Australian students continuing to sit well below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average for classroom disciplinary climate (Thomson et al., 2017). There is also an increasing discrepancy between how parents and teachers view student wellbeing, with more than half of Australian parents increasing their expectations of their child's school in supporting a more holistic approach to wellbeing within the last five years (Pillay, 2020).

In building on the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019) positions student wellbeing as foundational to authentic student learning. In October 2018, the Department of Education and Training launched The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (Education Council, 2018), intending to align with state and territory wellbeing initiatives, the Australian curriculum and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and Principals. The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (Education Council, 2018) identifies five elements in support of whole-school wellbeing and learning: leadership, inclusion, student voice, partnerships and support. At the time of writing, it remains to be seen the level of impact this resourced approach will have in building both a collective understanding and level of practice across school sectors; however, it is a timely initiative in attempting to support the development of a standard and proactive national understanding to this construct.

While there is increasingly wide acceptance of the importance of student wellbeing and its direct impact on learning outcomes, the adoption of a common definition has given rise to an ongoing exchange of views (Dinham, 2007; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2015). In his analysis of

initiatives that support disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the United Kingdom, Dinham (2007) suggested the term 'wellbeing' was becoming overused and ambiguous due to "little or no consensus about what it really means or looks like and therefore to produce and reproduce it, and to know that it is there, proves highly difficult" (p. 183). While there have been more recent studies that have attempted to provide a definitive statement as to what student wellbeing is and how it can best be achieved through education (Powell & Graham, 2017; Spratt, 2016; Watson et al., 2012), for the purpose of this study the scoping research of Noble and colleagues' (2008) will form the basis for an operational definition that will be used within this study: "Student wellbeing is defined as a sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school" (Noble et al., 2008, p. 21). Such a definition leads to how schools can best promote and develop sustainable learning cultures that allow students to grow and develop within a community and flourish in this regard.

The importance placed on positive relationships within a school context as being central to student positive wellbeing and therefore, school engagement and learning, is reinforced and consistent within several studies (Graham et al., 2016; McLaughlin, 2008, Pietarinen et al., 2014; Smyth & Fasoli, 2007). With the relational tone of school communities having such an impact on positive student wellbeing, teacher relational awareness needs to be considered in order for schools to prosper. This is not only in terms of the social and emotional wellbeing needs of children and young people but also correlated with student academic success. Gray and Hackling's study (2009), which examined the participation, engagement and retention of year 11 students in considering their perspective on wellbeing, found that students who were achieving in most of their subjects also had consistently higher scores on all wellbeing indicators as compared to those with lower academic achievement scores. Their findings also included high levels of

student self-efficacy and satisfaction with their subject selection, a sense of belonging, and an overall positive connection to the school community (Gray & Hackling, 2009).

These findings, which show the correlation between positive self-efficacy and student achievement, support the work of Graham and colleagues (2016). In reporting on the qualitative findings of a large mixed-methods study involving focus groups and interviews across three regions of Australia, including 606 primary and secondary school students and 89 teachers and principals, Graham and colleagues (2016) compared and summarised how both teachers and students understand the concept of wellbeing. Their findings adopted a framing for further supporting student wellbeing in schools through their identified categories of recognition: being and feeling cared for, respected and valued. They argue the central importance of positive student wellbeing and how this is expressed through the mutual experience of being cared for, respected, and valued within their schools' relational context. This longitudinal study places the importance of effective relationships as the cornerstone of understanding and enhancing student wellbeing through a positive school learning culture.

But while both the qualitative and quantitative data from this study indicated the positive significance placed on effective relationships, there was a discrepancy between the emphasis placed by teachers and students about the importance of positive student/peer relationships. Both teachers and students equally agreed on the need for positive teacher/student relationships; however, it was found that the teachers in this study minimised the impact that student/peer relationships had on student wellbeing in comparison to how students emphasised this significance. The findings reinforce the need for teachers to continue in developing a heightened awareness of balancing the teacher/student relationships within their three prescribed modes of recognition: being and feeling cared for, respected and valued (Graham et al., 2016). However,

this study proposes a whole-school approach to emphasising, supporting, and even facilitating healthy student/peer relationships as a straightforward way for schools to enhance positive student wellbeing further. Graham and colleagues (2016) further argue that a school culture that embraces relationship-building as an approach does need to explicitly support teachers in understanding how critical they are to this achievement. Such findings support what McLaughlin (2008) earlier argued through her findings in emphasising the importance of teachers being able to self-regulate their emotions in order to support and help shape the abilities of young people to learn through relationships; "we learn our emotional habits including the capacity to manage and calm ourselves through relationships with significant others" (p. 361). While the relational tone of a school environment can arguably be difficult to measure outside of such research, other studies, such as that of Simmons and colleagues (2018), provide empirical evidence which demonstrates the apparent association between student participation and recognition and the impact this has on student wellbeing (Simmons et al., 2018). This study promotes practical methods to enhance student wellbeing through a whole-school approach to emphasising student voice and, therefore, student empowerment and participation and engagement levels.

In attempting to address the ever-increasing learning and wellbeing gender gaps that are being identified between male and female students, there is also literature that identifies a combined approach to both single-sex and co-education. In addressing both students' educational and wellbeing needs, there are examples of a hybrid parallel curriculum model that are worthy of consideration (Hart, 2016; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016). Within a co-educational school environment, a parallel curriculum combines the targeted introduction of single-sex core learning classes in subjects such as mathematics, science, and English, while also conducting co-educational learning classes in languages, technology, and creative arts. There is supporting literature to

suggest this to be a well-intentioned school initiative that can have a positive impact on learning and self-concept for both males and females and is, therefore, a model that is worthy of consideration (Hart, 2016; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016). Such a mixed-model approach to curriculum delivery may arguably support the findings identified by Dix (2017) to maximise the identified short-term learning gain in single-sex classes and student learning improvement overall. Such a position may also support Simpson and colleagues (2016), who found within their comparative study of examining the difference of attitude in both boys and girls in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects across single-sex and co-educational school settings that gender composition impacted the mathematical performance for girls.

However, there is also opposition to such a gender-specific parallel curriculum structure. While Reilly and colleagues (2019), in their analysis of eighth-grade students within the 2011 Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), "found mixed support for the gender segregation hypothesis for this age group" (p. 46), Kombe and colleagues (2016) within their comparative study of males and females in both co-educational and single-sex classes, found that the difference in student self-efficacy in mathematics, along with their perception of the classroom environment was negligible and in contrast to the findings of Simpson and colleagues (2016). Such research is reinforced by Pennington and colleagues (2017), who adds to the challenge of researching the academic and social impact on students within different types of schooling, and found limited evidence for the effectiveness of single-gender classrooms on achievement when controlling for prior achievement. This study supports the findings of Kersey and colleagues (2019) who, after analysing the neural processes of mathematics in young children, found no brain functional gender differences between boys and girls.

While the intention of this section was to broadly review the relevant literature that can inform the ongoing debate between single-sex education and co-education and the relationship between student learning and wellbeing, the next section considers the physical learning environment where these various school contexts actually play out.

2.3 The Physical Learning Environment

One of the significant and competing challenges within the amalgamation process of merging the neighbouring Catholic schools within this study was the process involved in both consolidating and improving the functionality and connectedness between the facilities from the previously separate neighbouring high schools. The physical learning environment, as defined by the OECD, is where students and teachers all interact both formally and informally in a physical location that considers materials, equipment, and technologies. This section focuses on exploring the concept that the improvement of a school's physical learning environment contributes to the formation and ongoing development of a new school learning culture. By examining literature that considers how enhancing the physical learning environment can further support the development of school learning culture, this review is intended to inform the case data and evaluate the degree to which a physical learning environment can impact educational change.

Despite their extensive and seminal work in contemporary and technologically enriched school design underpinned by acknowledged best practice principles, Nair et al., (2013) express great frustration between theory and practice. They argue that many school leaders are still hesitant to embrace new school design due to a disconnection between physical learning environment research and the more traditional educational settings and structures. In attempting to improve learning spaces for contemporary pedagogies, increasingly, school leaders are

considering varied and flexible learning environments that stimulate learning and creativity by their very design. In considering such concepts as Thornburg's (2013) primordial metaphors of the campfire, watering hole and cave designs, schools have increasing options to blend different types of flexible learning spaces in order to facilitate compelling learning opportunities. This could allow for a contemporary focus on applying the metacognitive skills of critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity to the actual content knowledge (Byers et al., 2018; Cleveland et al., 2018; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). To provide some clear and informed guidelines to this area, Cleveland and colleagues (2018) conducted a three-year research project to evaluate the relationships between the physical learning environment and the pedagogical activities of both school students and teachers across thirty-eight Catholic schools in Australia. In total, their study involved 3872 students and 300 teachers. This extensive review included a range of considerations that impact a school's physical learning environment. Some of these could be broadly classified as quantitative practical design measures, including the physical structure and various resource provisions. At the same time, other factors were more qualitative in nature, such as aesthetics, a sense of belonging and ownership. As a result of this study, Cleveland and colleagues (2018, p.3) recommend that physical learning environments for both primary and secondary schools include elements of the following nine principles:

- A dynamic social and physical environment;

- Variety and choice, concerning both settings and activities;

- The capacity to differentiate and personalise learning experiences, including across independent, small group, and whole-class activities;

- Ready access to multiple learning settings, commonly differentiated by furniture arrangements and glazed separations between spaces of different sizes;

- Engaging and meaningful teaching and learning experiences, including opportunities for instruction, interaction and reflective retreat;

- Options to socially organise students in varied ways, within the same class/or across multiple classes;

- Good acoustics, especially in more open spaces;

- Good sightlines to enable the consistent observation and monitoring of students' activities;

- A design that recognises the physical, organisational, temporal and cultural histories of the school/school sector and allows for pedagogical development over time without alienating teachers from their past practices.

In order for such guiding principles to form the basis for improving a school's physical learning environment and therefore student learning, it is necessary to include key stakeholders in the planning and consultation of any intended change process (Noriega et al., 2013). Noriega and colleagues (2013) highlight the significance of the actual users of contemporary learning spaces being central to the design and implementation phases for students to develop into what they term effective 'knowmadic learners'. The concept of a knowmadic learner shifts the emphasis away from expert designers of learning spaces and more toward the actual users of learning spaces - the teachers and students. While student voice is an essential factor for the design of the physical learning environment (McCarter & Woolner, 2011), an even greater level of collaboration, consultation and professional learning and engagement is required with the teaching staff in order for a new learning environment to enhance sustainable pedagogical practice at a whole-school level (Blackmore et al., 2011; McCarter & Woolner, 2011; Sala-Oviedo & Imms, 2016). In allowing for both teaching and support staff to effectively collaborate within a change process

and establish new workplace customs and practices, it is necessary to draw a connection to the role the environment plays in contributing to school change (Woolner et al., 2018). Woolner and colleagues (2018) discovered a research gap that appreciates the impact a school's physical learning environment can have on a change process by applying Priestley's (2011) framework. Priestley (2011) examined how culture, structure, and individual action can enable or constrain social interaction and teacher agency within educational change. Through this framework, Woolner and colleagues (2018) argued that "current school change literature tends not to focus on the role of the physical learning environment" (p.226).

Such a view was also supported by Maguire and colleagues (2015), who emphasised the actual place where teaching and support staff gather, both formally and informally, adds to the dynamic nature of a school's culture. Through their study of teacher perceptions, Gray and Summers (2015) reported that enhancing physical learning structures and providing the necessary organisational conditions to foster a sense of openness contributed to the formation and development of professional learning communities, which in turn can enhance collective teacher efficacy and therefore student learning and wellbeing outcomes. This argument is expanded further by Spillane (2015), who asserts that school administrative and organisational practice directly impacts classroom instruction and, therefore, student learning.

As well as designing physical learning environments that better equip teachers in the classroom and support staff and leaders in their administration for enhanced student academic outcomes, there is evidence to suggest that the physical learning environment can further enhance positive student wellbeing outcomes; both in terms of school facilities being aesthetically pleasing as well as providing an environment which is safe and supportive (Jama et al., 2013; Kuurme & Carlsson, 2010; McLaughlin, 2008). Considering student wellbeing factors within the school

facilities and the environment is a feature of the longitudinal observation study by Blatchford and colleagues (2003). They found through their study of students within the social context of school playgrounds that social interaction between gender and ethnic groups became more integrated with time. Such findings correspond with Noriega and colleagues (2013). They strongly advocate for the actual users (students) as having a central role in designing and co-creating the places where they socially interact and learn. Cleveland and colleagues also reinforced the same level of student consultation and collaboration within the design of physical learning environments (2018). Research appreciating the impact a school's physical learning environment can have on the user supports studies on the factors that promote a positive school culture. In stressing the importance of student wellbeing, Simmons and colleagues (2018) strongly advocate for the empowerment of students and practical means of participation and recognition of their voice.

While the first four sections of this chapter examined literature that represents the elements of 'what' was transforming within a school amalgamation, the next section on leadership for change aims to inform the 'how' change evolved within an Australian Catholic school setting.

2.4 Leadership and Administration

This section presents relevant literature on educational leadership relative to the previous sections within this review. The wide-ranging literature on leadership needs to be firstly framed before considering educational leadership within the context of change theory. Northouse (2015), in considering the plethora of different models of leadership, provides a practical definition: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p.6).

Defining leadership as a process, contrasts with the original and long-held understanding of leadership based on the quality of an individual's certain traits. Trait theory of leadership, known initially as 'the great man' theory and frequently characterised by the charismatic qualities of a leader, has long been seen as the means to quantify the essential characteristics of effective leadership (Dinham, 2016; Meuser et al., 2016; Spillane, 2006; 2012; Zaccaro, 2007). Such a view identifies an almost chosen birth right to leadership. Therefore, such a construct's criticism can be seen as being too broadly subjective and challenging to identify, define, and provide effective leadership development and succession (Dinham, 2016; Northouse, 2015; Zaccaro, 2007).

In attempting to gain an alternative perspective, it was the seminal work of Burns (1978), as one of the earliest proponents of identifying and promoting the difference between transformational and transactional leadership styles, that gave rise to arguably the most researched set of leadership theories (Day et al., 2016; Holten & Brenner, 2015; Jensen et al., 2019).

The emergence of leadership theories that differentiated between the transformational and transactional styles of the leader often focussed on how either one or the other style was preferential. This discourse, however, was often framed around how transformational leadership was the superior style. Examples of this argument include how a transformational leadership style arguably reduces the rate of employee turnover (Hamstra et al., 2011) and how it can positively impact employee perspectives as opposed to the impact of a transactional leader (Da'as, 2020). However, the universal appeal of a single transformational leadership style often related to how a leader's personality had a bearing on how this was expressed (Hansbrough & Schyns, 2018) which arguably were presented as deficiencies that would be addressed through

more transactional means (Dartey-Baah, 2015). The effective mix of transformational and transactional leadership theories is therefore presented as a means to achieve the desired organisational performance.

An example of such analysis includes a longitudinal survey among 351 employees in two Danish organisations. Holten and Brenner (2015) investigated the direct and indirect relationships between transformational and transactional leadership styles and the employee's appraisal of change through their engagement with the leader/manager. Holten and Brenner (2015) defined transformational leadership as being characterised by inspirational motivation and an idealised influence, which encourages followers to reimagine conventional practices and ideas in order to aspire to a new vision. In contrast, the mode of transactional leadership was seen to be more pragmatic and concrete in organisation and management practices in which the leader negotiates with colleagues in order to implement the prescribed change. Holten and Brenner (2015) argued that while transformational and transactional leadership styles are separate in style, focus and delivery, they are complementary and both essential for effective organisational reform.

While such findings add a more balanced approach to what Burns (1978) originally stressed within the concept of the leader transforming people and organisations, such a construct has led to what educational leadership researchers Leithwood and Duke (1999) described as a series of 'adjectival leadership' theories, which attempt to sharpen the concept of transformational change. Some of these adjectival leadership theories continue to emerge, ranging from instructional (Dinham, 2016), teacher (Wenner & Campbell, 2017), distributed (Fullan, 2016, Spillane, 2012; Jones & Harris, 2014), servant (Sousa & Dierendonck, 2017), transrelational (Branson et al., 2018), shared (Han et al., 2018) and authentic (Duignan, 2014).

However, despite these ongoing and continuously emerging strands some scholars question if any of these provide a commonly accepted expression or application (Day et al., 2014; Lindberg, 2014; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Lindberg (2014), in comparing educational change interventions that are considered ineffective, argues that school principals who invest in a short-term perspective on improving teaching and learning without considering long-term structures and systems can often be in a continuous and reactive cycle of response. Such a cycle is highlighted by the researchers who estimate that 70 per cent of organisational change efforts fail (Jacobs et al., 2013; Kotter, 2014; Michel et al., 2013). However, the lack of acceptance criteria for a definitively failed change process is considered a vague contextual area (Jones et al., 2018), with such a widely accepted discourse being questioned by Hughes (2011), who challenges the lack of empirical evidence for such a high percentage claim. Despite this, Raywid's (1999) research indicates that high schools are a particularly complex and challenging environment to initiate and successfully implement any type of large-scale change:

> There is the well-known and powerful resistance to change, which has made the high school largely impervious and impossible to improve. And there is the growing list of features that have been linked to effectiveness and productivity, which appear fundamentally incompatible with the comprehensive high school. (p. 306)

Such a view is reinforced by a range of large-scale educational change theorists (see e.g., Elmore 2016; Fullan 2001; Tyack and Tobin, 1994) who each reinforce the difficulty with the challenge that is characterised by whole-school reform.

In considering educational leadership within the context of change theory and specifically to this case study, the processes involved in effectively undertaking educational reform are generally accepted as a collaborative form of practice (Dinham, 2016; Eckert, 2019; Fullan,

2016). While such a description most accurately fits a distributed form of leadership, at times, this concept has been narrowly defined as a process of delegation from administrators to teachers (Holten & Brenner, 2015). Such a limiting view, where leadership is distributed transactionally, is further broadened by Spillane (2012), who describes distributed leadership as more about the actual engagement and resulting synergies, which further build both the individual and the organisation.

A collective expression of leadership is therefore promoted as an expansion of the concept of a distributed leadership and one that develops a clearer understanding of how not only administrators and teachers can co-construct leadership within their own context but just as importantly consider the leadership impact of other stakeholders (Eckert, 2019; Empson & Alvehus, 2019; Ni et al., 2018; Raelin, 2018). In the same way that the physical learning environment and improved facilities were presented in the previous section as a contributing factor to the amalgamation change process, collective leadership considers how all school community stakeholders can work towards providing the conditions for improving student outcomes.

Eckert (2019), in seeking to gain a better understanding of collective leadership, conducted a multiple-case study of three high schools in describing and explaining variations to collective leadership capacity and student outcomes. Findings from this study show that a school community's relational trust and professional capital correlate with the relationships and levels of support identified between the principal and teachers, initial teacher capacity, and school conditions. Concerning each of these factors being an expression of a collective form of leadership, it is necessary also to consider those stakeholders who, while on the peripheral, have

a contributing influence on the school (Eckert, 2019; Friedrich et al., 2009; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Ni et al., 2018).

As one of the premier educational change theorists, Fullan (2007) considers the entire process for school-based change and emphasises the sequential stages of initiation, implementation and institutionalisation. In considering each of these stages, it is also imperative for staff to be collectively involved in the change process and empowered through the opportunity for collaboration in ensuring long-term embedded and sustainable change (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hattie, 2015). Fullan (2016), in further expanding on his educational change theory, stresses the need to build professional capital to combine human and social capital to amplify the change. Such a view further supports the concept of a collective sense of leadership (Eckert, 2019; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008) rather than the sole dependence on a narrow set of leaders. Fullan (2016) explains that: "commonly touted change strategy typically err in trusting too much in the power of individuals to solve educational problems while failing to enlist and capitalise on the power of the group" (p.45).

Despite this discourse, educational change reform processes are consistently identified as very difficult and complex to navigate due to the difficulty associated with an established school culture (Hinde, 2004; Priestley et al., 2011; Raywid, 1999; Saxi, 2017; Thomson, 2010). In order to undertake a substantial change-process in secondary schools it is essential that the change is a site-specific intervention that addresses the specific needs of a particular school community (Marzano, 2003). School culture is a concept that is very difficult to define. In simple terms, culture is a lived expression of what is important to a particular community - the values and beliefs of both spoken and unspoken. These can be seen in the various signs and symbols that form tradition and inform behaviour. Hinde (2004), in examining the effects of school culture on

the process of change, examined the underlying assumptions held by school staff members in expressing the unique culture of any given school. In considering the characteristics of both positive and negative school cultures, Hinde (2004) found a need to examine specific school culture's before and during any intended change process. Such an approach would then address the specific cultural assumptions that determine the success of any change process. Such assumptions for staff members are typically associated with a fear of the unknown relating to perceived changes to job security and workplace status (Lysova et al., 2015; Saxi, 2017). Heightened senses of workplace emotion and resistance, while essentially based upon an individual's predisposition towards change (Rock & Cox, 2012), are central to any type of reculturing process for an organisation (Hargreaves, 1994; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

During the phases of both the initiation and implementation change processes, there is most commonly a form of regression in overall performance, referred to as the 'implementation dip' before achieving the desired change. Fullan (2001), in his book *Leading in a Culture of Change,* defines the implementation dip as being "a dip in performance and confidence as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and new understandings" (p. 40). The dip's actual depth in performance is generally associated with the overall capacity of leadership within the organisation during the period of implementation (Fullan, 2001; Gleibs et al., 2010; Saxi, 2017).

When considering the concept of an implementation dip to a school amalgamation, it is useful also to consider the research on the social and psychological perspectives impacting merging organisations and to highlight several theories relating to social identification and intergroup dynamics relevant to this case study (Gleibs et al., 2010; Lysova et al., 2015; Saxi 2017). Through a longitudinal study involving the amalgamation of three upper-secondary

schools in Norway, based on three evaluations which were conducted 2, 6 and 17 years after implementation, Saxi (2017) was able to evaluate the implementation problems associated with the change process which were involved within the various groups of the amalgamation. Saxi (2017) identified two primary sources of conflict: conflict of interest and culture conflict. This emphasis relates well to the interdependent processes of restructuring and reculturing previously identified.

A common source of 'conflict of interest' involves working through human resource requirements within any form of restructuring. Blackmore and Sachs (2000), in commenting on what they describe as a paradox of leadership and management processes in higher education change management, explained that "while most people deal with conflicts and compromises in their work, some rebel, some adapt, and some suffer more visibly" (p.12). Through their longitudinal field study investigating student perceptions of a university merger, Gleibs and colleagues (2010) examined the impact of predictors for ingroup favouritism and how this determines a positive or negative attitude towards a change process in establishing a new paradigm. In the same way that Hinde (2004) emphasised the need to consider culture within an intergroup perspective before the merging process, Gleibs and colleagues (2009) examined how ingroup favouritism is both a cause and effect of any merger. They found that while some pre-merged groups will respond to any perceived threat by resisting change through ingroup favouritism, others will express this as a coping means to understand and express both their social identity and self-concept.

In exploring how the career identity of staff members informs both how employees make sense of organisational change, as well as their willingness to engage in it, Lysova and colleagues (2015) described the following employee groupings of champions, supporters, loyal

citizens and doubters as being based upon a personal career identity involving either a subjective values-driven and self-directed perspective, or more self-centred work values. The attempt to group colleagues psychologically is also reinforced by the work of Rock and Cox (2012), who argue that employees' emphasis on the categories of status, certainty, autonomy, relationships, and fairness (SCARF) give insight into individual employee workplace responses.

The importance of engaging with members of any organisation deemed resistant to change is an essential factor within an effective implementation process (Starr, 2014). Seeking out and listening to opposing views is vital in allowing an organisation to navigate the implementation phase and respond collectively and therefore decrease the depth of the actual dip in performance within the implementation process (Fullan, 2001).

The second area identified by Saxi (2017) of 'cultural conflict' is characterised by the, at times, emotional interpretation of institutional symbols as expressed through "deep-rooted values amongst organisational members" (p.5). In presenting factors likely to lead to a successful amalgamation, Hatton (2002), through a case study of the merging processes which were involved in establishing Charles Sturt University, commented on how the decision involving the former Lismore and Armidale colleges' in retaining their existing symbols and coats of arms was to the detriment of the unifying process. In order to facilitate a reculturing process, which is viewed in a less threatening way, the careful balance of acknowledging structural and cultural elements of the previous two organisations, while at the same time presenting an emerging cultural identity of the new organisation, requires what Blackmore and Sachs (2000) call "the old skills of nurturing and new skills of emotional management under stress" (p.14). Such collaborative processes provide what Gleibs and colleagues (2010) describe as opportunities for positive intergroup contact, which they argue eventually breaks down intergroup prejudice and

favouritism and leads to the eventual reduction of anxiety amongst staff members. This concept of the positive impact on intergroup contact supports Saxi's (2017) study where over time, key stakeholders became progressively positive about the school amalgamation implementation process.

While the initiation and implementation phases of a large-scale change process are central to this research, consideration to evaluate this school amalgamation retrospectively through a relevant theoretical change framework is central to the following section.

2.5 Kotter's Eight-Step Process for Leading Change

The final section of this chapter focuses on exploring a theoretical change framework in which to critique the overall school amalgamation change process. The intention of utilising Kotter's eight-step process for leading change as an identified framework is to apply a lens to the findings from the data analysis within this case and critique the overall impact of the change process that took place. It should be noted that Kotter's eight-step process described in this section was not in any way utilised before or during the school amalgamation process presented within this study; instead, it was used as a post-analysis of the contextual change process. This will become clearer within the case analysis and discussion.

John Paul Kotter is Emeritus Professor of Leadership at Harvard Business School, Boston and is a renowned authority on transformation processes and evaluating specific strategic directions for leading organisational change in the modern workplace (Kotter, 2014). In 1995 and after two decades of observing and analysing many companies that adapt and undertake organisational change reform, Kotter wrote a definitive article for the Harvard Business Review titled, "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail." In explaining a combination of

competing factors that undermine and ultimately halt change-reform, Kotter (1995) described the following scenario,

> The urgency level is not intense enough, the guiding coalition is not powerful
> enough, and the vision is not clear enough. However, it is the premature victory
> celebration that kills momentum. And then the powerful forces associated with
> tradition take over. (p.8)

Through identifying a range of critical yet common mistakes associated with leading and managing significant change processes, this seminal paper led Kotter to publish his widely recognised book *Leading Change* (1996), which further expanded upon the identification of common errors that many organisations make when undertaking change processes; and instead responded by prescribing eight-steps in successfully transforming an organisation. The eight-steps include the following stages of the framework, which will support the discussion of the case data findings within this research:

- Establishing a sense of urgency

- Creating the guiding coalition

- Developing a vision and a strategy

- Communicating the change vision

- Empowering employees for broad-based action

- Generating short-term wins

- Consolidating gains and producing more change

- Anchoring new approaches in the culture

In describing a general overview of the eight-step transformation approach, Kotter (1996) categorised the first four steps as the "defrost" phase where the status quo and the resistance for

change are gradually diminished. From the first step, creating a sense of urgency depends on a solid rationale for the need for change. Such a rationale needs to embrace all key stakeholders and progressively lead to forming a leadership group that can collectively guide the change process through a sense of inclusivity and a keen awareness of the context in question. Kotter (1996) stresses the essential importance of creating and effectively communicating a future-focused change vision that can compellingly bind stakeholders and energise the change agenda further. Steps five through seven represent a period of transition where new social norms and practices are introduced and developed. Within these steps, the change begins to take some form of traction, and that momentum either begins to build or the derailment of initiatives instead lead to the return of previous practices and behaviours. The final step not only anchors the changes through the consolidation of a new culture, it also contributes to the organisation becoming more externally oriented, resilient and agile enough to evolve further.

