

**What does 'Ethical Leadership' mean to
Educational Leaders in Christian Schools? Belief,
Values and Leadership in Practice**

Hilario Garcia Ostos

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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DEDICATION

In memory of Hilario García Vivas (1933-2015), who taught me that listening is the first step towards understanding.

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Jesus told a story about a Jewish man who, on his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, was attacked by robbers and left for dead. Miraculously, the man survived thanks to the intervention of a foreign passer-by who took pity on him. The parable concludes with the complete restoration of the unfortunate protagonist thanks to the intervention of another human being. For whatever reason, this great story has always resonated with me but never quite as strongly as during my time as a doctoral student. The truth is that on this occasion, there have been numerous times during this extraordinary journey when I have felt desperate and in need of help, just like the Jewish man in the parable. However, in my case, I was saved not by one but by many ‘good Samaritans’ to whom I am indebted.

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation to all the participating school leaders. This project would not have been possible without the generous and selfless participation of these twelve inspirational school leaders. My most sincere and heartfelt ‘thank you’ goes to all of them. Secondly, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to both of my supervisors: Dr Michael Wilson, a formidable man who always led by example and went the extra mile more times than was reasonable and Prof Mark Pike who shared expertise, invaluable insight and much-appreciated encouragement. I am also grateful to Prof Jeremy Higham and Prof Pia Christensen, who served the upgrade panel and helped refocus the project. I cannot forget to mention Louise Greaves, who always demonstrated great care, diligence and inexhaustible patience and Dr Aisha Walker, who supported me when I really needed it. I am also immensely grateful to the University of Leeds for granting an academic scholarship for this project.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the moral values and the application of these values by Christian headteachers in Catholic and Protestant schools in England. Although the amount of research on leadership in general and educational leadership, in particular, is substantial, the critical issue of the ethical dimension of educational leadership and the role that values and ethics play in school leadership is still relatively understudied. This is especially apparent in the non-Anglican, Protestant field. Furthermore, no studies have focused specifically on our comparison between the values of Catholic and Protestant headteachers in England and how these values are applied to resolve tensions and dilemmas.

The nature of this study is qualitative and it has drawn insights from phenomenology and has focused specifically on the understanding that a selected group of English Catholic and Protestant headteachers has of the experience of ethical educational leadership in a Christian faith school context. The thesis first outlines the historical context of education in England, focusing on the contribution made by different Christian denominations as a backdrop for the empirical research on moral values, tensions and dilemmas of six Catholic and six Protestant headteachers.

The data collected came from twelve Christian headteachers working in Catholic, independent Christian and Christian-ethos schools in England. An interpretive phenomenological approach was adopted to gain access to the lived experience of these headteachers through semistructured interviews. The headteachers shared their recollections of their upbringing, faith, and life experiences. They also offered their interpretation of how these have shaped their values. Furthermore, they elaborated on their experience of the application of these values in their current leadership role and the meaning that they attribute to these experiences.

The findings suggest that their values are based on their Christian faith, which plays a significant role in their personal and professional lives. Religious convictions were used regularly to understand the role's demands and resolve and manage difficult situations in their schools, especially those with a moral dimension. Analysis of the data revealed that although there were some differences between both groups, the similarities were relatively more significant. The content of the interviews showed almost complete agreement on the most fundamental issues concerning morality and the role of the leader. The study concludes with a call for further research in leadership ethics and ethical leadership in general and in the field of Christian faith schools.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study aims to contribute to the knowledge about leadership ethics and ethical leadership in Roman Catholic, Christian-ethos and independent Christian schools in England. There are four short sections in this introductory chapter. The first section introduces the study's research focus, provides background information to the issue at hand and gives a brief description of the significance of the study from a general perspective. The second section follows from the previous section and covers its significance from a more personal perspective, including the vital issue of positionality. Whilst the third section shares the purpose of the study and the research questions, section 1.4 provides a brief but comprehensive overview of the historical context of education provision in England and, more specifically, the contribution made by Christian groups. It also describes the tensions and dilemmas derived from the relationship between Church and State and its implications for headteachers working in Catholic and Protestant English schools. Finally, this introductory chapter concludes with a summary and an outline of the remaining chapters contained in the thesis.

1.1 RESEARCH FOCUS AND SIGNIFICANCE

This project explores the values of twelve headteachers in Christian faith schools in England, the tensions and dilemmas they face, and their leadership strategies in putting their values into practice. It is widely acknowledged that England has experienced profound cultural changes in the last few decades. Whilst individualism, ambition, and pragmatism (Hofstede, 2021), as well as a tolerance of eccentricity (Aymes-Stokes and Mellet, 2012), are still part of the collective psyche, the influence of traditional religious beliefs in general, and Christianity in particular (Brown, 2009; Pike, 2019), has diminished significantly. According to Curtice *et al.* (2019), more than half of Britons have *no religion*, and a quarter of the population claim to be atheists. However, faith-based schools remain ubiquitous and highly popular in England. Many schools in the independent sector and one-third of all state-funded schools in England are faith-based (Long, Danechi and Loft, 2019). Indeed, in rural areas, more than half of all primary schools are faith-based (DfE, 2020c). In terms of the number of students, almost two million children attend Christian faith-based schools in England. Even in today's largely secular society, faith schools have been seen favourably by both Labour and Conservative UK Governments (Levitt and Woodhead, 2020) as well as by many parents/carers who desire their children to be educated in schools that place greater emphasis on moral values and that provide safe and caring learning environments (McKendrick and

Walker, 2020). Despite the significant influence of secular forces in education in recent years (Cooling, 1994), Christian faith schools remain one of the principal actors in English education and a major contributor to the protection of the Christian faith as a positive influence in society (Newbiggin, 1986, 1989; McClelland, 1988; Edwards and Hobson, 1999).

All schools in England (faith-based or otherwise) operate within the boundaries of a unique and highly idiosyncratic education system. This system's uniqueness is partly due to the adoption of the principles of deregulation, fragmentation and accountability-driven competition (Roberts, 2017, 2019). These values have provided a philosophical and ideological justification for many of the recent (and sometimes controversial) changes in the world of English education (e.g., the publication of league tables based on academic performance). In this highly competitive context, schools have become increasingly dependent on having high-quality leadership (Robinson, Goleby and Hosgood, 2007; Leithwood and Seashore Louis, 2012; Holmes, Clement and Albright, 2013). This requirement is, of course, not exclusive to education in England. *Good school leadership* is an almost universally valued commodity that has long been identified as one of the main contributing factors to academic achievement (Marzano, Walters and McNulty, 2005; Day, Sammons, Leithwood, Hopkins, Gu, E. Brown, *et al.*, 2011; Hallinger and Heck, 2011; Bruggencate *et al.*, 2012; Bloom *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, in the English context, the importance of having 'good' school leaders has been identified as a *sine qua non* to educational success for over thirty years (see Sammons *et al.*, 1995; Reynolds *et al.*, 1996; Day, Sammons, Leithwood, Hopkins, Gu, E. J. Brown, *et al.*, 2011).

In the context outlined above, the term *good* could be replaced with adjectives such as *competent*, *knowledgeable*, *ambitious* or *experienced*. However, *good* could also be substituted for adjectives such as *trustworthy*, *altruistic* or *principled* in line with Gardner's (2006) conviction that genuinely good leadership ought to be possessed of ethical qualities, or expressed in simple terms, leadership is only good when it is ethical. In fact, ethical leadership is now recognised as a fundamental distinguishing characteristic of good leadership in general (e.g., Collins, 2001) and of school leadership in particular (see Calabrese, 1988; Stader, 2013). Although there is ample evidence of good leaders working in English schools (e.g., Campbell, Gold and Lunt, 2003; Bazalgette, 2006), there also have been instances of headteachers who, in an effort to demonstrate their worth and competitive advantage, have engaged in dishonest practices. Some examples of such practices are the removal of students from school roll (Long and Danechi, 2018; Mansell, 2018), academic dishonesty (Meadows and Black, 2018; Richardson, 2018), coercive tactics often linked to objectionable 'gagging clauses' (George, 2019) or data falsification (Mansell, 2015;

Turner, 2016; Adams, 2017). This less than ideal situation can be, at least partially, explained by the absence of a nationwide unifying, cohesive moral code, the expectation for headteachers to be their “own moral arbiters” (Roberts, 2019, p.7) and the natural human tendency to make poor moral decisions when performing under pressure.

The case of headteachers in faith schools shares some similarities with the scenario described above. On the one hand, educational authorities expect headteachers in Christian faith schools to act according to the same moral standards as non-denominational schools (i.e. one that emphasises competition, self-regulation and self-improvement). Such an approach seems questionable when one considers the evidence emerging from research that indicates that schools have become increasingly complex and unique in recent years and that institutional cultures are highly idiosyncratic (Maxcy, 2002). Furthermore, there is no evidence that Christian headteachers are immune to unethical behaviour. However, these headteachers are subject to extra pressures as the values of the education system might clash with the school’s values and their moral values. The issue of what specific values are most important to headteachers of Christian faith schools and how they apply these values in practice, although timely and significant, is not fully understood yet. Even though there is research on the importance of ethical school leadership both in general (e.g., Sergiovanni, 1992; Harris, Carrington and Ainscow, 2017; Roberts, 2019), and in the Catholic context (e.g., Grace, 1995; Bryk, 2008; Fincham, 2019), more work is needed about the specific values of Christian school leaders (especially in the non-Catholic field), their origin and how these are applied in practice.

1.2 RESEARCHER VALUE POSITION

Several factors explain my interest in the topic of this study. I started my teaching career in 1997 in Spain, the country where I was born and where I had spent the first thirty-seven years of my life. Teaching full-time revealed that honesty, care and mutual respect between teachers and pupils are fundamental pillars of ethical and effective teaching and learning. After six years as a primary teacher, I felt called to pursue leadership responsibilities. Undertaking such duties was not an easy decision as in the words of Munby (2019), “whenever you step up into a new leadership role, you are usually stopping doing something you know you are pretty good at and embarking on something that you’re not sure you are really good at” (p.264). For the next five years, I took on different leadership roles (e.g., Head of Department, Deputy Headteacher and Regional Chair of Schooling). Eventually, I became the headteacher of a 500-pupil nursery, primary and special education school in

Pozoblanco, Spain. My interest in moral values and education did not diminish during my time as a headteacher. As a matter of fact, I became increasingly more interested in the concepts of leadership ethics and ethical leadership. My frequent interactions with other headteachers revealed that even in the highly centralised Spanish education system, the values of different headteachers affect leadership.

During my time as a headteacher in Spain, I became convinced of the importance of moral values as a tool to find meaning and overcome existential angst. As a Christian, I believe in a real, metaphysical foundation for these values, and as someone interested in history, I understand that such values have shaped today's society and contributed significantly to overall human progress (see Holland, 2019; Mahoney, 2020). The interaction between religious faith, moral values and school leadership has always been of great importance to me. During my time as a headteacher, my values (many of them based on Christian belief) always provided a sense of identity, purpose and direction. They also prioritised actions and provided comfort and solace in moments of difficulty. From an axiological perspective, I believe in the merit of moral values as the best conceptual and practical framework for genuine leadership. Furthermore, I figure that Christian headteachers would benefit from finding out how much alignment exists between what they believe, what they think and ultimately, what they do in their professional capacity.

Finally, my interest in doing this project in England has been highly significant for two reasons. On the one hand, researching school leadership in a country that is not my own is, at the same time, exciting and intellectually demanding (Elliot *et al.*, 2016). It is challenging not only because, objectively, it takes place in an unfamiliar context but also for all the extra care required to register and interpret correctly the information shared by the participants. Nevertheless, the benefits of such an approach outweigh any additional difficulties. Moreover, the distance created by taking the study in a relatively unfamiliar context can be beneficial as it can potentially uncover new and fresh insights from the data. On the other hand, being a student at a British university under the supervision of two outstanding scholars with extensive expertise in the fields of education, school leadership and Christian ethics and first-hand experience as well as academic knowledge of the education system in England is a clear advantage.

Another important aspect of this project is positionality, or in other words, where I stand as a researcher in relation to others (Bourke, 2014). My position can be described as balanced and dynamic as it fluctuates between insider and outsider ends depending on the different identity facets. From a professional perspective, despite the differences between the Spanish and English education systems as well as the considerable disparity between the intrinsic needs of children in Spain and in England (see Ipsos and Nairn, 2011; Dalrymple, 2021), my experience as a

headteacher in Spain contributes to a sense of affinity and collegiality with the participants (i.e. insider). This circumstance increased the chance for the researcher to be perceived as an equal and, therefore, more likely to be accepted by the participants (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Berger, 2015). In contrast, as a Head of Modern Foreign Languages Department in an English school in England, I was an outsider in terms of professional role but an insider in terms of national context.

Moreover, my positionality can be analysed from the perspective of personal, religious and ethical values. The aspect that best fits the insider position is the fact that everyone involved in the project was a practising Christian who shared a common language (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Furthermore, the participants and I share similar views about the importance of having moral values, which are derived from the teachings of Christ and the example of other Christians throughout history. Two other aspects worth mentioning are the relatively small age gap between the participants (most of them belonging to what is commonly known as the 'Baby Boom' generation) and me (born in the early 1970s) or a similar social status that diminishes the chance of participants being dismissive or patronising. Finally, being a Spanish researcher who lived there for most of his life researching school leadership in Christian schools in England increases the chance of finding fresh and original perspectives. The scenario where the researcher is simultaneously an insider and an outsider has been described by authors such as Merton (1972) and Hammersley (1993) as highly desirable. Hellawell (2006) agrees and suggests that empathy and familiarity combined with a sense of estrangement (whenever possible) can genuinely enhance the rigour of the research. In this case, the unique and relevant combination of elements concerning positionality provides the project with a unique edge. The disclosure of my stand within the study allows appreciate its strengths and limitations (Berger, 2015).

Positionality also has implications for the quality of this research and knowledge creation (i.e. epistemology). My professional experience as an insider and outsider working in the UK has clear advantages. As an insider, I am familiar with educational leadership as a 'middle leader' in an English secondary school, which has provided good insight into the challenges and demands of leadership in this specific context. Working in close contact with headteachers in English schools and listening to their rationale for sorting out tensions and dilemmas has provided good insight into the collection and analysis of the data from the participants. Moreover, I have also the experience of working as a teacher under other people's leadership (i.e. outsider). The study also benefits from an insider position. As a Christian with knowledge of Catholic and Protestant traditions and sympathy towards the participants, I maximised the chances of understanding and making sense of the participants' contributions.

Any potential disadvantages of this positionality, such as bias because of professional experience or personal religious leanings, have been minimised by the application of critical reflexivity and phenomenological bracketing as advocated by Langdrige (2004, 2007) and demonstrated practically in a similar study by Bednall (2006) involving Australian Christian headteachers. This approach included, for instance, the deliberate suspension of judgment until all evidence is thoroughly and impartially evaluated. These factors are discussed at length in the third chapter of the thesis (i.e. methodology).

1.3 AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore how individual Christian headteachers working in English Catholic and non-Anglican Protestant faith schools conceptualise, perceive and interpret their own leadership with a strong emphasis on its moral dimension. The focus here is on the specific values that inform their understanding of leadership ethics and the virtues (more directly related to applied ethics) and its relationship with the concept of ‘ethical leadership’ (i.e. what leaders actually *do*) as experienced in their professional lives. The primary source of data for the study came from twelve semi-structured interviews with Christian school headteachers currently working in faith schools (including Sixth Forms) in England in both the private and public sectors. This topic is particularly interesting based on the conviction that school leadership, in general, must be ethical (Maxcy, 1994, 2002; Fullan, 2003). This is certainly applicable to the UK context (Roberts, 2019), where there are serious concerns about the moral state of educational leadership in these quietly convulsive and “turbulent” times (Shapiro and Gross, 2013).

The project started with the objective of providing answers to a set of two *prima facie* (G. Thomas, 2017) research questions:

(1) What are the values of headteachers in Christian schools in England?

(2) How are these values implemented?

It might be useful at this stage to clarify that by *prima facie* research questions, Thomas is referring to somewhat crude, preliminary questions that orient the study in its early stages. These are subject to “change and become refined as [one’s] study progresses” (p. 52). It became evident that two themes underpinned each of these initial questions: (a) the moral values that underpin the leadership ethics of

headteachers in English Christian faith schools and (b) how leadership ethics is implemented in order to achieve ethical leadership. Consistent with Thomas's recommendation, there were modifications made after critical reflection resulting from the literature review leading to the final version of four research questions (numbered RQ1 to 4). The first *prima facie* research question and the associated theme was subdivided into RQ1 and 2. The former focused on specific moral values, whilst the latter focused on the genesis of those specific values. The second *prima facie* research question and theme, on the other hand, focused on the practical application of these values with an emphasis on tensions, dilemmas and challenges faced by headteachers working in a Christian environment.

