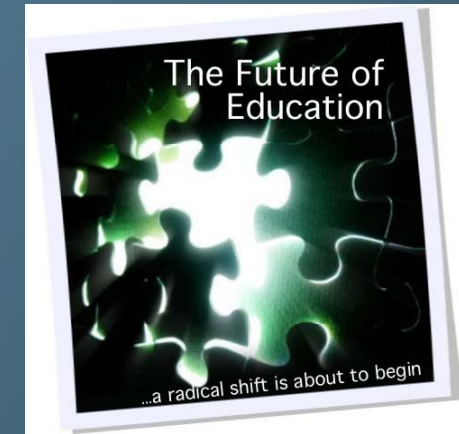


Reading 4.5



Queensland Catholic Commission. (2001).

The Queensland Bishop's Project – Catholic Schools for the 21st Century.

Brisbane: Queensland Catholic Education
Commission.

This reading is the full account of an extensive research project conducted in Queensland (1998 – 2001) on behalf of the Queensland Bishops and is focused on identifying the defining features of Catholic School for the 21st Century.

This summary was prepared by Kerry Miller

Acknowledgements & Introduction

- ▣ This reading begins with an open letter from the Bishops of Queensland and a page acknowledging the contributors.

The guiding question for this report was:

What are to be the defining features of Catholic schools in the context of the Church's evolving mission in the world?

- ▣ Queensland stats: 103,200 students and 7,200 staff in 280 Catholic schools.
- ▣ Majority acknowledge that Catholic school is their only Church community.
- ▣ Catholic schools have the will and capacity to implement the mission of the Church in the 21st Century.
- ▣ Authors implore Bishops to consider report findings and lead Catholic schools confidently into the future.

Chapter One - Context of the Research and development Project

Bishop Michael Putney launched this study in 1998 which was managed by Queensland Catholic Education Commission through its Research Committee.

- Four phase study – engaging consultation from all members of the community and defining features from five different diocesan reports have been collated and compiled together into this report and presented in a Venn diagram. See below
- When planning for a Catholic school of the future, people have focused on its intersection with three major domains of human experience – Society, Church, Education. The domains of society and Church have been indicated as the ones in most need of change.

The Catholic school of the future will:

CHURCH

- Have a strong Catholic identity – and give witness to Christian values
- Be a community of care and right relationships
- Be open and accessible to those who seek it's values

SOCIETY

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Be staffed by qualified , competent people who give witness to Gospel Values

EDUCATION

- Offer a holistic curriculum

Society – the negative influences of technology, consumerism, materialism, individualism and competitiveness, fragmented communities and a ‘values poor’ culture translate into a need for the Church to expand their service to society

Church – 2/3 of the study cohort are not engaged with the parish or Church, for them the school is the face and place of the Church. Church traditions are not relevant to young adults in the 21st century. Catholic school perceived to be less judgmental and more accepting than the Church. Schools need to be recognized as an educational and worshipping community.

Education – the data indicated an overwhelming support and affirmation of the work that Catholic schools do, accompanied by a strong belief that they have the capacity to meet the challenges of the future.

Chapter Two - A Paradigm Shift

- ▣ Schools reflecting the industrialized production line are a thing of the past and the Catholic School is now regarded as a school of the technological age in a knowledge society.
- ▣ Catholic school governance pre Vatican Council II were described – the resemblance to Catholic Parish primary schools in the Melbourne Archdiocese was amazing! During the 1970s the withdrawal of religious men and women and the increasing numbers of lay teachers in Catholic schools have assisted this paradigm shift.
- ▣ In the 21st century there is a new paradigm shift, defined by the participation of the Catholic school in the Church's evangelical mission
- ▣ A Catholic school of the future overview statement appears on page 6 and is noteworthy.

Chapter Three - Defining Features of a Catholic School of the Future

The Catholic school of the future will:

1. Have a strong Catholic identity and give witness to Christian values.
2. Be open and accessible to those who seek its values.
3. Offer a holistic curriculum.
4. Be a community of care and right relationships.
5. Be staffed by qualified, competent people who give witness to Gospel values.

Each of these features is then further described and the resulting consequences outlined.

1. The Catholic school of the future will have an explicit Catholic identity, these beliefs and vision will permeate the curriculum and school life. There will be visibly Catholic artifacts, rituals and celebrations and the Gospels will be lived daily. The formation of strong community partnerships will be encouraged and newcomers welcomed. The underpinning vision will provide support and guidance to the school community.
1. The Catholic school of the future will live the Gospels as it welcomes all and evangelizes through outreach. It will have a strong sense of wellbeing, belonging and security and will be of service to society. Staffing will reflect this openness.
1. The Catholic school of the future will provide a comprehensive, challenging and focused education that encourages collaboration and inquiry while developing all the human dimensions. Through continual renewal, the curriculum will be flexible and responsive to the student's changing needs and life experiences.

4. The Catholic school of the future will encourage within the community, right relationships that are modeled by God's unlimited and unconditional love for all. Parents and community members will be active and integral partners in education. The school will implement collaborative and inclusive decision making in a 'safe' environment.

4. In the Catholic school of the future teachers personify the life-long learner. Supported continuously by the school through professional learning, mentoring and reflection all staff will be supported and encouraged to be all they can be.

Chapter Four - Challenges and Suggestions for Action for the Bishops of Queensland from the Research and Development Project

Challenges and suggestions are then presented for consideration by the study's authors to the Bishops

Affirmation & Endorsement – the authors recommend that the 21st century Catholic school defining features as presented in the study be formally endorsed and that the Bishops contribute to discussions surrounding ecumenism and evangelization.

Implementation – that an accountability process for identifying the defining features in schools is developed and intended support to Catholic schools is described

Witness/Catholic Identity – Catholic schools should be promoted and supported as important, vibrant evangelizing Church communities, school staffs be affirmed in their roles.

Open to all – enrolment policies should reflect inclusiveness, Bishops to contribute to public discussion and endorse evangelical role of schools

Funding – to ensure inclusiveness, lobby governments for additional capital funding, investigate alternative staffing arrangements, adopt a clear funding position for this approach.

Chapter Five - Methodology of the Research and Development Project

This chapter describes at length the process used and the various groups involved in this project. This particular chapter would be useful in establishing how to go about a research project of this magnitude.

Module 4 is called: The 'ideal' Catholic School and I think the description laid out on page 6 is useful in this context.