While Kotter's (1996) eight-step process for implementing major reform is widely accepted as a landmark point of reference within the field of change management (Mento et al., 2002; Rune et al., 2016; Wentworth et al., 2020), it was originally based upon a linear viewpoint which raised arguments about the difference between change as a theory and change in actual practice (Appelbaum et al., 2012; Saka, 2003). Such a distinction has been addressed by Appelbaum and colleagues (2012) through a wide-ranging review of the literature in considering the arguments for-and-against supporting Kotter's (1996) universally accepted change management model. Although Kotter's (1996) model included an extensive range of examples and analysis, it lacked a grounding from established literature or change management theories. This gap between the change-scholar and change-practitioner was also noted by Pollack and Pollack (2015), who applied Kotter's eight-step process in implementing a change process to a

finance and insurance company in Australia. The application of Kotter's eight-stage approach for bringing about considerable change is examined in depth, providing insight into its application that can be useful to other change managers. Their findings indicated that while Kotter's procedure was observed to be a viable method for overseeing and driving change, some adjustments were required. This included an acceptance of multiple stages of the change process enacting simultaneously in order for it to be effective within a specific context.

Through applying a design methodology approach in reviewing the literature on change management, each of Kotter's eight steps and how much they were supported was reviewed by Appelbaum and colleagues (2012). In conducting the first formal review of Kotter's change management model, 15 years after its introduction, Appelbaum and colleagues (2012) reinforced the appeal of Kotter's eight-step model as stemming from its easy-to-understand structure rather than any scientific consensus on the findings, they concluded that despite some limitations in terms of a presented linear rigidity, in what could be described as a step-lock approach to change theory, Kotter's (1996) model has not been superseded and deserved its widespread popularity.

In considering such reviews, Kotter (2014), in turn, has since softened his stance on his original strong emphasis on the sequential progression of each of the eight steps of his model. Compared to the original model, where warnings of the many pitfalls surrounding overlooking any of the steps and rushing through the model's phases, they are now viewed with more flexibility in co-existing with five core principles that Kotter (2014) describes as "Accelerators" (p. 27). The notion of accelerators is based around a broad-based approach to ongoing change from across the organisation, where instead of finite and sequential steps, accelerators attract as many people as possible from the entire organisation to form a "volunteer army" that is both

flexible and agile to ongoing improvement. The steps in Kotter's model are now expressed as a dual platform that co-exists throughout the ongoing cycle of change (Kotter, 2014).

Kotter's (1995, 1996, 2014) body of work has been progressively developed to strategically support corporate cultures' improvement within the private business sector. While such studies are within the contextual character of a particular corporate setting, there are an increasing number of examples in various organisations employing Kotter's eight-step model to bring about transformational change in a variety of different settings. These range from non-for-profit fields, education, public relations, as well as the military (Day & Atkinson, 2004; Dawson et al., 2010; Guzmán et al., 2011; Hackman, 2017; Morrison, 2016; Nitta et al., 2009; Pollack & Pollack, 2015; Springer et al., 2012).

Through applying Kotter's eight-step change framework retrospectively, Nitta and colleagues (2009), within their research and evaluation of an American school district restructure, found through their detailed interviews and surveys of staff, teachers, principals and their superintendents, that the change process had ultimately failed at steps four and five. Nitta and colleagues (2009) concluded that the vision was not communicated throughout the district, and teachers and staff did not understand the goals of the reorganisation and how to achieve them. In another context, Springer and colleagues (2012) utilised Kotter's model within an eight-year longitudinal study of an American School of Nursing's organisational culture. Through framing Kotter's (1996) eight-steps, Springer and colleagues (2012) applied a Cultural and Climate Assessment Scale and found there to be an overall improvement in the organisation's culture and climate. This progressive improvement of dissatisfaction and distrust to high employee satisfaction and trust was characterised by higher measured levels of faculty and staff confidence, commitment and competence (Springer et al., 2012).

It is these types of post-analysis examples of contextual change processes which is the intention of this study. There are increasing examples of Kotter's framework being used to evaluate and critique change processes retrospectively, despite Kotter's eight steps not being the original model for the contextual change (Chappell et al., 2016; Nitta, 2009; Quinn et al., 2012; Smith, 2011). Chappell and colleagues (2016) in applying the lens of Kotter's framework, explored the implementation of workplace health and wellbeing initiatives across thirty-one workplaces. Through their qualitative interviews, Chappell and colleagues (2016) found that while none of the individual workplaces reported using a formal change process when implementing their healthy workplace initiatives, there did appear to be perceived merit in using the steps in Kotter's model retrospectively. Applying an established change theory can therefore assist in identifying errors made by organisations when the change was originally introduced. Quinn and colleagues (2012) in considering future opportunities for blended learning opportunities for undergraduate engineering students, decided to apply Kotter's framework as an audit tool to their program. Through applying Kotter's framework, Quinn and colleagues (2012) looked back at what was originally introduced and then how the program could be further improved. The retrospective application of Kotter's framework to a change process can therefore provide insights that can further improve future similar change processes.

Applying Kotter's eight-step model to the case data within this study will, therefore, allow for a reflective/critical vehicle in providing an informed discussion. This is especially useful given the nature of the secondary analysis of existing data within this case. The findings within the case data analysis, representative of the key stakeholders during the school amalgamation and expressed through each of the embedded units of analysis, will allow for a discussion of the actual impact of the leadership collectively to the change process.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has presented an expansive and broad scope of the relevant literature that is fundamental to understanding the contextual character of the school amalgamation process. The literature also presented some broader considerations within the discussion of each of the sections throughout the chapter.

The literature review presents implications when considering future potential Catholic school restructures and amalgamations between schools with previously established Catholic school charisms. It also provided further considerations for newly-established Catholic schools not founded by religious orders in establishing a Catholic school life and culture. Such considerations will contribute to Catholic schools' original mission to educate in faith that may provide some strategic direction for Catholic schools.

While the impact of the parallel curriculum model introduced as part of the contextual change process of merging the identified single-sex schools will be discussed in a further chapter, the literature's findings highlighted an increasing gender gap between girls and boys on several measures, including student achievement, engagement and self-efficacy. These findings highlight the central importance of considering gender in the context of school transformation and point to a feature within this research. The emphasis on how student learning curriculum models have a reciprocal impact on whole-school approaches to wellbeing can only be achieved through a whole-school community fully embracing a chosen model philosophically and pedagogically (Dinham, 2016; Hartman, 2011; Hattie, 2003).

The review also highlighted the impact the physical learning environment has on contributing to a significant school change process. Exploring staff, students, and parents' impact

and reaction to the changing environment will add a greater understanding within this field (Priestley, 2011).

   The literature on leadership and administration highlights the complexity of leading a large-scale change process by providing a greater awareness of developing a form of collective leadership capacity. Through describing Kotter's (1996) framework for change management, the eight steps will support the analysis and discussion of the findings within the research analysis. Overall, this chapter has presented an expansive range of literature relevant to understanding the context of this case study and providing considerations and implications for change management within future Catholic school amalgamations.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and justify the research design adopted within this study to explore the process and impact of change during the amalgamation of two long-standing Catholic schools in a capital city of Australia. The intended focus of this study was to better inform future potential Catholic school restructuring processes and advocate for students as the true beneficiaries of an educational change process. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will explain the study's placement within a pragmatic theoretical framework that forms the basis for the research methodology and design. The second section provides an overview of the case study design, justification for using mixed-methods, and information about the research site and participants. The third section outlines the specific research methods applied in the collection and analysis of the case data.

This study explored a contemporary understanding of a Catholic school amalgamation as a lived phenomenon, investigating each of the embedded units of analysis: Catholic school life and culture; vision for student learning and wellbeing; physical learning environment; and school leadership and administration. The research questions that guided this study included two primary research questions which were supported by three additional sub-questions:

- What was the impact of the amalgamation of two single-sex Catholic secondary schools?

    - What was the impact on Catholic school life and culture within the change process?

- What was the impact on student learning and wellbeing within the change process?

- What was the impact on the physical learning environment within the change process?

• What can be learned from leading a Catholic school restructure?

3.1 Theoretical Perspective

In considering the research questions, it is prudent to first understand the ontological viewpoint of the researcher. The ontology, the form and nature of reality, not only presents a relevant paradigm for the research, but importantly frames the philosophy and epistemological limitations of knowledge for the intended methods of inquiry (Cohen et al., 2011). An identified paradigm provides a theoretical perspective on the different approaches to conceptualising the intended research (Creswell, 2016). The continuous discussion between social researchers over the past 25 years on the benefits and detriments of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research have traditionally presented the two contrasting paradigms of positivism and naturalism (Given, 2017; Morgan, 2007; Shepherd & Challenger, 2013). The positivist worldview, often referred to as the more traditional and dominant of the two paradigms, is supported by quantitative strategies directed through scientifically objective and value-free procedures (Cohen et al., 2011; Feilzer, 2010). Critics of the positivist approach prefer to explore contextual experiences more holistically, giving rise to the naturalistic or interpretive paradigm (Morgan, 2014). In establishing an alternative view to social research, the naturalistic paradigm allows for qualitative research methods to explore phenomena as they impact the subjective world of humans and their practices (Cohen et al., 2011).

The essence of these ongoing paradigm debates stems from what many argue are essentially political infighting amongst social scientists and research communities as to what is deemed acceptable (Creswell, 2016; Given, 2017; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 2014; Feilzer, 2010). Adding to this debate, there is literature to suggest that research should not be restricted to one single paradigm and that both worldviews complement each other (Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Mitchell, 2018). Epistemologically, the premise of a pragmatic paradigm promotes a practical understanding of a social phenomenon rather than a metaphysical concern (Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Gross, 2018; Mitchell, 2018; Morgan, 2014). Pragmatically combining the scientific and social aspects of the two distinctive research paradigms leads to what Mitchell (2018, p.115) describes as "a 'best answer' to data that otherwise could not always be adequately explained and contained a number of ambiguities." However, an overemphasis by proponents on a practical common-sense of a pragmatic paradigm is a perceived weakness among critics and one which Denzin (2012, p.81) addresses:

> Classic pragmatism is not a methodology per se. It is a doctrine of meaning, a theory of truth. It rests on the argument that the meaning of an event cannot be given in advance of experience. The focus is on the consequences and meanings of an action or event in a social situation.

Because of the research purpose, this project was positioned within the theoretical perspective of pragmatism (Creswell, 2016). Gross (2018), in his review of pragmatism as a theoretical perspective in sociology, examined how the philosophy of this paradigm is geared toward investigating social problems, with one of its goals being to facilitate social reconstruction. As a new paradigm, pragmatism disrupts the assumptions of earlier paradigms based on a philosophy

of knowledge (Morgan, 2014). The fundamental tenet of a pragmatic theoretical perspective requires an understanding of what the actors (i.e., staff, students and parents) believe about their reality and, in so doing, has the potential to transform practice (Kelly et al., 2020). Essentially, pragmatic inquiry recognises that individuals within social settings can experience the same action and change process differently. The rationale for positioning this study in pragmatism was necessary due to the suitability for addressing the need to explore the social phenomenon of lived experiences and perspectives of staff, students and parents dealing with a large-scale school amalgamation change process.

Pragmatism addresses the research questions through mixed methods, allowing for a better understanding of the process and the impact of change during the amalgamation of two Catholic schools. The research aimed to explicate an understanding of a real-world issue in a practical and useful way. The goal was to gain practical and valuable knowledge of insights to illuminate the current leadership practice involved in Catholic school restructuring processes. Utilising mixed methods endeavours to produce a more complete picture, to avoid the biases intrinsic to the use of monomethod design, as a way of building on, and developing, initial findings (Feilzer, 2010, p. 4). The following sections justify the application of mixed-methods and case study design used within this study.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a single-case study design, a method of evaluation that can be used to thoroughly test the success of an intervention in a particular case and provide evidence about the general effectiveness of the intervention (Yin, 2017). The single case is represented by the Catholic school community in this study, while the intervention represents the intervention being

tested. The study included an analysis of the multiple embedded units of Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, the physical learning environment, and leadership and administration employing quantitative and qualitative methods. The intention was to describe and analyse each subunit as connecting variables to the overall impact of the amalgamation to better understand the overall case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data from the participating staff, student and parent stakeholders, who form the "case" (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 2017) was conducted by an external consultant. The Researcher then conducted a secondary analysis of the pre-existing survey data along with the concurrent document analysis of reflective notes. Through a combination of interpreting both the quantitative and qualitative data through statistical analysis and thematic analysis, respectively, this case study allowed for the lived experiences of participants to speak for themselves (Cohen et al., 2011; Patton, 2015).

3.2.1 Mixed Methods Research

While pragmatism is the philosophical underpinning for this study, the methodology that enabled this research was through mixed methods. In carefully considering the range of prevalent mixed method descriptions and evolving views, Johnson and colleagues (2007) promote the following definition:

> Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (p.123)

Applying a convergent triangulated mixed-methods to this research allowed for an extra richness of the evidence to respond to the research problem than otherwise would be anticipated in either quantitative or qualitative research alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Turner et al., 2017). The selection of an appropriate mixed-methods design was essential to integrating these qualitative and quantitative features. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the most frequently identified mixed-method strategies include triangulation, explanatory, embedded and exploratory designs. Each of these designs is characterised by the sequence by which the data is collected and analysed, the level of emphasis placed on the different types of data strands, and the process and timing for data integration (Turner et al., 2017). After considering these differences, a convergent triangulated mixed-methods design was selected to collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data concurrently with both strategies equal in prioritisation. The convergence of data was also consistent with the purpose of a case study to understand the phenomenon in question. While triangulation can be achieved through a single form of methodology, the intention of mixed-methods research within a pragmatic worldview is to address and counteract both the real and perceived flaws of a single research discipline (Creswell, 2016; Denzin, 2012; Mitchell, 2018; Torrance, 2012). Therefore, the objective for the convergence of the triangulated findings within this study was validated through both divergence and commonality across both of the qualitative and quantitative strategies employed.

While this study's theoretical purpose and philosophy have previously outlined the intention of both theory development and theory testing about Catholic school amalgamations, this study's methodological ideal provides the necessary foundation for triangulation mixed-methods design. According to Turner and colleagues (2017), the research strategies that are employed in a mixed-methods study are ideally based upon the degree in which to achieve the

methodological objectives of i) generalisability, ii) precision in control/measurement of identified variables, and iii) authenticity of context. The extent to which each of these objectives is defined and explored will have implications for informing the proposed theory. Convergent triangulation is therefore achieved when the theoretical and methodological purposes and processes of a study are aligned (Denzin, 2012; Turner et al., 2017).

Such intended alignment can be seen through this project's theoretical purpose to better inform future potential Catholic school restructuring processes (Stark, 2019). To achieve this objective, the methodological purposes of this study were addressed through mixed-methods processes which included:

- Large scale target population survey questionnaires (quantitative and qualitative) to maximise generalisability

- Statistical data analysis to enable precision in measuring identified variables

- The review and analysis of a range of documents and the use of reflective notes

- Case study research design to capture the authenticity of context

- Each of these methods mitigated any fundamental biases within the research and reinforced a pragmatic worldview lens. Within the phenomenon of this case, the process involved in attaining a convergent triangulation of mixed-method contextual data is best described by Noble and Heale (2019, p. 67) as being able, "to help explore and explain complex human behaviour using a variety of methods to offer a more balanced explanation to readers."

While there are several research benefits to a triangulated mixed-methods design, proponents are also wary of the potential limitations involved (Murdock, 2019; Noble & Heale, 2019; Turner et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers are encouraged to be aware of the identified challenges

involved in the level of expertise required to undertake effective mixed-methods research and allow for the appropriate length of time for such strategies to be conducted. Both of the supervisors of this research have considerable experience in their areas of expertise and supported the researcher in their respective qualitative or quantitative critical feedback throughout the study, allowing for equal priority given to the quantitative and qualitative analysis and reporting.

While the mixed-methods approach to this study has been identified, the specific research method will be detailed further in this chapter. The following section justifies the use of a case study design within this research.

3.2.2 Case Study Research Design

The case study design is "an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context…" (Yin, 2017, p.15). In this case, the phenomenon is a Catholic school amalgamation. Case studies allow for a range of data collection methods to explain and evaluate particular programs, events, activities, and processes specifically "bounded" by their very nature and definition (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2014). The use of a case study design is consistent with the importance of identifying each Catholic school setting as unique and, therefore, essential in contextualising an inquiry into a large-scale educational change process (Fullan, 2009; Merriam, 1998). The justification of a case study for this project is highlighted through the previously stated theoretical purpose of investigating and reporting on real-life interactions between events and human relationships (Cohen et al., 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Stark, 2019). A case study investigation aims to

identify the impact of an organisational change process to capture valuable insights to inform other such interventions. Yin (2017) supports such a view in stating that,

> Compared with other evaluation methods, such as surveys, experiments and quasi-experiments, case study evaluations can (1) capture the complexity of a case, including changes over time, and (2) attend fully to contextual conditions… case study research can perform an especially valuable additional function: (3) to explain how the "case," usually a planned intervention or ongoing initiative, works. (p.270)

Considering the study's overall purpose, Yin (2017) categorises the various types of case studies as either explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive; while further differentiating between single, holistic, and multiple-case study designs. This case study is a single case exploratory design that analysed and reported on a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Through the emerging themes, the results of this exploratory study resulted in the researcher synthesising findings to create a conceptual framework unique to this thesis. The researcher proposes that the conceptual framework is a consideration to support both future Catholic school change processes and further research on this topic. While literature endorses the case study method as a suitable medium for school-based research, (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Stark, 2019; Verschuren, 2003) there is also criticism for a lack of generalisability to similar cases (Cohen et al., 2011; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2013; Yin, 2017). Patton (2015) addresses the concern of case study generalisability by highlighting the use of a convergent mixed-methods approach. Whereas qualitative methods produce thick descriptive comments, a quantitative approach allows for the capture of precise statistical data from large numbers of individuals using a limited set of questions. This combination produces generalisable results that are both broad and concise for reporting purposes.

It is also necessary, as the Researcher, to clearly state any preconceived notions to promote a transparent case study design process and further increase generalisability. This case study intends to better understand the nature and impact of a Catholic school amalgamation. While the research presupposes the contextual focus areas within the actual change process through a review of the literature, it does not propose to assume that the case chosen was indicative of all Catholic school amalgamations, let alone those within an Australian contemporary educational context. This study does not presume to present an exact method for Catholic school amalgamations and school restructures, instead, it investigated and reported on what occurred in this amalgamation and suggests policy directions for further research to improve future educational change processes for the benefit of student outcomes. To achieve these objectives, Yin's (2017) criteria for ensuring transparent quality control of the research design were applied; these included: "construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability" (p.42). The previously defined research questions outlined the study's aim and objectives in outlining the Catholic school amalgamation as a construct and how it was measured in terms of testing both process and impact. The number of measures in the study, including each of the embedded units of Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, the physical learning environment, and leadership and administration, further increased the construct validity by the very fact they each measured the same construct (amalgamation). In a practical sense, the reviewed draft case study reports during the data collection phase ensured transparent quality control.

The notion of internal validity of results within this study concerned the strength of assigning causes to the outcomes. This study was bound within a complex change environment and was carried out as a historical review to reduce prejudice and conflicts of interest. An

external consultant collected the data towards the end of the initial year of the amalgamation, with each participant's privacy respected with stated anonymity guaranteed. High internal validity is claimed through the measures to protect individual participant's confidentiality. The permission to use the redacted data set was given, increasing internal validity through randomisation. Several rival explanations were critically tested to substantiate these protocols further to ensure yet another level of internal validity.

The study's external validity concerned the study's application and findings in an external setting outside the case. The actual generalisability of this research was an objective of this study overall. Both primary research questions look to cause and effect, with the secondary question explicitly asking, "What can be learned by leading a Catholic school restructure?" As an experienced secondary Catholic school principal, the Researcher thoroughly understood the culture of the research setting before embarking on the study, which is considered a means of improving external validity.

The research design's final quality control, which ensured transparency, was the study's reliability. The structure of the actual research design ensured reliability by testing each of the embedded units of Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, the physical learning environment, and leadership and administration of each of the individual staff, student and parent stakeholder groups. This process consistency contributed to a case study database and chain of evidence during the data collection phase, ensuring a high level of reliability.

3.2.3 Binding the Case

This section provides a visual representation of this case study. The characteristic feature of a case study is that the project is "bound" by a defined scope of research (Creswell, 2014).

Figure 1 highlights the importance of focusing and refining the bound nature of the research and relevant case data, but also highlights the contextual nature of where and how the case is positioned. These boundaries not only determine the time, place, and participant samples but also indicate the depth of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2014). The boundaries for this research are identified within the visual representation of this case study, as defined by three distinct criteria features, as seen in Figure 1.
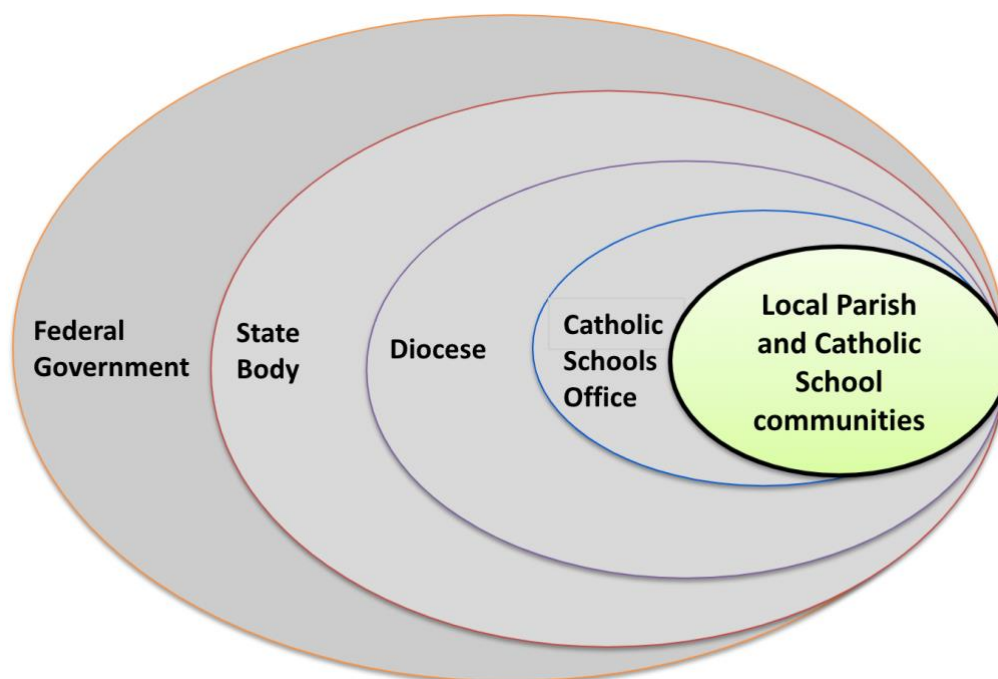
Figure 1

Conceptualising the context of the bound case

Firstly, to explore the impact of a specific amalgamation process involving two single-sex Catholic secondary schools, the research site is identified as the first criteria. The specific location (and the communities) where the two Catholic schools operated side-by-side before merging is a significant binding factor.

Secondly, a time boundary further narrows the focus of the study. The official announcement that the two schools, central to this study, would amalgamate was on the 18th of August 2014, while the newly merged school entity concluded the inaugural school year on the 19th December 2016. The rationale for this timeframe was based upon the broad implementation phase that was undertaken during the amalgamation process.

The third and final boundary to this case is the target population for the study. It is imperative that the actors as defined within the boundary of this case, including the staff, parents and students from the two original schools, could accurately express their own specific experience of the school amalgamation change process (see Table 1).

Table 1

Combined school target population: survey sample

Cohort	Number
Staff members	85
Students	816
Parents	259

Note: Table 1 indicates the number of participants who participated in the qualitative & quantitative survey.

These large sample numbers support what Creswell (2014) emphasises within the importance of obtaining differing perspectives from the target populations despite each of them experiencing the same phenomenon. If other school communities are to potentially benefit from the process of an amalgamation, then a case study that is informed by a varied collection of information will provide valuable insights, as expressed by those for whom it was designed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Yin, 2014).

3.3   Reporting the Case

This case study's reporting is underpinned by the single case exploratory design, which analysed and reported on the contextual phenomenon central to this research. Yin (2017) suggests six different methods for the reporting of a case study: linear, comparative, chronological, theory building, suspense, and unsequenced. In considering both the previously stated theoretical and methodological purposes of this study and the importance of considering multiple perspectives to enhance understanding and, therefore, generalisability, a theory-building method was utilised. This reporting method is further reinforced by the application of Kotter's (1996) eight-step change process as a relevant theoretical framework in which to evaluate the overall strategy within the change process phenomenon. There are many theories about change management and widespread discussion on their similarities and differences (Galli 2019). However, the primary justification for choosing Kotter as a theoretical framework method was two-fold. Firstly, Kotter's focus on those leading the actual change process (Appelbaum et al., 2012), and secondly, the recognised strength of it being a helpful post-analysis tool of a retrospective change process (Chappell et al., 2016; Nitta, 2009; Quinn et al., 2012; Smith, 2011). Both of these reasons align with a secondary analysis and provide a critical vehicle for an informed discussion of the research overall.

When reporting in a narrative, the position and voice of the researcher should be clearly understood and how this influences the interpretation of the case (Costley et al., 2010; Chavez, 2008). The Researcher was the newly appointed principal of the amalgamated school, which further necessitates the contextual perspective. The data collection, therefore, included the addition of reflective notes in complementing the case reports. In mitigating against bias and conflict of interest, the Researcher did not have any involvement with participants during any

part of the data collection. As the amalgamation process took place during 2016, this is an historical case study seeking to critically evaluate the process and the challenges that were presented so that future amalgamations can learn from this one. While an external consultant undertook the collection of the data, the nature of being a 'former insider' to the case allowed the Researcher to uniquely "understand the cognitive, emotional, and psychological precepts of participants as well as possess a more profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field" (Chavez, 2008, p. 481). The documenting of this case, by someone who played a role in the process offers a reflective perspective, for the reader to consider alternative theories to the study, thus further enhancing the transferability of the study (Chavez, 2008; Costley et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

3.4 Research Process

The research process initially involved an extensive data collection from the case bound staff, students and parents through an online survey/questionnaire facilitated by an external consultant. This process captured both concise statistical data and thick descriptive comments from the target populations. Added to this was the concurrent review of key documents in corroborating and augmenting evidence from other sources (Yin, 2017). The Researcher subsequently analysed the data sets according to the methodological perspective proposed later in this chapter, resulting in the culmination of three case reports to address the research questions. This process was consistent with both the pragmatic worldview and case study design previously identified in this chapter. Through analysing and interpreting each of these case reports, the Researcher utilised thick description in narrating the key findings to the reader (Creswell, 2016).