The final set of research questions pertinent to the study are the following:

- *RQ 1: What are the main values of headteachers of selected Christian faith schools in England?*
- *RQ 2: What are the key influences on those values?*
- *RQ 3: What facilitates and what hinders the application of those values in practice?*
- *RQ 4: How do these headteachers resolve moral dilemmas and deal with conflicting values?*

Given the calls for more research on morality in a 'natural' context and the need for a better understanding of the ethical dimension of educational leadership in general and, more specifically, of Christian faith schools, this study's research questions offer some first steps towards a more profound understanding of an issue that is certainly timely. The complete rationale for the final set of research questions is further detailed in section 3.1. As a final remark, it is important to point out that in line with the nature of a professional doctorate (i.e. research that combines academic rigour *and* practical impact), this study intends to be of interest to three key categories of professional stakeholders: educational researchers, school leadership practitioners and educational policymakers.

1.4 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Overview of educational provision in England and the role of the Established Church

From the late sixth century onwards, education in England was largely reserved for those entering the priesthood and delivered in cathedrals and monastic schools. Progressively, as interest in scholarship developed, grammar schools, *de facto* feeder schools to the universities at Oxford and Cambridge, emerged. However, access to

both institutions was still reserved for the elite whilst most of the population's education was limited to the instruction provided in the family context and their involvement in practical apprenticeships (see the Statute of Artificers and Apprentices Act passed in 1562 (Woodward, 1980)). This arrangement would continue until 1534, when the Protestant Reformation challenged previous ideas influencing the majority of the English intelligentsia first (Law, 2018) and, eventually, the rest of the populace. King Henry VIII's decision to separate from Rome and the rise to notoriety of influential scholars such as William Tyndale created the right conditions for the emergence of new religious and cultural ideas that encouraged widespread access to reading Scripture in English and "the impetus for universal literacy" (Groome, 1995, p.266). Eventually, Anglicanism (which kept a parallel pseudo-Catholic hierarchy whilst embracing reformed theology) became the established religion of the English, exerting almost complete control in matters of faith and education. One example of this influence was the expectation for university fellows and schoolmasters to be ordained in the Anglican Church, which remained in place until the mid of the 19th century.

While it is true that religion plays a much less significant role in today's education in England (Brown, 2009), it would be incorrect to dismiss the role that Christians, and particularly the Anglican Church, have played in the English educational landscape. One of the earliest examples of this contribution was the founding of charity schools in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Anglican clergy members such as Thomas Bray's Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Similarly, Robert Raikes, an evangelical Anglican, provided free education to working-class children in Gloucester in 1780. In the end, ecclesiastical authorities founded the National Society in 1811 with the objective of developing "a system of elementary schooling based on each parish having a school or schools to provide education for the children" (Lankshear, 2013, p.2). Parliament's decision to grant £11,000 to the Church of England for the building of schools in 1833 is now understood as the foundation of the current Anglican-State educational partnership (Chadwick, 2001).

Notwithstanding some protestation by the Church of England (Ensor, 1936), by the mid-19th century, secular authorities got increasingly involved in the provision of education for all children. The 1844 Factory Act stipulated a minimum of twelve hours of tuition per week (paid by the employer) for all 'apprentices' up to the age of thirteen (HMSO, 2021c, 2021b). However, only the most philanthropic factory and mill owners observed these directions, and educational provision remained piecemeal and inconsistent. Ultimately, the 1870 Forster Education Act (which brought the expectation of education for five years for all children) established government-financed Board Schools in the areas with no presence of church

schools. This dual arrangement meant *de facto* the integration of Anglican schools in the State system where the former would strive to maintain their Christian identity whilst catering for “the nation’s general provision in education” (Chadwick, 1994, p.10).

By the mid-20th century, calls for educational reform materialised with the publication of the 1941 Green Book memorandum and the 1944 Education Act. Both documents drew inspiration from the work of earlier education reformers (e.g., Richard Henry Tawney) and, in the end, confirmed the role of Christian faith schools in the English educational landscape. The education secretary Richard Butler skilfully persuaded church leaders to accept some control from local education authorities in exchange for protected legal status and government funding (Sharpe, 2020). During the process, negotiations remained lengthy and difficult, often on the brink of collapse. However, in the end, a consensus was achieved and whilst the majority of Catholic schools chose to become voluntary aided (i.e. only partially funded by the State), most Anglican schools became voluntary controlled (i.e. fully funded). Given the difficulties faced by Butler and his team and the relative success of the arrangement, it is unsurprising that the unique State-Church educational partnership, first established in 1833 and confirmed in 1944, has remained unchanged and largely unchallenged.

Contribution of non-Anglican Christians to education

As well as the Anglican Church, other Christian denominations also have contributed to the provision of education. These include the Catholic Church and non-Anglican Protestant groups that emerged after the English Reformation (Brigden, 2002). The Protestant Reformation signified the end of the singular European religious identity (Martin, 1978) and those in England who remained faithful to the Church in Rome Catholics experienced disadvantage and persecution (Daly, 2016). After the death of Mary, the last Catholic English monarch, hopes for a return to a Catholic England vanished. Her half-sister Elizabeth would eventually become Queen, and although initially persuaded to tolerate the Catholic minority, most English Catholics, encouraged by Pope Pius V, rejected this offer and proactively opposed her rule (Russell, 1996). In reality, the majority of English Catholics opted for relocation abroad (mainly in France), waiting for a more propitious time to return. It could be argued that they accepted that living under the principle of *Cuius region, eius religio* (i.e. the religion of the King is the religion of his subjects) (Gorski, 2003) was simply unacceptable. It was not until 1829, with the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act, that Catholic recusants enjoyed an improvement in living conditions. The traditional anti-Catholic (as well as anti-

Spanish (Whitelock, 2016)) sentiment of previous centuries had started to weaken. Previous bigotry and prejudice (Norman, 2019) had given way to mild toleration as it had become evident that efforts to achieve complete religious uniformity under Anglicanism had effectively failed. Moreover, it was argued that such forced uniformity was not only unachievable but also regressive, divisive and questionable on Christian theological grounds (Coffey, 2000).

One of the consequences of the combination of greater religious freedom, the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy and the return of Catholic individuals to the country was the foundation of the Catholic Poor School Committee in 1847, the forerunner to the current Catholic Education Service (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2021). The bishops deemed education inseparable from faith (Arthur, 1995; Groome, 1995) and indispensable for the well-being of Catholic parents and their children. Furthermore, the bishops perceived education as a vehicle to help the poor (always an important element of Catholic theology) and a way to re-enter the English cultural landscape (Supple, 1985; McClelland, 1999). One example of this new focus was prioritising the building of schools, frequently funded by individual Catholic laity (Arthur, 1995; Whitehead, 1999), over the construction of churches. This investment paid off, and the 1944 Education Act recognised the need to incorporate Catholic schools into mainstream education. Under this Act, most of them became Voluntary Aided schools retaining their distinctive religious identity and ethos.

Finally, the success of the Vatican II Council (1962-65) accelerated the integration of Catholic schools into the educational system. The post-conciliar Church demonstrated genuine willingness to modernise (Greeley, 1982; Seidler and Meyer, 1989; McBrien, 1992), recognised the value of other worldviews (Chadwick, 1994) and the need to reflect on past mistakes (Arbuckle, 1993). Such changes persuaded many to accept the Catholic Church as an important education provider, even to non-Catholic students (Chambers, 2012). Moreover, these changes reinforced the Church's identity and confirmed the idea of Catholic schools as places of faith nurture (Paul VI, 1965). In recent decades, Catholic institutions have become an integral part of the educational landscape in England, as proven by their popularity amongst parents, outstanding academic track record and the conversion of all former Catholic teacher training colleges into universities in 2012.

Catholics were not the only non-Anglican Christian group involved in education despite discrimination as Nonconformist Protestants also endured persecution (Waddell, 2021), spurious accusations of irrationality (Haigh, 2018) and limitations to their civil liberties. Nonconformists believed in the basic tenets of the Christian faith but rejected most medieval additions and traditional Catholic or Anglican ecclesiology (Spraggon, 2003). They also showed a preference for a less hierarchical

faith which favoured personal study and interpretation of Scripture, strong work ethic and the need to protect freedom of conscience and religious liberty (Reynolds and Durham, 1996). Nonconformists flourished after the Reformation (Brigden, 2002) and eventually became an amalgamation of dissenting Anglicans who opposed the 1662 Act of Uniformity (BHO, 2021), Puritans (see Nuttall, 1992), Quakers (Durnbaugh, 1973) and sympathisers of continental Protestantism. Nonconformists would gather in diverse congregations that progressively gained notoriety and influence. As demonstrated in the 1851 census (McAndrew, 2010), by 1850, the Nonconformist movement had become ubiquitous in England and Wales, frequently outnumbering Anglican congregations. Furthermore, Nonconformists often engaged in politics and promoted an agenda that sought to limit authoritarianism and discrimination (Tyacke, 2010) whilst proposing a spirited defence of family values, morality and temperance (Larsen, 2005).

Nonconformists established academies as early as 1779 and organisations such as the British and Foreign School Society, founded in 1808 by William Allen (Quaker) or Samuel Whitbread (Puritan), attracting numerous pupils. The 1840 Education Act provided grammar schools (frequently founded by Nonconformists) greater autonomy to focus on academic outcomes and character (see Pike, 2010). This trend would slow down in 1870 with the Foster's Education Act which disappointed most Nonconformists. Their reason was that, although the Act called for non-sectarian religious teaching (O'Grady and Jackson, 2007), in reality, it was still partial to Anglican interests. Even more contentious for the interest of Nonconformists were the following Education Acts, which assimilated and funded denominational voluntary elementary schools (i.e. Anglican and Catholic) whilst neglecting the rest. Nonconformists were shocked (Johnson, 2000) and, once again, outmanoeuvred by their religious and political competitors (Bebbington, 2005) when their influence was weakened by the 1902 Education Act, limiting their influence on elected school boards.

Despite some protestation from humanists and secularists (see Clayton *et al.*, 2018), the educational system still allows not only for Church schools but also for Christian-ethos schools and what Baker (2013) calls "new independent Christian schools" typically led and run by Nonconformists. Christian-ethos schools are often academies run by Christian charitable organizations and emerged as a consequence of the call of successive governments for schools that tackled disadvantage and promoted academic and moral excellence (Francis, Casson and McKenna, 2018), which often operate as academies or free schools. Conversely, independent Christian schools started in the 1960s as a reaction of Christian parents and teachers against new trends in education, which some perceived as hostile and incompatible with traditional Christian belief (Baker, Freeman and Cox, 2005) as well as in

conflict with the parental right to educate their children in ways they find acceptable. From a theological perspective, most of these schools are within the Nonconformist tradition and tend to be either Calvinist or Pentecostal but diverse and with high degrees of cross-pollination. These schools tend to be small, all-through schools that emphasise character education and have been described as highly protective of their almost complete autonomy (Walford, 1995, 2001) and, congruent with Evangelical Christian tradition, not fully tied down to secular authorities (McEwen and Robinson, 1995).

Tensions and dilemmas

The origin of the involvement of religious institutions in education in England and the existence of a dual (i.e. secular and religious) system of voluntary bodies in the current educational system can be traced back to the 1870 Education Act drafted by Liberal MP William Forster. Although critiqued by some (e.g., Middleton, 1970) for not being ambitious enough, the importance of this Act is widely recognised as a transformative and significant piece of legislation and the genesis of some of the most ubiquitous aspects of our present system (Francis, 1993). The Butler Education Act of 1944 further expanded this partnership and led to establishing a relationship that has been largely positive for both parties. For instance, in the case of most Catholic schools, their newly gained status as Voluntary Aided schools meant their integration into the mainstream educational system while having their religious identity legally protected and progressively increasing levels of financial support. On the other hand, the State benefited as it gained access to school places in academically successful institutions (Morris, 2005) at a minimal cost. However, this relationship has also brought some tensions and challenges due to competing values and conflicting objectives and perspectives that will be explored briefly here.

One of these challenges is the ideas that emerged from the 1988 Education Reform Act (HMSO, 2021a) and have become ubiquitous in English schools today. Arguably, the most significant of these is the influence of principals inherited from deregulated capitalism and the world of business has had in education. Under this market-based educational policy, schools are not only scrutinised based on their capability to keep students safe and achieve outstanding academic outcomes but are expected to compete with other schools. Although some have praised the Act for providing schools with greater independence and for tackling complacency and low standards (Bradley and Taylor, 2002), it has also been criticised for being disruptive, ineffective (Walford, 1990; Wiggins and Tymms, 2002) and for contributing to job dissatisfaction, low morale and high staff turnover (Pratt, 2016). Although, on the one hand, Christian faith schools have benefited from an overall positive perception

by politicians, it is also true that the moral values of many of these Christian institutions sit uncomfortably with the current educational model, which promotes the idea that the most important aspect of education is quantitative academic outcome and competition the best method to obtain these. The traditional approach of Christians has always focused on ‘doing what is right’ in the long term and not necessarily what is expedient. Therefore, Christian teachers and headteachers in Catholic and Protestant schools (e.g., Grace, 2001, 2003, 2013; Arthur, 2015; Gleeson, 2015; Greentree, 2021) have struggled to accept that the guiding principles of these “turbulent times” (Price, 1999, p.112) are desirable or inherently superior.

It has also been argued that faith schools can sometimes undermine social cohesion as they, even if not deliberately, segregate pupils based on religious, ethnic or racial criteria. By selecting students from a specific religious background, faith schools can prevent pupils from different backgrounds from joining in whilst also preventing their own pupils from getting to know and interact with pupils from different backgrounds. From this perspective, deliberate limitation of contact between different human groups has been described by some academics as undesirable in a liberal, multicultural society (e.g., Hughes, 2011; Watson, 2013; Manzoni and Rolfe, 2019). However, other academics (e.g., Short, 2002, 2003; Burtonwood, 2003; Hemming, 2018) have been more favourable and have identified that not only Christian faith schools are not as restrictive in their contact with other groups as suspected but a positive force for social mobility and integration, bringing positive and sustained effects to society as a whole. Although this can be explained by the fact that, in general, people who are involved in religious faith tend to have more successful relationships with others (Pearce and Axinn, 1998; Regnerus, 2000, 2001; Wilcox, 2002, 2004; Brooks, 2004) this positive influence can be also be attributed to the positive attitudes taught and encouraged in Christian faith schools (Tritter, 1992).

Another contentious issue is the one relating to performance. It is generally accepted that faith schools provide better education outcomes than nondenominational/secular alternatives (Thiessen, 2001). Although this seems to be the case, there are growing concerns that these results must be interpreted by carefully considering the students’ profile and backgrounds and not just assuming it is a consequence of the school's ethos. In other words, arguably not all good Christian faith schools are good but only ‘Ofsted-good’ (Allen and West, 2011; Gibbons and Silva, 2011; Andrews and Johnes, 2016; Clayton *et al.*, 2018; Sullivan *et al.*, 2018). The evidence seems to suggest that students in Christian schools tend to do better not because of the school but because of the type of student they are and

the level of support that they receive but, in any case, disentangling faith from family life and from education is undoubtedly an onerous task.

Finally, a controversial aspect of Christian faith schools is the one that deals with values and morality. Reconciling traditional Christian morality and expectations for equality in areas such as identity and sexual orientation has proven complex and contentious. On the one hand, most Catholic and Nonconformist Christian schools reject charges of indoctrination (Thiessen, 2001) but acknowledge their defence of, for instance, biblical views of sexuality (e.g., Williams, 2011) and other related issues. It has been argued that Christian schools have become cautious but also protective of their core beliefs to safeguard their distinctiveness from further erosion (McLaughlin, 1999; Casson, 2011; Scott and McNeish, 2012; Arthur, 2013). By contrast, critics have argued that the position of most Christian faith schools is only a reflection of their desire to perpetuate old-fashioned and prejudiced perspectives that are incompatible with current moral values. Concerning the issue of students identifying with the LGBTQ+ community, there are concerns about the ability and willingness of Christian faith schools to comply with secular expectations. Generally, critics consider that attitudes of Christian faith schools towards these issues range from reluctantly tolerating, mainly in Anglican schools (e.g., Carlile, 2020), to fierce antagonism (e.g., Callaghan, 2015, 2016; Fenton, 2016; Kurian, 2020; Nash and Browne, 2021). However, the severity of the problem has been disputed by other academics (e.g., Mason, 2018), who, although agreeing that there is room for improvement, have concluded that there is no basis for questioning that, in general, Christian schools operate respectfully and in good faith. Finally, others have pointed out that support for the LGBTQ+ community and denunciations of ‘systemic homophobia’ in Christian institutions have been the consequence of previous hostility against Christians by certain individuals and not as a consequence of interest in the movement *per se* (Yancey, 2019).

Research implications

The ubiquity and popularity of faith schools in a largely secular society as modern Britain could be described as an anomaly. As we have seen, this is the result of historical and cultural circumstances that have resulted in more than one in three schools in Great Britain being faith schools, the majority of them Christian. Also, many of them are fully integrated into the State system, receiving funds and support from taxpayers. For many, the existence of these schools is justified as, based on the number of oversubscribed faith schools, there is demand for faith-based education. It has been argued that it is not only parental choice that has justified their existence

but also the emphasis that these institutions place on moral values and the achievement of outstanding educational outcomes.