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

A mixed-method structure gathered both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently, with the two strategies equivalent in prioritisation. At first, the information examined remained separated by technique before the results from the different strands were then blended to accomplish convergence (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 2017). The sources of data collection included a formal document review and a survey questionnaire undertaken in November of the inaugural year of the amalgamation. Table 2 provides an overview of the methods applied within this research and by whom it was undertaken.

Table 2

Methods application

Process undertaken	Role
Online survey data collected	Consultant
Reflective notes collected	Researcher
Case study database established	Researcher
Case study database verified	Supervisor
Concurrent review of data	Researcher
Coding, categorising, memoing	Researcher
Analysis and interpretation	Researcher
Data analysis verified	Supervisor
Draft case study reports written	Researcher
Draft case study reports reviewed	Supervisors
Rival explanations critically tested	Researcher & Supervisors
Emerging themes established	Researcher
Theoretical framework applied	Researcher

Note: Table 2 indicates an overview of the methods applied within the secondary analysis

The sources of data collection included a secondary analysis of pre-existing survey data along with the concurrent document analysis of reflective notes. The collection of data and the review of documents involved the consideration of credibility, accessibility and the reporting of bias in ensuring that all ethical obligations were met (Cohen et al., 2011; Punch, 2014; Yin, 2017). The advantage of a secondary data analysis, with previously redacted individual participants, allowed for sizeable raw data sets to be grouped and coded appropriately. The retrospective use of such data was aligned with the ethical obligations initially stated during the collection (Reddy & Agrawal, 2012). The secondary datasets allowed for the relevant measures to formulate a generalisable answer to the research questions and added to the casebound nature of the research. While critics of secondary data analysis claim that the observational nature of secondary data can make it difficult to assess causality, this is countered within a dual document analysis structure that assisted in the interpretation of key findings (Smith et al., 2020).

In this study, the Researcher sourced personal reflective notes that were made before the study and created throughout the inaugural year of the amalgamation. The documents included a reflective journal, which were informed through the experiences of contributing to previously written educational briefs and school annual strategic goals, as well as school community published newsletters. Yin (2017) advises that such documents provide added context to first-person accounts and can assist in triangulation and convergence. Document reviews are considered to be efficient, cost-effective, and a stable means of data collection that can supplement other sources (Bowen, 2009). The cross-checking with the other sources also reduces interpretative bias from specific document authors (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The survey questionnaire tool yielded individual responses from 85 staff, 816 students and 259 parents. It included individual satisfaction rankings and comments in the following

areas of the bounded case: Catholic life and identity, academic life, staff and student wellbeing, school leadership and administration, school facilities and resources, and the overall level of satisfaction. Each of these categories provided the opportunity for individual respondents to rate each of the specific areas and make personalised comments. The privacy protection was stated prior to the survey being conducted and assured with the confidentiality of respondents being de-identified within the survey data. This anonymity level included the assurance that the Researcher or another person cannot identify a specific participant from the information provided within the data (Cohen et al., 2011).

Each comment was analysed and clustered to determine the extent to which the data addressed the research questions associated with this phenomenon. Analysing the qualitative comments from this databank involved the following general cycles defined by Kalpokaite and Radivojevic (2019) - inspection, coding, categorising, modelling - with each cycle relying on memoing in order to get an overall sense of the particular stakeholder views and the themes which emerged.

The quantitative survey ratings included the above-mentioned aspects of school life being rated on a Likert scale between 1-7, with the accumulated percentage results being understood in the following way:

- A score below 3.00 ($< 43\%$) indicating a critical deficiency

- A score between 3.00 and 4.00 (43% - 57%) is an area of key concern

- A score between 4.00 and 5.00 (57% - 71%) is satisfactory but needs development

- A score between 5.00 and 6.00 (71% - 85%) is a positive result

- A score above 6.00 (85% - 100%) is a strong affirmation

The identified range within the data sets presented an overall average score. Illustrating the 'shape' of the datasets through frequency histograms provided a visual representation of each sample target population of the case (Muijs, 2011).

Both the analysis of the document review, the survey statistics and the range of categorised comments together allowed for substantial amounts of rich data to converge and be analysed to address each of the research questions. Short narrative reports were then prepared from each stakeholder group: staff, students, and parents which helped triangulate the dataset from the point of view of the case bound population. The writing of such narrative reports captured the actors' experience within the lived phenomenon and is considered a significant component within the process of analysis (Creswell, 2016). The convergence of the triangulated findings within this study was validated through both divergence and commonality across both qualitative and quantitative strategies employed (Creswell et al., 2018).

To ensure consistency and reliability of the coding and assessment process, the data analysis was verified by the chief supervisor in order to go beyond what is typically deemed sufficient for achieving reliability and validity (Morse et al., 2002) and therefore ensure robust interpretative analysis and conclusions in achieving both impartiality and dependability. The previously described mixed-methods research approach of a convergent triangulated mixed-methods design, inclusive of the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently and in equal prioritisation, is visually represented in Figure 2. The design by its very nature, allows for both an external and internal validity to increase an accurate picture of the contextual variables associated with the distinctiveness of the case.

Figure 2

Convergent triangulated mixed methods design
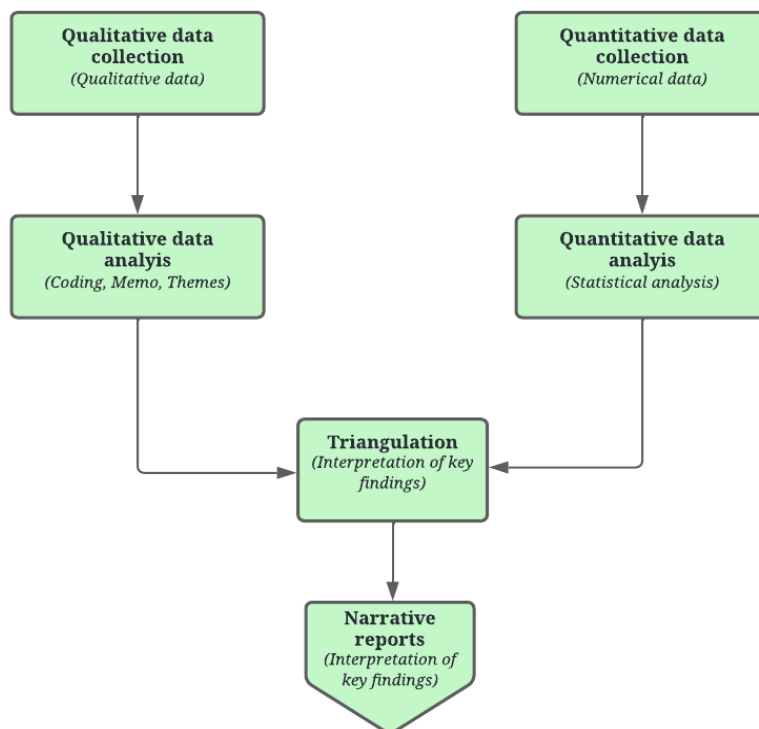
3.6 Summary

This chapter presented the details of the methodology involved in this research. The first

section identified the theoretical perspective on the different approach to conceptualising the

research that was undertaken within this study. In outlining the for-and-against of both

qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, the pragmatic scope and direction of the

study was identified. This included the adoption of a single case study design. The second

section provided insight into the mixed-methods and case study design utilised within this study.

In selecting a convergent triangulated mixed-methods design the collection and analysis of

qualitative and quantitative data occurred concurrently with both strategies equal in prioritisation. Within this section the contextual detail that bound the actual case was also investigated. In addition, the third section outlined the specific research methods that were applied and the process involved in collecting, analysing and reporting on the relevant research data. The following chapter outlines the case data results through a series of stakeholder case reports. The findings within each of these case reports allowed for emerging themes to be analysed in achieving convergence.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

4.0 Introduction

The following chapter presents a discussion of the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the participating staff, students, and parents who together represent the "case" (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 2017) within this study. Section 1 includes three separate case reports representative of the stakeholder groups for the purpose of presenting the data collected. This section includes a particular focus on the categories of interest within this study: Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, physical learning environment, and school leadership and administration. Section 2 presents the analysis and the themes which emerged from each of the case data categories. Section 3 summarises the analysis of each theme to provide further insights and a practical understanding of a real-world change process. The reporting of this chapter applies a theory-building method (Yin, 2017) which was outlined in Chapter 3, and utilises a triangulated convergent mixed-method structure. The results from both the quantitative and qualitative strands were blended in order to achieve convergence (Creswell, 2016; Yin 2017).

4.1 Case Reports

This section includes three stakeholder case reports, each employing a mixed-method of statistical analysis which is complemented by qualitative data that is used to explain and interrogate the findings from the quantitative data (Patton, 2015). The case reports from staff, students, and parents assisted in triangulating the overall dataset and captured the actors' experience within the lived phenomenon (Creswell, 2016). While each report is an interpretation

of the overall collective of each grouping, individual respondent quotes from each data set are used to highlight a particular point. Contextual comments are also based upon the document review analysis. Each of these are common features of case study research and reinforces an authentic perspective in assisting the reader to make their own judgements (Yin, 2017).

4.2 Case Report 1 - Staff

The staff case report's primary source of data collection was a survey and questionnaire undertaken in November 2016 and included a range of individual responses from 85 staff members. The ratio of survey participants included an even split of 34 staff each from the previous Girls' (40%) and Boys' (40%) schools, seven staff members who worked at another school before the amalgamation (8%), three staff members (3%) who indicated they were pre-service teachers in their first year, along with eight staff members (9%) identifying as having worked concurrently in both the Girls' and Boys' schools the year prior to the amalgamation.

The importance of contextualising where the staff members were working before the year of amalgamation highlights the number of staff who had previously not experienced either of the original two Catholic schools before the change process and an even split of staff members from the previous school entities. There were 60 female staff members and 25 male staff members from the staff who participated in the survey, representing a more significant percentage of female staff (70%) than male staff (30%).

Table 3 identifies the various staff roles and responsibilities as nominated by the survey respondents. The majority of staff are general classroom teachers (51%), followed by non-teaching staff members (24%). The majority of teachers (22%) are in their first five years of teaching (Table 4).

Table 3

Staff categories

Identified Survey Groupings	Staff Members
General teaching staff	43 (51%)
Middle leaders	15 (17%)
Leadership team	7 (8%)
Administration staff	20 (24%)

Note: Table 3 indicates the breakdown of staff roles and responsibilities identified by the survey

Table 4

Teaching experience of the combined staff

Teaching experience in years	Number of teachers
0 – 5 years	14 (22%)
6 – 7 years	9 (14%)
11 – 15 years	9 (14%)
16 – 20 years	10 (15%)
21 – 25 years	5 (8%)
26 – 30 years	7 (11%)
31+ years	11 (16%)

Note: Table 4 illustrates staff numbers according to their teaching staff years of experience

4.2.1 Catholic School Life and Culture

As was outlined in the previous chapter, the quantitative section of the staff survey tool included a Likert scale ranging between 1-7 with the accumulated percentage results being interpreted in the following way:

- A score below 3.00 ($<$ 43%) indicates a critical deficiency

- A score between 3.00 and 4.00 (43% - 57%) is an area of key concern

- A score between 4.00 and 5.00 (57% - 71%) is satisfactory but needs development

- A score between 5.00 and 6.00 (71% - 85%) is a positive result

- A score above 6.00 (85% - 100%) is a strong affirmation

In reference to the amalgamation of two single-sex Catholic schools, and specifically the processes involved in honouring the founding school religious orders of the two original schools, there was overall approval from staff respondents. This was highlighted by staff members rating the statement, 'The founding charisms of the two schools have been respected in the amalgamation' with an average of 5.54. This positive response is further captured with the combined staff average rating of 5.26 across all Catholic school life and culture questions. The importance of Catholicity to the newly combined College was rated within this section as the highest component by staff (5.58), followed by an acceptance of adequate opportunities for students to express Catholic social teaching principles through embracing social justice issues (5.54). The third highest ranked area was the acknowledgement that regular prayer was a prevalent part of school life in being faithful to the Catholic mission and values (5.43), followed by the statement asking staff to rate if 'The sense of Catholic identity has been strengthened by the amalgamation' (5.10). These positive ratings are supported by the staff member who commented:

> There are numerous opportunities for the students to become involved in the
> religious life of the College. Coming together, the students are lucky to share
> in two great charisms. The Feast Days, Rosary at Lunch, and many charity
> events like Vinnies Night Patrol provide the students with many opportunities
> to further develop their Catholic identity.

The various ratings in this category reinforce how the change process included a deliberate

approach to supporting a new expression of Catholic school life and culture, through a deliberate expression and acknowledgement of the previously separate Catholic school heritages. However, the staff comments also presented some opposing views. There were 19 (22%) comments by staff that were critical of various elements relating to Catholic school life and identity. The main reasons that were highlighted by staff members as concerns resulting from the impact of the change process included the removal of some previously long-standing traditional daily prayers, with one staff member commenting: "I feel that we have lost something that the girls' school once had." This sentiment of loss was repeated by another staff member who claimed: "The Brother's prayer is said every Friday; however, it seems that the girls' school prayers have been forgotten." These comparisons between the previous school entities will be further explicated in section 2 of this chapter.

4.2.2 Student Learning and Wellbeing

While the previous section's data on Catholic school life and culture was straightforward and consistent, the data from this section is more contentious. While staff members indicated on the Likert scale questions that student learning and wellbeing were being well catered for within the merged school entity, some contradictions emerged in the comments made about these same facets of school life.

The combined staff average rating for all questions relating to academic life was 5.06, while the average overall score ratings for student wellbeing questions was 5.34. These average scores illustrate that the staff generally affirmed the overall school support for student learning and wellbeing. Staff members indicated their support with the statement that 'Student wellbeing was a priority in the amalgamated school,' with an average score of 5.85. In support of this

rating, the staff also indicated that students had adequate access to counsellors with an average

score of 6.1. This acknowledged degree of student wellbeing support was further reinforced by

staff members indicating that students felt safe at school (5.67) and that each student at the newly

merged College knew a staff member they could approach if they were worried (5.83). A staff

member's comment supports these ratings:

> The counsellors are excellent at their jobs, and it is great that they are qualified
>
> psychologists. The Leaders of Wellbeing address issues as quickly as possible,
>
> and the Wellbeing Centre is an excellent addition to the campus as students
>
> can gain access to a Leader of Wellbeing very easily.

While another staff member commented, "I think that the Wellbeing aspect of the school is

catered for better than any other school I have ever worked at, which is brilliant."

The actual impact on learning due to the amalgamation was captured by the overall staff

rating of 5.20 of the statement, 'The larger school provides additional learning opportunities for

students.' This was further reinforced by more specific statements regarding the diverse learning

needs of students. Staff members indicated that the newly formed College addressed the needs of

the most academically capable and therefore in need of extension (5.33) and students who were

either identified as needing extra support or for students who presented with learning difficulties

and in need of greater individual learning support (5.27). Other student learnings and wellbeing

factors that staff members positively rated were regarding individual subject resourcing (5.31),

formal student reporting processes (5.92), effective child protection policies and processes being

understood by staff (5.82), as well as an adequate number of sporting (5.89) and cultural

opportunities being provided (5.15) for students within the newly merged school setting. One

comment from a staff member that was indicative of other positive comments that support this

data was: "Positive initiatives such as RAMP, Quicksmart, the reading program, and the Year 8 action research project focused on writing are having a positive impact on the academic achievements of our students".

However, despite staff affirming several different areas within student learning and wellbeing as high, and rating the overall quality of education at the merged school as satisfactory (5.08), some of the staff were critical of other areas within this section. These criticisms included the overall school approach to consistent curriculum policy, assessment procedures, and various elements of the curriculum scope and sequencing across some courses and subject areas. The following statement captures some anecdotal comments made by staff members in this regard:

> The lack of comments in Reports (software program) makes it easier for us
>
> but provides very little information about our students. Behaviour is improving
>
> in most classes, but there are still some serious areas of concern, particularly
>
> in consequences for students. Policies on this need to be made clear and enforced.
>
> Assessment practices need reform and professional development at a whole school
>
> level.

While accepted policies and inconsistent operational practices towards student learning were highlighted as areas for development within the inaugural year of the amalgamated school, there was also evidence of varying staff perceptions towards a student gender bias, which is underpinned by staff rating the statement, 'Students behave well in class and focus on their learning' at a concerning 3.88. However, staff members also rated the statement 'Student morale, and interest in school life was high' at 4.97, which indicates a different perspective. The difference in these two scores is clarified by some comments which highlight issues of staff members' perceptions of gender inequality in student learning and wellbeing, with one

commenting:

> And what about acknowledging the B-girls class - they are expected to hand things in, but
>
> it is the boys who receive the praise - and a positive comment in their diary! And the
>
> Diary system works for the boys, but the girls are expected to behave and never receive
>
> positive comments. The student is always given the benefit of the doubt over the teacher.
>
> Poor behaviour and no consequences are the reasons why I will not be here next year.

This section's findings illustrate that there are stark differences of opinions in the former boys' and girls' school staff members. Examples of this can be seen in the following comments: "Once again, it is the boys who cannot seem to handle the rules, so they just get a tap on the wrist and sent back to class to continue giving attitude." While in contrast, one staff member indicated that: "The boys have added energy to the classroom - the girls were sedate and compliant. The boys have mixed that up."

The student learning and wellbeing data within this staff case report were positive overall, with an average of 5.39 for all questions within this section. However, the data needs to be considered in light of staff comments, which at times seems to contradict the overall rating. This is reinforced by the staff member who commented:

> The College is in the early years of amalgamation, and there is a long way to go.
>
> Overall, it seems to be rather positive for both staff and students. Old habits will
>
> most likely die hard as the new College finds its own identity and place within
>
> the community.

4.2.3 Physical Learning Environment

The building program, which was undertaken during the amalgamation and the reconfiguration of a combined Catholic school entity, included improving the overall physical learning environment. As well as introducing up to ten new agile learning spaces, the newly formed College also needed to address issues of safety involving the significant increase in student transport flow across what were formerly two separate and segregated campuses. On top of this was the need to unite two former staff room cultures within a newly designed staffroom, in both a physical and cultural sense. The new classrooms, combined staffroom, and the introduction of a student wellbeing centre and student cafeteria required the necessary support from the creation of a contemporary and centralised administration office, with the capacity to manage the significant increase in both the staff, student and parent population.

According to the staff respondents within this data set, there was an overall positive rating of what was widely accepted as improvements to the newly merged College's physical learning environment. This positive response is captured with the combined staff average rating of 5.67 across all questions relating to the school's physical learning environment. This overall positive indicator was highlighted by staff rating the now larger school as providing additional learning opportunities for students (5.20) and that the new buildings had improved college amenity and functioning (5.70). These ratings are reinforced by the following staff member who commented: "It feels like a place of innovation because of how it looks. There is a good flow between the campuses now. There is a sense of continuity."

The following comment also reinforces how the physical learning environment during the period of amalgamation was clearly for the benefit of student learning and wellbeing: The facilities are beautiful, and there are good resources that have improved over the last year or so.

There are now more spaces for the students. Another staff member supported this view: "The learning spaces are so much better than previously experienced. They are a vast improvement from the girls' perspective."

While staff rated their own newly combined facilities relatively high (5.80), the highest overall staff rating within this section was with the new reception and front office systems being well organised and efficient (6.00). This positive rating of the new administration office is reinforced by the staff member who commented that "The physical security of the school has also improved."

While the data and comments both align to staff indicating that the improvements to the physical learning environment had an overall positive impact during amalgamation, some staff questioned the consultative processes that informed the changes to the newly combined school campus. These concerns ranged from a lack of consultation with all staff in regards to the design of the new facilities, as well as some practical concerns relating to the need for a new hall to accommodate the increased size of cohorts and the urgency to increase access to more student toilets across both sides of the merged campus. These points are also highlighted by the anecdotal comment made about the refurbishment of what can arguably be considered a very traditional school setting: "Some of the areas of the school are made to look worse now when compared to the new buildings."

Overall, staff members indicated a positive impact of the planned processes for improving the physical learning environment of the newly merged school entity, which is characterised by 65% of positive staff comments. Within the amalgamation process the expansion of the previously segregated campus provided a positive educational and social context for staff in general. As one staff member commented: "The campus looks great, and I

feel very proud about this aspect of the College."

4.2.4 Leadership and Administration

In considering the previous sections within this staff case report, it is feasible to argue that the data reveals how the embedded units within this case study: Catholic school life and identity, student learning and wellbeing, and the physical learning environment, can each be considered as vehicles that contributed in some way to the overall change process. While the previous three sections gleaned the overall learnings of the amalgamation from the perspective of the staff members who lived through the phenomenon, this particular focus area further highlights the collective staff views on the leadership and administration of the amalgamated College, while also providing insights on the status of staff relationships. Such views provide data which informs both the operational and transformational impact on staff within the change process.

The dataset indicated a reluctance from staff members in some quarters to celebrate the amalgamation and formation of a merged Catholic school entity. The data shows that staff wellbeing and relationships had an overall combined average of 4.33. This score is reinforced by staff indicating in the survey that they were overly stressed with an average score of 3.81. This level of identified stress is emphasised within several comments made by staff: "Many staff are still coming to terms with the amalgamation. Lots of comparisons about how things "used to be done" come up on a daily basis which does not help in moving forward." A staff member struggling with the rapidly changing nature of their former workplace expressed a sense of loss for the past with the following comment:

I have asked for redundancy. I used to love teaching but now do not want to live

my life being disrespected and working somewhere, which has just become a place

where I feel so negative about. I feel angry every day, which is not me. That is

how negative I feel because of this school. I do not know if I need a new career or

if my wonderful memories have just been so corrupted that I want to cry for

the loss.

Such a comment highlights the challenging process of reculturing in the initial year of the

amalgamation process. It is supported by staff rating the statement, 'A new staff identity is being

forged' with a 4.80 average score. The data reveals the difficulty in creating a 'new normal' with

the challenge being captured by the comment: "Staff tend to support their own - there is a real

division between us; this has even spilled into staff socials that have been organised outside of

school hours."

It needs to be stated that such rhetoric across many of the staff comments are within what

was still a very recent context of all leadership roles having been spilled. Such an extensive

human resource process of recruitment and selection for the newly combined school's leadership

and management added to the change process's complexity. It was a significant underlying cause

of frustration for many staff. As one staff member commented: "It upsets me that it feels that

past achievements and responsibilities that staff have held are not recognised and celebrated or

rewarded in promotions that have happened in the College throughout the year."

Within this context, the leadership and administration of the change process undertaken

were also considered within the staff survey questionnaire. While staff rated the leadership

team's availability to staff along with their modelling of sound professional behaviours with

average scores of 5.20 and 5.16, respectively, the overall score for all questions relating to

leadership received a combined average rating of 4.88. The main areas for improvement that

staff identified were about whole-school communication processes and the need for school policies and procedures to be clearer, consistent, and accessible to all staff members. These concerns are captured by the staff member who commented that:

> Whilst the leadership team is very accessible, and I personally feel very comfortable speaking with all of the leadership team on any matter, I do not feel like the policies and procedures are clear enough. It is difficult to know who is responsible for different things making staff at all levels frustrated.

This identified area of the need for more clarity around organisational processes and leadership team responsibilities appeared regularly for some staff members and is captured in the following comment: "The leadership team is a large group of people. Approaches to tasks vary a great deal. The role of each member may need to be clarified."

While the policies of the newly merged school that were developed as a result of the amalgamation were deemed acceptable and compliant in theory, it appears the consistent application and difficulty of some staff members to 'let go' of the previous practice, albeit unintentionally, presented the leadership team with the challenge of a false assumption of consistent staff knowledge of processes and practices, which were being taken for granted. This dilemma is captured by the staff member who commented:

> Lack of communication and the assumption of the knowledge of some procedures can lead to confusion and frustration. At times the reaction by some members of the leadership, when problems arise, can come across as a lack of trust in our professionalism. I feel that it is important that we are all supported and that we are not made to feel incompetent as a result of a preconceived opinion about our abilities and capabilities.

This statement is characteristic of what appears to be a challenge for the leadership team in balancing a large-scale transformation with the need to consolidate the transactional and day-to-day operations of the newly combined school entity. Within this, the overall staff satisfaction received a combined average score of 5.18. This score also aligns to the overall positive bank of staff comments (62%) towards both the leadership and administration of the amalgamated College. The following survey statements reinforce these results, 'I enjoy working at this school and would recommend it to other teachers or support staff' (5.28), and 'This school enjoys a good reputation in the community' (5.41). Such scores are characterised by the staff member who concludes:

> I strongly believe that the changes that have occurred as a result of the amalgamation have been amazing. I think that there are still many people on the outside who have yet to recognise the wonderful things that are going on. This is a great school, and I am proud to work here.

4.2.5 Summary

This case report provides an understanding of the process of amalgamation that transpired in the merging of two Catholic secondary schools from the perspective of the staff members in the initial year of restructure. The analysis of this data provided both the strengths of the change process as well as areas that were identified as needing greater development and overall improvement.

Staff felt that the long-standing educational and religious histories of both schools were respected as part of the change process. This was a positive feature within the dataset and provided some level of familiarity in supporting staff in having to make significant adaptations in

their professional practice and changing workplace practices and circumstances within the new school entity. The staff supported the deliberate attention given to student wellbeing, as well as for those students who required diverse learning needs. Staff also recognised the overall positive response of students to the amalgamation overall. There was also approval of the newly refurbished administration buildings along with the additional recreational playground spaces.

While the analysed findings included an acknowledgement of the leadership team in having to navigate the logistical complexities and competing demands throughout the change process, it was clear that the development of more effective organisational processes for significantly larger student cohorts across a newly combined learning environment were required. This as an area for improvement was symptomatic of the expressed need for greater whole-school communication and further clarity and consistency of policy and procedure.

Another significant area for development that was identified within the staff data is the recognition of the ongoing need to continue building a combined school staff culture - both professionally and socially. There were also a number of staff who were finding it difficult in adapting their student management processes and in teaching the 'other' gender. On several occasions this was expressed by some as a comment on poor student behaviour.

4.3 Case Report 2 - Students

As with each of the case reports, this student report aims to present the data collected within the survey and questionnaire completed in November 2016 along with the contextual document analysis of existing reflective notes that occurred concurrently. This dataset included individual responses from 811 students, comprising 415 males (51%) and 396 females (49%).

It should be pointed out that 590 students (73%) who participated in the online survey had attended the separate boys' and girls' schools the year before the amalgamation. In comparison, 221 (27%) were Year 7 students who are new to the inaugural amalgamated school. The same Likert scale (1-7) with accumulated percentage results for various question banks was included throughout the questionnaire.

4.3.1 Catholic school life and culture

The overall average student ratings show Catholic school life and culture to be satisfactory but needing further development. While prayer was seen by students as a regular part of school life (5.05), the combined student average for all survey questions relating to the merged College's religious life was 4.74. Overall student engagement in religious education lessons and school-based liturgies was identified as being an area for improvement, which is illustrated by the ratings relating to participation in school liturgies (4.45), the teaching of religious education (4.92), and teacher encouragement for student involvement in social justice (4.74). These average scores were viewed concurrently through the lens of student commentary within this same area. While the Likert ratings commented on the formalised religious curriculum and liturgical aspects of the amalgamated Catholic school, the dataset also included 96 (94%) positive comments relating to more values-focussed elements of the Catholic school life and culture of the new school entity. One student had a particularly strong opinion on the matter stating that "I love it here because it is a Catholic school and I want to learn about my faith."

The majority of student comments on Catholic school life, however, were captured more broadly in terms of overall Catholic school culture, which is highlighted by the student who commented, "I enjoy the religious life and how it is reflected on us," and another who believed the strength of the merged school was "The multiculturalism, diverse learning and good religious life."

This theme is reinforced with several student comments identifying the value of "respect," along with 86% of students commenting on the positive sense of community within the merged school. One student comment that is reflective of others illustrates the overall feeling of the students, stating: "I am proud of being at a Catholic school with a good name." Another student explained that "I enjoy the community of the school and feel great as a member of it," which was further reinforced by the student who highlighted "The times when we come together as a community and celebrate."

This holistic view of Catholic school life and culture is expanded upon by most students identifying other key facets of school life within a more integrated commentary. One student expressed their appreciation of the "The education that this school provides and the importance of religion," with another describing the "Combination between religion and school work along with discipline" as a positive feature of the new school entity.

These positive comments are in contrast to 6 (0.06%) students, who expressed their desire for further improvement in the Catholic school life and culture. Within the open-ended opportunity for student recommendations, one student nominated their desire for the school to "Improve Religious life" with another wanting more in the "practice of prayer;" while juxtaposed against these comments of wanting more was one particular student who asked for "Religion not to be compulsory."

There were also opposing student views on whether the two original schools' founding school religious orders were being honoured. While two students commented positively on how "Continuing the traditions of both the Brothers and the Sisters" was a positive aspect of the merged school, another expressed their concern about how previous practices of the former schools were no longer continuing. This was highlighted by one particular student who wanted their previous school song to remain.

This section's findings illustrate the impact that Catholic school life and culture had on students within the new school entity. The data shows that while students could effectively comment on how positive the community atmosphere and sense of belonging existed within the newly formed school, there were also some key ratings that identified areas for improvement within both the liturgical and formal religious education delivery and engagement.

4.3.2 Student Learning and Wellbeing

In a similar way to the data in the previous section on Catholic school life and culture, the data section on student learning and wellbeing also resulted in a large number of positive comments from student respondents to the survey questionnaire. However, these comments contradict several facets that students rated overall as areas in need of improvement, including a particular key area of concern addressed in this section.

The dataset includes 143 (20%) positive comments explicitly relating to learning in the classroom. Students commented on how supportive their teachers were to individual student learning. These positive comments are highlighted by the student who explained that: "I like how teachers interact with the students to make sure that they are not struggling with any topic and helping them when they are in need." While another student affirmed the importance of being

able to collaborate with other students: "I enjoy working with fellow peers and helping them to achieve their goals. I believe that is one of the great things about this school, that we are given an opportunity to work with one another."

These comments are considered alongside the overall average student rating of 4.85 for life in the classroom. While students indicated within this question bank that some areas are satisfactory, there are other areas in need of further improvement, such as the individual student learning plans (4.06), assignment feedback (4.86), and the use of technology in class (4.92). There were also some positive ratings to consider. Students rated how well prepared they felt their teachers were for lessons with an overall average of 5.19. This score is reinforced with students rating the level of knowledge and expertise of their teachers with an overall average of 5.48. Generally, student interaction with teachers was judged as being a positive feature of the school, with many affirming comments being made by students, of which are best captured by the following:

> I enjoy the wonderful teachers who help me on my personal growth journey and education; I must endorse teachers such as ... for their tremendous efforts and continual encouragement when it comes to my learning. These teachers, amongst many others, are the ones that bring spirit and joy to our school community. I thank them for their motivation to teach and respect for students; they treat everyone, whether it be staff or students, with continual respect and decency.

While such comments affirm the newly combined school, the analysis of the student dataset highlights some discrepancies between student and teacher interactions that require further examination. While average student ratings indicate that they felt safe at school (5.01) and appreciate access to a counsellor (5.71), having a teacher that students felt they could talk to if

they had a problem, along with teachers treating students with respect both received an overall student average rating of only 4.7. This score is highlighted by the collective student cohort average rating of 4.73 for wellbeing. This overall average rating by students appears to be at odds with students commenting on how they appreciated that teachers and the school emphasised the importance of positive student wellbeing to the learning process. Some of these comments include the student who stated: "I enjoy being part of a good school that cares about the wellbeing of their students," and another who explained," I like most the way staff teachers treat the students. I like how much they care for our wellbeing."

Further analysis of the discrepancy between the student ratings and the student comments is highlighted by students rating overall student behaviour in the classroom with 3.8. Despite this low rating there were those students who were positive about the change in class structures within the first year of the amalgamation. In commenting on the parallel curriculum model that was introduced, which included single-sex core classes in mathematics, English and science, as well as co-educational experience classes, many students feel this was a positive. Here are some quotes:

- "I like the co-ed classes"

- "I like having both types of classes"

- "Having new friends, subjects, teachers, co-ed classes is great"

- "I am glad the boys are not in my maths class"

However, there were also students who felt this was inconsistent. Some quotes that demonstrate this includes:

- "Get more teachers that are ok with teaching both genders as there are many teachers who have preferences"

- "Why can't all classes be co-ed?"

- "The sports and activities for boys and girls should be the same"

On the whole, it appears students can see both the benefits and challenges of co-education. Here's a quote from one student who highlighted this: "I like being in some classes with my mates but I also like going to the co-ed classes and meeting new people." This quote also demonstrates the importance students place on their desire for positive student/peer relationships. There were 174 (36%) comments specific to students strongly valuing their friendships with peers. This is characterised by the comment that "I like the fact I have made some really close friendships throughout the two years of me being in the college, I enjoy most of my class lessons." This link to how positive peer friendships can enhance learning is a common feature of many student comments on this topic; as evidenced by the student who explained: "What I like the most about this school is that everyone has friends, the teachers try their best to make you a better student."

It should also be noted that the inaugural Year 7 students indicated that moving from primary school had been easy (5.04) and that they felt they had made a positive start to their new school (5.45). Other areas that students rated included an overall average of 4.90 for participation in co-curricular activities and similarly an overall rating of 5.00 for the delivery and participation in sporting activities. The final bank of questions, which required students to rate their level of pride and sense of belonging, also resulted in an overall average of 5.00, which complements the student who stated:

> It's more than just learning. There is more fun and joy throughout school, and most of the teachers you can talk to about anything and feel like you're not hiding anything. It's really easy to relate with other students as well.

Overall, the student learning and wellbeing data within this case report were generally satisfactory, with an average of 5.00 for all questions within this section. While many student comments expressed a positive level of satisfaction for many facets within this section (66%), there were also some key contradicting comments (34%) that highlight some concerning factors with student behaviour that impacted learning within the initial year of the school restructure.

4.3.3 Physical Learning Environment

According to the student respondents within this dataset, there was an overall mixed response towards the changes to the physical learning environment within the initial year of merging campuses, with some identified areas in need of improvement from the students' perspective. The overall average student rating of school facilities and resources was 4.90. This related bank of questions included rating whether students had access to the newly developed learning facilities (4.79), how well-equipped students felt the library was (5.30), the effectiveness of the library as a learning environment (4.83); along with questions relating to the new student reception area (4.56) and the student cafeteria (4.76).

These ratings are supplemented by 39 (31%) students who wished to highlight some of the strengths of the recent changes to the physical learning environment. Student comments, which were positive towards the new classrooms and the cafeteria, are characteristic of the student who liked "The opportunities we receive with learning and technology." Such views are supported by another student who expressed how the change process in regards to the physical learning environment was a positive aspect of the amalgamation:

> Joining with the boy's school is a good idea of using both schools for lunch
>
> and recess in expanding the school grounds. I like hanging around the boy's

school, which is very spacious but also crowded. I like the section where the girl's

school is connected to the boy's school on the ground. It was a good idea.

In contrast to the students who affirmed the changes to the physical learning environment, there

were 87 (69%) comments made by students to the open-ended question in identifying this facet

as an area for school improvement, with 28 (22%) of these comments relating to the playground

and recreational areas of the newly combined school entity.

The opening-up of facilities and playgrounds that were previously segregated and

exclusive to the respective boys' and girls' schools required students to make both physical and

social adjustments. The increase in access to a combined student population impacted on a more

crowded playground spacing, with 13 (10%) students indicating tension between genders in this

regard. While a female student lamented on how "the boys take over the basketball courts and

playground," a male student made the following observation: "I would change the number of

kids (especially Year 7) that appear on the oval at recess and lunch. Also, the girls need to

evacuate because they restrict the boys from doing anything."

This perceived encroachment from the boys' perspective was in response to the College

leadership introducing more safety-conscious rules to reduce potential student injury, which

restricted the use of regular soccer balls. This particular rule change was the focus of 13 (10%)

comments by students within the dataset; indicative of the students who commented on this

topic, including:

- "Allow hard balls to be accepted"

- "Improve the playground"

- "Playground spacing. We need to change the rules on the oval."

Students also frequently identified the student toilets as an area to be addressed, as highlighted by the student who explained, "One thing that this school could improve is the toilets." Whilst the number of required student toilet facilities had not changed within the school restructure, the geographical size within the process of merging the two campuses presented a logistical challenge, which was captured by the student who requested "more toilets, so it's more convenient." The students also observed that the increase in the campus's size had led to some teething problems in student flow across the merged entity, with individual students asking for "Better routes to travel in school to classes" and "bigger corridors." In much the same way, individual students made a comparison between the old and new staff and student facilities, with one stating there should be "More things for students because the teachers got a new staff room and we still have some old rooms."

Overall, there was a mixed acknowledgement by students to the impact of the change process, which resulted in modifying the newly merged school entity's physical learning environment. While the expansion of the previously segregated campus presented students with increased learning facilities and opportunities, at the same time, students cited several challenges within the change process that required them to make many social adjustments across the school campus.

4.3.4 Leadership and Administration

The previous sections gleaned the perspective from students towards Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, and the physical learning environment, which were essentially an indication of 'what' factors were impacted during the time of amalgamation. This

section further highlights the student views on the collective leadership and administration of the College during the inaugural year of the change process.

While the previously rated average of students indicated they were proud to be a member of the new school entity (5.01) and was characteristic of the positive student comments cited in the student learning and wellbeing section, the student data in this section of the survey indicated that students were critical of several school policies and procedures that were put in place for the combined school setting. Students rated the statement 'The school's rules are fair and make sense to me' with an average score of 4.40. Overall, 97 (87%) of student comments align with this rating, with 27 (24%) students also concerned with how strictly the uniform policy was being enforced, characterised by the student who requested: "For the school not to worry about the smallest things about students such as their hair colour, earrings, socks (sock length) etc. as students do not understand how this will affect our learning."

The student survey data also highlighted the period of transition that the merged school was navigating through, with one student explaining that "Some acts that are not clearly stated in the school guidelines/rules are still being punished." Examples of student perceived inconsistencies from teachers were also translated into comments where both student genders expressed a level of teacher bias towards the opposite sex. Such an identified bias was seen in 46 (41%) student comments, including those previously identified in the student learning and wellbeing section, with one student commenting that "I would appreciate it if students were treated as equals."

There were also examples of students making comparisons between their previous school setting and the newly merged entity, with one individual student describing how "It was very

hard to settle into the new school, and the whole shift was very disruptive" with another feeling aggrieved towards the amalgamation and requesting "To split the schools back up."

While such comments were uncommon within an overall positive level of satisfaction for many facets of the newly merged school, it is imperative to note that the survey provided an open-ended opportunity for all students to express how they were impacted by the amalgamation. While there were isolated student comments opposed to the amalgamation as a whole, the ratings and comments within this section both indicated that despite a high level of pride and engagement, students felt a level of frustration in adapting to a 'combined' set of policies and procedures within the first year of the newly amalgamated Catholic school entity.

4.3.5 Summary

This case report provided an understanding of the process of amalgamation that occurred with the merging of two Catholic secondary schools from the perspective of the students within the initial year of restructure. The analysis of this data indicated that there is a strong sense of belonging and student connection to the school as a newly formed community. Students affirmed the learning and wellbeing programs and expressed an overall confidence and respect towards their teachers. There was also a strong emphasis placed on the amalgamation increasing the opportunity for developing positive student peer relationships. The improvements in school facilities and resources resulting in more learning and recreational opportunities was also expressed by students.

The areas that students identified as needing further improvement was in the area of classroom behaviour and student distractors. Students also perceived there to be some teacher inconsistencies in the delivery of curriculum between boys and girls. Other frustrations that

impacted on students included them having to adapt to the larger student population, which required further adjustments to the physical learning environment (toilets, playground). This also was symptomatic of students needing clarification around what were essentially newly combined school policies and procedures.

4.4 Case Report 3 - Parents

As with both the previous staff and student case reports, the parent case report's source of data collection was a survey and questionnaire completed in November 2016 and included individual responses from 259 parents. As with the previous case reports, the purpose of this case report was to present the data collected from the parent respondents. The actual analysis of the data sets will be presented in the subsequent section. Table 5 identifies the parent data groupings as nominated by the survey respondents. The majority of parents are mothers (75%), followed by the fathers (23%) and other guardians (2%).

Table 5

Parent data groupings

Identified Survey Groupings	Parents
Mothers	195 (75%)
Fathers	58 (23%)
Guardians	6 (2%)

Note: Table 5 indicates the breakdown of parents and guardians identified by the survey

The majority of parents (68%) have been associated with the parish school communities for between 0-5 years (Table 6).

Table 6

Years associated with the original schools

Parent Association in Years	Parent Percentage
0 – 5 years	175 (67%)
6 – 10 years	54 (21%)
10+ years	31 (12%)

Note: Table 6 illustrates parental association with the original Girls' and Boys' school

The majority of parents (81%) have one child attending the amalgamated College, followed by

the two children (16%) (Table 7).

Table 7

Number of children attending the college

Children Attending	Parent Percentage
1 child	210 (81%)
2 children	42 (16%)
3 children	6 (2%)
4+ children	1 (0.39%)

Note: Table 7 illustrates the number of children that parents have attending the amalgamated College

4.4.1 Catholic School Life and Culture

The collected parent data for Catholic school life and culture was positive overall. Both

the parent ratings and the related comments on this facet of the merged school entity indicated a

positive satisfaction level from survey respondents.

The combined parent average for all survey questions relating to the merged school's

religious life was 5.43. This average score included rating statements relating to the school being

faithful to its Catholic mission and values (5.69), the quality of religious education at the school (5.40), opportunities for student involvement in social justice issues (5.42), prayer being a regular part of school life (5.40), and how well their child responds to the religious dimension of the school (5.22).

These positive scores were supported by 34 (79%) parents who positively commented on this area, characterised by one of the parents who explained how important it was that "the religious education that my child learns will guide her in the future." Another parent explained that "The motto of Jesus at the centre, is a value that is paramount to our family's values." While there were parents who commented on their connection to the local parish, there were also those parents who specifically chose the school despite not being Catholic themselves, with the following parent explaining the reasons for enrolling his/her child:

> Christian values and teachings in social justice. A faith-based community that was inclusive and welcoming of all Christians was important to me, so my child would have a strong faith base to live out her faith (we are not Catholic).

Besides specific values and faith-based parent responses, some parents commented on the Catholic school culture more broadly to include the "Good religious atmosphere, academic success and discipline."

Despite 85 (33%) parents who responded to the survey having more than five years associated with the school community, there was no comment or reference made about the founding religious orders for either of the original two schools or their respective charism.

The findings in this section illustrate that Catholic school life and culture was a positive feature within the change process for the parents surveyed within the new school entity. The data shows an alignment between the average ratings and the individual comments made within this

area.

4.4.2 Student Learning and Wellbeing

Similar to the previous section, the parent ratings relating to student learning and wellbeing were positive. However, most parents who chose to comment on this section identified specific areas that needed improvement.

The parent averaged ratings for all survey questions relating to student learning was 5.12. This average score included a variety of different areas, including parents rating the standard of teaching across the College (5.16), teacher enthusiasm towards their work (5.05), subject choices according to student needs and interests (5.30), support for students with learning difficulties (5.28), as well as gifted and talented programs (5.10).

These positive ratings on student learning were supported by 27 (47%) parents who identified the combined school entity as a 'School with a high standard' and being described by a parent as "having good discipline and being academically high." In contrast, there were 30 (53%) parent comments critical of individual elements within this category. While one parent commented that they "would prefer more homework or more specific instruction of what students need to do for each subject," another three parents indicated they felt there was too much homework for students to complete. All other comments appeared to be specific to the individual parent. These included issues such as individual teachers and subjects being identified, targeted interventions, preparation for examinations, and students being able to have a flexible timetable.

In specific reference to the impact of the amalgamation, parents indicated that subject choices available to students had improved since the merger with a rating of 5.01. Parents also

felt that maintaining single-sex core classes was a helpful strategy during the merger with a rating of 4.98. These ratings on the parallel curriculum model that was introduced within the change process were supported by eight parents specifically choosing to comment on this model, which is best captured by the following comment: "There are most definitely different teaching techniques when teaching only boys or only girls, and I believe that the school has mastered that." This affirmation for the introduced parallel curriculum model, which highlights a difference in teaching both boys and girls, is also observed by a parent of boys who commented:

> Teachers need to be more mindful of trivial things, especially with boys and how
> they learn or interact in the classroom! It's obvious to me where teachers who were
> previously teaching only girls who are now teaching the boys find it difficult
> to understand the way boys' function in the classroom and get the best from them.
> But on a positive, when they embrace that acceptance of different learning strategies, my
> boys are shining and loving those classes!

When asked whether the parallel curriculum model should continue into the future, parents rated this 4.56. Of the eight parents who commented on this question, all were positive comments. This is represented by the parent who explained, "I would strongly agree with single-sex classes for core subjects continue," along with another who commented:

> I strongly would like to see the core subjects stay as single-sex classes, only being
> that is one of the MAIN reasons why I am sending my next child to the High School
> there in 2018 and don't feel that this policy needs to change.

Parents also rate favourably to whether an adequate range of sporting opportunities was being provided for students (5.44) and the quality of co-curricular activities and resources (5.53). Parents did not provide comments in these sections.

There were also positive ratings for the majority of areas within the student wellbeing section. While the parent average for student wellbeing was 5.31 overall, individual sections that were rated by parents included: 'my child feels safe at this school' (5.65), 'there is an adult at the school my child trusts and can turn to for help' (5.39), 'students are treated fairly when they break school rules' (5.22), 'there is a positive school spirit amongst the students at this school' (5.28), and 'my child is happy to attend this school' (5.65).

The one area that parents highlighted within this section that required improvement was when teachers addressed student bullying incidents (4.85), with four parents within this section mentioning some student bullying incidents they wished to highlight.

The student learning and wellbeing rating data within this parent case report was generally positive overall, with an average of 5.23 for all questions within this section. This overall average was concurrently viewed through the 57 parents who chose to comment on the various elements within this section. While there were various individually specific comments, the coding of parent comments allowed for five groupings to be established. These included positive comments (47%) on the introduction of co-education and the parallel curriculum model (8 comments) and the Year 7 transition program (7 comments). However, 53% of the overall comments were from parents who took the opportunity to recommend areas for improvement, including the inconsistency of teachers (8 comments), homework (5 comments), and some identified incidents of student bullying (4 comments).

4.4.3 Physical Learning Environment

According to the parent respondents within this dataset, there was an overall positive satisfaction rating of the school's physical learning environment within the initial year of the amalgamation.

The average parent rating of school facilities and resources was 5.33. This bank of questions included parents rating whether they felt: 'students were benefiting from the combined resources of the two schools' (4.94), 'the buildings and grounds of the school had improved since the merger' (5.04), 'buildings, classrooms and toilets being well presented' (5.11), 'the school grounds are neat and attractive' (5.45), 'adequate outdoor space is available for students (5.2), 'the school library is well resourced' (5.77), 'adequate technology resources are available to support teaching and learning' (5.56) and, whether 'co-curricular activities were well equipped' (5.53).

In comparison to both the staff and student surveys on this topic, the parents were less likely to take the opportunity to comment in some sections. There were only three individual parents who commented on the physical learning environment. These comments noted the desire for parent involvement in the canteen, the heavy weight of the school bags, and the need for greater access for parent parking.

4.4.4 Leadership and Administration

This final section reports on the parent perspective of the strategic direction of the merged school entity. It provides an overall comment on the leadership and administration of the College during the initial year of the change process.

In providing contextual insight to the data overall, the parents were asked to indicate their

reasons for choosing either of the pre-amalgamated schools and for inaugural Year 7 parents, the

resulting merged school. Table 8 highlights the reasons that parents chose either the pre or post

amalgamated College. The majority of parents emphasised discipline and student welfare (86%),

followed by academic success (81%) and Catholic education (78%) as the top three reasons for

choosing to attend the College.

Table 8

Parental reasons for choosing to attend the College.

Parental Reason	Parent Rank (%)
Discipline and student welfare	86%
Academic success	81%
Catholic school	78%
Location	69%
Meeting diverse student needs	62%
Financially accessible	54%
Family history and connection	45%
A co-educational school	40%

Note: Table 8 illustrates the reasons that parents chose either the pre or post amalgamated
College

The 7th placed rating of family history and connection (45%) as a reason for enrolling in

the school is consistent with the dearth of comments on the original schools' founding charisms

and traditions, which was identified earlier (Section 4.16). The 8th placed ranking of co-

education (40%) as being reasons for parents choosing the school is somewhat justified by the

72.7% of students whose parents had originally enrolled their son/daughter into a single-sex

school. Despite this, 40% can still be considered a positive result and is arguably an indication of the significantly large Year 7 cohort (276) that enrolled for the inaugural school year. At the same time, this topic highlights the change process that was undertaken that gave rise to polarising comments from parents. There were those parents who expressed their dissatisfaction with the original decision to amalgamate that were based upon single-sex reasons: "When it was not co-ed, we were attracted to the idea of the school as it was unique to the area," and "I chose the school originally because it was a single-sex school;" another commented, "Not happy with the decision to be a co-ed high school." Equally, there were countering views from parents who supported the decision to merge: "My preference would be for the school to be co-ed all throughout the years from K-12," "It does not matter as primary was co-ed," "The school was not co-educational when my first child started at the school, but I was pleased that it moved in this direction for my second child."

In contrast to these comments were parents who previously (Section 4.17) promoted the parallel curriculum model, which offered co-educational experience classes and single-sex core subjects. These comments were aligned with the parent survey rating of 4.98 for whether this model assisted the change process, along with the rating of 4.56 for whether this model should continue into the future. The difference in these two scores shows that while most parents agreed with how the parallel model assisted the actual change process, the curriculum model may need further development for it to be sustainable in future years.

The effectiveness of communication between home and school was rated by parents with an average of 5.40. This score included ratings on the school newsletter (5.51), school website (5.27), parent/teacher nights (5.24), teachers returning phone calls in a timely fashion (5.29), access to school policies (5.26), knowing whom to contact at the school (5.37), along with

parents being kept informed of important dates and events (5.54). Such a range of positive scores for the merged school's administrative and operational areas is also supported by parents rating the statement: 'The school is managing the merger of the two schools well' with a score of 5.04. This rating speaks to the transformation process within the amalgamation and again gives rise to opportunities for polarising parent comments. One parent captured the early days of the amalgamation and its impact in describing: "My child initially disliked the merger and resisted even going to school; this seems to have improved. I doubt it would be an issue in the future, only affecting transition students." Such an observation on the actual process of reculturing, which was occurring within the original restructure is also identified by the following parent: "Congratulations on achieving what would have been a stressful and challenging project (& probably still is). Onwards and upwards."

The final bank of questions that can be viewed as a reflection on the school's collective leadership within its inaugural year is included in the final overall satisfaction ratings, which included an overall score of 5.32. This included parents rating: 'how welcome they are made to feel at the school' (5.59), 'opportunities for parents to be involved in the school' (5.03), 'the school preparing their child well for later life' (5.42), 'how well the school is regarded in the wider community' (5.54), along with 'recommending the school to other parents' (5.50). These scores are reinforced by the following parent who stated: "I always tell family, friends and community members how happy we are with the school."

The leadership and administration data within this parent case report was positive overall, with an average of 5.30 for all questions related to this section. However, the ratings need to be considered within the subjective nature of polarising parent comments expressed within this section and highlight the complexity of this particular social change process phenomenon.

4.4.5 Summary

This case report provided an understanding of the resulting process of amalgamation that occurred with the merging of two Catholic secondary schools from the parents' perspective within the initial year of restructuring. The analysis of this data included an affirmation by parents of the religious life of the merged College in being true to its Catholic identity. The introduction of the parallel curriculum model was seen as a means to meet the learning needs of both genders whilst also providing a means to support the actual change process. There was recognition by parents that students feel connected and engaged with the school as a community, and were pleased with the improvements of school facilities and resources that resulted in more learning and recreational opportunities for their children. The parents also recognised the implementation of effective communication processes and a sense of welcome that exists between school and home. Lastly, parents affirmed the actual change process of the amalgamation.

Parents also clearly identified some areas for further improvement. There was a recognition among parents for the need to continue the process of building a more united school staff culture, with a priority for further support and professional development for staff in regards to teaching both genders. Similarly, to both the staff and students, the parent data indicated there was a need for a more consistent implementation of school policy and procedures and sought the ongoing need for parent feedback and consultation.

4.5 Thematic Analysis

This section includes an analysis of the triangulated themes which emerged from each of the previous narrative case reports. Based on the data coding procedures outlined in Chapter 3,

and identified throughout the category analysis of Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, physical learning environment, and leadership and administration, there were four themes created from the research findings. The themes are Generational Expression of a Catholic School Charism (CSLC), The Relationship between Student Learning and Wellbeing (SLW), Valuing the Physical Learning Environment in Organisational Change (PLE), Balancing Transactional and Transformational Leadership (LA). Each of the themes are reinforced by the three previous case reports, which outline the various impacts of the amalgamation from the perspectives of staff, students and parents. A cross-unit analysis of the four themes and a chapter summary follow.

4.5.1 Theme 1 - Generational Expression of a Catholic School Charism (CSLC)

The analysis of case data relating to Catholic school life and culture indicated that each of the three stakeholder groups viewed this differently and with varying points of emphasis. Figure 3 illustrates the comparative Likert ratings from each of the staff, students, and parent data sets and shows that while the staff and parents rated Catholic school life and culture positively, the students felt that while it was satisfactory there was a need for further improvement within this aspect of the combined school.