However, there are problems and tensions of moral nature derived from the clash between the values of the educational establishment and the traditional values cherished, promoted and encouraged by the Church for nearly two millennia. Because of the long-term, moral nature of these tensions and dilemmas, these are unlikely to go away or get resolved easily. It is often the case that these have to be approached on a one-to-one basis by each individual school leader. This is not to say that some of these issues cannot be discussed from a wide perspective. However, it is obvious that there is an explicit connection between the wider tensions of values and the challenges that Christian headteachers have to face when trying their best to comply with the demands from the authorities and the law whilst staying faithful to the requirements of the church and their own professional, religious and moral values.

This situation gets even more complicated in the case of Catholic and Nonconformist Christian headteachers as they come from religious traditions that have had a tumultuous and not always smooth relationship with education authorities in the country. Arguably, the former marginalisation of both of these religious groups might have contributed to strengthening the solidarity within the groups and, therefore, their sense of identity and shared values. In the case of headteachers of Catholic schools, Chadwick (1994) recognises that “Catholic schools are simply part of the inheritance which Catholic forefathers made huge sacrifices to keep, and which should, for that reason alone, be preserved at all costs” (p.15). It would be entirely reasonable to believe that headteachers in Catholic schools (who have to be baptised and active Catholics themselves) would not be willing to compromise this commitment in any way. Similarly, Protestant headteachers in independent Christian schools believe that “religion is the primary *raison d’être* of [their] existence” (Baker, 2009, p.112). In their view, leading a school is a privilege from God and a great personal responsibility that one should take with the utmost seriousness. For these, compromise is neither possible nor desirable as a genuinely lived Christian life “in the community of fellow believers” (McEwen and Robinson, 1995, p.3) is congruent with tradition but also the fulfilment of a plan that provides ultimate meaning in this life and validation for the next. Such high levels of commitment, which include metaphysical, moral and professional dimensions, is one of the most recognisable and interesting elements of the leadership of Christian faith schools.

For all these reasons knowing what specific values, the origin of these and how these are implemented to fulfil ethical leadership in Christian schools is of

paramount importance to fully understand how these institutions operate and how they contribute to the educational landscape of the nation.

1.5 SUMMARY AND THESIS STRUCTURE

Leadership ethics and ethical leadership are vital to all school leaders. This study investigates these concepts and the role of associated concepts such as values and virtues in headteachers' leadership in English Catholic and Protestant faith schools. There are seven chapters in this study. The main points of each chapter in terms of contents are as follows.

Chapter 1 has the specific purpose of 'setting the scene' for the rest of the thesis. This chapter discloses the perspective adopted for the investigation of the phenomena of ethical educational leadership in Christian faith schools in England and provides some crucial background information about the historical, technical and theological aspects pertinent to such schools. Chapter 2 provides a rich and wide-ranging but focused review of the available literature on leadership ethics and ethical leadership in schools. Chapter 3 is concerned with the methodology used for this study which is qualitative, idiographic and philosophically rooted in the subjectivist-naturalist tradition. Although chapters 4 and 5 share the same overall structure, the former deals with the six Roman Catholic participants, whereas the findings belonging to protestant participants are included in the latter. In chapter 6, comparisons between headteachers of different religious affiliations can be found in the shape of a discussion. Chapter 7 features a brief summary of the preceding chapters, including a restatement of the research problem, the study's aims and the research questions. Then, it provides an overview of the findings. This is followed by a critical analysis of the study's strengths and limitations and suggests appropriate recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with a self-reflective paragraph where I detail some personal insights about my experience as a doctoral student in the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on the issues of ethics, values and school leadership, and more specifically, how these elements interact with each other in the context of compulsory faith-based education in England. The chapter begins with section 2.1 and provides a brief introduction to leadership theories and their evolution over time. This is followed by a section (2.2) that reviews the concept of ethics as an important and significant phenomenon for human experience. It includes a section on the significance of ethics in leadership. Section 2.3 presents a detailed analysis of the often misunderstood and poorly conceptualised concept of value and an analysis of the role that values play in school leadership. This section concludes with a comparison of the terms values and virtues. Section 2.4 offers a review of the literature on leadership ethics in schools (both generally and Christian faith-based), emphasising the values of the school leaders and the new ethical framework included in the 2020 Standards for Headteachers. Section 2.5 identifies some knowledge gaps that justify the choice of research focus and provides a conceptual framework that addresses the need for a theoretical underpinning for the research, specifically focusing on the concepts of leadership ethics and ethical leadership. Section 2.6 is a summary of the most relevant points included in this literature review.

2.1 An introduction to leadership theories

Early leadership theories

Leadership is inextricably linked to human experience. For most people, leadership is first experienced in the context of one's family, and it will continue throughout most people's lives in one way or another. It is, therefore, unsurprising that scholars have become increasingly interested in this phenomenon. A quick search on academic databases such as Google Scholar reveals that there is no shortage of studies on leadership. Covering all of them would be almost impossible (Bush and Glover, 2003), especially given the limitations of a professional doctorate thesis such as this. However, a quick trawl through the literature reveals that there is a striking lack of clarity with regard to its nature. Sergiovanni (1992) explains that despite great and sustained interest in the topic, studies dealing with leadership have been "one of social science's greatest disappointments" (p.2). Talking from a coherentist epistemological position, Lakomski (1999) also seems unhesitant to persuasively identify some of the flaws of the scientific literature on leadership. This confusing scenario is, at least in part, the consequence of the inability of scholars to agree on one all-encompassing definition for leadership (Peterson, 2018). This difficulty is

not helped by the fact that high levels of cynicism towards leadership and leaders (see Duignan 2006) are only increasing ‘muddying the waters’ even further. Although at least a hundred leadership definitions have been formulated (Rost, 1991) and despite sustained and sincere efforts to find a final definition for leadership (e.g., Antonakis, Cianciolo and Sternberg, 2004; Conger and Riggio, 2007), no consensus has been reached yet. In the view of Poldony, Khurana and Besharov (2010), the concept of leadership is simply too “loosely defined” (p.65), and it is often reduced to a composite of behaviours and attributes. For all these reasons, the study of the complex and elusive phenomenon of leadership (Shields, 2004) greatly benefits from a more comprehensive and holistic approach.

Existing leadership theories can be categorised into three clusters: theories that focus on the leader exclusively, theories that focus on the organisation and theories that focus on the relationship between leaders and followers. The first group includes the earliest leadership theories, and it focuses on the traits, abilities, skills and behaviour of the leader. Interpretations of leadership as a trait focus on the leader’s natural talents, and it is grounded on the belief that leaders have been granted ‘natural’ qualities that make them especially suitable for leadership. This approach implies that possessing certain traits are *sine qua non* for leadership. This conceptualisation has been criticised for being excessively restrictive (Reave, 2005; Walker, Goethals and Sorenson, 2006; Northouse, 2009). Leadership can also be conceptualised as an ability to lead. Unlike traits, abilities can be developed over time. Thirdly, leadership has been conceptualised as a skill that can be learnt irrespective of personal qualities or natural ability (Yaverbaum and Sherman, 2008). A skilled leader is a competent professional who knows how to achieve an objective. Finally, leadership as a behaviour theory was influenced by behaviourist theory (Fromm, 1941; Maslow, 1943; Erikson, 1964) and focuses on the observable actions of the leader. It seeks to determine what leadership behaviours contribute to effective leadership. Leadership theories based exclusively on the leader have progressively given way to other alternatives as described in the next segment.

Alternative leadership theories

The second cluster of leadership theories shifted the focus from the leader to the organisation. These theories consider how contextual and situational variables influence the behaviour of the leader (Reddin, 1967; Hersey and Blanchard, 1969) and are classed as “essential” in leadership studies (Milner, 2005, p.253). One example is Fiedler’s Contingency Theory which focuses on finding “the match between the leader’s style and specific situational variables” (Northouse, 2020, p.1) in order to achieve organisational goals. Approaches based on situational leadership

are still active and have resurfaced in recent contributions (e.g., McChrystal, Eggers and Mangone, 2018). Similarly, transactional approaches (Weber, 1947; Bass, 1981; Bass and Bass, 2008) apply Skinner's (Skinner, 1953) principles of rewards and punishments as the best way to achieve these objectives. This model is the foundation for the authoritative/ directive model that stresses the importance of setting performance goals and stressing adherence to rules and regulations. In this model, the leader takes an exclusivist leading role whilst limiting the subordinate's agency (Nystrand, 1981). Other models favour more participative (e.g., Van Wagner, 2008) approaches where the emphasis is on the participation of subordinates in decision-making (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969) as a collective effort (Cox and Meda, 2004).

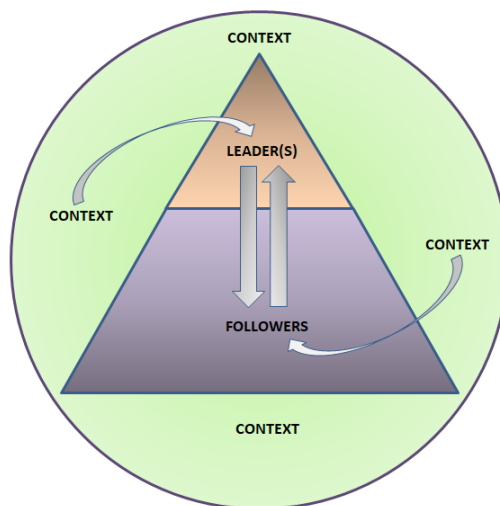


Figure 2.1: Leadership as relationships

The final cluster includes theoretical models that focus on the relationship between the different elements involved in the leadership phenomenon (see Popper, 2004). These new theories are no longer limited to the individual qualities, skills or behaviour of the leader. Instead, the emphasis here is on the relationship between leader and follower. Theories from the first two clusters generally assume that leadership is essentially a top-down, linear event. However, leadership theory from a relational perspective understands leadership as the interactive collaboration between leaders and followers (Rost, 1991) where influence is shared and multi-directional (see Figure 2.1). In Figure 2.1, the arrows symbolise the idea that the leader, the followers and the context are involved in a highly dynamic sense of mutuality. Under this paradigm, leadership is shared and cements the idea that a collaborative effort between leaders and followers ensures both parties' wellbeing

and the organisation's success. These novel perspectives have become a valid alternative to older leadership theories that favoured "process over substance" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p.4) and focused excessively on technical aspects of leadership whilst routinely ignoring its more complex human and ethical dimensions. It could be argued then that leadership theory is no longer 'under the spell' of what Zaleznik (1989) calls with great insight, 'managerial mystique'.

Relational leadership theories acknowledge the need to consider carefully the interest and wellbeing of all parties involved in the leadership process. This involves the adoption of high ethical standards that orient and govern these interactions. In other words, such approaches require the adoption and promotion of ethical principles that regulate leadership as a relational process that affects different individuals engaged in an asymmetrical relationship (Huber, 2004). In the words of Northouse (2009), "leadership has a moral dimension because leaders influence the lives of others" (p.157). These approaches recognise the role that leadership play in positive change and the need for leaders to gain insight and be 'enlightened' (Oakley and Krug, 1994). For Kouzes and Posner (2007), when leadership is conceptualised as a relationship based on confidence and trust, followers become empowered to believe in their own ability for leadership. In the case of school leaders, the effects of leaders adopting a moral approach to leadership is, arguably, even more important as their stance often has a positive (or negative) lasting effect on the lives of people that these can experience for decades (Ehrich and Carrington, 2018). Eacott (2015) has suggested that relational approaches to leadership are highly significant in general, but he put his emphasis on the need for this approach, particularly in education.

Reasons for this change in perspective

Until the emergence of relational leadership theories, there was a relative neglect of ethics in both leadership research and leadership practice in commercial and educational organisations, including schools. This is reflected in the earlier theories (i.e. first two clusters), where there was an emphasis on aspects such as measurable performance, school effectiveness and school improvement. This observation can be easily confirmed when one looks at documents detailing headteacher standards or headteacher/school leadership Continuing Professional Development (CPD from this point forward) and notices how ethics has barely received a mention. However, there has been a gradual change towards the need for greater recognition of, and emphasis on, the ethical aspects of leadership. What exactly has motivated this change in perspective is a highly complex issue. However, two reasons have been identified. One of them is the need to respond to the multiple examples of

widespread unethical leadership practice, not only in the world of politics and business but also in education. The other one is the realisation of the inadequacies of previous models. Emergent leadership theories have recognised the importance of morally responsible leadership that promotes healthy institutions where leaders work *with* people rather than *over* people through collaboration and good relationships that depend on mutual respect and trust. Each one of these two aspects is going to be analysed in some detail.

Concerning the worrying prevalence of unethical leadership, it has been noticed that malpractice is more widespread than initially thought. Such dysfunctional practices very often damage not only the institution but also the people working there (Blase and Blase, 2003; Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005; Tepper, 2007). In recent years, academic research has identified morally questionable practices which have been tolerated or even perpetrated by leaders. Some examples of such practices are extreme pragmatism (Whitaker, 2011), dangerous tendencies (Einarsen, Aasland and Skogstad, 2007; Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser, 2007), narcissistic tendencies (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006), unnecessary severity (Ashforth, 1994), disingenuous confidence (Moore, 2021) or deliberate toxic leadership (Hemsath, 2001; Watt, Javidi and Normore, 2015). Research has shown that whenever such dysfunctional approaches to leadership can be found, adverse effects associated with them can also be found. These negative effects hinder essential factors such as collaboration (Onorato, 2013), productivity (Brown and Treviño, 2006) and creativity (Liu, Liao and Loi, 2012), as well as contributing to high employee turnover (Meisler, 2013). Furthermore, unethical leadership almost always has a negative effect on the well-being of the employees leading to high numbers of staff affected by depression, poor health and anxiety. Sadly, it is the case that the true origin of such undesirable circumstances (i.e. unethical leadership) often goes undetected (Mackey *et al.*, 2017), even the subjective nature of the problem. Furthermore, there are instances when even the unethical leader is unaware of his/her behaviour (De Cremer, van Dijk and Folmer, 2009), making a proper diagnosis even more difficult. Unfortunately, educational leaders are not an exception, and they get involved sometimes in these pernicious practices (e.g., Blase and Blase, 2002, 2003; Rosenblatt, Shapira-Lishchinsky and Shirom, 2010; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2016), jeopardising the wellbeing of students and staff and the credibility and viability of the school.

Concerning the emergence of ethical leadership theories, this segment presents the contribution of three influential leadership scholars. The first perspective is the one by American psychiatrist Ronald Heifetz (1994). Heifetz proposed a fresh understanding of ethical leadership in which leaders would assist followers in the process of confronting conflict. In this model, the values of the followers and the

values of the organisation are respected and taken into account. Heifetz proposes that leaders must use authority but only to equip followers when facing moral dilemmas and difficulties. The leader is responsible for providing the right environment in which moral values such as trust and empathy can flourish. It is evident that the followers would benefit from such levels of support, but also the organisation benefits.

The second “ethics-oriented leadership theory” (Sam, 2021) is transformational leadership and, more specifically, authentic leadership (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009). This perspective was first proposed by Burns (1978), and it places a strong emphasis on the values, morals and needs of the followers and encourages leaders to motivate followers to achieve higher standards of moral responsibility. In some respects, there are some similarities between this approach and Heifetz’s. Both defend the idea that leaders need to engage with the needs of followers. By doing so, all parties involved benefit, and a moral environment is not only created but sustained. According to Ciulla (1995), Burns was influenced by writers such as Milton Rokeach, who understood the need for the leader to know the motivations and moral character of those following him/her. This is consistent with one of the guiding principles of ethical leadership, which seeks to contribute to a sense of community amongst all parties involved (Sullivan, 2009). This emphasis on looking after individuals that belong to a community is a fundamentally ethical concept (Foster, 1989). Although there have been some critics of Burns’ perspective (see Northouse, 2001), it is difficult to argue against the significance of his contribution.

The last perspective on ethical leadership is the one proposed by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s. (Greenleaf, 1977) claimed that the true leader is the one who understands leadership as an act of service. This approach is concerned with ethical considerations and advocates leadership practice that is focused on altruism. In one way, this is one step further than Burns’ and Heifetz’s positions as it indicates that the leader not only has to care for the followers but proactively seek the wellbeing of these even when this might imply a sacrifice on his/her part. In any case, there are some significant similarities between the three approaches as they put the relationship between the follower and the leader at the forefront of the leadership phenomenon. The servant-leader is one approach that defends the idea that the leader must respect the followers and invest heavily into their wellbeing, expecting little in return. These ideas are not new and certainly are present in many religious texts as well as in leadership scholarship (e.g., the work of Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984), but surprisingly, these were largely absent from former leadership theories.

In sum, this section has described how earlier research studies on leadership have traditionally had a ‘blind spot’ in terms of their acknowledgement of the moral dimension of leadership and how there has been a lack of clarity as to an agreed

understanding of what constitutes ‘good leadership’. Furthermore, it has been noticed that the adoption of moral approaches to leadership based on positive relationships has been inconsistent (Maxcy, 2002) and not always given the attention that they once enjoyed, especially in the educational context (e.g., Callahan, 1962; Hansot and Tyack, 1982). Although progress has been made in this field, there is still a need for further studies on the ethical dimension of leadership in different contexts. In order to provide a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, the next section reviews the essential material on the nature of ethics.

2.2 Leadership ethics

Metaethics of leadership

Ever since we first acquired the gift of consciousness, ethics has played a significant role in our quest for meaning. Many ancient texts include, sometimes in great detail, information of moral nature about what is good and what is not. Humans have had these moral intuitions for millennia, and although these moral intuitions have grown in complexity and sophistication over time, these have remained largely unchanged until the present time. This long-established familiarity has contributed to the belief that ethics is self-evident and generally uncontroversial. Nevertheless, a careful look at the issue, confirmed by a review of the academic literature, quickly reveals that the issue is not as straightforward as first suspected. A brief review of the components of ethics is therefore warranted.

The term originates from the Greek word *ethica*, which comes either from *etheos* (i.e. related to character) or from the word *ethos*, Greek for habit or custom as the Greek philosopher Aristotle seemed to think. Ethics is frequently described as ‘moral philosophy’. The term ‘moral’ originates from the Latin term for tradition or usage (Grenz, 1997). It has been argued that the existence of both terms simply reflects the dual Greek-Roman heritage pervasive in Western civilisation and not a profound difference in meaning. In fact, most people use both terms as almost perfect synonyms despite the protestation of some academics. Both terms are concerned with the development of character (Cherrington and Cherrington, 2000) and the implementation of the “kind of values an individual or society finds desirable or appropriate” (Northouse, 2001, p.250). Ethical theories are divided into three general subject areas: metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics. Metaethics is the underlying foundation for the other two and deals with the question of the nature of morality. Timmons (2013) very insightfully notes that it seeks to “answer nonmoral questions about morality” (p.19). It looks at the foundation and scope of moral properties and proposes a rationale for them (Fisher, 2014). There are many competing metaethical perspectives. The two most prevalent are cognitivism and

non-cognitivism. Cognitive metaethicists believe that moral claims describe reality. These moral claims can be, therefore, objectively true or false. In contrast to this view, non-cognitivist metaethicists propose that moral claims are mere emotional responses that cannot possibly be true or false. In other words, for non-cognitivist metaethicists moral claims are nothing more than persuasive expressions of subjective preference (Ayer, 1936). As a consequence, all moral claims are equally valid (Marturano, 2021). Many moral philosophers (e.g., Shweder and Haidt, 1993; Rottschaefer, 1999) consider non-cognitivist views significantly less persuasive than cognitivist approaches.

Under cognitivism, there are two main schools of thought: relativism and moral realism. The former rejects the idea that moral judgements are universally true or false. Under this premise, more than one moral position on the same topic could be correct. By contrast, moral realism assumes that moral facts exist beyond our cognition and yet they are accessible to us. Moral realism defends that “moral values exist in a way that is causally and evidentially independent from the beliefs of anyone” (DeLapp, 2013, p.17). From this perspective, moral judgements can be true or false. When these are true, this is in spite of human consideration and not because of it (Shafer-Landau, 2003). Fisher (2014) agrees and claims that what makes moral judgements true (or false) is “independent from people’s (or groups of people’s) beliefs, judgements or desires” (p.77).

Philosophers have offered a good number of persuasive arguments in support of moral realism. Some of the most important of these are based on the link between epistemic and moral realism (Cuneo, 2007; Ridge, 2007), the concept of moral progress (Fisher, 2014) and the idea that, unless proven false, the objectivity of ethics is the most logical metaethical starting point (Brink, 2007). Although moral realism is the most prevalent approach to metaethics (a recent survey revealed that 56.4% of the 931 participating philosophy faculty members subscribed to moral realism (Bourget and Chalmers, 2014)), dissent amongst moral realist metaethicists also exists. Whilst some of them (e.g., Harris, 2011) argue that morality has a strict natural origin, non-naturalist metaethicists reject this interpretation and argue that although concepts such as happiness are unequivocally good, it would be incorrect to identify happiness as the essence of good (Moore, 1903).

Beyond its theoretical focus, metaethics has important practical implications as it determines where our moral sensibilities (e.g., what is genuinely ‘good’) lie. These shape our worldview, thinking and eventually, our behaviour (Rebore, 2001). What really matters and why it matters to someone is determined by metaethics (even if one has never heard of the term). In other words, a careful analysis of metaethics provides a window into the ethical mind of any individual. This is particularly important in the case of leaders because not only their vision (Starratt, 1990) but also

their worldview, thinking and behaviour have an impact on their own professional and personal lives and the lives of others who have a connection with their leadership (Maxcy, 2002; Fullan, 2003; Northouse, 2009). Ethical leaders are expected to have a sound understanding of others (i.e. their identities, preferences, needs, strengths and fallibilities) but also of themselves (i.e. their own values, beliefs, strengths and fallibilities). Unfoundedly, the study of metaethics is of great utility for such a task. One example of metaethics applied to leadership is John Dewey's (1916) notion of democracy and democratic leadership, where the leader includes all different types of participants who demonstrate openness and honesty when dealing with conflict.

Normative ethics and leadership

In simple terms, normative ethics (sometimes called prescriptive ethics) is a framework that helps individuals to orient themselves by determining what is good and how they ought to live their lives. In other words, it puts forward a theory of how to be good and the underlying principles that guide behaviour. Normative theories about ethics can be divided into two categories: theories that focus on the behaviour of the leader and theories about the leader's character. Those ethical theories that focus on conduct can be divided into two kinds. One of them focuses on the duty or rules that affect leaders, whilst the other type stresses the consequences of the actions of the leaders. The first group focuses on the consequences of somebody's action and assumes that an action is good if it produces desirable consequences. From this teleological perspective, what is right is determined by the outcomes, which will determine *a posteriori* whether a particular action is at all good or at all bad. Naturally, what is considered to be a good outcome varies depending on who is making the assessment. For example, those who subscribe to ethical egoism (those who believe that a person should act in their personal interest at all times) believe that the only realistic approach to ethics is to seek one's interest first. This type of ethical standpoint is common in the world of business and, more recently, in the world of education in the UK (Ball, 2018). Not only do those leaders want to lead organisations that are better than the competition, but they also use rewards to encourage competition amongst employees within the same company.

Another approach to ethics is utilitarianism. Instead of looking exclusively for your own wellbeing, those who subscribe to utilitarianism believe that the most moral thing to do is to look for the maximum benefit for the greatest number of people, even at their own expense (Bowie, 1991). Public and not-for-profit companies often adopt this stance, as illustrated in the case of the NHS in the UK. NHS

services have been “free at the point of use” (Gosling, 2018, p.11) since its founding in 1948. Aneurin Bevan, the UK Minister for Health then, unveiled the National Health Service on the fifth of July 1948, at Park Hospital in Manchester and declared that “We [the British] now have the moral leadership of the world” (Guardian, 1948). Bevan’s statement had a clear utilitarian foundation (i.e. protecting the whole population from disease is the moral thing to do). At the other end of the spectrum, one finds deontological moral theory, which is linked to the Greek word for duty *deon*. This theory proposes that actions are either good or bad per se with little regard for consequences. Leaders are expected to fulfil their moral duty to do what is correct. Perhaps the most well-known example of this ethical approach is Kantian ethics. Both teleological and deontological moral theories focus on the actions of the leader. However, there is a third approach to ethics that focuses on the character of the leader instead. These theories are often called aretaic, the Greek word for virtue. They originate from Ancient Greece, as revealed by their etymology. It is well known that ancient Greece philosophers Plato and especially Aristotle defended ethical models based on virtue and the type of person that the leader is.

The ethical leader will be consistently virtuous, although virtues are not necessarily innate. These can (and should) be gained and learned through repeated practice (Frankena, 1973; Pojman, 1995; MacIntyre, 2007). For example, courageous people become courageous by being consistently courageous. Virtue is first taught within the boundaries of the family and refined within communities. There has been a resurgence of interest in virtue ethics in recent years, with a call for more attention and resources dedicated to these approaches amongst leaders (Velasquez, 1992). There are some clear strengths to this model as it leads to societies of self-regulating individuals. Under such circumstances, successful leaders are able to navigate the complex ethical landscape and manage to “maintain a multitude of competing obligations and interests” (Cooper, 1998, p.244). Rather than focusing on rules that can be abused or on consequences that might justify unethical behaviour, the virtuous leader is on a journey of perpetual moral self-improvement. For the virtuous leader, not acting ethically would be an intolerable moral failure. Aristotle mentioned a number of virtues that a moral person would demonstrate (e.g., generosity, temperance, courage, self-control, honesty, modesty, foreseeability, fairness and justice). Velasquez (1992) has suggested that managers should develop analogous virtues (e.g., humility, benevolence, fidelity, truthfulness, integrity, public-spiritedness, and perseverance). The main idea behind virtue ethics is that human beings become moral by the habitual practice of moral virtues (Wright, 2014).

The significance of ethics in leadership

Values and morals affect action and connect with people's motivation for these actions within a given context. In other words, what is important is not only doing 'the right thing' but doing it 'at the right time' and 'for the right reason'. In the field of leadership, ethics functions as the compass that orients the character and the actions of the leader. It could be argued that this applies to anyone as we all have some internal framework that helps us in any decision-making situation. However, what separates leaders from ordinary people is the scope and source of influence. In terms of scope, the leader of an organisation not only influences him/herself but he/she is expected to influence many people. Furthermore, leaders have explicit and implicit power and authority over their followers. Because of these two reasons, leaders ought to think and act with care, sensitivity and great moral responsibility.

The role of the leader is to reach organisational goals, which necessarily involves the engagement of other people as collaborators for the task. However, the achievement of these objectives should not be at the expense of the well-being of subordinates. Followers must not be treated as a means to an end but ends in themselves. In an organisational context, it is the responsibility of the leader to invariably treat every individual with respect and dignity. This people-centred approach to leadership can be challenging and demanding for the leader, as it involves a deliberate and often onerous investment in time, effort and even financial resources (Beauchamp and Bowie, 1988). Naturally, this expectation is not exclusive to leaders; the emphasis on moral responsibility must apply to the followers as well. Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that leaders are at the top of a hierarchy, and this unique position gives them sufficient power to determine between good and bad. In other words, although unethical behaviour is undesirable, the leader's unethical behaviour has even more severe consequences than that of the followers. In contrast, ethical leaders can often 'neutralise' the negative influence of a minority of unethical followers and perhaps even persuade them to reconsider their position.

Furthermore, the values and ethics of the leader have an impact on the values of the organisation. All leaders have values, beliefs, ideas and motivations that they seek to promote and see implemented (Gini, 1998). Even the most 'democratic' and open-minded leaders seek the promotion and implementation of those values that are most important to them. It would be difficult to find effective leaders who are uncommitted to any moral stance whatsoever. As a matter of fact, non-committal, extreme laissez-faire styles of leadership are often considered undesirable, not only because they are ineffective (Anbazhagan and Kotur, 2014) but also because they can lead to passivity, moral uncertainty and lack of direction in the organisation. The expectation for leaders to establish and maintain organisational values further confirms the relevance of the leader's moral stance. Both of these circumstances

contribute to the situation where organisational values and the values of the leader become almost identical. Whether this is good or bad depends, of course, on the specific ethical principles (or lack thereof) of the leader. Furthermore, it would be naïve to think that the influence of the ethical stance of a leader is only relevant when the leader is present. The leader's ethical stance will undoubtedly have an impact on the whole organisation shaping its moral climate (Anderson, 1982; Trevino, 1986; Carlson, Perrewe and Carlson, 1995; Schminke, Ambrose and Noel, 1997) and, ultimately, its culture and outcomes. As long as the leader remains in his/her job for a significant amount of time and clearly articulated values are promoted, a type of organisational morality will become embedded in the organisation. Summing up, ethics is central to leadership because of the relational nature of the phenomenon and the pervasive influence that moral values have over all organisational aspects.

2.3 Dealing with the concept of value

A basic conceptualisation of values

In recent years, the term 'value' has become increasingly explicit. It is not uncommon to learn that individuals claim that they choose friends, jobs, schools or supermarkets based on how well the values of these people and companies align with their own. Similarly, companies, organisations and governments (e.g., British values) disclose their values and try to convince others of their commitment to those values. Despite its pervasiveness and undeniable appeal, the concept of 'value' is far from being simple. A value is a multifaceted concept that includes many dimensions. As a matter of fact, it could be best described as an umbrella term that integrates diverse attributes or concepts of the 'desirable' (e.g., standard, ideal, principle, attitude, belief, conviction, persuasion). This ability to amalgamate all these dimensions under one convenient, popular term gives the term its appeal.

Values play a significant role in leadership. In recent years, the term 'value' has become increasingly ubiquitous. Despite its ubiquity and significance, explicit definitions of what a value is are difficult to find. When definitions are provided (e.g., Rokeach, 1973; Hodgkinson, 1991, 1996), these are often unique to each author and therefore inconclusive in providing a solution to this lack of clarity (Begley, 1996). One source of contention is the fact that values have been described from many perspectives. For instance, they have been described in ethically neutral terms as "conceptions of the desirable" (Haydon, 2007, p.12) or "subjective facts of the inner and personal experience" (Hodgkinson, 1983, p.351), whilst Parkes and Thomas (2007) consider them to be a 'preference' (p.209). Alavi and Rahimipoor (2010) regard them as what is 'good, desirable or worthy' (p.424). This

postmodernist approach to moral values has been contested by other authors (Craig, 1997; Halstead, 2005), who defend the idea that values are based on universal and objective moral principles, often of theistic nature.

For practical reasons, three working definitions that respect the open-ended nature of values are considered here. Northouse (2009) states that values are “the ideas, beliefs, and modes of action that people find worthwhile or desirable” (p.167). This definition is consonant with Rokeach (1973), who explained that a value is “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (p.5). In a sense, it can be argued that moral values are the most basic element of moral systems which contribute to the correct regulation of society at a communal and individual level (Haidt, 2008). Finally, the definition for values adopted for this study is Halstead and Pike's (2006):

Values are principles and fundamental convictions which act as justifications for activity in the public domain and general guides to private behaviour; they are enduring beliefs about what is worthwhile, ideals for which people strive and broad standards by which particular practices are judged to be good, right, desirable or worthy of respect.
(p.4)

This definition expands on the other two definitions, and it breaks down the term values into two units: principles and convictions. The former helps to clarify the concept of value (Covey, 1989). The etymology of the word (i.e. *principium*, Latin for origin or starting point) suggests that values are a priori beliefs or axioms from which all our actions emerge. The latter implies a firm belief based on experience. Like Rokeach, Halstead and Pike choose the words “enduring beliefs” to delve into a different dimension of the nature of value. Whereas Rokeach opts to link these enduring beliefs to preference (i.e. what people do) in a utilitarian way, Halstead and Pike prefer a more normative approach grounding these beliefs into something that is considered to be ‘good’ or ‘desirable’ (Hodgkinson, 1991), either individually or collectively.

The values of any individual emerge from the synthesis of personality traits, broader culture, existential experience (e.g., upbringing), and worldview/belief. Concerning personality traits, firstly, it is important to recognise that personality traits and values are different (Parks and Guay, 2009; Parks-Leduc, Feldman and Bardi, 2015) in spite of some similarities between them (see Goldberg, 1993). The main difference is that personality traits are innate (Olver and Mooradian, 2003), significantly more

stable over time (McCrae *et al.*, 2000) as well as relatively free from cultural interference (Rokeach, 1972). However, temperament does affect what values are to be espoused. For example, an individual who is high in agreeableness is likely to adopt compassion as a worthy value from an early age.

Values and school leadership

As seen in section 2.1, there is a strong link between values and leadership. This subsection reviews the available literature with regard to leadership in the context of schools bearing in mind its connection with ethics and moral values. There are many different types of leadership styles that reveal a different focus, although this choice of focus is not necessarily exclusivist. Generally, adjectives are chosen to describe these different approaches. For example, one might be talking about transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1998), distributed leadership (Harris, 2008) or authentic leadership (Begley, 2003). Typically, these adjectives refer to leadership as an influence (Coleman, 2005). It is important to remember that all these theories bring some insight into the phenomenon of leadership, which in the real world is far wider-ranging than what the definitions might suggest (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008; Leithwood and Sun, 2012). The relationship between these theories and the issue of ethics and moral values is complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, leadership is intrinsically linked to making choices that acknowledges one course of action over the alternatives. Therefore, values are of great utility in the process of effective decision-making process (see Begley, 1996). Whenever leaders are faced with a situation, their choice of one option over another is a practical demonstration of their value preference that they enact in practice. Careful consideration of the leaders' different ethical stances often reveals the often undisclosed (Marshall, 1992) values and worldviews of these individuals. However, the degree to which different leadership theories are morally explicit varies greatly. A review of some of these leadership theories and their relationship to ethics and values can be found next.

One type of leadership is instructional leadership which focuses on facilitating and maximising effectiveness in the teaching and learning process (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008; Hallinger and Heck, 2011). Schools are perceived as learning communities where the acquisition of knowledge is paramount over any other consideration. This approach to leadership is particularly prevalent in the United States (Leithwood and Poplin, 1992) as well as in the UK (Frost and Harris, 2003) and enjoys great levels of support. This is to be expected as schools are meant to be institutions where the best teaching and learning takes place. It would be reasonable to assume that a model that focuses on children learning and teachers teaching is

going to be considered wholly appropriate. However, there have been some criticisms associated with this approach as it neglects other areas of educational leadership and focuses excessively on school improvement (Fullan, 2002). Furthermore, values do not feature prominently in this model. This is not to say that values are not important, but every action is largely deemed appropriate or inappropriate based on the degree to which these facilitate the process of academic teaching and learning. In this sense, this approach could be described from a moral theoretical perspective as based on the ethical theory of consequentialism. In order to improve academic outcomes, many schools establish stringent systems of quality assurance which sometimes can undermine the trust of staff. Also, students might feel that they are only appreciated it as long as they are making progress and not for their intrinsic worth.