Figure 3

Catholic school life and culture: Average Likert ratings
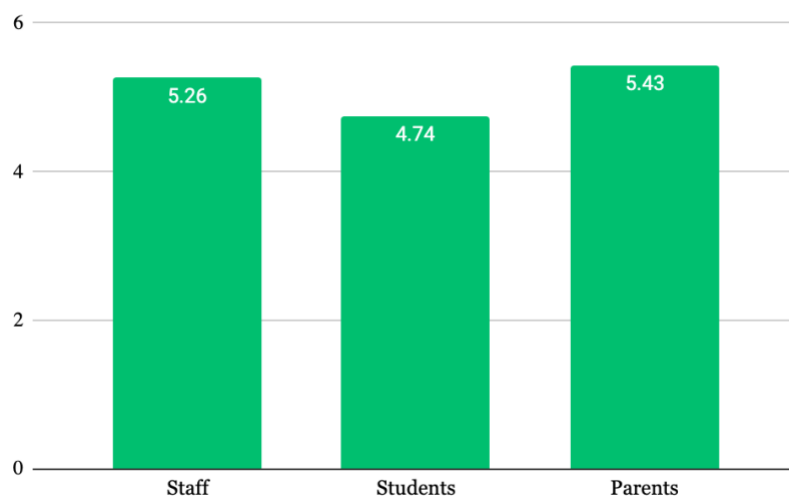
This difference is further illustrated through concurrently considering the differences in the stakeholder positive-negative comment ratio seen in Figure 4. Comparing Figure 3 and Figure 4 shows that out of the three groups only the parent cohort consistently identified the category of Catholic school life and culture as having a positive impact overall. This forms the premise for the thematic analysis of a Generational Expression of a Catholic School Charism (CSLC).

Figure 4

Catholic school life and culture - negative and positive comment ratio
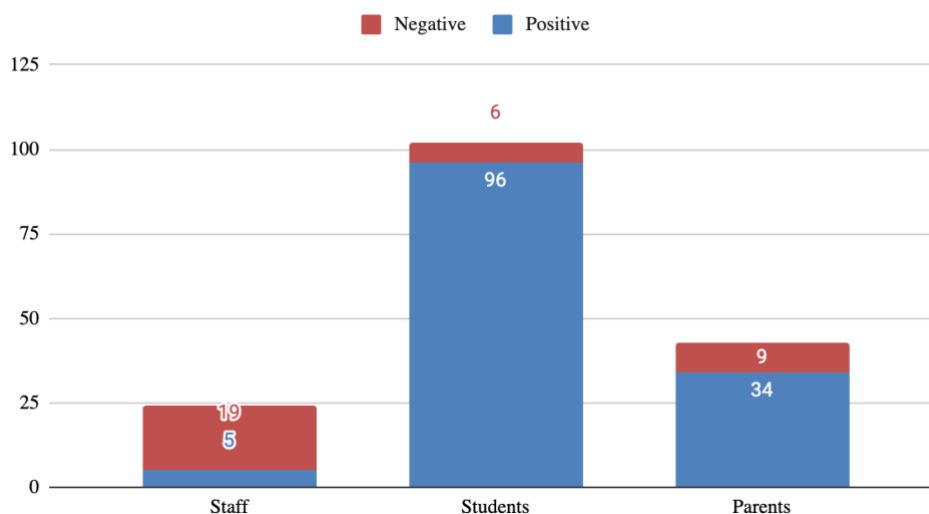
The staff rated this category with an overall average of 5.26, which as a percentage (75%) places it in the 71% - 85% bracket as a positive result. Despite the positive score, the staff comment ratio of 5:19 (positive-negative) presents apparent tension between the old and new school paradigms. The initial process of forming a new Catholic school culture, in this instance, included a deliberate attempt to honour elements of the two previous founding religious school identities. The launching of a new Catholic school mission and vision, together with a new school motto and crest, which symbolised the newly combined school's direction. At the same time, the previous long-standing school founding religious congregations were also honoured in the new school entity with the respective naming of the formal House system and explicit values being aligned to the Houses that were representative of the previous schools' mottos. However, while the names of each of the Houses captured the heritage of the original schools and was reinforced through a group of five (6%) staff members commenting on how the amalgamated school had improved the religious dimension of the community, 8 (9%) staff respondents

selected the lowest two ratings across all questions relating to this category. There were also pointed comments made by nine (11%) staff members expressing their concern that some previously long-standing daily prayers and traditions from one or either of the previous two schools were no longer being practised at the newly amalgamated College. The other identified area of tension was regarding the social dynamics amongst staff. Eight (9%) staff members cited specific examples of a divided staff from their perspective. The newly developed staff lunchroom was mentioned regularly within these comments as not being a fully integrated venue of mutual respect. Staff commentary on previous school traditions needing to be honoured along with other identified issues with staff group dynamics highlight the reculturing process that was a feature within the phases of both initiation and implementation during the time the survey was undertaken. These two areas highlight the spoken and unspoken cultural assumptions of staff within any Catholic school setting and how traditional customs inform behaviour. The actual process and external understanding of an amalgamation are arguably towards emphasising two entities' merging to create a new paradigm. However, the data in this category indicates that one should not understate the emotional toll that resulted in not only creating something new but simultaneously ending and closing two long-standing Catholic schools. The previous year's formal and informal decommissioning of school religious symbols and the rationalisation of leadership positions across the previous two stand-alone schools exacerbated the loss of workplace identity for some staff members, resulting in various cause-and-effect social obstacles for the staff overall. An example of which can be seen in the following staff comment: "Support amongst staff is very much based on which campus you came from."

This described ingroup favouritism amongst staff within the survey is recognised as a common workplace coping mechanism to express social identity and self-concept during major

workplace mergers (Gleibs et al., 2010; Lysova et al., 2015). Such a negative social response to the change process was commented on by 13 (15%) staff members in this category and highlights the range of employees' psychological responses in making sense of organisational change within this particular Catholic school setting (Rock & Cox, 2012; Starr, 2014).

The students rated this category with an overall 4.75 (68%) placing it in the 57% - 71% category of being satisfactory but in need of further development. Despite this, the open-ended student comments had a 96:6 ratio, which indicated that students were 16 times more likely to give a positive comment within this survey category. This is a significant feature of the student data when one considers the various social, cultural and academic challenges presented to the students within merging the two formerly separate Catholic schools. The discrepancy between the student ratings and the student comments in this section appears to be the opposite to the staff and underpins the theme of a Generational Expression of a Catholic School Charism (CSLSC). While staff rated the new school's formal religious and liturgical aspects as generally positive, a perceived level of disappointment in the actual staff relationships was emphasised in a section of the staff comments.

In contrast, 46% of students indicated a level of disengagement with the school's religious curriculum and liturgical life. The large majority of open-ended student comments were about the positive relationships that existed across the merged Catholic school as a community. The student emphasis on community engagement and strong relationships highlights examples of a personal witness to faith in practice. Such a view is supported by the student who explained:

> I enjoy the fact that I can be myself and still feel accepted. The teachers are
> always open to help those in need. The school makes me feel so proud wearing
> the uniform; it makes me feel welcomed.

Many such student comments highlight the newly merged school's inclusive nature as a community within its own right. They are reinforced by the student who commented on how: "I enjoy being a part of a close school that welcomes everyone and being part of a school community."

While there is no comparative data of student participation and levels of engagement in school-based liturgy or religious education curriculum before the amalgamation, the data showed student ratings of school liturgies and the teaching of religious education indicated a level of disengagement that is consistent with a broader progressive weakening of societal formal religious practice (Franchi & Rymarz, 2017). Such a finding is also commented on by a staff member who explained from their perspective: "The religious education aspect of college life does feel too traditional and not very accessible to students at times."

Student ratings on religious education and liturgical engagement, however, are at odds with the parent data. Parents within this category rated highly both the quality of religious education at the new school and how well their child responds to the school's religious dimension. This same category was rated the highest by the parent survey respondents with an overall 5.43 (78%). The 34:9 ratio of open-ended parent comments demonstrated a clear affirmation for the merged College's religious life in it being true to its Catholic identity. This is highlighted by the parent who explained: "I believe it is very important to continue the faith and teach our children who is important and who they can turn to in life once they get older."

While parents cited several individual examples of the explicit religious aspects of the College, several comments were also about the pastoral and relational atmosphere of the College,

with one interpretation being that parents essentially felt that their sons/daughters were happy within the new Catholic school setting.

In analysing the case data related to this category, there were particular Catholic school elements consistently emphasised by all three case stakeholder groups. Catholic social teaching and social justice opportunities within the amalgamated College were recognised positively by each of the three cohorts. This particular area of recognition speaks to a significant point of difference for Catholic schools and is arguably a central purpose for Catholic schools in general (Groome in O'Keefe et al., 1996). Similarly, there was alignment with all three case stakeholder groups acknowledging that the regular prayer is a prevalent part of school life.

Through the comparative analysis of the Catholic school life and culture category, it is evident that there were some individual stakeholder nuances that impacted the staff, students and parents during the initial year of school amalgamation. Both staff and parents rated this element of the merged school positively, while the student rating was satisfactory but in need of further development. The differences identified within the comments related to stakeholder-specific areas, which were emphasised within the broadness of the category of interest within the study. Despite the positive rating, there were staff comments in response to the merging of the founding charisms that showed some discrepancies and focused on the Catholic identity and the formal practices associated with this part of school life. However, while such characteristics of a Catholic culture were rated positively by both students and parents, these two groups commented more broadly. They emphasised the values of the Catholic school as a pastoral values-based Christian community.

Findings from this section give rise to the main theme within this category, which is described as a Generational Expression of a Catholic School Charism (CSLC). The data

indicated that both staff and parents viewed charism as a traditional construct within the Catholic school and identified the importance of religious education and formal liturgical celebrations. Staff acknowledging how both of the previous school traditional founding orders were being honoured within the change process is another example of their traditional appreciation and expression of a religious charism. However, this factor also contributed to the loss of workplace identity for some staff members. Within this same theme, it is important to note how much emphasis parents placed on their children experiencing a Catholic education.

In comparison to the staff and parent perspectives, the student emphasis of a Catholic school culture was less on their participation in formal religious liturgical rituals and curriculum but instead more on an appreciation of the newly combined school as a Catholic 'community.' Students, therefore, expressed a more simplified and arguably authentic understanding of the value of inclusiveness and a sense of welcome and connection, all of which are central to an actual definition of a charism (Cook & Simmonds, 2011; Grace, 2010).

This theme highlights that while some staff held onto elements of the previous school cultures, the large majority of students were able to let-go and fully embrace a new normal within the change process. These findings highlight the difficulty in educational change reform processes and how reculturing previously established school cultures is a complex phenomenon (Saxi, 2017; Thomson, 2010).

4.5.2 Theme 2 - The Relationship between Student Learning and Wellbeing (SLW)

The analysis of case data identifying the impact on student learning and wellbeing during the initial year of school amalgamation also provided mixed results. This is highlighted by the complexity in measuring the comparative impact of this category on such broad staff, student,

and parent datasets. The overall comparative Likert ratings from each of the stakeholder survey cohorts were positive, as can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Student learning and wellbeing: Average Likert ratings
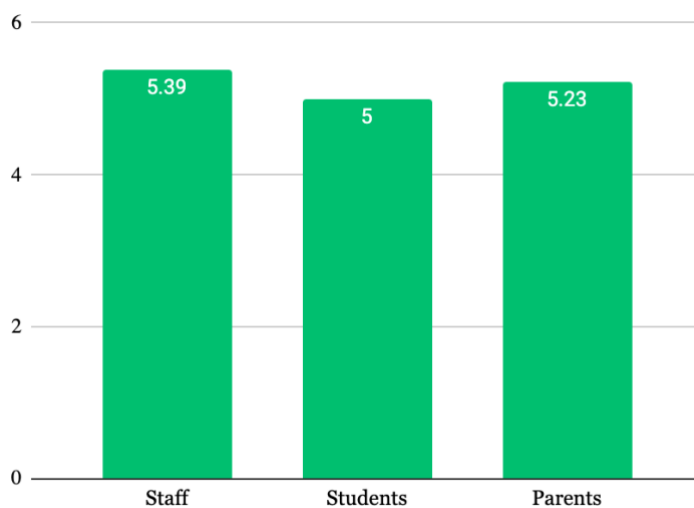
However, the positive-negative comment ratio seen in Figure 6 demonstrates a different view. This is highlighted by the breakdown of staff (66%), student (44%) and parent (53%) negative comments made towards this same category, which is indicative of the complexity within this emerging theme of The Relationship between Student Learning and Wellbeing (SLW).

Figure 6

Student learning and wellbeing - negative and positive comment ratio
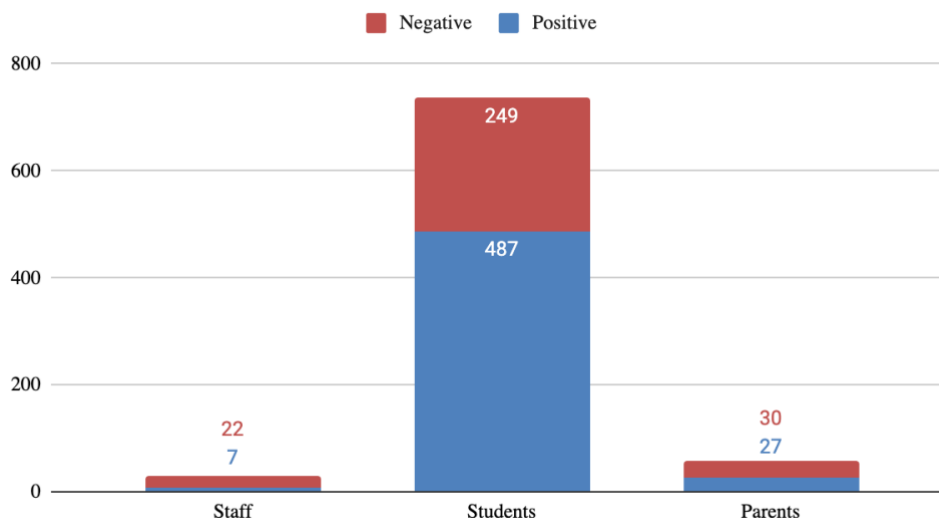
Both general and specific examples of poor student behaviour in class were a feature of the negative comments highlighted in Figure 6. However, this can also be interpreted as being symptomatic of individual teachers having to adjust both their pedagogy and student management processes within the newly introduced parallel curriculum model. As was highlighted in the previous staff case report, the underlying causes in student behavioural issues point to several staff who found it challenging to teach within a new school paradigm, as characterised by the staff member who commented: "Since combining the boys and the girls, there seems to be a lot of time being spent on a handful of boys and correcting their behaviour."

Within such comments, those staff also felt a lack of leadership support within student behaviour issues during the amalgamation change process, with one teacher expressing the view that:

If it is a student-to-student issue, they are generally dealt with in a timely and professional manner. When the issue is staff student-related, it is generally seen as our

fault, not the students, and there is little support or communication.

These factors are also characteristic of the inconsistency of whole-school policy implementation, which is highlighted by the staff member who commented on how: "Processes need to be consistent across all subjects. We are sending mixed messages to students if all faculties have different expectations."

However, despite the cultural shift that staff were experiencing within the inaugural year of the amalgamation, the staff rated the student learning and wellbeing category with an overall positive result of 5.39 (77%), which was the highest staff average Likert rating across all categories of interest in this study. In considering the difference in staff ratings and staff comments, the theme of the reciprocal relationship between effective student learning and the overall wellbeing of students (Graham et al., 2016) can be seen within the difference in all questions relating to academic life when compared with the ratings for student wellbeing questions. While staff did not specifically comment on the parallel curriculum model implemented across the school, they were explicit in affirming the overall school focus on student wellbeing. Staff regularly endorsed the inextricable links between learning and wellbeing, with one staff member commenting on how "The wellbeing focus in the school is really something we should be proud of." This view is also supported by the staff member who explained that "In the first year of the new school, much progress is being made in many areas for our students in their learning."

Many student comments also expressed a positive level of satisfaction for many facets within this category. Some of these general open-ended student comments included the following range:

- "I feel great being at this school. I feel I learn very well."

- "I like the subjects at this school. They are fun. I enjoy learning new things in the subjects."

- "Being able to have access to education and having the advantage of learning new things and studying the subjects I enjoy while meeting new people."

These wide-ranging comments also include a variety of open-ended comments on the co-curricular opportunities provided for students within the amalgamated College, which is representative of the student who explained:

> That there are many extra-curricular but also fun activities available at this school, such as debating are taken care of to meet a high standard. I am also a dancer, and I take it very seriously. I was very glad when I saw that the school takes this as an important matter and allows the students to compete and present themselves doing what they love.

However, there were also some critical ratings and comments, which are indicative of the 483:249 student comment ratio, which were further examined. Students commented strongly on the need for sporting options to be equally consistent for both girls and boys, which was emphasised by the student who stated that "Boys don't have to do dancing for PE practical. Not all girls like dancing!" Students were also critical of areas in their learning that needed further improvements, including the individual student learning plans, assignment feedback, and the consistent use of technology in lessons.

Students also took the opportunity to comment on the parallel curriculum model that was introduced, with support of the changes in class structure characterised by the student who explained: "I like the friends that I have met through my different classes. I feel that having some mixed classes allows students to talk and work with people they usually would not."

This comment is a feature of the main theme within this category, which characterises the Relationship between Student Learning and Wellbeing (SLW) outcomes. The student comment above highlights both the social and the learning facets of school within one simple sentence - to both "talk and work with people they usually would not" and aligns with the research citing the importance of student peer relationships to the learning process (Graham et al., 2016; Simmons et al., 2018).

Similarly, to both the staff and students, the parent Likert ratings relating to student learning and wellbeing were also positive with a rating of 5.23 (75%). However, the 27:30 parent comment ratio demonstrates some polarising views of this category.

The parent ratings towards the newly merged College's student learning and wellbeing programs indicated a level of satisfaction for various areas. In specific reference to the change process, parents indicated that subject choice previously available to students had improved since the amalgamation, with one parent commenting on how "All teachers have demonstrated that they are enthusiastic at imparting knowledge to the children."

The 27 parent comments that were critical of individual elements within this category consisted of a range of individual and specific concerns related to either individual subjects or individual teachers, with one parent commenting that: "I know it has been a challenge for some girls' school teachers who have not taught boys before, more so than the boys' teachers who seem to have adjusted to teaching girls better." Eight parents chose to comment on the parallel curriculum model, which is best captured by the following comment: "I think the school is unique in that it gives the best of both worlds for the students; single-sex classes in some subjects and then co-ed in others." Such an affirming comment is further supported by the parent cohort rating how the parallel curriculum model was a helpful strategy during the process of merging of

the two Catholic schools. Interestingly, while the students often emphasised the introduction of the co-education classes within the parallel curriculum model, the parents indicated that maintaining the single-sex core classes was an important feature of the change process.

The data analysis from each of the three cohorts within this study provided a range of specific insights that each highlight the links between the academic, sociological, and self-efficacy outcomes for students (Graham et al., 2016; Simmons et al., 2018). The emergence of The Relationship between Student Learning and Wellbeing (SLW) theme is one that is characteristic of the specific period of time that the data was collected during the inaugural year of the school amalgamation. Within the thematic analysis there is a recognition of the ongoing need to continue building a combined and fully integrated school learning culture. While this is a notable finding within the staff data, there are also strong threads of this theme indicating that parents also felt the need for the newly formed College to further consolidate and build on the progress made to date. To enable this there is a need for greater whole-school communication that clarifies both policy and procedure. Such clarity would then allow for new workplace customs and practises to evolve and further assist in the development of a new staff workplace identity.

There was an acknowledgement from all school community stakeholders that staff, on the whole, have needed to make a significant adaptation in their professional teaching practice to meet the changing workplace circumstances within the newly formed school entity. The data within this category indicates the need for further support and professional development for all staff in the teaching of either the boys, girls or co-educational classes within the parallel curriculum program of study. Such a pedagogical focus would then aim to address the evolving gender gaps (Fink et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2017) in supporting best-practice in student

management and pastoral care. A whole-school pedagogical focus would further complement the celebrated level of commitment to student wellbeing that all stakeholders within the data highlight.

It would appear that the introduction of the parallel curriculum model was an effective means in meeting the learning and wellbeing needs of both genders within the initiation and implementation of the amalgamation; and was a point of difference that was generally well accepted by staff, students and parents. Further discernment would determine if such a curriculum model should be further embedded in the amalgamated College long-term or instead be accepted as an effective change process vehicle for the short-term.

The data analysis of each of the stakeholders bound within this case demonstrated a general level of consistency in acknowledging that the newly amalgamated College endeavoured to meet all learners' needs, with diverse learning and student wellbeing being affirmed by staff, students, and parents. The following staff comment succinctly captures the overall analysis of this category:

Things are going relatively well, considering the enormity of the undertaking of

the amalgamation. I think there are continued ideas about 'boys' staff and 'girls'

staff despite all the changes, but hopefully, this will improve with time.

Behaviour has improved, but a number of policies are not followed by all teachers

in this regard, and it is very important that this happens going forward.

Such a comment on the amalgamation process aligns with what Fullan (2001) describes as the "implementation dip" whereby staff members facing workplace uncertainty can be at risk of losing confidence as they face new experiences that require new aptitudes and new understandings.

4.5.3 Theme 3 - Valuing the Physical Learning Environment in Organisational Change (PLE)

One of the significant and competing challenges within the amalgamation process of merging the neighbouring Catholic schools within this study was the process involved in consolidating and improving the functionality and connectedness of the buildings and recreational spaces from the previously separated neighbouring Catholic high schools. The neighbouring schools' site developed over time into a compartmentalised campus of isolated building units within a traditional boys'/girls' segregation. The physical learning environment data analysis illustrated a generally positive impact on staff and parents within this category. However, the student data indicated that this was a challenging aspect within the amalgamation process from their perspective. Figure 7 shows the comparative Likert ratings from each of the staff, students, and parent data sets and shows that while the staff and parents rated this positively, the students felt that it was only satisfactory with scope for further development.

Figure 7

Physical Learning Environment: Average Likert ratings
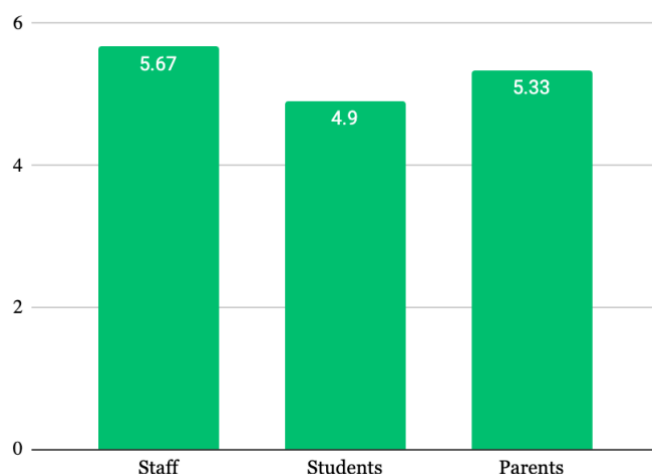
This difference is reinforced by the comment ratio seen in Figure 8, where 87 (69%) students made reference to a negative aspect of the changes made to the physical learning environment. These differing views and experiences from each of the stakeholders support an emerging understanding through the data analysis that illustrates the theme of Valuing the Physical Learning Environment in Organisational Change (PLE).

Figure 8

Physical Learning Environment - negative and positive comment ratio
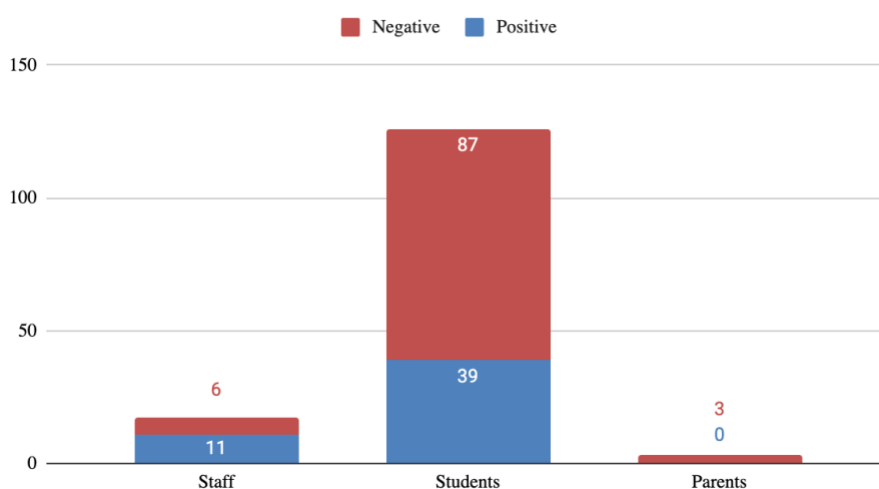
The staff rated this category with an overall average of 5.67 (81%) placing it in the 71% - 85% bracket as being a positive result and the highest overall staff Likert rating across all categories of interest to this study. This result is highlighted by the newly combined staff room facilities being rated by staff with an overall average of 5.8. Within the context of a school amalgamation, a newly designed staffroom was essential for the process required in endeavouring to unite two former staff room cultures in both a physical and cultural sense.

The significant increase in the size of the new school entity also required the necessary support from a contemporary and centralised administration office, with the capacity to manage the substantial increase in both the staff, student and parent population, which was also affirmed by staff with a Likert overall rating of 6.0. The positive overall staff ratings for both the newly designed staff room and central administration are indicative of the staff member who commented on how: "The office's physical set-up has improved - the space, the light and layout, the student and public encounters are now better separated."

Staff also indicated that the capital works building program, including new learning spaces, a wellbeing centre, and a student cafeteria, provided additional learning and recreational opportunities for students. Consistent staff ratings highlight the practical and operational benefits of such a design and implementation and how the new buildings improved the overall College amenity and functioning.

In comparison to the previous categories, there was also a relatively modest staff comment ratio of 11:6. Within the negative comments, there were those staff members who expressed their disappointment in not being appropriately consulted on the design of the various learning and administrative facilities and were critical of this. The remaining 65% of staff comments positively perceived the improvements in this category, which were highlighted by the following staff member who commented on how the changes to the combined campus also addressed issues of safety involving the increase in student access and transport flow across the former separate campuses:

Physically the site has opened up so much more. The fences have come down. There are now effective walkways and direct routes through the place. There are identified places where certain activities and roles in the school take place.

The positive staff comments and each of the staff ratings highlight how improving organisational conditions within a change process allowed for the necessary social interactions to contribute to the formation of a new professional learning community. This points to a key feature of the identified theme within this category of Valuing the Physical Learning Environment in Organisational Change (PLE).

The parent data showed how they were also supportive of the improvements made to the physical learning environment during the year of amalgamation, with a 5.33 (76%) rating for this category overall. Interestingly, however, was the low number of parents who chose to comment on this category. While the three parents who commented were very much specific examples, one can infer from the high Likert ratings that parents were generally satisfied in this regard.

In contrast to the overall staff and parent perspective, the data from the students who rated the changes to the school's physical learning environment with a 4.9 (70%) rating overall, believed the changes to the combined campus to be satisfactory but in need of further development. There were 39 (31%) students who wished to highlight a range of strengths in how the changes to the physical learning environment were a positive aspect of the amalgamation, characterised by the students who spoke of how "I have access to the best learning possible using the most recent equipment" along with "how the school is now so modern." Despite this, the low student Likert ratings were reinforced by students requesting the added convenience of a closer proximity of toilets for both male and female across what was now a considerably larger school site.