Another very popular approach to school leadership in Western societies is transformational leadership (Downton, 1973; Burns, 1978; Avolio, Bass and Jung, 1999; Price, 2008). This model is not exclusive to education, although it has been applied to educational settings (e.g., Hoy and Miskel, 2013), and it has been linked to the idea that school principals must fully embrace the inescapable ethical dimension of educational leadership (Mertz, 1997). One way of conceptualising transformational leadership is by looking at transactional leadership. Whereas the latter conceptualises leadership as the contractual relationship between two parties (i.e. the leader and the follower), the former is “a comprehensive approach” (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999, p.21) that seeks shared objectives between the leader and follower and implies an ethic of care from the leader (who has the most power) towards the follower. Similarly to instructional leadership, this model seeks to maximise academic outcomes (Barnett, McCormick and Connors, 2001; Witziers, Bosker and Krüger, 2003; Hallinger, 2011). This theory puts more emphasis on emotions and values (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005) than instructional leadership. However, explicit reflection on values is unusual. Again, this is not the case for ethical considerations but rather an assumption that leaders act ethically by default. This assumption has been linked to the influence of moral principles based on Christianity in general and Protestant Christianity in particular (see Holland, 2019). Finally, transformational leadership has been criticised for the excessive burden placed on the leader (Bottery, 2004) and a lack of clarity of the origin and nature of the moral values at play.

Finally, there has been an emergence of values-based approaches to leadership in schools. Unlike the two previous groups, these concepts of leadership do not place effectiveness or academic achievement at the centre. These approaches based on values do not escape the trend of adding adjectives to the word leadership. For example, authentic leadership (Begley and Johansson, 2003; Ford and Harding,

2011; Duignan, 2014) are more open-ended and, therefore, less bound to cultural and ethical traditions than the theories mentioned earlier (Dimmock and Walker, 2000). The main advantage of this approach is its explicit acknowledgement of the ethical dimension of leadership and adopted by leaders from both secular and religious (e.g., Boyer, 2021) perspectives. This is not to say that the term authentic is entirely uncontroversial. Whereas for some people, authenticity is limited to leaders being faithful to whatever ethical framework exist within each leader (Hodgkinson, 1991), others object and suggest that authenticity demands the enactment of discrete moral values such as integrity (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Bishop, 2013) or inclusion and participation (Harber and Davies, 1997). Another weakness is that authentic leadership seems to assume that enacting strong moral values is available to anyone as long as they want to do it. This is in clear opposition to all empirical evidence that suggests that different values are not only different but perhaps even incompatible (Ford and Harding, 2011; Haidt, 2013).

Values and virtues

Although perhaps not as commonly used currently, the concept of ‘virtues’ is a closely related term that has recently regained relevance in recent years. Although there are apparent differences between them (Lickona, 1991, 2004), it is not uncommon to find that some people use both terms as if they were synonyms. One possible reason for this is the fact that the words ‘virtues’ and ‘values’ are often found in close proximity (Carr, 2006, 2011), both in speech and written texts. Furthermore, this confusion has been exacerbated by the fact that some authors (e.g., Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2000; Begley, 2001) would describe something as a value whilst other authors might be categorised the same concept as a virtue (e.g., Carr, 2006, 2007; Wilson, 2014) further reinforcing this misunderstanding. The main difference between them is the need for virtues to be unequivocally good and habitually practised over time. Pike (2019) summarises these differences by stating that “values are beliefs and ideals whereas virtues are moral habits and dispositions of character” (p.3).

There have been other attempts at differentiating between these values and virtues. Elaborating further from the work of Christopher Hodgkinson, Carr (2011) establishes a similarity between values as principled preferences or principled commitments (when these preferences are enacted). However, both preferences and commitments are likely to become a virtue. Carr claims that the interaction of preferences, commitments and principled disposition (i.e. inner compulsion) is required for a value to turn the value into a virtue. Another difference that has been noticed is that whilst virtues are universally good, values are less so (see Pike, 2019).

The reason for this is that virtues have to be demonstrated and practised whilst good moral values can be adopted but misinterpreted or not at all put into practice. Similarly, from an Aristotelian perspective, virtues are always halfway between two undesirable extremes. This is something that is not directly applicable to values (Aristotle, 1996). For instance, courage could be interpreted as value but also as a virtue (i.e. it avoids the extremes of cowardice and foolishness). However, Begley (2001) indicates that values such as ‘happiness’ cannot be considered a virtue *per se*.

Finally, there is an intrinsic subjective element to the concept of value. Whatever I might value may not be valued by other people. This is not the case with virtues that are universally accepted as positive and praiseworthy. Although both terms are indeed helpful, for this study, the term ‘values’ are connected to leadership ethics whilst ‘virtues’ refer to positive values that are applied habitually in practice and therefore more connected with applied ethics or in the terminology of this thesis, ethical leadership. Although using the terms ‘values’ and ‘values in practice’ is entirely appropriate, the reasons above make a case for differentiation between both (see Pike, 2017).

2.4 Leadership ethics in schools

Values of Christian school leaders

With regard to headteachers in Christian schools, it would be legitimate to wonder to the extent to which general theories about values and leadership apply to them. In the case of Catholic schools, there are examples in the literature that there is a difference. Although the profile of those fulfilling the role of leaders in Catholic schools has changed in the last few decades (i.e. from members of the clergy to lay individuals), the purpose of Catholic schools has not varied; in the words of Haldane (1996), this is “to provide forms of education through which the essential doctrines and devotions of Catholicism are transmitted” (p.133). This idea of Catholic schools looking to “intentionally catechise its students” (Groome, 1996, p.118) is significant in understanding the role of Catholic heads and how they exercise their leadership. Values that are linked to Christian values in general, and Catholic theology in particular, have always provided a distinctiveness (McClelland, 1996) to Catholic education generally protected and cherished by their heads which in effect has led to what Anthony Bryk (2008) describes as “the unusual effectiveness of Catholic schools.” (p.137). In other words, adherence to a strict moral code has traditionally resulted in a type of education that, simultaneously, has managed to be consistent and academically desirable. However, this is beginning to change, and the influence of serving a society that has ‘moved on’ culturally and in terms of belief is starting to show. For Wallace (2000), “there is a major identity crisis occurring in Catholic

schools... [and] the tensions between survival, mission and market are central to this crisis” (p.191). This is also recognised by Belmonte, Wales and Cranston (2009), who insist that “Catholic schools are especially challenged to maintain their overall character and ethos and at the same time integrate into a new context.” (p. 295). These new tensions are the consequences of a conflict between completely antagonistic worldviews, as indicated by Fincham (2010, p.74):

There is a perception that a target-setting culture is a significant source of anxiety. These pressures (such as the requirements of the National Curriculum, Ofsted inspections, performance management and league tables) have considerable implications for leadership in Catholic schools because they raise questions about the kinds of values that should be adopted.

Grace (1995), in his study involving 88 Catholic heads in England, concluded that present Catholic heads are aware of these challenges. He noted that the amount of guidance they receive from ecclesiastical authorities has diminished, provoking a need for them to develop their own solutions to challenges. Interestingly, Branson (2004) and Roche (1997) recognised in two different studies the importance of values in Christian faith schools and researched the values of Catholic headteachers and how these values were applied in Catholic schools in Australia, a country that, although very remote geographically, remains, from a cultural perspective, strongly linked to the UK. Both academics recognised the fundamental role of moral values in the leadership of Catholic schools and correctly identified, especially in the case of Christopher Branson, the complexity of the interplay between values and how their leadership was the result of this interplay.

In the case of non-Catholic independent Christian schools, founded in the 1980s by Christian teachers and parents of reformed or evangelical persuasion, they were a reaction against “the underlying message coming through the education... that the main purpose of life was to get a good job and make money. We also saw them being trained to think of right and wrong as relative terms. This was not at all the manner in which we wanted our young children to be educated” (Baker and Freeman, 2005, p.13). (Walford, 1995) had the chance of interviewing eleven headteachers of small Independent Christian schools, but unfortunately, the issue of heads’ own values, how they enacted them and how they dealt with conflicts when the important issue of ‘conflicting values’ (see Sproull, 1981) raised questions and dilemmas of moral nature were not discussed. However, these schools are characterised by a shared “ideology of biblically-based evangelical Christianity that

seeks to relate the message of the Bible to all aspects of present-day life” (Walford, 1995, p.7) which has put them in a controversial position regarding the teaching of the origin of the universe and corporal punishment (ap Siôn, Francis and Baker, 2007). In contrast with Anglican schools, it is not unlikely that heads in these schools will adopt a more confrontational approach to externally imposed policy that could hinder the wellbeing of their students or the school’s ethos.

Overall ethical framework for educational institutions

The role of the headteacher in England is only gaining relevance. Schools demand high-quality headteachers that are efficient and experienced and capable of a dual mission: behaving impeccably in terms of their own personal morals and ensuring that most professionals behave in a similar way in the school they lead. This is especially important in this time when change is persistent and unavoidable as well as an intrinsic part of the educational *status quo*. In order to be able to cope with this set of circumstances, leaders are expected to adopt and demonstrate ethical approaches to leadership (Gill, 2002; Babalola, Stouten and Euwema, 2016). Although this is true for schools all over the world (e.g., Kanokorn, Wallapha and Ngang, 2013), this is certainly the case in England (Roberts, 2019). In the words of Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005), ethical leadership is the “demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision making” (p.120). This is a particularly apt definition because it mentions the dual nature of ethical leadership: knowledge of what is appropriate (i.e. leadership ethics) and the action associated with these (i.e. ethical leadership). In other words, ethical leadership is the complex consequence of the interaction between ethical thought and ethical action (Kalshoven, Den Hartog and De Hoogh, 2011) in a context based on trust (Hitt, 1990; Fullan, 2003; Yates, 2011).

This often involves the adoption of new mindsets and practices that equip all parties involved, especially in times of uncertainty, challenge and change (Levy and Merry, 1986; Anderson and Anderson, 2002) with the required motivation and support. Traditionally, schools were rather static as they basically reinforced the *status quo* of the culture. By contrast, England’s *status quo* is one of change, where school staff is expected to adopt these principles very quickly. A further complication is that headteachers ought to motivate others whilst striving to eliminate unethical practices whilst maintaining high levels of personal morality and integrity (Prince, Tumlin and Connaughton, 2009; Session, 2014).

Given the moral dimension of school leadership (Woods *et al.*, 2021) and the seriousness and magnitude of the situation, particularly in England (e.g., BBC Radio 4, 2015), in recent years, there has been a growing realisation of the necessity to assist headteachers with the correct tools to tackle these situations (e.g., Munby, 2019). The Association of School and College Leaders (2019) published a framework for ethical leadership in education inspired by the Seven Principles of Public Life developed by the Nolan Committee in 1995. These principles apply to everyone working as a public office-holder (COSIPL, 1995), which of course includes school teachers and educational leaders working in schools. This particular interpretation relevant to school leaders puts them into context to be used in schools by substituting words such as ‘holders of public office’ for ‘leaders’ (see Table 2.4.A).

Table 2.4.A Seven Principles of Public Life (based on Roberts, 2019)

1	Selflessness
2	Integrity
3	Objectivity
4	Accountability
5	Openness
6	Honesty
7	Leadership

Furthermore, Roberts (2019) explains how leadership should be divided into seven “personal characteristics of virtues” (p.10). These are included in table 2.4.B below.

Table 2.4.B Seven personal virtues applicable to leaders (based on Roberts, 2019)

1	Trust
2	Wisdom
3	Kindness
4	Justice
5	Service
6	Courage
7	Optimism

Although the original seven principles have been subject to criticism (e.g., Spicker, 2014), it is indisputable that there are clear advantages to these approaches. On the one hand, there is an unequivocal acknowledgement of the need for a moral framework that minimises the chances of unethical leadership. On the other hand, the framework makes use of seven well established and accepted moral principles in order to create a common language that can be used to discuss issues of ethical nature with the assistance of an agreed reference point. These principles have been included in section 1 of the latest version of the headteacher standards 2020 (DfE, 2020a). In this document, it is clearly stated that:

Headteachers are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of principled and professional conduct. They are expected to meet the teacher standards and be responsible for providing the conditions in which teachers can fulfil them. Headteachers uphold and demonstrate the Seven Principles of Public Life at all times. Known as the Nolan principles, these form the basis of the ethical standards expected of public office holders.

It is clear that the authorities seek to find a common framework in which multiple documents share the same language and, more importantly, expectations to create trustworthy and healthy organisations that work diligently to protect pupils' best interests (see Stefkovich and Begley, 2007).

Christian Educational leadership ethics

Everything mentioned in the previous subsection is applicable to headteachers in Christian faith schools in England, with the possible exception that the majority of these faith schools were already familiar with very similar values and traditionally expressed them in more explicit terms than their secular counterparts. In any case and regardless of past traditions, this issue is particularly important for Christian headteachers working in Christian schools that cherish and promote moral values based on religious belief as part of their mission (see Mark 16:15) and as an effective tool that has been shown to lead to better academic outcomes for all students (Jeynes, 2003; Byfield, 2008; Abar, Carter and Winsler, 2009) when compared to secular counterparts. The case of Catholic headteachers in England is paradigmatic in this respect because they have to be practising Catholics who defend the tenets of Catholic Christianity (Grace, 1995). This could potentially lead to clashes between

the leaders' values, the values of the school, the values of the Catholic Church and the values that are imposed by society, the current cultural *zeitgeist* or by outside agencies such as, in the case of the UK, Ofsted. The possibility of conflict at philosophical, moral and practical levels between Catholic schools, authorities and some sectors of the wider society is certainly not exclusive to England (e.g., for studies relative to Catholic headteachers in Australia see Roche, 1997, 1999). Despite its importance and serious implications of education, there is a relative scarcity of studies dealing with these conflicts, especially in the context of Catholic schools in England.

The situation with non-Catholic Christian headteachers working in schools is not dissimilar. Their values are expected to be compromised to some degree to conform to external expectations. The nature of some of these schools hints at the possibility that they are less willing to accept compromises in terms of morals and ethics. Baker and Freeman (2005) documented the story of independent Christian schools in England and found that many of these schools were started by teachers in the public sector who felt dissatisfied with the educational *status quo* in Britain in the late 1980s. This was described as a feeling of "unease" (p.14). This sentiment was often linked to moral and ethical issues that they perceived as antithetical to their own. In a way, this movement could be described as reactive to the changes that were taking place in the UK at the time. In this study, there are plenty of opportunities to read how these schools have fought challenging circumstances in order to work in an environment with a greater degree of freedom. Similarly, Baker (2013) deals with similar topics in her book on Independent Christian schools. However, the same gaps exist. There is ample opportunity to talk about the rationale of the schools. There is also a careful exposition of why they think political interference from the government is unacceptable. However, the morality of the headteachers in these schools is largely taken for granted, and their approaches are largely unknown.

One interesting study is the one by John Bazalgette (2006), where three struggling faith schools in England appointed new Christian headteachers who transformed the schools for the better with minimum changes and without having to make any further changes in personnel. Finally, the report by Casson, Cooling and Francis (2017) on ten examples of Christian-ethos secondary schools in England where strong moral values are enacted demonstrates how the application of strong moral leadership can make education institutions flourish when such vision is lived out in the context of an engaged local community. However, something that seems to be absent in all these reports is the account of leadership ethics (including values) and ethical leadership (including virtues) by the headteachers. This could be compared to a report about a war in a far-way country. We learn about those battles won (possibly to keep morale high), but we remain agnostic about the difficulties and

way the battles have been fought. It is reasonable to believe that a deeper, honest look at some of the more ‘messy’ details is warranted.

2.5 Knowledge gap and conceptual framework

Knowledge gap

It is evident from this review that the ethical dimension of leadership in the field of education is an important one. This is especially the case in the UK context, where educational leaders are expected to be their own moral arbiters and enjoy unprecedented levels of autonomy. It could be said that school leaders in this context are moral autodidacts. Not enough is known about the process of ethical leadership (or leadership ethics, for that matter) in the context of Christian faith schools in England. Four discernible limitations from existing research have been identified that my own work intends to address:

- (1) The need to extend the research beyond Catholic schools to include leadership of schools of other Christian/religious denominations, especially independent Christian schools;
- (2) The need for comparative analysis to ascertain whether Christian leadership values are largely generic or vary according to context and type of religious school;
- (3) The need to assess the extent to which espoused or articulated leadership values are enacted in practice in accordance with the principles of applied ethics;
- (4) The need to apply innovative qualitative methodologies in order to gain a deeper understanding of leadership values, ethical practices and outcomes, especially based on insights from phenomenology as an epistemological tool with the potential for providing rich insights into the key issues identified.

Conceptual framework

This study’s theoretical underpinning is based on the distinction between leadership ethics and ethical leadership in the school context. For Flanigan (2018), leadership ethics seek “to inform what a leader should do in morally fraught situations” (p.1). Although learning about specific examples of ethical behaviour can be undoubtedly beneficial, it is also a truism that the first step into achieving ethical leadership is to understand the foundations that underpin the practice. Consequently, it cannot be overestimated the importance of establishing moral reasoning that includes, naturally, leadership and the importance of the dynamic relationship between the

leader and the follower (e.g., Hollander, 1992; ap Siôn, Francis and Baker, 2007; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014).

The three major perspectives related to ethical theory are deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics. The first one can be described as the study of moral obligation and determined by the characteristics of the behaviour itself (Frankena, 1973). In other words, what determines what is correct and permissible is the inherent nature of the action itself (Hunt and Vitell, 1986). Concerning utilitarianism, Quinton's (1989) view combines the approach that something is either morally correct or incorrect based upon whether the consequences of the action are positive or negative (i.e. consequentialism) and the understanding that pain is to be avoided.

Finally, one approach that has gained popularity in recent years (despite being first postulated many centuries ago by Ancient Greece philosophers Plato and Aristotle in the West and Mencius and Confucius in the East) through the work of influential academics and thinkers (e.g., Anscombe, 1958; MacIntyre, 2007; Annas, 2015) is virtue ethics. In the eyes of many, the practice of virtues has become one of the most satisfying and useful approaches to moral theory as it avoids some of the pitfalls of previous theories and links successfully the concept of value to actions. In the words of Ciulla and Forsyth (2013), “virtues are moral qualities that you only have if you practice them” (p.234). These three approaches are not at all mutually exclusive, and school leaders often use a combination of all three in different degrees. However, it is apparent that deontology and virtue ethics are perceived to be preferable by Christian school leaders. This is particularly true for virtue ethics, as the Christian faith encourages the development of character and the necessity to act on our beliefs.

Linked to the idea of leadership ethics is the concept of ethical leadership, which in reality is how leadership ethics and values are implemented in practice. A really useful approach to ethical leadership is included in the book by Day *et al.* (2000), in which a model of values-led contingency leadership is described. One of the most important attributes of this model is its acknowledgement of the complexity of the phenomenon of leadership and the need to integrate different and highly interactive dimensions that are congruent with this complexity (see Figure 2.5).

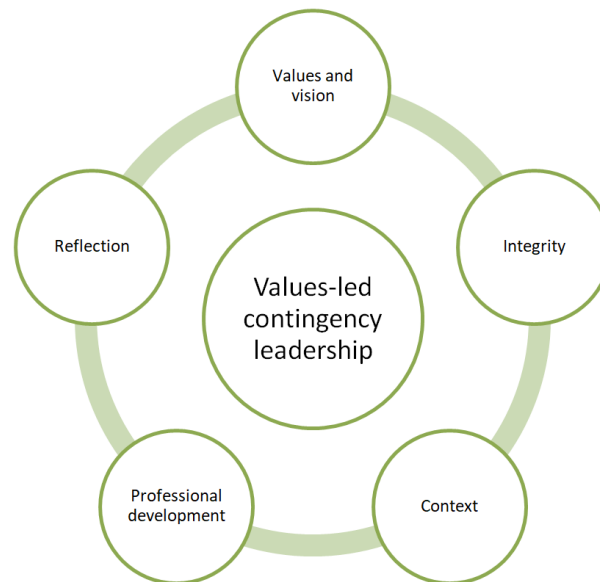


Figure 2.5 values led contingency leadership model based on Day, Harris and Hadfield (2000)

Arguably the most significant point in this model is the necessity for alignment not only between the leader’s vision for the institution and values but also their vision and values of the rest of the stakeholders (e.g., staff, governors, community). This is particularly important in the case of Christian faith schools as the alignment has to include the vision and values that are external to the organisation. For example, in the case of Catholic schools, the Catholic school as an institution is another actor that influences both values and vision. Secondly, it includes the need to “walk the talk” (p.171), which means an explicit determination (see McCormick Myers, 2014) to model behaviour and, again, demonstrate alignment between vision, values and action. Four moral values are described as particularly significant: optimism, respect, trust and intention. This is in line with the Seven Principles of Public Life described in section 2.4. Thirdly, effective leadership is contingent on the context where it takes place. Flexibility, wisdom, and the capability to become ‘adaptive’ (Heifetz, 1994) are necessary for successfully managing conflict and resolving tensions and dilemmas. It has been noted that conflicts are an unavoidable and intrinsic part of the leadership phenomenon (see Novak, 2002). Professional development is also an important dimension as it recognises the need to be proactive and intentional in the field of ethics. Haphazard or naive passive approaches are disregarded as attitudes that do not contribute to a sense of purpose or collaboration (Telford, 1996). Finally, the very important issue of reflection is recognised to have a significant effect on the effectiveness of school leadership. A constant re-evaluation of values, beliefs and practices are necessary not only for the leader but for the rest of the people involved. However, the leader has the responsibility to demonstrate this

dimension in his/her leadership so others can become self-reflective as well (see Lindley, 2014; Castelli, 2016). This dimension also resonates with Christian headteachers who traditionally understand the significance of past actions and the need to celebrate the successes and learn from past mistakes and find, to use the Christian term, 'redemption' through self-aware leadership.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the available literature on the most important aspects concerning school ethical leadership. It has shown the need to focus on the ethical dimension of leadership whilst critiquing and problematising the relative neglect of ethics in both leadership research and leadership practice in organisations until recently. Furthermore, it has identified a lack of clarity in the understanding of what constitutes 'good' leadership. Both of these aspects have highlighted the significance of the research focus of this study. It has reviewed important aspects such as an understanding of ethics, the concept of value and virtue and the role that these aspects play in school leadership identifying gaps in the knowledge. Finally, it has made a distinction between ethical leadership and leadership ethics and has proposed a conceptual framework underpinning the research drawing on insights from the literature and, more specifically, the insightful work of Day, Harris and Hadfield (2000).

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design and the specific procedures used in conducting the study, as well as its rationale in order to answer the chosen research problem (Birks and Mills, 2015). The first section revisits the research questions and elaborates on their rationale. Section 3.2 describes the study's research design. Section 3.3 presents the chosen approaches to sampling. The following section (3.4) discusses the way the data has been collected and analysed. Section 3.5 deals with the issue of quality assurance, whilst section 3.6 discusses its ethical dimension. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter's most salient points (3.7).

3.1 Research questions

This section discusses in detail the four research questions (RQs 1 to 4) that underpin the study.

RQ 1: What are the main values of headteachers of selected Christian faith schools in England?

Research Question 1 focuses on the moral values that underpin the leadership ethics of a selection of headteachers in English Christian (i.e. Roman Catholic and Non-Anglican Protestant) faith schools. It explores the specific values that participating Christian headteachers consider to be of utmost importance in their leadership and the reason for the establishment of such moral hierarchy. Furthermore, it seeks to gain insight into the dynamic interplay between different and sometimes competing values.

RQ 2: What are the key influences on those values?

Research Question 2 explores the origin of these values and elucidates which events, individuals, or personal beliefs have contributed to the adoption of these values. Given that individuals first learn about morality during childhood (see Wright and Bartsch, 2008) and that the values acquired during childhood 'fill-in' a naturally occurring 'gap' (Kagan, 1988; Wilson, 1993), the study seeks to explore the experience of the participants growing up. It is important to point out that these 'childhood' values play an important role in shaping the moral sensitivities of individuals, and they often stay with us for the rest of our lives. Other sources, such as the influence of key individuals (e.g., mentors, teachers, former leaders, clergy, *et cetera*), often inspired by the example of Jesus (see Dobrotka, 2021), and significant

events that might have confirmed or dismissed previous moral assumptions are also explored.

RQ 3: What facilitates and what hinders the application of those values in practice?

Research Question 3 shifts the focus from the values themselves to the way in which these values are actually implemented. One of the key issues is the extent to which different factors can affect the practical application of moral values in order to achieve ethical leadership. It also seeks to elicit illustrations of their value-motivated actions, their virtues and how these are affected by intrinsic and extrinsic factors in the 'natural' context of their leadership.

RQ 4: How do these headteachers cope with tensions and resolve moral dilemmas?

Finally, Research Question 4 is also focused on the practical application of values and delves deeper into the first-hand experience of the headteacher and looks for examples of how challenging situations emerged from their efforts to implement ethical leadership principles and how these have been resolved and managed. This issue is significant as leadership is inextricably linked to problem-solving and decision-making. Headteachers are expected to be able to correctly identify what is 'the right thing to do' and to ensure that their actions, as well as the actions of others, are congruent with those principles. Although decisions are sometimes strictly technical, often decisions have an ethical component (e.g., staff competency procedures, work-life balance, allocation of funds, curriculum choices, approaches to student discipline) that needs to be carefully considered. This question concludes the exploration of some of the most important points concerning the ethical dimension of ethical educational leadership.

3.2 Research design

Qualitative design

The study's focus is placed on the exploration of the perception that Christian headteachers have of their values and how these are implemented in practice within the boundaries of their own professional contexts. Perception has been defined as the most basic and primary form of intrapersonal cognitive contact with the surrounding world (Efron, 1969). The philosophical worldview underpinning this study is directly linked to interpretivism and hermeneutics. These paradigms acknowledge both the uniqueness of human experience and the complex interplay between the psychological and social processes that shape human perception, as well

as a focus on the search for ‘understanding’. Bearing this in mind, this study adopts a social constructivist worldview with implications in terms of the chosen research design (i.e. qualitative), research paradigm (i.e. idiographic) and strategies of enquiry (i.e. phenomenology). In order to generate the necessary data, twelve in-depth phenomenologically informed interviews (Seidman, 2006) with headteachers, conceptualised as “conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984, p.102), were carried out. During these interviews, the etic component was combined with the emic perspective (see Pike, 1964; Headland, Pike and Harris, 1990) for the ‘co-construction’ of the necessary knowledge. The integrity of each interview was protected in line with the idiographic tradition (De Vaus, 2001).

The decision to adopt a qualitative approach was based on the nature of the data necessary to address the research questions: moral values in practice, a topic that is both complex and sensitive. This is preferable to the adoption of purely quantitative methods (e.g., survey), which would not have provided the necessary type of data to achieve what Max Weber called *Verstehen* or understanding (see Kim, 2012). This interpretive understanding is an exploration of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participant, including its context. This approach generates ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973) of the phenomena, which contribute to a more nuanced, humane as well as accurate understanding of the phenomena. The importance of context cannot be overestimated in studies such as this one: conceptualising and applying ethical leadership is not a linear, simple process but a complex one influenced by many and very diverse factors not always easy to perceive or fully appreciate. By involving participants in honest, in-depth discussions and the co-construction of knowledge, a reformulation of their understanding of ethical leadership in practice was achieved. In conclusion, as the essence of in-depth qualitative research is to capture that idiographic dimension of any given phenomenon, a qualitative approach represents the best approach when tackling the subject and focus of this study (i.e. the pursuit of understanding). In the field of educational research, this approach is perceived as wholly appropriate for gaining an understanding of human experience (Ziliak and McCloskey, 2008).

Phenomenological approach

This study is situated in the idiographic, qualitative tradition and draws on insights from phenomenology. Phenomenology is one of the most influential branches of philosophy to emerge in the 20th century (Zahavi, 2019), and it remains highly popular amongst qualitative researchers. It proposes the need for “a return to the things themselves” (Husserl cited in Langdridge, 2007, p.4) as a way to gain understanding. As a method, phenomenology involves the co-creation of

knowledge by way of interpretation of the situated experience of the participants (Moustakas, 1994) and emphasises the importance of meaning and how it arises through experience. Given the study's focus on the experience of individuals with direct experience of school leadership, phenomenologically informed approaches are indeed useful. This is congruent with the acknowledgement that studies on complex social abstractions such as school leadership benefit from these insights (Ferrarotti, 1981).

The adoption of insights from phenomenology has had significant advantages for this study. One of them has been the adoption of in-depth interviewing as the most appropriate approach for data collection (Seidman, 2006). Irving Seidman proposes a type of interviewing approach that, in order to explore the meaning of an experience, divides the interview into three sections or stages, each with a different focus. The first focuses on the discrete context of the participant in relation to his/her experience. The second section puts emphasis on the experience of the participant with regard to the phenomenon at hand. Finally, the third section focuses on the meaning attributed to the experience. By way of integration of the content of the three sections, the researcher gains an understanding of the phenomena. In order to orient the three sections of the interview, some initial questions were created, as included in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: 3 section interview (based on Seidman, 2006)

	Overall Focus	Specific Focus
Section 1	Focused life history	The participants' lives in relation to the aims of the study (e.g., religious identity).
Section 2	Details of experience	Their experience of applied leadership ethics.
Section 3	Reflections on meaning	The meaning the participants attribute to their experience as ethical leaders.

Although Seidman recommends carrying out three different interviews on three different days, this was not possible in this case due to the lack of availability of the participants. However, even in the case of an individual interview per participant, this shared the same three-section structure (albeit in a more condensed format) and benefited from the sharp focus of Seidman's approach.

Another relevant term is reflexivity, a concept not always properly detailed. In very simple terms, reflexivity makes reference to the process through which researchers become conscious and reflective of their influence in the process of co-creation of knowledge with the participant. Reflexivity helps researchers judge the suitability of

the different choices at their disposal and, therefore, plays a significant role in framing both the data collection and data analysis processes of the study. Similarly, *epoché* (see Myerhoff and Ruby, 1992; Brooks, 2005) helped the study by disassociating the researcher's past experiences from the experience of the participants. In terms of this study, this involved the compilation of a list of foundational questions that oriented the whole analytical process. Some of them made reference to basic questions about my personal experience of ethical educational leadership in Spain and in England and about how these could impinge upon my perception of the contributions made by the participants. Following the example of research conducted by Bednall (2006) when researching attitudes to religiosity in Christian headteachers, a private record of all these questions and corresponding answers was kept as a reminder of the possible 'pitfalls' that could potentially hinder this study (Nieswiadomy, 1993). This 'feelings audit' contributed to the success in avoiding pre-empted questions and the adoption of 'natural attitude' during the twelve semistructured interviews. All these elements play a part in the adoption of a 'phenomenological attitude' that contributed to illuminating the participants' lived world through detailed descriptions of relevant specific experiences and "epiphanic moments" (Angelides, 2001, p.430) that often populated the participants' narratives.

Phases of the study

The study was divided into two phases. The first preliminary phase included two steps and had the objective of providing the foundation for the rest of the study. The first step identified the need for further research in the field of ethical educational leadership in practice in Christian schools. The second step included the choice of instruments for the investigation and focused on its planning and designing (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) what was necessary for the investigation and the format for the interview (i.e. location type, use of technology, type of questions and use of field notes) in accordance with the research ethic protocol. As the study's objective was to explore the meaning that participants gave to their experience, interpretive phenomenology was adopted as the most suitable design (Smith and Shinebourne, 2012). This decision had implications for scheduling, sampling (i.e. purposive), interview type (i.e. semistructured, in-depth), interview design (i.e. Seidman's three stages) and researcher attitude (i.e. 'bracketing' ideas in line with Bednall (2006)). Please see Appendices G, H and I for samples of the three-section interview schedule.

The next phase was again divided into two steps: the pilot study that informed the rest of the study and the interviews with participants. The pilot study progressed

from the insights from phase 1 and integrated a synthesis from the preliminary phase with a documentary analysis that provided contextual information about Wilfred Hill Christian School's strengths and weaknesses which helped fine-tune some of the questions for the interview. After this interview with Dennis, headteacher of the school, the recording was transcribed verbatim in its entirety by the researcher and sent to the participant for participant validation. He confirmed that the transcript was a faithful and accurate representation of the interview (see section 3.5 on Research Rigour for further information). Furthermore, he was asked the following five questions:

- Do you think the interview was a valid tool to collect the required information for this research's objectives?
- Has the questionnaire missed any key issues related to ethical leadership in practice, and if so, what further questions should be included?
- Which questions, if any, could be expressed more clearly, and how?
- What adjectives would you choose to describe the experience?
- Is there anything else you would like to point out?

Dennis responded positively to all questions, and he confirmed that the process was not only useful but highly enjoyable as it allowed for some self-reflection in a collegial, non-threatening context. He did mention that although he was a bit nervous at first, he felt completely relaxed after a few minutes once he forgot the digital audio recorder was there. Learning from this feedback, I decided that, for the rest of the interviews in the next step, I was going to put a small ball of reusable putty-like material over the red light of the recorder and place it in an inconspicuous place in order to minimise the effect of self-awareness in the interviewees. Dennis' largely positive feedback was congruent with my notes and cemented the utility and validity of the research design. This phase then progressed to the analysis of the data using Nvivo and concluded with a final step of verification based on my own observations, triangulation, and Dennis's feedback (i.e. respondent validity).

The second step of phase 2 followed a similar process to the pilot study. Due to the iterative nature of this phase, this one was the longest as all the steps had to be repeated for each remaining participant. Naturally, feedback from participants and personal observations were taken into consideration in all subsequent scheduled interviews (see Appendix D) in a process of continuous improvement. However, it became evident that only very minor modifications were necessary (e.g., listening to the recording of the first interview suggested that it would be beneficial to leave

more time for participants to respond to avoid participants feeling ‘rushed’ or interrupted) and, therefore, the design was fit-for-purpose. The last step in the process was the writing-up process and presentation of the research findings.