Such practical feedback is reinforced by what students indicated as a significant school adjustment brought about by student recreational spaces. In opening-up, the previously separated school playground and recreational areas for the newly combined school entity, the challenge

presented was a feature within the student data described as the previous playground demarcation. For generations, the pre-merged single-sex schools had clear boundaries for exclusively separate student recreational activities for both of the respective former boys' and girls' school students. Social interaction between the neighbouring schools was sporadic. The students' limited interaction from the two previous schools was through both a former shared canteen and library. However, students were traditionally still required to be formally separated whilst using these two shared facilities. Therefore, the amalgamation and the resulting changes to the combining of campuses presented a significant cultural and organisational change for students in having to adapt to both the necessary physical and social modifications. The co-educational increase in student population, with now open access across the entire school campus, presented a necessary period of acclimatisation for students, resulting in some initial tension between genders, which is highlighted by the following student comment:

> Bring back the full inflated balls, I went three years with them, and it was functioning well until we combined schools with girls sitting on the field like they expected not to get hit. When we had the fully inflated balls someone would only get hit once a week. I see the safety in it, but it is unacceptable to take it away from us boys because of stupid decisions that girls make by sitting on the field.

This comment reinforces the main theme within this category in Valuing the Physical Learning Environment in Organisational Change (PLE). The time of the survey being conducted within this study is commensurate to capturing the initial impact within the actual year of school amalgamation. However, student interaction within the social context of school playgrounds typically improves over time (Blatchford et al., 2003).

Findings from this thematic analysis confirms that despite the discrepancies between the staff, student and parent stakeholders expressing a positive or negative impact, the actual processes involved in modifying a school's physical learning environment provided a necessary vehicle in contributing to large-scale educational change. While the building program within this study was required in the transactional and operational processes of increasing the safe functioning, accessibility and improvement of contemporary learning spaces of a modified school site, the transformational benefits for supporting the amalgamation process allowed for several physical conduits to assist in facilitating the social and cultural change process. The new staff room is featured as a positive addition to the College within the amalgamation. While the staff room was described in the Catholic school life and culture category as a place where various staff divisions exist, the argument is that the design, construction and implementation of a newly combined workplace provided a mechanism for staff to begin the social process of breaking-down ingroup favouritism and to eventually evolve into a new professional learning community.

The students reinforce this exact point. The physical process, which involved demolishing walls and removing fences to open the access to both of the previously separate school cohorts, provided both the male and female students with a new social paradigm to navigate. Therefore, the various playgrounds, wellbeing centre, and student cafeteria also provided a conduit for students to begin the socialisation process that would eventually lead to a commonly identified student body cohort. The lack of parents choosing to comment on this category reinforces this theme. Parents were not experiencing the onsite organisational change processes first-hand each day throughout the amalgamation and therefore did not require a daily conduit for the changes previously described in the staff and student cohort data.

Within the amalgamation process central to this case, the previously segregated campus expansion provided a new physical and social context for both staff and students. The physical learning environment provided a structural framework for individual actions to flourish or to be openly challenged and worked through. The building program within the process of school amalgamation was not only a necessary functional change element, it was also a visual and symbolic sign of the school environment playing its part in contributing to the educational change process.

4.5.4 Theme 4 - Balancing Transactional and Transformational Leadership (LA)

The analysis of case data relating to the leadership and administration category indicated an overall mixed response towards the leadership and administration of the amalgamated Catholic College. Figure 9 illustrates the comparative Likert ratings from each of the staff, student, and parent data sets and clearly shows that both the staff and students felt there were considerable improvements to be made within this category.

Figure 9

Leadership and administration: average Likert ratings
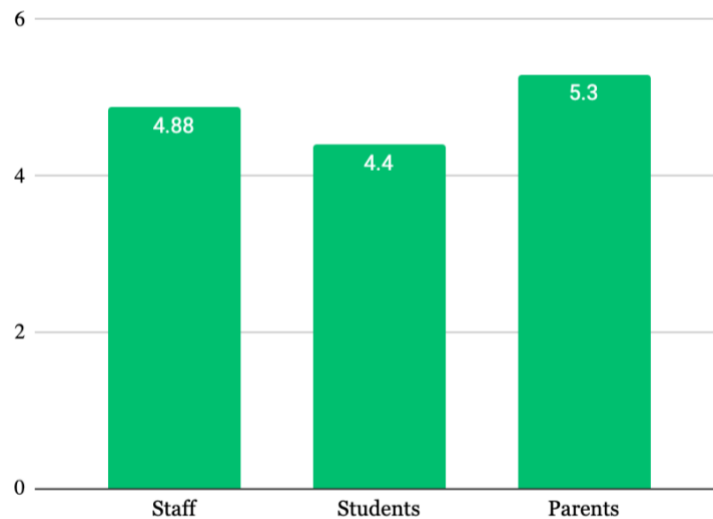
These ratings are reinforced in Figure 10. While the staff and parent comment ratio were relatively evenly balanced, there were 97 (87%) students who took the opportunity to express their concerns and frustrations towards the leadership and administration within the change process. Similar to the other categories of interest within this study the differing viewpoints from each of the stakeholders allowed for various themes to emerge. Figures 9 and 10 form the premise for the thematic analysis within Balancing Transactional and Transformational Leadership (LA).

Figure 10

Leadership and administration – negative and positive comment ratio
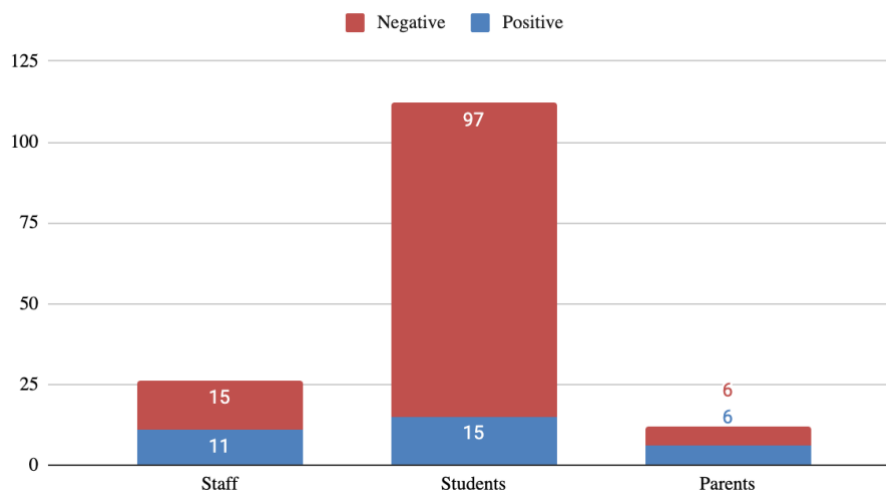
Staff rated all Likert related statements for leadership and administration with a 4.88

(70%) placing it in the 57% - 71% category of being satisfactory but in need of further

development. It should be noted that this rating was the lowest overall staff Likert rating across

all categories of interest in this study. The 11:15 comment ratio demonstrated the polarising

status of staff during this time. While there were positive staff comments from a whole-school

perspective, including how "Strong leadership has developed a very positive school culture, and

I feel completely supported by the Leadership Team, and I trust each of them entirely," staff

considered policy and procedure to be an area in need of attention; characterised by the staff

member who explained how "Policies and procedures are still very unclear."

While a whole-school approach to policy was an area that was recognised by both the

staff comments and Likert ratings, it is arguably symptomatic of a newly combined staff

developing within a new school culture. This was highlighted by the staff cohort rating the status

of whole-staff relationships with a 4.33 (62%) overall average. The whole-school policies and

procedures designed within the year of amalgamation were accepted and considered satisfactory

in theory. However, the inconsistent practical application of these policies presented unexpected challenges for the leadership team; these challenges are highlighted by the staff member who commented on how "The assumption of knowledge of some procedures can lead to confusion and frustration." Such a view was reinforced by the staff member who illustrated the clash of combined school cultures by observing that "Very different expectations of student behaviour and achievements between past boys' and girls' staff are evident."

Such a comment highlights how this category overlaps and directly impacts each of the other three previously outlined. Each of the previous categories was influenced by the leadership team as a collective and directly impacted the change process as a whole. Therefore, the analysis of the leadership and administration data also takes into account the previously described human resources context of the school restructure, which brought about changes to workplace status for several staff members within the combined school setting.

The student data showed that while they indicated a level of support and pride in being a member of the new school entity, they were also critical of several school policies and procedures within the inaugural year of the combined College, which when considered with the previous staff comments highlighted an added challenge. Students rated this category 4.4 (63%) also placing it in the 57% - 71% category of being satisfactory but needed further development. The significant disparity in student comment ratio of 15:97 however reinforces this as an area of tension for students. While there were some individually specific comments on various topics, the main comment groupings were concerning homework, sharing what were now combined recreational spaces, and on how strictly the uniform policy was being enforced, with one student explaining how "The school needs to be less strict on rules involving the way students look such as jewellery, hair-cuts and socks." The analysis of the student data is highlighted by their

expressed frustration in adapting to the opening-up of the previously separated school playground and recreational areas and the relevant safety rules that were introduced as a result of this change.

In contrast to the staff and student data, parents within this category were positive overall and rated this category with an average of 5.3 (76%). Parents were in support of several operational and administrative processes within the inaugural year of the combined school entity, highlighted by the overall effectiveness of communication between home and school. Interestingly, parents rated their access and support of whole-school policies with an overall average of 5.26, which in comparison to the staff and students would arguably support the theory that while the students may have opposed various grooming and procedural policies, the inconsistency of staff implementation was essentially an added cause of the school-based frustration within the change process.

While parent respondents supported the transactional systems introduced by the leadership team, the whole-school transformation was also rated positively by parents; including how the introduction of the parallel curriculum model assisted the overall change process. Parents also felt the College was leading and managing the amalgamation of the two schools well (72%). The 6:6 parent comment ratio indicates that while there was an equal number of positive and negative comments towards this category, the considerably low number of parents choosing to comment arguably speaks more towards an overall acceptance of the efforts from the leadership team and the need for the College to continue seeking parent feedback and consultation during the ensuing years ahead. Such a view is supported by parents rating whether the school enjoys a good reputation in the community with an overall average score of 5.41, which arguably reinforces the acceptance of the two schools' original reasons to amalgamate.

Despite this positivity, however, some parents also recognised the need to continue the process of building a more united school staff culture, with the following parent comment providing an insightful comment on the dataset overall:

> It is disappointing to continue to see and hear the "it's the boys' school," "it's the girls' school" attitude, and the blame game that often goes with that. Obviously, more time is required, as well as the movement of teachers both into and out of the school.

The overall analysis of the three data sets within this category highlights how the leadership team as a collective were required to make significant large-scale transformative decisions and, often, more minor daily operative determinations to improve student learning and wellbeing outcomes during the period of change implementation. The general acknowledgement of the leadership team in navigating the complexities of a large-scale change process was highlighted by the positive affirmation from the parents' perspective. However, this is countered by the staff and student data, each impacted by the amalgamation more directly within the change process on a daily basis.

The analysis of this category was captured during what Kotter (1996) describes as the 'defrosting' stage in an overall change process. The main theme emerging from this data analysis is in Balancing Transactional and Transformational Leadership (LA) within a large-scale change process. While the transformational processes undertaken in bringing about the amalgamation itself included the strategic consultation, planning and implementation of large-scale reform and was affirmed by the parent data, the polarising staff views emphasised an inconsistency of policy and procedure at a more transactional and daily operational level. Students also expressed frustration in regards to the newly combined school rules that were being enforced within the amalgamated Catholic school setting. While this theme is a comment on the complexity of

leading such a complicated process this thematic analysis also provides insights as to how each of the staff, student and parent stakeholders were navigating the change process during this time.

4.5.5 Summary

The identification and analysis of the four triangulated themes of Generational Expression of a Catholic School Charism (CSLC), The Relationship between Student Learning and Wellbeing (SLW), Valuing the Physical Learning Environment in Organisational Change (PLE), and Balancing Transactional and Transformational Leadership (LA), were each presented in the previous section. Each of the case reports in section one, which were inclusive of each of the categories within this study, allowed for a thematic analysis that involved a cross-unit analysis of the staff, student and parent data sets and provided an insight into the overall impact of the amalgamation process.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results and the synthesised findings within the identified themes from the previous chapter, namely, the factors that assisted or hindered a large-scale Catholic school amalgamation. The document review analysis added to both the pre-and-post context to the change process within the case. In addition, leadership capabilities that are required for change management within large-scale change processes for Catholic school settings are considered.

The discussion is divided into sections based on the guiding research questions and the subsequent sub-questions. The guiding questions to this study include:

- What was the impact of the amalgamation of two single-sex Catholic secondary schools?

    - What was the impact on Catholic school life and culture within the change process?

    - What was the impact on student learning and wellbeing within the change process?

    - What was the impact on the physical learning environment within the change process?

- What can be learned from leading a Catholic school restructure?

The application of a theoretical framework was included within the research question that considered the learnings from undertaking a Catholic school amalgamation change process. Kotter's (1996) eight-step model provided a lens for a reflective post-data analysis to further

expand on the related findings in this case. This chapter's final question addresses the central research question of this study.

The chapter concludes with a proposed conceptual framework resulting from the findings of this study. A graphic representation of a framework that conceptualises a Catholic school restructure process included the emerging themes and the recommended leadership capabilities to undertake such a process. This framework is unique to this study.

5.1 Interpretation of findings

As was detailed in Chapter 3, this study included a triangulated, convergent, mixed-method structure applied to both the qualitative and quantitative data with equal priority (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 2017). The concurrent data analysis of a document review, the coding and categorising of open-ended stakeholder survey comments, and the various aspects of school life rated by stakeholders on a Likert scale allowed the data to be presented within a series of narrative case reports and histograms. The analysis of the case reports allowed for the emerging themes to be triangulated and for the collective voices of the participants within this case study to be heard. This contextualised knowledge further illuminated the overall research.

5.2 Summary of findings

In the previous chapter several themes emerged from the data and thematic analysis. A summary for each of these themes underpinned by a synthesised overview of the related findings is outlined in Table 9.

Table 9

Summary of inter-related categories and themes

Categories	Themes	Sub-Themes
Catholic School Life and Culture	**Generational Expression of a Catholic School Charism (CSLC)**	There was a strong indication from all stakeholders that the formal processes involved in amalgamating the two schools resulted in an explicit Catholic school life and culture. This was despite some staff members visibly suffering a loss of workplace identity - both professionally and personally.
		Both staff and parents viewed charism as a traditional construct within the merged Catholic school and identified the importance of religious education and formal liturgical celebrations.
		In reference to charism as an expression of a new Catholic life and cultural identity, students emphasised a sense of welcome and relational connection to the newly combined school community, as opposed to their engagement in religious education curriculum and the more formal liturgical life of the College.
Student Learning and Wellbeing	**The Relationship between Student Learning and Wellbeing (SLW)**	There was a recognition from all stakeholders of the ongoing need to continue building a combined and fully integrated school learning culture. Examples that were identified as needing to be addressed included more clarity around policy and procedure, along with more professional development for staff regarding the teaching of either (or both) boys' and girls' classes, which manifested as student management issues.
		The introduction of the parallel curriculum model was seen as an effective means of meeting the learning needs of both genders within the initiation and implementation of the amalgamation.
		The whole-school focus on student diverse learning needs and student wellbeing within the newly amalgamated College was affirmed by staff, students, and parents.

Physical Learning Environment	Valuing the Physical Learning Environment in Organisational Change (PLE)	Staff, students, and parents affirmed the improvements of the overall physical learning environment - each from differing viewpoints.
		Modifying the combined school's physical learning environment provided a necessary vehicle in contributing to the educational change process - both in allowing community members to either flourish and embrace the change or in providing an avenue for members to openly challenge and struggle in a new paradigm. This struggle included sections of staff disappointed at the level of design consultation and varying student experiences during the expansion of the combined playground and recreational spaces.
Leadership and Administration	Balancing Transactional and Transformational Leadership (LA)	Staff members had polarising views of the effectiveness and consistency of the newly combined leadership team.
		Students were highly critical of the newly combined school rules enforced within the amalgamated Catholic school setting.
		Parents affirmed the leadership team of the newly combined school entity, both in terms of the operational administration and the transformational processes undertaken.

5.2.1 What was the impact on Catholic school life and culture within the change process?

The overall positive acknowledgement of the case study stakeholders to the processes involved in blending and honouring both of the individual founding charisms from the original two Catholic schools is critical in addressing this question.

The analysis of the Generational Expression of a Catholic School Charism (CSLC) theme and the ensuing findings indicated that the deliberate attempts by the combined school community to honour elements of the two previous founding religious school congregations went a considerable way in supporting the amalgamation change process overall. In many respects,

this was a factor in essentially winning the hearts and minds of the large majority of the case-bound population within both the initiation and implementation phases of the amalgamation.

The formal and informal collaborative processes that assisted in establishing a new Catholic school mission and vision, including the planning, consultation, and selection of a new school motto, House patrons, religious celebrations, as well as a pastoral care structure, was seen by staff and students as being an overall positive factor in contributing to CSLC of the newly combined school entity. This is highlighted by a staff member who stated that it was: "A very important element in underlying values/practices in the school" and was supported by 80% of staff members indicating that Catholicity was an essential factor within the newly combined College. This positive rating was complemented by 73% of staff members, indicating that a Catholic identity has been strengthened due to the amalgamation process, and is consistent with 81% of parents rating the amalgamated school as being faithful to its Catholic mission and values. These high ratings, from large data samples, support the importance of how a school charism, albeit blended elements from two distinctive founding religious orders provided a balance to the historic nature of the two previous Catholic schools with a means to both transmitting and supporting a new expression of a Catholic school identity and is further supported by literature that values a reimagined community perspective of a Catholic school charism (Groome, 2001; Lydon, 2009; Rossiter, 2013).

This point of a 'new expression' is a key factor in differentiating the type of impact students felt within this theme compared to both the staff and parents. As previously identified, CSLC positively impacted both staff and parents in what can arguably be seen as through their generational lens of a traditional construct of Catholic school identity. In contrast to this was the impact of this theme on the students of the amalgamated schools. While students were also

positive in rating Catholic school life, they overwhelmingly emphasised the 'welcoming' and relational features of the amalgamated school as a pastoral values-based Christian community; rather than the elements associated with religious education and the liturgical expression of a Catholic identity, which was featured within the staff and parent views. Such an emphasis is reinforced by the positive - negative student comment ratio of 96:6 in highlighting their strong sense of connection and community engagement within the amalgamated College. The expressed perspective of this theme by a substantial student sample highlights the increasing generational and sociological challenges for Catholic school leaders and young people more broadly in their search for spiritual meaning (Dixon et al., 2013; Franchi & Rymarz, 2017; Rossiter, 2006; Tacey, 2000).

This level of differentiation to the type of impact that CSLC had on the case-bound population is further expanded upon when one considers those staff members who, within this theme, expressed a clear sense of loss in their workplace identity as a result of the two previous Catholic schools amalgamating. While staff identity rightly sits within a Catholic school culture, this particular element will be expanded upon in the fourth guiding research question that addresses a range of broader factors, including human resources. However, in the context of this theme it is noted that several staff members had a strong emotional connection to their previous Catholic school. As stated in section 4.3.1, there were staff members (9.4%) who selected one of the two lowest ratings across all questions relating to CSLC. While the large majority of the case bound population indicated an overall positive impact on this theme, there were those staff members who stated this had a negative effect on them both personally and professionally and frequently described this as a sense of loss for their original Catholic school ethos and traditions.

It is also noted that while staff rated formal religious and liturgical aspects positively, a section of staff expressed disappointment in staff relationships. In contrast, several students rated their level of disengagement with religious education lessons and school-based liturgies but emphasised the positive student relationships that existed (Rossiter, 2010). Despite these opposing perceptions from both the staff and students, the overall results indicate that both staff and students were positively impacted by the formal and informal blending of both charisms within the amalgamated College community. This view is supported by the writings of John Paul II (2004, #79) in exploring the role that a charism plays in benefiting both the modern-day Church and society more broadly. Such a role allows for both a liturgical understanding, as described by staff and parents, and a personal witness to social action and relationships, which was emphasised by the students, as both being essentially at the very heart of a charism, and as expressed within the relationship of a Catholic school culture (Cook & Simmonds, 2011; Grace, 2010).

While the data reveals that both the formal and informal processes and experiences of a new expression of Catholic identity contributed positively towards the process of amalgamation, this research has further implications for leading future Catholic school amalgamations. Learnings regarding leadership in a process of amalgamation are explored in section four. However, it should be noted here that the leadership team within this study were former staff members of the two original Catholic schools. While the research does not presuppose this as being an essential factor for other Catholic school amalgamations, future decision-makers responsible for leading a Catholic school amalgamation should not underestimate the value of a community's founders and traditional Catholic school charism. The analysis of this case implies that an underestimation of these values could give rise to significant social, cultural and possibly

even industrial barriers within the various phases of a whole-school change process, which could then lead to questions of authenticity (Groome, 2001; Neidhart & Lamb, 2016) and may diminish the impetus for change.

The overall positive acknowledgement of the case study stakeholders to the amalgamation, specifically in blending and honouring both of the individual founding charisms is a key feature in addressing the actual impact on a Catholic school life and culture. The impact within this theme had individual and collective grouped nuances, the overall effect of which was a positive contributing factor to the amalgamation process. The analysis supports the notion that respectful considerations of traditions provide an effective and meaningful conduit for reimagining a new Catholic school identity (Lydon, 2009; Rossiter, 2013). Such a process allows community stakeholders to have various entry points for stakeholder engagement within the overall change process. This has implications for future Catholic school amalgamations between those schools with established Catholic school charisms. Equally, it may provide some considerations for planning newly-established Catholic schools that are not founded by religious orders.

5.2.2 What was the impact on student learning and wellbeing within the change process?

Overall, the impact on student learning and wellbeing from the point of view of staff, students, and parents was generally positive. Considering the large data set on this topic, each of the findings and the main elements of the impact will be expanded upon, including identified negative features for staff and students, which were in contrast to the overall results.

In addressing The Relationship between Student Learning and Wellbeing (SLW) theme as to the impact on the change process, it is necessary to consider the findings that emerged from

the thematic analysis. Without overstating the complexity of any amalgamation process, the central tenant to this study lies in the clash of cultures involved in merging a traditional girls' school with a traditional boy's school. While this may be seen as an obvious statement given the nature of this research, this consideration is foundational when discussing the findings and their impact on the casebound population within the inaugural year of amalgamation.

While the reasons for the two schools amalgamating are not a feature of this research, it should be noted that other than the newly appointed staff members and the inaugural Year 7 student cohort and their parents, who commenced with the understanding that the combined school would now be co-educational, the remaining students, staff members and parents were original members of a single-sex Catholic school environment. This in itself arguably brought about a variety of contextualised reasons for the case-bound population to either express a conscious or unconscious personal bias as to what they understood to be an effective learning culture.

Through considering a variety of academic, biological and social reasons, there is considerable literature from a range of advocates that promote for-and-against either single-sex or co-educational schooling (see Crosswell & Hunter, 2012; Dix, 2017; Fitzsimmons et al., 2018; Harker, 2000; Mael et al., 2005; Pahlke et al., 2014; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016; Yates, 2011). With such a diverse range of findings within this polarising topic, it would appear that there is no single answer about whether single-sex or co-educational schools provide a better overall education. It was within this context that the parallel curriculum model was introduced at the time of amalgamation. The parallel curriculum model aimed to cater to single-sex core learning subjects (English, mathematics, science, history) and co-educational experience classes (languages, technologies, creative arts, personal development, health and physical education

(PDHPE). It was apparent in the data that the introduction of the parallel curriculum model had a positive impact on students and was seen as an effective means in meeting the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. The data from students, from a purely sociological perspective, indicated that this was a positive feature within the amalgamation. The sense of student belonging and their connection to the newly combined school community is consistent with the findings on the impact of CLSC. The bank of 174 comments relating to students strongly valuing their peer friendships is characterised by the comment that, "The most enjoyable part of attending this school is the education and the friends that I make." Describing a relational tone of a school environment is also compatible with a range of literature on student wellbeing (Graham et al., 2016; Gray & Hackling, 2009; Pietarinen et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2018) and once again complements the findings in CLSC in aligning with the findings of Cook & Simmonds (2011), who strongly advocate for a Catholic school charism as a way for community relationships to flourish meaningfully.

While students emphasised the introduction of co-educational learning experiences as a positive, the parents instead emphasised the single-sex core learning classes as having a positive impact. Such a finding can be seen as being consistent with most parents initially choosing a single-sex school for their children, but students enjoying the variability of learning experiences.

This differentiation of stakeholder emphasis is consistent with the impact on CSLC. The effect of impact on student learning and wellbeing within the change process was positive overall, but differed according to the stakeholder sub-group. This point is reinforced by the impact on staff within this same theme. While students and parents expressed their support for introducing a parallel curriculum, the staff did not specifically comment on the model. While there are numerous staff comments on the gender differences in learning, engagement, and the

behaviours of both the male and female students, the parallel curriculum structure was not an explicit feature they commented on. While the lack of staff criticism of the parallel model may be seen as a positive indicator, it is more likely that they were focused on the immediacy of actually delivering and responding to implementing the curriculum model and had not yet formed an opinion on it.

Such a hybrid form of curriculum delivery is supported by the literature, which suggests this as a well-meaning structure for both student learning and self-concept for both males and females (Hart, 2016; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016; Simpson et al., 2016). The model is also consistent with the inextricably linked relationship between effective student learning and the overall wellbeing of students (Graham et al., 2016; Simmons et al., 2018).

In balancing the findings within this section, it should be noted that while the identified impact on SLW from the varying perspectives of staff, students and parents were positive towards the introduction and delivery of a parallel curriculum, as noted earlier, there is also literature that opposes such models (Kombe et al., 2016; Pennington et al., 2018; Reilly et al., 2019). This case study adds to the literature that suggests that parallel curriculum models, such as the one implemented here, was an effective model to initiate and implement within the amalgamation process. However, further research would be required to determine whether such a model has long-term benefits in providing sustainable opportunities for teachers to maximise student engagement and self-efficacy; as well as considering whether there is long-term support from the perspectives of both students and parents (Leder & Forgasz, 1997).

Equally, the findings within this theme, and particularly the impact on teachers, clearly indicate the need for a more long-term approach to staff development in maximising the prescribed objectives of a parallel curriculum model. If the differentiation of learning and

wellbeing is to be effectively based upon gender, then the findings within this case demonstrate the need for a more rigorous approach to providing researched-based professional development and sustainable support for all staff involved.

While there were several indicators that the teaching staff were positive in their overall rating of SLW, which is reinforced by this area having the highest overall staff ratings across all categories, clearly there was data suggesting that several teachers were struggling with the amalgamation. The difficulties for some staff stemmed from having to make a significant adaptation in their professional practice in meeting the changing workplace practices and circumstances. Staff comments reveal divisions between some staff members from the former two schools and highlight a clash of school cultures in terms of comparing previous whole-school approaches to student learning and pastoral care. An example of this was a concern that the learning needs of the girls were not fully met as a result of the amalgamation, and is captured by the following statement:

> It seems to me that at the girls' school, we were trying to challenge the girls and now we are just giving all students the minimum, which is based around only what we feel we can get from them.