Generalizability

Although there is agreement that generalisability is a fundamental issue in research, there are doubts about the extent to which qualitative research findings can be relevant beyond the specific context and sample of the study (Lewis *et al.*, 2003). In this case, a study involving twelve headteachers (from a population of many thousands) was not, and could not be, statistically significant (see Langdridge, 2007). Furthermore, neither analytic generalisation (due to the lack of sufficient studies to reach the required point of saturation) nor theoretical generalisation (i.e. no new theory has emerged from the analysis of the collected data) was possible. In the end, only naturalistic generalisation (also known as ‘reader generalisation’ or ‘generalisation through transferability’) was possible. This type is to be achieved when thick descriptions from participants resonate with the experience of the reader, establishing a germane link between them (Stake and Trumbull, 1982).

3.3. Sampling

The sample of research participants was largely based on purposive sampling. This study sought to engage with participants with first-hand experience of ethical educational leadership in practice in the context of primary and secondary schools in England. Due to the expectation for headteachers in England to “demonstrate consistently high standards of principled and professional conduct” (DfE, 2020b), all headteachers in England (naturally, including those working in Christian faith schools) could have been approached as potential candidates for the study. However, possibly due to lack of available time, only a small percentage of headteachers invited eventually took part in the research. In the end, twelve headteachers working in Christian primary and secondary schools in England were eventually selected. The sample included six Catholic and six Protestant headteachers working in English, Christian faith schools (i.e. institutions “which are designated as having a faith character (Long, Danechi and Loft, 2019, p.4).

From within purposive sampling, homogeneous sampling was the predominant kind. The sampling is homogeneous because the selected twelve participants had the direct experience of ethical educational leadership in Christian faith schools as required for phenomenology-influenced research (Polkinghorne, 1989; Anderson and Arsenault, 1998). Another aspect that the participants had in common was their

belief in the importance of Western moral values, which they perceive as largely derivative from Christian values. This conviction is unsurprising given that it is now known that the Christian faith is *de facto* the underpinning of most of the Western morality (Mohr, 2011). For Smith and Osborn (2008), liberal secularism is simply “the latest expression of the Christian religion” (p.2) albeit stripped from supernatural elements. Furthermore, the participants also shared most demographic data (e.g., age and nationality), education level and religious sensitivity and engagement. Although homogenous sampling was the most significant sampling type (see Teddlie and Tashakkori, (2009)), there is also a degree of variation built into the sample. This variation involved three different areas: differences between Christian religious identities of the participants (i.e. Roman Catholic and Protestant); varying degrees of institutional success (i.e. schools ranging from ‘outstanding’ to ‘inadequate’), and finally, typology of the school (i.e. public-funded and independent).

The sampling sought to find a sufficient number of participants from the target group willing to participate. The second process involved selecting four detailed follow-up vignettes that illustrated some of the findings in deeper, richer details. Concerning the first, it sought to select between ten and fifteen participants working in Roman Catholic, Christian-ethos and Independent Christian faith schools in England to conflate both homogeneous and variation perspectives. Given the difficulty for researchers to get headteachers involved in research, one of the successes of this study (albeit to some degree ‘accidental’) was finding a sample of participants that was large enough to generate the required “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) as well as rich and detailed data necessary for a qualitative study such as this one (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007).

The step-by-step process for the selection of the original twelve participants was as follows. An initial list of two hundred Christian faith schools and academies in England ranging from highly successful to struggling was compiled. This list included ten schools in the Leeds-Bradford area, one hundred in the North of England and ninety in the rest of England. In the case of the ten local schools, invitations were delivered in person, allowing prospective participants to meet the researcher face-to-face and ask questions before deciding on their potential participation. The rest of the potential participants were invited via a printed invitation sent by post and addressed to the headteacher (see Appendix A). Thirty schools responded to the invitation. Eighteen of them kindly declined to take part due to lack of time for the interviews. However, twelve participants (i.e. six Roman Catholic and six Protestant) agreed to take part in the project, as detailed in Table 3.3. All twelve interviews were successfully carried out.

Table 3.3 List of participants (pseudonyms)

Participant Pseudonym	School Pseudonym	Religious affiliation and funding source
Theresa	Sadler Teaching Alliance	Roman Catholic State-funded
Maria	St Michael's School	Roman Catholic State-funded
Paul	Rivergrey Catholic College	Roman Catholic State-funded
Dominic	St Mark the Evangelist School	Roman Catholic State-funded
Julie	St Francis RC Primary School	Roman Catholic State-funded
Christopher	Hartstock Catholic Grammar School	Roman Catholic State-funded
Dennis	Wilfred Hill Christian School	Christian - independent Parental fees
Alan	Pullburn Mission School	Christian - independent Parental fees
Arthur	Moorside Christian Education Centre	Christian - independent Parental fees
Janet	Chesterworth Church School	Christian - independent Parental fees
Ronald	Redrock Achievement College	Christian-ethos State-funded
Timothy	Telchester City Academy	Christian-ethos State-funded

As a final thought, it could be argued that in the case of this study and due to its idiographic nature, there are grounds for the use of the term 'group of participants' or simply 'participants' rather than 'sample' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). For this reason, from this point onwards, 'the participants' would be the preferred term when making reference to the group of twelve participating headteachers.

3.4 Approaches to data collection and data analysis

Data Collection

The data collection process involved two different processes. On the one hand, documentary information about each school was downloaded to provide contextual information for each of the twelve semistructured interviews. This documentary information was collected from the schools' websites and publicly available Ofsted reports. The former frequently made explicit mention of the institutional values upon which the school operated as well as a mention of their mission statement.

This provided very useful information about the ethical stance of each institution. The Ofsted reports of each one of the participating schools were also of great usefulness. These were downloaded from the official Ofsted website (Ofsted, 2021) before the interview. Given the serious consequences that a negative Ofsted grading can have for the professional prospect and emotional well-being of headteachers (e.g., Chaplain, 2001; Phillips, Sen and McNamee, 2007; Lynch and Worth, 2017), understanding the specific challenges faced by these leaders beforehand put information into context and helped to orient the original set of open-ended questions.

The second process involved twelve interviews designed to elicit the participants' experience of ethical leadership in practice in as much detail as possible. The objective was to allow meaning to develop intersubjectively between the interviewer and the interviewee. Although the original design envisaged for all interviews to be done face-to-face to the end of facilitating a "good interview ambience" (Opdenakker, 2006, p.4) and the establishment of good rapport, only eight of the twelve participants (i.e. two thirds) agreed to be interviewed in person. The remaining four agreed to take part only if this could be done remotely. Two of them agreed to be interviewed by telephone, and the other two used the videoconferencing application Skype. Although interviews via telephone and Skype lack some of the face-to-face interactivity, it is now known that both methods are worthy alternatives (Donovan, Corti and Jalleh, 1997; Sullivan, 2012; Lo Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016). The questions related to the research questions described in section 3.1 and asked participants to describe and reflect on different and yet pertinent aspects of their experience. In all cases, the interviews were recorded digitally using a small, unobtrusive recording device in order to minimise distractions and maximise engagement between the interviewer and the interviewee (see Fernandez and Griffiths, 2007; Al-Yateem, 2012; Rutakumwa *et al.*, 2020).

Each participant was interviewed once, and each interview lasted on average just over one hour. The face-to-face interviews took place in the headteachers' offices, and at least on five occasions, there was an opportunity to visit the facilities. The semistructured nature of the interviews proved effective: although there was a list of open-ended questions prepared beforehand, there were ample opportunities for exploration, clarification and follow-up questions (Thomas, 2016). The interview followed the structure recommended by Seidman (2006) and Bevan (2014). The first section is what Bevan calls contextualisation, and it seeks to 'situate' the phenomenon within the personal and historical context of the interviewee's life experience. The second section focused on the details of the experience and explored the phenomenon in more detail in different circumstances or modes of appearing. How the participants chose to describe their experience gave crucial

information about their understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, clarification of the phenomenon (last domain) focused on the possible application of the phenomenon in different scenarios. This is linked to the phenomenological concept of imaginative variation. There was a deliberate intention to practice what (Bevan, 2014) calls 'active listening' and to strike a good balance between sympathy and distance (Seidman, 2006) where interruptions were deliberately kept to a minimum and where pre-empted ideas were kept from the participant.

Although there was a deliberate decision not to take any notes during the interviews that could interfere with a free-flowing conversation, as soon as each interview was over, ideas, thoughts and impressions that emerged from the interviews were recorded in a stream of consciousness style and saved in a dated research journal. The content included reflections on that specific experience as well as the level of success in terms of *epoché*. This process was followed by the transcription of the interview data. All the interviews followed the convention amongst qualitative researchers and were transcribed verbatim (Sandelowski, 1994), including questions, prompts and relevant paralinguistic features such as laughter or big pauses (Trouvain, 2014). Although the transcription process can be tedious (Bryman, 2001), I opted for doing all the transcriptions myself to gain familiarity with the data (Thompson, 2014). To assist with the transcription process, professional voice-recognition software (i.e. Dragon NaturallySpeaking Premium) was used. The process involved listening to small portions of the recorded interview to then dictate each portion, generally one sentence, to the computer in an iterative process (Park and Zeanah, 2005; Matheson, 2007; Owens, 2010; Fletcher and Shaw, 2011). The computer accurately converted the spoken words into written text (see Figure 3.4). This novel method had the advantage of giving the researcher the opportunity to do the transcription himself despite having limited prior experience in the transcription of long interviews. Furthermore, this approach was more accurate (i.e. mistakes would be spotted and corrected immediately on the screen) than simply typing. Finally, the process involved the physical act of repeating every word said in the interview. This 'recitation' helped to gain confidence with the data and increased engagement and depth of understanding. Using voice-recognition software for transcription turned out to be not only useful but also a part of this thesis' original contribution to knowledge. Finally, transcriptions were shared with participants for their validation.

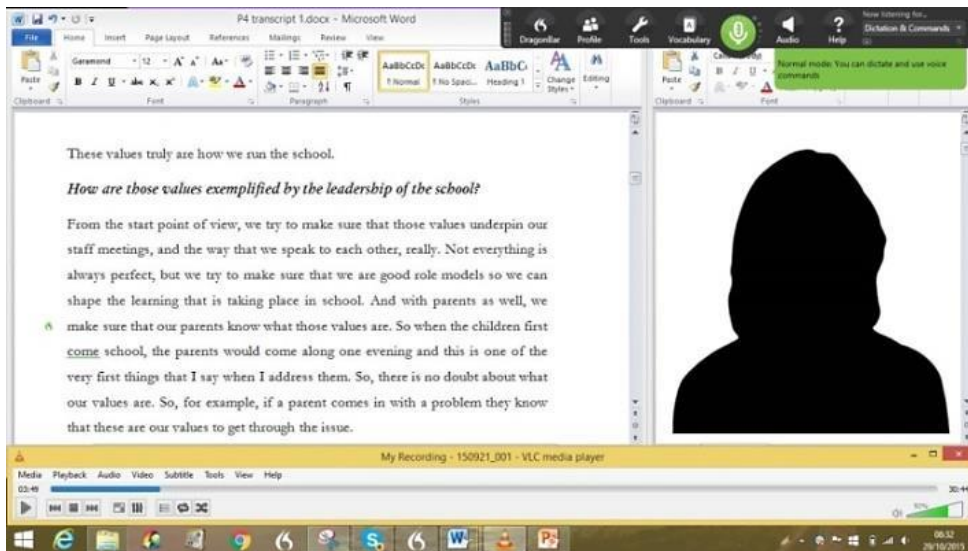


Figure 3.4: Screen capture of the transcript process using voice-recognition software

Data Analysis

Concerning the method, the study's analytical approach combined analysis of documents relative to each participant (i.e. Ofsted reports and mission statements) followed by an extensive thematic analysis of the content of the interviews. The objective of the data analysis was to achieve a robust understanding of the meaning that each participant attributed to their experience (Smith and Shinebourne, 2012). The documentary analysis process involved downloading the Ofsted reports and mission statements relative to each participant. Then, a SWOT analysis (see Helms and Nixon, 2010) of the content of the latest report was carried out. This analysis helped identify the internal and external positive and negative aspects that contribute to the school's *status quo* as perceived by HMIs. On the other hand, the key concepts and values included in the school's mission statement were extracted and colour-coded. These key concepts were compared to the information contained in the Ofsted reports and colour-coded accordingly (see Appendix F). In conclusion, a list of points relevant to the research questions was formulated as part of the preparation process for the interview.

After the interviews, a substantial amount of time was spent with the transcripts and the recordings to find major themes that would help make sense of the participants' world. For the sake of clarity, the group of twelve participants were divided into two groups: a first group that included six Roman Catholic participants and a second group that comprised the remaining six Protestant participants. The number of participants in each group is consistent with Langdridge's (2007) recommendation for "five or six participants" (p.109) in idiographic, phenomenological studies. The findings of each group are shared independently (i.e. findings of the first group can be found in chapter 4 whilst the findings of the

second group are detailed in chapter 5). However, chapter 6 includes some original comparative elements between both groups. The analysis for both groups was carried out sequentially, cyclically and iteratively, beginning with the first participant from within each group concluding with the sixth participant. This analysis was carried out in six stages:

Stage one. The process began by uploading the transcript of each interview into Nvivo. Then the content of the interview was analysed line by line, avoiding any interpretation. The objective was to extract the objective information from the information (also known as units of meaning) given by the participants generating an initial set of codes. This process was done several times to ensure accuracy and faithfulness to the original. At this first stage, many codes were used to capture the participant contribution with as much detail as possible and with a minimum amount of interpretation. Some of those initial codes occasionally overlapped, but this was necessary in order to extract the multiple layers of meaning within one utterance. The participants' words were used as much as possible to avoid interference. These initial codes got further established when meaning was confirmed by the use of prompts, probes or requests for clarification.

Stage two. During this second stage, *epoché* was still firmly in place. The fairly numerous codes were clustered together into common, broader codes, or in Nvivo terminology, 'aggregated' codes. It was important not to mix codes belonging to different levels within the Nvivo hierarchy of codes. This process of grouping codes also avoided interpretation and remained focused exclusively on the units of meaning derived from the participants' contributions.

Stage three. This third stage was the last one where *epoché* was still fully applicable. Second generation codes were grouped into themes or, in the words of Bednall (2006), topics of significance. Themes and codes were revisited whilst listening to the original recordings. Attentive and careful, iterative listening was a really important element of the process as it helped to 'relive' the interview process and helped significantly in the process of beginning to understand the material shared by the participants. It can be compared to a process of 'zooming in and out' to gain perspective and understand the participants' main ideas but avoid interpretation. The objective of this stage was to ensure that the coding process was faithful to the participants' contribution whilst engaging in a continuous and deliberate process of familiarization with the data collected from the participants.

Stage four. During this stage, ideas and thoughts based on past experiences of the shared phenomenon were first reconsidered. The content of themes and codes, feelings audit and research journal were compared for the first time in a process that re-established the importance and relevance of the themes. For the first time, themes

related directly to the research questions were identified. Although the content of the feelings audit and research journal was taken into consideration, these were still used with caution. During this stage, the study's focus was used as a practical tool for gaining understanding.

Stage five. During this stage, complete reintegration of original ideas took place. Elements from the researcher's previous experience were used and synthesised with the units of meaning shared by the participants only in so far the former helped to make sense of the participants' contribution. Self-reflection and critical self-evaluation of preconceived ideas on the researcher's part were crucial for the correct interpretation of the data collected from the participants.

Stage six. This final stage included writing up the synthesis of all the elements analysed in previous stages, including quotes from the participants to illustrate the different points. This process was repeated for all six participants that belonged to the same group. The whole process was repeated for the participant for the second group. When the participants' contributions from both groups were composed, a comparative process where similarities and differences were identified took place. It is important to point out that each cohort of participants (i.e. Catholic or Protestant) was treated initially as a different case in Nvivo. Eventually, both sets of results were compared only when the coding and analysis were finished for each group.

In sum, the analysis stage of the research consisted of three elements that progressed in order. The first one was the deliberate discovery and acknowledgement of preconceived ideas based on previous experience about the topic. In order to achieve a phenomenological attitude, these ideas were suspended temporarily. The second element involved a careful analysis of the data whilst retaining the necessary bracketing of preconceived ideas. The third element involved synthesising previous ideas and units of meaning from the participants.

3.5 Ensuring Research Rigour

Although it is now known that the qualitative research paradigm is of great value and usefulness, it is also acknowledged that it requires a high degree of rigour due to the high level of complexity inextricably linked to it. There is more than one approach in which qualitative researchers ensure full academic rigour that helps to convince their readers of the value of their research findings. One of them is through the application of the concept of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), a concept that has become an integral part of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba's criteria for trustworthiness (i.e. credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) have proven very successful in qualitative research of very diverse epistemological and ontological backgrounds (Greene, 2000). Although not all

elements are necessarily applicable to this study, it is still beneficial to consider the extent to which trustworthiness helps to “demonstrate the accuracy of the findings and convince readers of this accuracy” (Creswell, 2018, p.250).