Such comparisons between the old and the new school are further reinforced by the statement from a staff member who added: "The decline of behaviour stems from the poor behaviour tolerated by the staff who once taught the boys." While the triangulated student data on learning and wellbeing were placed within a positive range, there were also examples of students self-reporting on classroom behaviour and examples of peer student distractors. This same level of student discontent was also expressed as varying levels of teacher inconsistency in the curriculum delivery between boys and girls, and in some instances, in the actual curriculum

itself.

Examples of such qualitative data reinforce the choice of mixed-method research for this particular study, especially when the quantitative ratings for the same themes are relatively positive; therefore, it needs to be highlighted that while the learning culture within the inaugural year was generally positive, there was a section of classroom examples where this was not the case. Such a view is highlighted by the following teacher who explains:

> Wellbeing is an area of strength and a unique focus in the school. The only
>
> concern is that some responses, whilst employing the practices of restorative
>
> justice, are perceived as being without real consequence by the students.

Such a comment provides a small window into the complexities of how the joining of two distinct groups of staff and students presented a myriad of challenges in developing a positive learning culture for the amalgamated school. The previously learned experiences of stakeholders from either single-sex school, whether organisational, pedagogical, or sociological, are at the very heart of addressing this section.

The impact of a whole-school focus on SLW within the new College was affirmed by staff, students, and parents. But these affirmations are balanced with recognition from those who indicated the ongoing need to continue building and consolidating a fully integrated school learning culture into the future.

5.2.3 What was the impact on the physical learning environment within the change process?

The numerous changes within this amalgamation also included the complexity of undertaking a capital works school building program. This section considers the impact that the building program had on the casebound stakeholders, not only within the actual change process

itself, including the added potential stress this placed on staff the year before the amalgamation, but also on how this impacted student learning and wellbeing outcomes and the combined school learning culture in general. This research indicates that the changes to the physical learning environment presented an essential vehicle for the necessary sociological adaptations to occur during the amalgamation and inform the main theme for this category: Valuing the Physical Learning Environment in Organisational Change (PLE).

The various onsite school buildings of the previously separate Catholic schools had historically been added as required, and over time had encroached on the neighbouring parish across the overall site. This approach to school building, made partly due to the funding available at any given time, led to an increasingly disconnected set of buildings that gradually limited recreational options for students. The duplication of facilities and the long-standing segregated organisation of the two school sites added to the siloed nature of the parish and schools, both in terms of the physical and cultural. The findings in this theme were mixed as to the overall impact of the considerable changes made to what became a combined environment. While the parents were positive towards the changes to the PLE, in many respects, this positivity was in regards to new and improved facilities and their functionality. However, some staff expressed a lack of consultation and noted that a number of students had difficulty adapting to the shared recreational spaces.

The newly designed and refurbished staff room, together with the administration office, provided both a clean slate and a vehicle for attempting to foster unity amongst three distinct groups of staff: those in the previous two schools and newly appointed staff. The refurbishment and the deliberate centrality of these two facilities played a role forming new workplace customs and practices. This view connects with what Priestley (2011) identifies as structure and culture,

which is also supported by Maguire et al., (2015), who suggest that the actual place where teaching and support staff gather, both formally and informally, adds to the dynamic nature of school culture.

The contemporary design and furnishings of the staff room and administrative building were well received by staff members, one noted, "The new spaces and buildings are much more welcoming and fresher. The playgrounds and rooms have been improved." However, the comments also highlight a divide within the staff reinforcing how the physical environment provided a medium for a new staff culture to develop.

Designing learning spaces to support improved student academic outcomes was one goal, but there is also literature to suggest that the PLE can also enhance student wellbeing; both in terms of school facilities being aesthetically pleasing and providing an environment that is safe and supportive (Jamal et al., 2013; Kuurme & Carlsson, 2010; McLaughlin, 2008). This consideration was central to the social and psychological transition process, a feature of what is described as the playground demarcation for students (Blatchford et al., 2003). For generations, the pre-merged, single-sex schools had clear boundaries for student recreational and social interaction. The process of removing these boundaries allowed the physical setting to support the cultural change towards co-education (Woolner et al., 2012). However, the findings do not support that contention. Many boys expressed territorial difficulty adapting to what was now shared recreational spaces, one commented that, "the girls need to evacuate because they restrict the boys from doing anything."

The data indicates that the capital works school building program, including the refurbishment of selected classrooms, the introduction of a new student wellbeing centre in close proximity to the new staffroom and the administration building, contributed to both formal and

informal social engagement opportunities for staff and students and was cited as an effective vehicle for educational change (Thomson & Hall, 2016). However, this overall positive impact was limited by the degree of collaboration, consultation and professional learning for staff (Blackmore et al., 2011; McCarter & Woolner, 2011; Sala-Oviedo, 2016); as well as a period of transitional unrest for students in having to adapt to new social norms. The PLE changes to the campus recreational spaces and playground facilities required a new level of student compromise and a revised understanding of previous physical and social boundaries.

5.2.4 What can be learned from leading a Catholic school restructure?

This section considers the findings within the leadership and administration theme of Balancing Transactional and Transformational Leadership (LA) within the process of addressing the second primary research. The application of Kotter's (1996) theoretical change framework to the research findings allowed for a reflective post-data analysis. This section is informed by the thematic analysis involving all data collection elements; inclusive of both the document analysis and the survey questionnaire and Likert ratings.

Chapter Two outlined a review of Kotter's (1996) eight-step model, including its continued status as a widely accepted strategic blueprint for planning, implementing and consolidating change. Although Kotter's eight steps were not the original model for contextual change within this study, there are increasing examples of Kotter's (1996) framework being used to evaluate and critique change processes retrospectively (Chappell et al., 2016; Nitta, 2009; Quinn et al., 2012; Smith, 2011).

Kotter's eight-steps include the following stages of the framework, with each of the steps addressed within this section.

1. Establishing a sense of urgency

2. Creating the guiding coalition

3. Developing a vision and a strategy

4. Communicating the change vision

5. Empowering employees for broad-based action

6. Generating short-term wins

7. Consolidating gains and producing more change

8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

Analysis, using Kotter's (1996) eight-step change process, allowed for an examination of the overall impact of LA during the initial year of amalgamation. The impact of this theme is considered within the sphere of educational change leadership theory (Dinham, 2016; Eckert, 2018; Fullan, 2016; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

While considering the findings within each of Kotter's steps essentially addressed the second primary research question, it is imperative to have also critically analysed Kotter (1996) as an applied theoretical framework within this study. Steps 1-4 captured the status quo before and during amalgamation and the opportunity for stakeholder resistance. These steps provided considerable context to the change period that Kotter (1996) categorised as a defrosting stage, where early opposition to the change gradually diminishes. Step 1, establishing a sense of urgency, was the period of lead-up to the amalgamation process and technically sat outside the bounded nature of this case and required a heavier reliance on the document review analysis as one of the mixed method tools. However, the application of steps 2, 3 and 4 of Kotter (1996) had

elements of all mixed methods used within this study and was more balanced within the process of analysing the data appropriate to those steps. The most useful application of Kotter (1996), which produced a rich data synthesis, was found in steps 5-7; empowering employees for broad-based action, generating short-term wins, and consolidating gains and producing more change. Each of these steps provided an effective lens to examine the scope of successes and failures within the amalgamation as a whole event. While step 8 provided the opportunity to consider and examine the results of the post-amalgamation, this, like step 1, also required a more weighted reliance on the document review analysis of reflective notes and was a consideration of the post-change. But while the critique of Kotter's (1996) theoretical framework presents the challenges within the extremities of the steps, the framework accurately captured the complexity of a Catholic school amalgamation. It also provided some pre- and post-context, which assisted in adding further richness to the findings.

Kotter's (1996) 8-step change process was effective as a retrospective analysis tool in this study and provided the impetus for developing a conceptual framework from the conclusions overall. The conceptual framework that emerged from this study led to the formulation of recommendations for future Catholic school amalgamations, outlined in Chapter 6.

The following eight sections of this chapter address Kotter's change process steps. The retrospective application of this theoretical framework provides key learnings for future Catholic school amalgamations.

5.2.4.1 Establishing a sense of urgency

This study did not explicitly set out to address the local political and social context of the time. However, several stakeholders took the opportunity to describe how the decision to

amalgamate did cause a considerable sense of angst rather than that of urgency. Therefore, the first step within the framework is more specific to the preparation and period of lead-up to the actual amalgamation.

There was a 2-year community, school and parish consultation period before the announcement in 2014 that the schools would amalgamate in 2016. The demographic context added to the case for amalgamation. The establishment of new suburbs came with pressure to establish and grow new Catholic schools in these new areas. The gradual shifting of the local population within a built-up urban city-parish increased pressures for student enrolment in several surrounding schools. Added to this pressure was the number of single-sex school options nearby. Therefore, the sense of urgency that underpinned the decision to initiate the amalgamation was due to an ever-growing community acceptance of the need to address an economy of scale.

5.2.4.2 Creating the guiding coalition

The leadership team was charged with leading and administering the overall process of the school amalgamation in what Kotter (1996) describes as a 'guiding coalition.' The challenge that emerged from the findings captured how this group was required to balance a large-scale transformation, while addressing situational and daily operational requirements. The leadership team was responsible for creating a 'new normal' by navigating the logistical complexities and competing demands throughout the change process; some of which included: a capital works school building program designed to improve the physical learning environment; the induction of the new middle-leader positions; and, the logistics of a student population that would double, which required further operational adjustments. Such a wide-ranging change processes within the

overall amalgamation were achieved by a collective form of leadership, as promoted by leadership theorists such as Eckert (2018) and Fullan (2016). This view is also consistent with the identified concept of a 'coalition' within Kotter's (1996) framework.

Staff, students and parents within this context considered the LA of the change process from very different viewpoints. The staff indicated that the leadership and administration was satisfactory, but needed further development. The 11:15 comment ratio illustrated the polarising nature of staff during this time. While there were positive staff comments from a whole-school perspective, including comments such as: "Strong leadership has developed a very positive school culture" and "I feel completely supported by the Leadership Team and trust each of them entirely," some staff felt that "Policies and procedures are still very unclear." This was an area that was symptomatic of a newly combined staff group grappling with the process of developing a new school culture. The whole-school policies and procedures were accepted and, according to the data, considered satisfactory. However, the inconsistent application of these policies presented unexpected challenges for the leadership team to contend with. These challenges are highlighted by one staff member who commented on how "the assumption of the knowledge of some procedures can lead to confusion and frustration" and is reinforced by another staff member who observed the clash of school cultures, and noted: "Very different expectations of student behaviour and achievements between past boys' and girls' staff is evident." While these comments may seem problematic, they are essential to a change process. Seeking out and listening to opposing views was vital in allowing the leadership team to collectively navigate the implementation phase and respond appropriately; therefore, decreasing the likelihood and potential depth of the dip in staff performance (Starr, 2014).

The students indicated that while they were supportive and proud to be members of the

new school entity, they were critical of several school policies and procedures. While there were some individually specific topics, the leading student comments concerned homework and on how strictly the uniform policy was being enforced. The findings demonstrated that despite an overall positive acceptance of the new College, the students also expressed a level of frustration in having to adapt to how the teaching staff implemented a 'combined' set of new rules and procedures within the first year.

The parent findings within this theme included an altogether different perspective regarding the leadership and administration. Parents expressed a very positive view of this theme, illustrated by their support of several operational and administrative processes, highlighted by the overall effectiveness of communication between home and school; and in keeping them informed of important dates and school events. Interestingly, parents rated their access to whole-school policies positively, which in comparison to the staff and student findings suggest that while the students may have opposed some policies, it was the inconsistency of staff implementation that was an underlying cause of their frustration according to the data.

While parents supported the operational elements that were introduced by the leadership team, the whole-school transformation was also rated positively by parents. The positive rating included how the parallel curriculum model assisted the overall change process and how parents' felt the school led and managed the amalgamation. Although the number of parent comments were quite low, this speaks more towards an overall acceptance of the efforts from the leadership team as a 'guiding coalition' (Kotter, 1996). When considering the leadership team's essential role, it is worth noting that each of the previous themes reflect the leadership and management of the change process as a whole.

The findings within this theme highlight how the leadership team were required to make

both significant large-scale strategic decisions, and often more minor operative determinations to provide the conditions for improving student outcomes. There is literature that supports such a balance of the transformational and transactional elements of leadership (see Dartey-Baah, 2015, Fullan, 2001, Hansbrough & Schyns, 2018, Holten & Brenner, 2013; Starr, 2014). In particular, Holten & Brenner (2013) argue that while transformational and transactional leadership styles are separate in style and delivery, they are reciprocal and each fundamental for successful organisational reform.

The level of impact on staff within the organisational change that took place varied according to the individual's predisposition to workplace change and was at times amplified by the longevity of the staff member to their previous school. The data collection for this study took place within the inaugural year of the amalgamation and highlights how the fullness of time in conducting research of school-based amalgamations improves both impact and staff perceptions (Saxi, 2017); whilst reinforcing the importance of a having a guiding coalition in the initial phases of the amalgamation process.

5.2.4.3 Developing a vision and a strategy

The mission and visioning of an organisation are essential for setting priorities and ultimately building unity and long-term cohesion of an organisation (Allen et al., 2017; Kotter 1996). Therefore, the aim, and consequently the ultimate vision for the amalgamation was to develop an innovative learning environment that would motivate the combined student body by reimagining the delivery of student learning and wellbeing outcomes. Central to the amalgamation was for the young people to grow in their knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic faith. To realise this aspiration the leadership team directed the change effort by

addressing the strategic priorities of ministry, teaching and learning, wellbeing, and co-curricular, each represented in Figure 11.

Figure 11

Strategic priorities for an amalgamated college

The previous themes each outlined the points of difference within the stages of developing and enacting the vision and strategy for the amalgamation. Creating a vision for the new College involved several elements within each of the strategic priorities seen in Figure 11 that were developed through the collaborative work of the leadership team. Importantly, however, as Kotter (1996) suggests, these can be captured within a succinct message. Because, while the leadership team's vision was to enhance the learning and wellbeing of every student, the College essentially existed to answer the mission of Catholic education (Cook & Simmonds, 2011; Heft, 1997; Sullivan, 2001).

5.2.4.4 Communicating the change vision

Once the decision to amalgamate was announced, it became imperative to have a clear communication message to promote the new vision. Essentially, this fourth step of Kotter's (1996) change process was a prelude to the focus of impact within this study. While the need to regularly communicate and promote the change vision did continue throughout the inaugural year of amalgamation, it was during the year prior that this was a critical element in supporting the imminent change process. The learnings from this fourth step include a range of practical decisions and strategies. These included having a combined school leadership team led by a single principal over dual campuses, which allowed for logistical changes to be implemented within the year prior to the amalgamation. Some of these included combined school staff meetings and staff development days, along with forming a combined parents advisory committee to assist and consult with the leadership team on matters that assisted in enabling open communication lines. While operational strategies supported the formal external marketing and promotion of what was an imminent school transformation, there were also internal matters to navigate underlined by the frequent meetings with the Teachers Union regarding the process of rationalising leadership roles.

The impact on staff members, both during and after the spilling of senior and middle leadership positions, has been highlighted in previous sections. The complexities of intergroup staff perspectives both before and during the amalgamation process, along with how the varying individual psychological responses to career identity were either expressed as a subjective values-driven and self-directed perspective, or more from a self-centred value of work, is highlighted within a range of workplace literature (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Gleibs et al.,

2009; Hinde, 2004; Lysova et al., 2015; Rock & Cox, 2012) and further informs the status of staff relationships.

The processes that were instrumental in communicating the change vision reinforced the importance of creating a guiding coalition. The leadership team straddled both of the schools during the initiation process (Fullan, 2007) of the amalgamation. This strategic decision allowed for the necessary groundwork to occur, both in the formal messaging of the change vision and within the unspoken and informal demonstration of new behaviours that were essentially an implicit example of the changing nature of the previously separate school cultures.

5.2.4.5 Empowering employees for broad-based action

The fifth stage of the framework focuses solely on the staff. The process of what Kotter (1996, p.105) describes as 'empowering employees for broad-based action' within the year of amalgamation highlights the need to build a collective sense of school leadership to provide the conditions for improving student outcomes.

The new context brought changes to workplace status for several staff members within the combined school setting. Some long-term staff members were now working with middle leaders who were either new to the school community or were from one of the previous school entities. The human resources restructure of the amalgamation, at times, led to a heightened sense of workplace emotion as staff members adapted (Rock & Cox, 2012). The leadership team believed that empowering the newly appointed middle leaders in both curriculum and student wellbeing and pastoral care, was an obvious decision; however, underestimating staff members who were on the social fringes and who had a contributing influence on the staff and the school as a whole proved to be a mistake (Eckert, 2018). To amplify the school-based changes, there

was a need to begin building professional capital amongst stakeholders to consolidate the long-term change (Fullan, 2016).

Within Kotter's (1996) framework, stage five required removing or altering structures that undermined the overall vision. The newly constructed staff room, highlighted in both the Catholic life and culture and the physical learning environment themes, provided the venue and the necessary alteration as a vehicle for staff inculturation. The career identities of staff members towards the change process allowed for the various intergroup perspectives to be expressed, whether or not they were positive or negative towards the decisions and the processes within the amalgamation. The staff members from either of the original two schools who decided to leave the newly formed College, both before and during the amalgamation process, allowed for more external staff members to be employed and gradually supported the reculturing process of an emerging staff identity.

The second recommendation that Kotter (1996) highlights within this stage is to encourage employees to take risks within what could be considered as non-traditional ideas. This particular element within step five was a vital feature. The parallel curriculum model, along with the school's celebrated focus on student wellbeing, is an example of innovation and risk-taking. Several other examples support this finding. The decision to employ two full-time psychologists; the dedicated student learning and wellbeing weekly staff briefings; the building of a dedicated student wellbeing centre; along with the eat-in student cafeteria, are each considered as examples of human and physical infrastructure that were intended to support the overall vision of the new College. Within this context of emerging school conditions, it is also argued that the newly appointed middle leaders of wellbeing for each student cohort, along with the newly appointed leaders of learning for each faculty, became advocates for the vision of the newly amalgamated

College and are presented as examples of Kotter's (1996, p.117) 'empowered employees for broad-based action.'

5.2.4.6 Generating short-term wins

While each of Kotter's (1996) eight steps are seen as essential to the overall process, the need to publicly identify visible performance improvements is a critical ingredient for long-term success and consolidation. There is literature that estimates approximately 70 percent of large-scale change processes fail to achieve their desired level of success (Jacobs et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2018; Kotter, 2014). Therefore, demonstrating some short-term wins during the height of the overall change impact can lead to an improvement in the fluctuating levels of social efficacy and reduce the degree of what Fullan (2001, p.40) terms as the 'implementation dip.' Some elements of which can be considered within the previously stated themes that required further improvements, including the need for greater whole-school communication in providing additional clarity and consistency of policy and procedure.

Within the description of Kotter's (1996) step one of the change processes, an economy of scale was identified within the local context of causing a sense of urgency. The success in attracting the previously described critical mass of 275 students for the inaugural Year 7 co-educational cohort is presented as a strong indicator for the local and broader school community support for the vision and direction of the Catholic school amalgamation overall. The levels of enrolment inquiries also led to waiting lists in one other year group cohort. While other examples indicated short-term success, including the positive results from an external whole-school review, there was a range of positive comments from students on several different topics, including some of the following comments:

- "I like how this school has very high NAPLAN results and that this school gives me everything and more I need for a good education that can secure me a good job."

- "There are many opportunities at this great school, the community is friendly, and learning is fun most of the time."

- "I like the availability of representative activities and the ability to communicate with a wider range of students (boys and girls)."

- "I like this school because teachers take their time to help us learn and get better at things if we have trouble in class. I like being a student in this school because everyone is supportive and understanding."

Other examples of evidence of early success can also be seen in parents rating how their child was enjoying his/her new school (81%), along with how well the school was regarded in the wider community (79%), and with how welcome they were made to feel when visiting the school (80%). Such ratings were reinforced by the parent who stated that "I am so impressed with this School." Other examples of satisfaction at the time of the survey were also noted by staff. Staff rated the statement: "This school enjoys a good reputation in the community'' with a positive overall average score (77%), which also reinforces the acceptance of the original need to amalgamate the two Catholic schools, along with the overall change vision and process. Staff also rated how ''I enjoy working at this school and would recommend it to other teachers or support staff'' with an overall average of 75%. While such a rating is considered within a positive range, it also indicates where the spectrum of the individual staff was sitting relative to a theoretical 'implementation dip' (Fullan, 2001).

While the analysis of the impact on the leadership and administration during the amalgamation presents various degrees of both positive and negative effects on each of the staff,

student and parent stakeholders, the sixth step of Kotter's (1996) change process illustrated how both objective and subjective short-term wins allowed for a degree of change-momentum to build within the amalgamation.

5.2.4.7 Consolidating gains and producing more change

In retrospectively applying Kotter's (1996) change process, the first six steps demonstrated both the context and impact of the leadership and administration on the staff, student and parents. The final two steps of this framework are technically outside of the intended scope of this research. Consolidating the gains of the amalgamation change process and 'endeavouring to produce more change' was essential in avoiding what Kotter (1996) describes as the pitfall of 'declaring victory too soon.'

The previous findings indicated that while staff and students agreed on the need for clarification on school policy and procedures, there was also recognition among parents of the need to continue building a united school staff culture. Parents also highlighted the need for the College to continue seeking parent feedback during the ensuing years. Within the student and staff data, there was also a need to address what was perceived as inconsistencies between boys and girls within the delivery of the curriculum. Therefore, to support the early success of the parallel curriculum model, it would be necessary to invest in a comprehensive program of professional learning for all staff members if this model were to be a long-term mode of curriculum delivery into the future. The final area that emerged from the data analysis as requiring further consolidation was in the area of the physical learning environment. This theme indicated that additional adjustments to student recreational spaces and the newly combined

school infrastructure of toilets and internet Wi-Fi were necessary to continue accommodating the significantly larger combined student population.

Each of these findings are essentially strong recommendations to navigate further growth and improvement. The application of Kotter's framework, highlights the importance within any large-scale school reform process of acknowledging the cultural elements and the successes of the previous organisations, while at the same time presenting a new vision and a way forward to balance an implementation process that can be consolidated.

5.2.4.8 Anchoring new approaches in the culture

One of the new approaches that began to evolve as a direct result of the amalgamation, albeit only mentioned as individually specific comments, was with the increasing collaboration of the neighbouring Catholic primary school. The improved physical learning environment resulted in a less compartmentalised and fenced-off campus allowing students in the neighbouring primary school to access the now combined co-educational secondary campus both formally and informally. What started as an idea based upon the goodwill of both individual primary and secondary teachers eventually became an example of what Kotter (1996) described in his final step in the change process of 'anchoring new approaches in the culture.' The primary students who were identified as being highly academically capable in mathematics began accessing a formalised extension program taught by the secondary teachers. This initial program then quickly evolved into a formal partnership of identifying primary school students who required further extension in the areas of literacy, STEM, as well as the creative and performing arts. This final eighth step essentially reinforces step five in encouraging innovation and risk-taking and further demonstrates the continuous cyclic nature of change.

The discussion of findings within this theme captured the various elements that were involved: The presentation of an alternative vision in steps 1-4 demonstrated how the status quo was challenged and allowed for resistance to emerge. Steps 5-7 represented the period of transition where new programs and practices were introduced; and, the final 8th step demonstrated a consolidation of the overall amalgamation that was highlighted by further evolving change initiatives.

5.2.5 What was the impact of the amalgamation of two single-sex Catholic secondary schools?

While any change process presents various opportunities to be creative and innovative in considering new options, there is also, at multiple times, the complex process of compromising previous practices and long-held traditions to be part of a new whole. During the initial year of the amalgamation an 'implementation dip' (Fullan, 2001) clearly existed. The concept of Fullan's (2001) implementation dip is beneficial in addressing the overall question of impact and further informs Kotter's (1996) change process. The initiation and implementation of a large-scale change process commonly causes regression or a dip in performance before achieving the overall desired change (Fullan, 2001; Gleibs et al., 2010; Saxi, 2017). Each of the sub-groups bound by this case were at different points of depth across a spectrum of a described 'dip' during the amalgamation. It is worth noting that any evaluation that is informed by employee stakeholders within the actual change can also reflect the opportunity to express a range of emotions. Therefore, the triangulation of findings from staff, students and parents represents the interests of all within the amalgamation.

The apparent differences in the former Boys' and Girls' schools, as expressed through differing Catholic school charisms, single-sex education, and the physical learning environment

have been highlighted. There were many other differences between the two schools from a sociological workplace perspective. A central feature of the amalgamation was within the various stages of change in what Hargreaves (1994) describes as the process of reculturing. The period of reculturing included the processes involved in establishing new social norms of behaviour for staff and students. In many ways, the restructuring of the two schools was the transactional and organisational part of the amalgamation, while simultaneously, the reculturing of the new school was the transformational essence of the change in creating a 'new normal.' While the intention to amalgamate two Catholic schools was to improve a community's scope and means to provide a quality Catholic school, the overall process had varying degrees of success.

The impact on parents of the amalgamation, highlighted by their affirmation of the leadership and administration of the newly combined College, was negligible overall. While parents were essential stakeholders within the casebound population, they were not daily participants on the ground. Parents clearly supported the management of the change process and were in favour of the changes made by the building program, the Catholic school climate, as well as the parallel curriculum model. This in itself was a major achievement and demonstrated a positive degree of trust from the parents in this study. Consideration for further research in determining if over time parents remained positive to single-sex classes in a co-educational high school into the future would further inform the single-sex / co-education debate (Leder & Forgasz, 1997); while at the same time further clarify if this was a strong feature of both the initiation and implementation phases of the amalgamation.

In comparison, the students were impacted positively within the themes of CSLC and SLW that were both underpinned by a relational sense of connection to the school community.

Despite this, students indicated difficulty adapting within the PLE and LA themes, as expressed by the re-adjustment of playground spaces and the combined set of school rules and policies. The impact on students was based upon the degree to which they either embraced or opposed what could be described as the balance between the old and the new. The positive acceptance of co-educational classes, new facilities, and the strengthening of a sense of community, were countered by a perceived reduction in recreational opportunities and the perception of more punitive regulations and policies. There were also sections of students who described a perceived level of inequality between genders in both the curriculum and its delivery.

The stakeholder group impacted the greatest within the amalgamation was the staff - with identified evidence of this being consistent throughout this chapter. The sections of staff members who fully embraced the change were balanced in their positive views for the purpose and innovation of the change process; whilst also critical of the lack of consistency in policy implementation. In contrast there were also staff members from both of the pre-merged schools, who at times did not adapt well to the change process. As Fullan (2001) describes, the staff were the main subgroup who were required to develop "new skills and new understandings" (p. 40), with varying degrees of success previously captured within each of the themes. Such varied staff findings once again reinforce the span and depth to which individual staff were situated in a dip during the initial year of the amalgamation.

The overall intention of the amalgamation was to improve a school community. The level of improvement achieved in the development of a Catholic school culture, student learning and wellbeing, along with the physical learning environment can be seen through the commitment and goodwill of participants in this study. However, despite this overall positive impact there were also those staff members who expressed dissent within the change process. Considering the

time-bounded nature of this study, it would be valuable to consider further research of this case outside the time constraints captured within this study. The potential value of a longitudinal study that compares the perceived effects of a school amalgamation over the course of time would further contribute to school leadership and evaluation methodology more broadly (Coleman & Thomas, 2017; Fullan, 2001; Gleibs et al., 2010; Leder & Forgasz, 1997; Saxi, 2017).

5.2.6 Conceptual framework for the exploration of a Catholic school restructure

This section presents a proposed conceptual framework resulting from the findings of this study. The graphic representation of Figure 12 is a framework that conceptualises a Catholic school restructuring process, including the emerging themes represented by each of the categories of interest within this study. The creation of this framework is unique to this study and includes the recommended leadership capabilities to undertake such a change process to reflect this research. The framework presented also provides scope for future research on large-scale Catholic school educational reform.

The framework graphically presents each of the categories that informs each of the themes from this study and is underpinned by a collective expression of leadership that balances both the transformational with the necessary transactional and operational details. The model proposed in Figure 12 is informed through a critical analysis and a greater understanding of each dimension, which is also included below:

Figure 12

A framework for Conceptualising Catholic school amalgamations
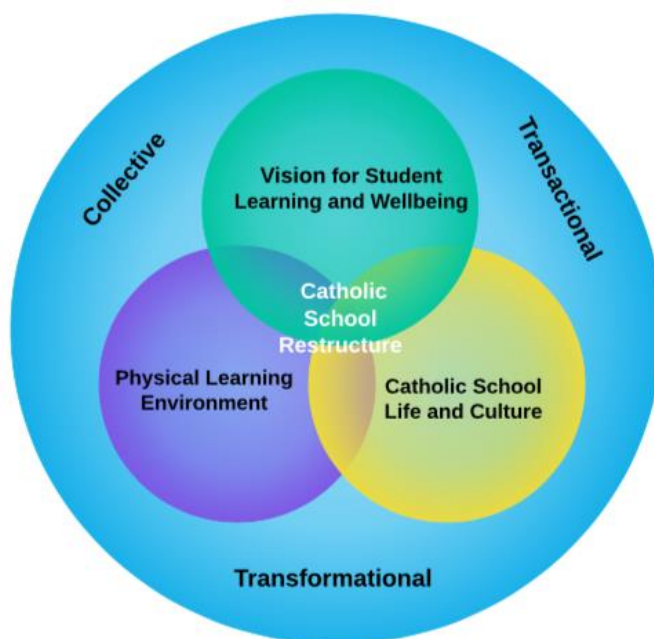
The first dimension of Catholic school life and culture is foundational to informing a

Catholic school change process (Convey, 2012, 2018; Grace, 2002; Groome, 1998; Lydon,

2009). While such a position is recommended in the process of winning the 'hearts and minds' of

key stakeholders within a school restructure, it can be equally important in providing an

authentic spiritual lens to the establishment of a new Catholic school entity. Catholic school life

and culture, as seen through the broad spectrum of spiritual, liturgical, symbolic, and pastoral

elements, is fundamental for a Catholic school to be authentic in achieving the mission of

educating in faith.

The second dimension within the framework emphasises a vision for student learning and

wellbeing. Contemporary student learning is inextricably linked to student wellbeing (Powell &

Graham, 2017; Simmons et al., 2018; Spratt, 2016;). Therefore, an explicit focus on student

wellbeing that is effectively underpinned by student learning not only supports a change process

within a whole-school restructure but is essential in the long-term sustainability of a newly

formed Catholic school entity.

The third dimension relates to the physical learning environment. Within the context of

an amalgamation, successful school design not only provides an opportunity to improve the

physical condition of a new school entity – it also can provide a means for the previous two

themes to be achieved. Improving the physical learning environment can also assist in both the

organisational and social interactions for all community stakeholders (Maguire et al., 2015;

Priestley, 2011; Spillane, 2015).

Catholic school life and culture, student learning and wellbeing, and the physical learning

environment are each complementary and interrelated. They are each represented in the

conceptual framework as being linked reciprocally in the nature of impact within this study.

While these three themes represent the actual elements that are changing during an

amalgamation, it is the 'how' that these themes evolve that sit within the outer elements of the

conceptual framework. As outlined in Chapter 2, section 2.4, the proponents of various

leadership styles are wide and varied (Dinham, 2016; Meuser et al., 2016; Northouse, 2015);

however, as was previously highlighted the concept of a 'collective' form of leadership (Eckert,

2018; Friedrich et al., 2009; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Ni et al., 2018) balances both the

transformational and transactional aspects of a change process and is put forward as the

overriding leadership philosophy for a Catholic school amalgamation.

5.3 Summary

Chapter Five provided an interpretive discussion of the results outlined in Chapter Four.

While this research sought to understand an amalgamation process as a 'whole' it was the

investigation of the three dimensions of Catholic school culture, student learning and wellbeing, and the physical learning environment that 'gave voice' to the change objectives. The leadership characteristics that informed these dimensions were each an expression of the overall improvement of individual student learning and wellbeing outcomes.

This thesis added knowledge to the field of study in four ways. Firstly, the study affirmed the importance of continuing to nurture the founding spiritual traditions and charism of a Catholic school community during significant phases of change. Secondly, the implementation of the parallel curriculum model added to the voluminous literature on single-sex versus co-educational schooling. Thirdly, this study added to a distinct gap in research that further informs the concept that improving a school's physical learning environment contributes to a change process and the ongoing development of a school's learning culture. Fourthly, the careful balance between the transactional and transformational, as expressed within the concept of a collective form of leadership, is essential in navigating the unfolding nature of large-scale reform.

The research study has implications for current and future key leaders in Catholic schools in three ways. Firstly, this study demonstrates that Catholic school leaders who embrace an interpretation of a charism as a spiritual sense of generosity and devotion for the good of others within a Catholic school setting, will further enhance a community. Moreover, Catholic school leaders who are able to authentically integrate a Catholic school culture across all facets of school life that is aligned to their educational leadership will further enhance change. Secondly, this study is worthy of consideration for congregations, or Catholic school dioceses, both with or without spiritual traditions, in seeking to undertake school reform. Finally, this case study has reinforced the importance of school-based relationships across all sub-groups. A continual focus

on the development of relationships was a consistent element throughout each of the findings and the emerging themes. Whether it was relationships as expressed as an authentic expression of a charism, or the essential ingredient in pedagogical practice and student wellbeing, or a physical place in which to gather and engage – it was the relational tone of the change process, inclusive of both positive and unhelpful relationships, that allowed for two separate school learning communities to join as one.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the research findings from the present study and makes recommendations for future Catholic school amalgamations. The main problem investigated in this dissertation was the impact of a Catholic school amalgamation on a casebound community. The findings from the present study are derived from a secondary analysis of existing data and the rich descriptions provided by the staff, students and parents who experienced it first-hand. The majority of research findings presented in the previous chapter point to important interrelated elements of a Catholic school learning culture, a vision for student learning and wellbeing, and the physical learning environment and how they each play out as central drivers within the social phenomenon that was the amalgamation. While there is no exact science for bringing about whole-school change (Thomson, 2010), gaining a better understanding of the reciprocal relationship of these elements further equips future decision-makers in undertaking whole-school change within the Catholic sector. Similarly, the findings in this study reinforce the importance of a critical mass of staff at the local level being empowered to respond and enact a whole-school change reform. While the leaders undertaking a large-scale change reform attempted to balance the complementary nature of transformational and transactional leadership styles (Holten & Brenner, 2015), the importance of a collective form of practice should not be understated (Dinham, 2016; Eckert, 2019; Fullan, 2016).

The study's findings emphasised the importance of continuing to nurture a Catholic school community's founding spiritual traditions and charism during a significant change phase. The processes honouring the original school founders' charisms assisted in developing a new

expression of an explicit Catholic school learning culture. The whole-school focus on student learning and wellbeing was also affirmed by staff, students, and parents within the newly amalgamated College. The implementation of a parallel curriculum model supported the academic care of students as well as assisted both staff and parent stakeholders within the actual change process transition. The findings also reinforced how the physical learning environment was necessary to contribute to the overall educational change process. The results highlight the importance of collective leadership and are reflected in a proposed conceptual model, which promotes a theory to guide future potential Catholic school amalgamations in Australia.

6.1 Recommendations

These recommendations are primarily directed to Catholic school and system leaders planning on undertaking a school amalgamation; however, many if not all recommendations provide some value for leaders in other school settings. Each of the recommendations is correlative with each of the emerging themes within this study and often overlap.

6.1.1 Recommendation 1 – An Appropriate Preparatory Phase

With a widespread agreement (Dimmock, 2011; Elmore, 2016; Fullan, 2009; Saxi, 2017; Starr, 2014; Thomson, 2010) that whole-school change is challenging and takes longer than the anticipated period, the importance of a considerable preparatory phase is seen as being vital to whole-school reform (Elmore, 2016; Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hinde, 2004; Lindberg, 2014). The need for an authentic community consultation period where stakeholder voices are heard and given due consideration is a priority for providing adequate lead-in time to the change process. Once a decision to implement change is realised, considerable planning also

requires a consultation period before the change process commences. However, the results from this study lead to the recommendation that elements of an amalgamated College start the year before the actual merge. An example of this within this study included a combined leadership team working across both of the neighbouring Catholic schools. A combined leadership team allowed other staff members to become involved in the preparatory work of planning the imminent change and establishing relationships. As well as having practical benefits, the combined leadership team contributed to building a change momentum through addressing barriers and opportunities as they arose.

6.1.2 Recommendation 2 – An Effective Staff Professional Development Program

In hindsight, the dedication of a more comprehensive staff professional development program would have benefited the overall change process featured in this study. This research found that some staff members resisted the amalgamation change process. Effective engagement with members of any organisation deemed resistant to change is critical to effective implementation (Starr, 2014). Decision-makers responsible for future Catholic school restructures would benefit from gaining an insight into the concept of an implementation dip within a change process, as well as considering the research on the social and psychological perspectives affecting merging school organisations (Fullan, 2001; Gleibs et al., 2010; Lysova et al., 2015; Saxi 2017). Understanding the career identity of staff members informs how employees make sense of organisational change (Lysova et al., 2015). A professional development program that addresses the detailed transactional elements of the change process, as well as the mission and vision of the new entity, is recommended to reduce the potential depth of an implementation dip.

In this study's context, a staff development program that supported staff members transitioning from a single-sex to a co-educational school setting would have benefited both staff and students. Presenting the research on current gender gaps (Louden et al., 2020; Stoet & Geary, 2018; Thomas, 2020; Wilcox et al., 2017) and addressing associated student engagement and curriculum differentiation within a staff professional learning program would have assisted the implementation of the parallel curriculum model.

6.1.3 Recommendation 3 – Formally Acknowledge Individual Catholic School Cultures

The leadership team charged with undertaking the amalgamation were already established in the two original Catholic schools. The leadership team, having lived experience of the cultural school symbols, stories, rituals, and liturgies, assisted them in addressing the cultural issues involved in the amalgamation at the beginning of the process, not afterwards. Understanding the story and appreciating the history of the original schools allowed the two schools to merge in a restructured physical sense and, just as significantly, allowed for a new school reculturing process to begin (Convey, 2012, as cited in Gleeson et al., 2018).

Other contextual change processes support the benefit of understanding and appreciating the original entities before amalgamation (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Gleibs et al., 2008; Gleibs et al., 2010; Hatton, 2002; Saxi, 2017). Within this recommendation, this study reinforces the need for a school community to consider the words of Pope John Paull II (2000), who challenged people "to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence." (Novo Millennio Ineunte, n1). In such a way, the deliberate decommissioning ceremonies of the original two Catholic schools the year before the

amalgamation allowed staff to openly express the value of their respective school cultural symbols and for them to each be formally respected and reconciled within the change process occurring.

6.1.4 Recommendation 4 – Strategic Human Resource Considerations

A planned approach to human resources cannot be underestimated when changing any workplace, particularly in school environments where change is difficult (Hinde, 2004; Priestley et al., 2011; Saxi, 2017; Thomson, 2010). In essence, any type of amalgamation involves how employees make sense of organisational change, which Saxi (2017) identifies as both a conflict of interest and culture. Therefore, the nature of an individual's career identity is as varied as it is complex, with literature highlighting the value of gaining a better understanding of such insights into individual employee workplace responses (Lysova et al., 2015; Rock & Cox, 2012). Having a plan for connecting the reasons for workplace change with the solutions offered will not remove employee resistance but will provide clarity that can assist the process. Within this recommendation, it is vital to formalise regular communication processes that are consultative and collaborative. Timely staff bulletins, briefings, focus group meetings, staff meetings, and individual staff member updates are imperative for keeping staff informed and engaging with those resistant to change, which contributes to an effective implementation process (Starr, 2014).

The amalgamation of two separate Catholic schools presented an apparent conflict of cultures; however, the fundamental conflict of interest for staff members was interpreted as a threat to continued employment and workplace status that at times added to a volatile change environment. It should be noted that addressing individual and group reactions and responses to the change process is, without doubt, the most challenging factor in an amalgamation process,

especially for those responsible for leading such a process. Within the process of rationalising staff positions of responsibility, leaders accountable for undertaking an amalgamation should expect various responses from individuals throughout this time. The importance of validating staff responses within the initial implementation process is also seen as essential to a particular school setting (Starr, 2014). Within this recommendation, it is noted that the appointment of new staff members external to the original two Catholic schools in this study greatly assisted in the reculturing process in developing, through time, new workplace cultural and social norms.

6.1.5 Recommendation 5 – Consistent Messaging

A commitment to clear and consistent and ongoing messaging throughout the implementation phase of an amalgamation is strongly recommended. While the importance of communication has been emphasised, the findings within this study included the challenge of newly formed policies and procedures being implemented consistently across the amalgamated College. The merging of assumed customs and structures from two separate and unique school cultures led to an initial period of uncertainty amongst staff members and, at times, manifested in challenging student behaviours. While staff assumed previous processes were still valid, the leadership team also wrongly assumed that all staff were familiar with all school policies and procedures and that they were being consistently implemented. Therefore, a commitment to clear and consistent and ongoing messaging throughout the implementation phase of an amalgamation is strongly recommended.

6.1.6 Recommendation 6 - Valuing the Importance of The Physical Learning Environment as A Key Vehicle For Change

This recommendation presents the physical learning environment as a critical vehicle within a school-based change process. There is a distinct gap in research that considers the impact a school's physical learning environment can have on a change process and how it can further support the development of school learning cultures (Woolner et al., 2018). The findings within this study reinforce the importance of consulting widely with both staff and students on the actual design and planning process of a new physical learning environment (McCarter & Woolner, 2011; Noriega et al., 2013). Within the competing priorities of the amalgamation, the lack of stakeholder consultation was identified as a weakness in this Catholic school amalgamation process. The physical place where staff, students, and parents gather, both formally and informally, plays a vital role in the continued development of a school and its learning culture (Gray et al., 2015; Spillane, 2015). While there were a range of significant changes to the physical learning environment within this study, the newly developed staff room facility and the opening-up of the merged recreational spaces and playgrounds had the most significant impact on the change process overall. Both the new staffroom and playgrounds were conduits for the change process and provided venues for the clash of school cultures to be addressed. In a similar vein to considering those resistant to change within the scope of human resources, the physical learning environment provided a necessary means for the implementation phase to be conducted. Decision-makers of potential Catholic school amalgamations should give careful consideration in how to combine physical learning environments. Thoughtful deliberation on where a school frontage is situated, the accessibility of a central staffroom and administration office is located, along with the design and introduction of new learning and recreational

facilities and spaces - all add to the psychological impact to the stakeholders and the community more broadly. While the extrinsic benefits of a school's building program are a logical and positive outcome for improved facilities and functionality, the intrinsic and unspoken effects of the territorial and psychological impact on the original school occupants are often unexpected and, at times, a confronting and unexpected by-product with which school leaders need to contend.

6.2 Significance and originality of the study

The aim of this case study was to understand the impact of the amalgamation, which took place in a capital city of Australia from the perspective of staff, students, and parents within a particular casebound population. While the research presupposes the contextual focus areas within the actual change process through a literature review, it does not propose to assume that the case chosen is indicative of all Catholic school amalgamations, let alone those within an Australian contemporary educational context. This study does not presume to present an exact method for Catholic school amalgamations and school restructures. Instead, it investigates and reports on what occurred due to the school amalgamation within this particular context.

Given the scarcity of research on Australian Catholic school amalgamations, this case study provided a means to investigate a contemporary understanding of the entire event and the lived experiences, contributing to the body of knowledge on whole-school reform. As a result, the study contributes to change management leadership by expressly informing Catholic school restructuring processes. Such research also contributes to a better understanding and development of leadership styles in authentically addressing change management in contemporary Catholic school settings in Australia.

However, unique characteristics further support the study's substantial contribution to the field. The idea of how a founding charism of a school can influence its culture offers a very contemporary interpretation for reimagining a new Catholic school identity (Cook & Simonds, 2011; Lydon, 2009; Rossiter, 2013); and, significantly, how staff, student and parent stakeholders differ in this understanding. These discoveries have ramifications for potential Catholic school mergers between institutions with well-established Catholic school charisms.

Additionally, this study contributes to the current discussion of single-sex versus co-educational schools (Fitzsimmons et al., 2018; Mael et al., 2005; Pahlke et al., 2014; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016). The results of this study suggest that a parallel curriculum model that accommodates both single-sex core learning subjects and co-educational experience classes has merit in supporting student learning and wellbeing outcomes as well as serving as a practical component of a cultural change process (Hart, 2016; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016). Finally, this study contributes to the impact the physical learning environment has on the transformation process and the gap in the literature in this field (Woolner et al., 2018).

6.3 Recommendations for future research

This study concentrated on a unique Catholic school amalgamation and its impact on a casebound population of staff, students, and parents, led by a unique group of school leaders. While the emerging themes highlight the reciprocal links between Catholic school culture, vision for student learning and wellbeing, and the physical learning environment, which have been detailed, there is the opportunity for current research gaps to be further explored. Two areas undeveloped within the literature and require further exploration are the parallel curriculum

model's long-term benefits or disadvantages and the impact of a physical learning environment on educational change processes.

The findings of this study suggest that more comparative studies can be conducted on other school restructures using similar methods. While this study was in a secondary Catholic school setting, such research would also benefit opportunities for primary schools to undertake an amalgamation process. The strengths and weaknesses of a particular Catholic school restructure could then be compared to further informed practices in this field of school organisational change. Allowing teachers, students, and parents to share their successes and acknowledge failures will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of a whole-school change process; and further maximise student learning opportunities.

This thesis has provided an extensive secondary analysis of the impact of a Catholic school amalgamation. It is anticipated that the results from this study will provide new insights to principals and system leaders in the Catholic sector. It is hoped the findings will provide opportunities to explore further ways to best equip school leaders charged with leading a significant cultural transformation in the future.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

The present study has investigated a contemporary large-scale change process and the impact this had on a newly combined Catholic school community. It identified that to effectively merge two very different school cultures, a balance between the transformational and transactional elements of a change process is vital in empowering a collective approach to leadership across a newly combined staff. There were times in this study when this balance was seen as effective, including the commitment of the new school to addressing student wellbeing

and gender gaps through the curriculum model introduced. Equally, an ineffective balance was expressed within staff's inconsistent application of policy and procedures during the amalgamated school's initial school year.

The study has confirmed the difficulty of reforming secondary schools. However, it found that it is possible to do this with leadership and teachers willing to embrace change in order to motivate and support students in improving student learning and wellbeing outcomes. The need for the professional development of staff that aligns with a new mission and vision of a combined school setting was also identified.

The study affirms the value of identifying a Catholic school's culture and how a charism is viewed, lived and expressed during phases of considerable change. It has also found that parent engagement and a sense of relational trust in the newly formed College leadership team led to an effective overall transition from two separate single-sex schools to a large co-educational secondary school.

The conclusion of this thesis brings us full circle to the study's goal, as stated in the introduction. Staff, students and parents of the amalgamated Catholic school studied highlighted a possible way forward for other schools to navigate Catholic school restructures in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Ethics Approval

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
AUSTRALIA

19 Mouat St (PO Box 1225) Fremantle WA 6959
+61 8 **9433 0555** | enquiries@nd.edu.au

11 October 2018

Dr Sean Kearney & Mr Stephen Gough
School of Education
The University of Notre Dame Australia
PO Box 944
Broadway NSW 2007

Dear Sean and Stephen,

Reference Number: 018134S

Project Title: "The amalgamation of two single-sex catholic schools ███████████
███████

Thank you for submitting the above project for Low Risk ethical review. Your application has been reviewed by a sub-committee of the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007, updated 2018). I am pleased to advise that ethics approval has been granted for this proposed study.

Other researchers identified as working on this project are:

Name	School/Centre	Role
████████████	School of Education Sydney	Co-Investigator

All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval.
Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

████████████

Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

cc: A/Prof Boris Handal, SRC Chair, School of Education Sydney

Broome Campus 88 Guy St (PO Box 2287) Broome WA 6725
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| Fremantle | Broome | Sydney | | ABN 69 330 643 210 | CRICOS Provider Code: 01032F | nd.edu.au |

Appendix B – Survey Questions

Staff
Are you a male or female member of staff?
Where were you working prior to the amalgamation of the College this year?
Which statement below best describes your role in the school?
How many years have you been teaching?

Likert 1-7 Ratings
- School Leadership & Administration
- Catholic Life & Identity
- Academic Life
- Staff Wellbeing & Relationships
- Student Wellbeing.
- Co-Curricular Life
- Facilities, Resources & Support Staff

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:
- Since the amalgamation, the academic expectations of students have strengthened.
- The larger school provides additional learning opportunities for students.
- The co-curricular life has been enhanced by the amalgamation.
- Student wellbeing is a priority in the amalgamated College
- The founding charisms of the two schools have been respected in the amalgamation.
- New buildings have improved College amenities and functioning.
- A new staff identity is being forged at the combined College
- The sense of Catholic identity has been strengthened by the amalgamation.

Overall Staff satisfaction rating:
- I enjoy working at this school and would recommend it to other teachers or support staff
- Working at this school has contributed to my professional development
- I would recommend this school to a friend or relative for their child
- This school enjoys a good reputation in the community
- Overall, the quality of education at this school is high

Extended Response
- If you would like to comment further on the school's LEADERSHIP and ADMINISTRATION, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on the RELIGIOUS dimension of school life, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on the school's ACADEMIC life, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on STAFF WELLBEING and RELATIONSHIPS, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on STUDENT WELLBEING at this school, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on the school's CO-CURRICULAR life, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on the FACILITIES, RESOURCES and SUPPORT STAFF at the school, please use the space below.
- Please use the space below if you would like to make a final comment.

Students
Are you a male or female student?
Which year group are you a member of?

Likert Scale 1-7
- Religious Life
- Academic life
- Student wellbeing - (Individual Year Group ratings)
- Co-curricular life
- School resources and facilities

Extended Response
- If you would like to comment further on the RELIGIOUS dimension of school life, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on the school's ACADEMIC life, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on STUDENT WELLBEING at this school, please use the space below.
- If you would like to comment further on the school's CO-CURRICULAR life, please use the space below.
- Please use the space below if you would like to comment further on the RESOURCES and FACILITIES at the school.
- In the past 12 months, have you participated in a CULTURAL activity such as music, drama, debating or other non-sport activity?
- What do you like or enjoy the most about being a student at this school?
- What change would you suggest? What would it be if there was ONE thing your school could do to improve?
- Please use the space below if you would like to make a final comment.

Parents
Please tick the description that best describes your status
How many years have you been associated with this school?
How many children do you currently have at this school?
In what year group do you have a child? Please tick all that apply.
What are your reasons for choosing a school for your child:
If you wish, please comment further on your reason for choosing this school.
Do you have a student in Year 7 this year?
Please use this space to comment further on the transition of your son or daughter from primary to high school if you wish.
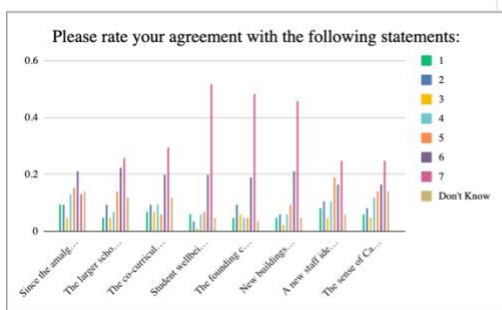
Likert Scale 1-7
- Communication with Parents and Guardians
- Academic life
- Religious Life
- Student Wellbeing
- Co-curricular Life
- Facilities and Resources
- The amalgamation and creation of the new College
- Overall Satisfaction

Extended Response
- Please use this space to comment further on the academic life at this school if you wish.
- Please use this space to comment further on religious life at this school if you wish.
- Please use this space to comment further on student wellbeing at this school if you wish.
- If you wish, please use the space below to comment further on the merger.
- Please use the space below if you would like to comment further on any matters of general interest or concern.

Appendix C - Data grouping and coding sample

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		Don't Know		Total	Average	Sub-Unit
Since the amalgamation academic expectations of students have strengthened.	9.41%	8	9.41%	8	4.71%	4	12.94%	11	15.29%	13	21.18%	18	12.94%	11	14.12%	12	85	4.52	VLW
The larger school provides additional learning opportunities for students.	4.71%	4	9.41%	8	4.71%	4	7.06%	6	14.12%	12	22.35%	19	25.88%	22	11.76%	10	85	5.2	VLW
The co-curricular life has been enhanced by the amalgamation.	7.06%	6	9.41%	8	7.06%	6	9.41%	8	5.88%	5	20.00%	17	29.41%	25	11.76%	10	85	4.99	VLW
Student wellbeing is a priority in the amalgamated College	5.88%	5	3.53%	3	1.18%	1	5.88%	5	7.06%	6	20.00%	17	51.76%	44	4.71%	4	85	5.85	VLW
The founding charisms of the two schools have been respected in the amalgamation.	4.71%	4	9.41%	8	5.88%	5	4.71%	4	4.71%	4	18.82%	16	48.24%	41	3.53%	3	85	5.54	CSLC
New buildings have improved College amenity and functioning.	4.71%	4	5.88%	5	2.35%	2	5.88%	5	9.41%	8	21.18%	18	45.88%	39	4.71%	4	85	5.7	PLE
A new staff identity is being forged at the College	8.24%	7	10.59%	9	4.71%	4	10.59%	9	18.82%	16	16.47%	14	24.71%	21	5.88%	5	85	4.8	CSLC
The sense of Catholic identity has been strengthened by the amalgamation.	5.88%	5	8.24%	7	4.71%	4	11.76%	10	14.12%	12	16.47%	14	24.71%	21	14.12%	12	85	5.1	CSLC

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:

(Legend: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, Don't Know)

(KEY) Likert scale between 1-7 with the accumulated percentage results:

A score below 3.00 (< 43%) indicating a critical deficiency (RED)

A score between 3.00 and 4.00 (43% - 57%) is an area of key concern (ORANGE)

A score between 4.00 and 5.00 (57% - 71%) is satisfactory but needs development (GREEN)

A score between 5.00 and 6.00 (71% - 85%) is a positive result (BLUE)

A score above 6.00 (85% - 100%) is a strong affirmation (PURPLE)

Sub-units

Physical Learning Environment	PLE
Catholic School Life and Culture	CSLC
Vision for Student Learning and Wel	VLW
Leadership	L