Arguably, the most important portion of the discussion of trustworthiness tends to be about the concept of credibility (Terrell, 2016). For Guba and Lincoln (1989), the credibility of a study is determined when readers who are confronted with this experience can recognise it. In other words, when there is congruence between the views of the participants (in this case, the twelve headteachers) and the researcher’s representation of these views (Tobin and Begley, 2004). In the opinion of Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are a number of techniques that can be used in order to demonstrate credibility. The first criterion is credibility based on prolonged engagement with the collected data. The fundamental issue here was the engagement in terms of time spent with the data. I chose to do all the transcription of the semistructured interviews in order to maximise this amount of time but also to initiate a process of what (Goodson, 2012) calls ‘bathing in the data’.

An additional criterion for credibility was participant validation. In this study, ‘participant validation’, also known as ‘member checks’ (D. R. Thomas, 2017), ‘participant review’ (Patton, 2002) or ‘member validation’ (Bloor, 1997; Koelsch, 2013), was sought in order to enhance its overall trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Birt *et al.*, 2016). Although not all qualitative studies require (or benefit) from participant validation, in the case of studies with a phenomenological orientation, such as this one, its use is recommended (Buchbinder, 2011). In his opinion, validation is particularly useful in studies that focus on “the need to capture inter-subjectivity and the essence of the interviewee’s life and world” (p.108). The aim of this additional step was to “confirm, substantiate, verify or correct researchers’ findings” (p.107). This process took place at two different stages. The first of these stages was during the interview *per se*. The semistructured nature of the interviews and the collegial atmosphere between the interviewer and interviewee provided a good context for the former to ask for clarification and confirmation whenever was required. Furthermore, the interview transcripts and the identification of themes were shared with the participants. These were asked to judge the adequacy of the account through what Gibbs (2015) calls weak respondent validation (i.e. respondents comment on the accuracy of specific interim documents). In this case, participants confirmed that the transcripts were accurate and that the themes and codes used represented the content of the interviews faithfully. For example, one of the participants (Alan) mentioned that he liked particularly the way that I had “categorised the data... and the differential between personal and institutional values”. Furthermore, he found rereading his responses “a very rewarding experience”. Another participant (Dennis) also approved the

transcript, agreed with the codes and commented on how much pleasure he got from reading the interview transcript and reflecting on the themes discussed.

Although Lincoln and Guba provide some interesting and useful insights about the trustworthiness that is applicable to this study, there are other sources from which academic rigour can be drawn. One example is the insights offered by authors such as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Mason (2002). Their most pertinent contribution with regard to quality assurance in qualitative research is their defence of reliability and validity as valid concepts in qualitative research as well as in quantitative research. This is not to say that both concepts are identical in both paradigms. On the contrary, they agree that although both concepts are important for both types of studies, there are caveats that are specific to naturalistic studies. For Mason (2002), validity is “to be able to demonstrate that your concepts can be identified, observed or ‘measured’ in the way you say they can” (p.39). In this study, all the participants were familiar with all the key concepts mentioned in the interviews and reacted with aplomb and conviction at questions about values, values in practice, influence and moral dilemmas. Clearly, these concepts were not only familiar to the participants but certainly important and influential in their professional as well as personal lives.

Similarly, Jennifer Mason tends to relate the concept of reliability with the concept of accuracy. In the study, this has been applied when analysing responses of participants and avoids sloppy language (e.g., expressions such as a majority) that often can weaken qualitative research. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) also retain the term reliability, but they prefer the term ‘consistency’ that is applicable to both method and data analysis. In this study, this was applied in the approach adopted for all the interviews. Although there were differences amongst the participants, there was consistency during the interviews in terms of, for instance, demeanour, use of prompts, probes and co-construction of meaning. This is also applicable to the data analysis process, where the same approach was used throughout all interviews. For an example of the dynamics used in the interviews, please see the transcriptions of three interviews included in Appendices G, H and I.

Additionally, there was consistency in terms of the quality of the data collected despite the use of three different modes of interviewing (i.e. face-to-face, telephone and videoconferencing). Traditionally, face-to-face interviewing has been perceived as the preferred medium for semistructured interviews in qualitative studies (McCoyd and Kerson, 2006). This preference has been justified on different grounds, but perhaps one of the most persuasive is the belief that face-to-face interviewing contributes to greater chances for establishing researcher-participant rapport (Shuy, 2003; Gillham, 2005). As a consequence, face-to-face interviews were chosen whenever possible. This decision led to a substantial majority of the

interviews (two thirds) taking place in person (please see Appendices G, H and I for a sample of all the interviews). On the other hand, face-to-face interviewing was not always possible due to logistical constraints such as the lack of availability on the part of the participant or the issue of geographical dispersion. Rather than risk losing access to potentially valuable data from a third of participants, alternative arrangements were made.

Two interviews were done via telephone, and two interviews were carried out via videoconferencing (i.e. Skype). With regard to the telephone interviews, my experience was concurrent with Irvine's (2011) observations that, in general, "telephone interviews [are] typically, and on average, shorter than those conducted face-to-face" (p. 202). However, there was no significant difference in qualitative terms when compared to interviews carried out face-to-face or via videoconference. In other words, although the number of words was slightly reduced, it was evident the participants communicated very clearly and comprehensively their opinion about the questions being asked. Arguably, one specific characteristic associated with telephone interviewing was that participants tended to stay on topic more than in any of the other methods. Therefore, this method was probably not the best in terms of collecting a large amount of data or for the purposes of purely inductive research. However, from a deductive perspective, the choice of telephone interviewing did not affect the quality of the data in any significant manner. After reading and analysing the data, it became apparent that doing the interviews on the telephone was a reasonable compromise, and the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Finally, there were two interviews that the work carried out via videoconferencing. Again, this experience proved to be really positive, with no real trade-offs in terms of quality. This is concordant with the opinion of Sullivan (2012), who advocates this method as a perfectly reasonable alternative to face-to-face interviewing, and Nehls, Smith and Schneider (2015), who argue that data collection approaches based on technology are going to become more and more ubiquitous.

Another method used to ensure the quality of the study was the use of reflexivity (linked to the phenomenological concept of *epoché*) during the interviews. This is the idea of 'bracketing' presuppositions (or suspension of judgement) in a process of critical self-reflection and awareness for both subject and researcher. This is demonstrated through the use of field notes in order to suspend judgement until all the interviews are fully analysed to make sure that any assumptions or any indication of potential bias were reduced through reflexivity. Similarly to the phenomenological approach adopted by Bednall (2006), I kept a record of my thoughts (i.e. field notes) after each interview in a Research Journal/Feelings Audit that was provisionally suspended for further reflection and critical analysis, and then

'reintegrated' into the overall analysis of the data. These field notes have included references to potential assumptions/bias and my response in order to maximise transparency and integrity in the research findings.

No discussion of quality assurance could be complete without a discussion of the possible threats and limitations of the study's methodology. This acknowledgement is in line with the opinion of Patton (2002), who is sceptical of the possibility of "perfect research designs" (p.223). The first difficulty was the fact that all participants were British whilst the researcher was Spanish (revisit section 1.2 for further details). It has been noticed that language barriers can be problematic for researchers using material written in a language that is not their own (Frantzen, 2003; Mondria, 2003). Although in this case, the danger of linguistic confusion is minimised due to the researcher's native-like command of English and the considerable linguistic similarities between English and Spanish, unlike other languages such as Mandarin Chinese (Elgort, 2017), cultural differences could be problematic. Research has shown that there are subtle cultural differences in the way northern and southern Europeans interact in conversation. For instance, Fant (1989) noticed that there are "spectacular differences" (p.247) in the way Scandinavians (who are arguably similar in their temperament to the British) and Spaniards interact when conversing in negotiation settings. Nevertheless, in the context of research interviewing, where the researcher takes a less prominent role, and there is a tacit acknowledgement of the more phlegmatic British temperament, these differences are less likely to become problematic.

This awareness was taken into consideration also during the analysis of the data. As pointed out by Hofstede (1991), it is important not to assume that understanding between people from different cultures is universal and problem-free (see Scheu-Lottgen and Hernández-Campoy, 1998; Tyrer, 2006). This is particularly important in any study dealing with attitudes and values as the risk of misjudging intention and values can be potentially serious. For instance, Goodwin and Hernandez Plaza (2000) noticed how Spaniards tend to be more collectivist than similarly aged British individuals. This is consistent with the information provided by Hofstede (2021), which clearly identifies Spanish culture as, essentially, collectivist. Compared to most people in the UK, most Spaniards tend to value in-group loyalty and often believe that there is intrinsic value when individuals are willing to subordinate their "goals to the goals of the collective, ... [alongside] a sense of harmony, interdependence and concern for others" (Hui and Triandis, 1986, pp. 244-245). Furthermore, in order to minimise the chance of linguistic and cultural dissonance that could cloud interpretation, Nvivo 12 software was employed to assist with the analysis. Nvivo makes use of the participants' own words to guide the coding and

thematic analysis (Crosley and Jansen, 2020). For this reason, using such software contributed to reducing the chance of error due to incorrect cultural inference.

To conclude, there is an acknowledgement of the main limitation of the study: the impossibility of generalisation. Exception made of ‘naturalistic generalisation’, no generalisation is possible. It is reasonable to assume that, taking into consideration the relatively small number of participants, it is not possible to know what all or even the majority of headteachers in Christian faith schools in England think about ethical leadership. It is not even possible to know what the majority of them think about ethical leadership. However, obtaining knowledge that could be generalised was never the objective of this piece of research. As in any idiographic study, the objective was to understand specific cases and not necessarily find out a singular, objective truth that could be extrapolated to the whole population. Instead, this research does offer valuable insight into what some headteachers in Christian faith schools in England think about the issue at hand and how these experiences compare. This knowledge is not only genuine but certainly useful for those interested in the ethical dimension of school leadership in general and in Christian education (see Hulmes, 1988) in particular. More details about the limitations of this project are included in the thesis’ last chapter.

3.6 Research ethics

In considering the ethical implications, the research proposal was mindful of the BERA (2018) guidelines and submitted to the University of Leeds Research Ethics Committee for approval on 9th September 2014. Ethical approval was granted by the Committee (reference: AREA 14-019) on 25th September 2014. The research, therefore, satisfied the following essential requirements.

In terms of participants, there are thirteen people involved in this qualitative study: twelve headteachers and one researcher. There were no vulnerable individuals in the group of participating headteachers. The research involved one long interview with each one of the participants as well as the download and analysis of material available in the public domain (e.g., Ofsted reports). These interviews took place at a time and a place that was most convenient and familiar to the participants. In most cases, the interviews took place in the office of the participating headteachers, although there was one occasion in which the interview took place in the staffroom of the school (as requested by the participant) and another occasion in which the interview took place in an office of the school of education of the University of Leeds, again at the request of the participant.

It is important to point out that no potential participants were at any point coerced into participation. This is clear in the way that participants were identified,

approached and recruited. In terms of the identification of the participants, a list of two hundred Christian faith schools was compiled through a search using Google's search engine. In terms of how the potential participants were approached, the process was as follows. A printed invitation letter (see Appendix A) was sent by Royal Mail to the possible 200 headteachers identified previously. The invitation letter contained all the key details about the project and insisted on the voluntary nature of their participation. Furthermore, ethical considerations such as their right to strict anonymity, the right to withdraw from the project and their right to receive a copy of the findings were mentioned explicitly. The potential participants could, based on the detailed information provided, choose between rejecting the invitation (no further action required), accepting the invitation, or requesting further information. Prospective participants had six months to accept the invitation and arrange a convenient time for the interview. If no answer was received after six months of receiving the letter, it was assumed that the prospective participant was not interested in taking part. The twelve potential participants who accepted the invitation were eventually recruited to take part in the study. A letter confirming their participation was sent to each one of the participants (see Appendix C). Given the purely qualitative nature of the study, twelve participants were a sufficient number of participants to be able to answer the aims of the research.

Concerning informed consent, two identical copies of forms (see Appendix E) were completed, signed and dated by the participant and the researcher on the day of the interview. Each party kept one copy for their records. In the case of those participants who were interviewed remotely, two copies of the form completed by the researcher were sent by post days before the interview. Once the participant signed both copies, one copy was kept at the school, and the other copy was returned by mail. Interviews only commenced when both parties had a signed and dated copy of the informed consent form. Copies of each one of the consent forms are available, albeit in a secure location. Participating headteachers always acted with great diligence and competence in this regard. There were no incidents during any of the interviews, and they all took place in an atmosphere of genuine interest and mutual appreciation and respect. Participants were made aware of the right to withdraw at any point or to refuse to answer any question. However, none of them withdrew or refused to answer any questions. It was made clear to all participants that they had their right to withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview until 30th September 2015. No participant received any payment, fee, reimbursement of expenses or incentive of any kind for taking part in this study. There were no discernible risks for the participants or the researcher.

Once the interviews took place, pseudonyms were assigned to all of the participating headteachers as a first step in the process of anonymisation (see 'Data

Protection Act 2018', 2018). The process of pseudonymisation of participant names was as follows. Two lists with possible pseudonyms were created, one for male participants and one for female participants. Each list contained the one hundred most popular names for either boys or girls in England between 1955 and 1965. This period was chosen as it was the decade in which the majority of participants were born. This information was taken from the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2016) website. Then, the participants' real names were removed from the lists to avoid any possible confusion or misunderstanding (e.g., although it is one of the chosen pseudonyms, no participant was named 'Arthur'). Finally, names were assigned to participants at random, although it must be said that whenever one of the names picked corresponded with a popular name in Catholic families (e.g., 'Theresa'), the name was assigned to one of the six Catholic participants. In the end, there was only one written list with the participants' real names and their pseudonyms, and the rest of the material was shredded. The final list was never shared with anyone, and it has been kept in a secure location during the whole research. Eventually, the chosen pseudonyms were used instead of their real names in all the interview transcripts.

Fictional names were given to the schools as well. In Catholic schools, generic names (e.g., St Francis or St Michael) were chosen. None of the chosen names coincided with the real name of any of the participating schools. For the rest of the institutions, a list of names of fictitious places or institutions was created and assigned at random. The names of these newly created institutions mimicked commonly used naming conventions whilst remaining completely fictional (e.g., Telchester City Academy). As a final stage in this process, a careful search using Google search engine confirmed that no real institutions in the UK or elsewhere with the same name exist. Similarly to the approach adopted with the names of the participants, whenever one of the participants mentioned the name of a town or city, this got substituted for one of the fictitious names or the expression 'this town' or 'this city' in the transcript instead. None of these alterations has had any effect on the research findings. The final list with the pseudonyms and fictitious school names was introduced in Table 3.3. Three years after the publication of the thesis, any information about the participants' real names will be deleted, completing the process of anonymisation.

The intention here was to demonstrate the ethical notion of respect and facilitate the flow and 'authenticity' of the text. The choice of 'believable' pseudonyms is congruent with the overall ethos of the thesis, which is to treat the participants with utmost respect and care. I believe that discussing, for example, Headteacher B in School 3 is not only cumbersome for the reader but also suggests a certain lack of care for the individual participants. In terms of documentary confidentiality (e.g.,

Ofsted reports or mission statements), the exact wording was never mentioned, published or discussed verbatim. As an alternative, their content was consistently paraphrased to avoid the possibility of unwarranted identification. The collected data in its original form is not to be distributed or shared with other individuals or through any other media to protect confidentiality.

All digital data was located online on the networks of the University of Leeds and encrypted in the personal PC of the researcher (fitted with antivirus and anti-spyware software) during the 2020–21 Covid-19 lockdown. To eliminate the chance of accidental loss, no sensitive data was placed in portable devices (e.g., laptop computer). Finally, it is important to mention that all the digital and printed data will be kept safe for three years after the publication of the thesis, and then, it will be deleted or shredded. Finally, in line with BERA's (2018) code of good practice, copies of the complete thesis in pdf format will be made available to all participants within six months of the thesis publication.

Finally, concerning conflict of interests, it is important to disclose that this research did not involve any external funding, and neither the researcher nor his supervisors or the participants received any other benefit or incentive for their involvement in this piece of research.

3.7 Summary

This study is centred around four research questions that focus on the perception that headteachers working in Christian faith schools in England have of their moral values and how these are enacted in practice. In order to provide answers to these questions, twelve headteachers (six Roman Catholic and six Protestant Christians) were interviewed. There are four selected vignettes that function as illustrations of experience from the sample of participants. The interviews were semistructured in line with insights from phenomenology and focused on narratives as an illustration of the most salient points. Key issues such as the study's trustworthiness, limitations and ethical considerations were also considered and explained.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON PARTICIPATING CATHOLIC HEADTEACHERS

This chapter presents the findings from the first group of participants: Catholic headteachers working for educational institutions with strong links to the Roman Catholic Church. The first section (4.1) focuses on the profile of the six Catholic respondents and their professional context. This information is required for the contextualisation and correct understanding of the rest of the chapter. Then, section 4.2 gives an overview of the findings for this particular group based on four key themes related to the research questions (i.e. personal & professional beliefs & values; key influences; the application of these beliefs and values in practice; coping with tensions & dilemmas). The following two sections (4.3 and 4.4) are two vignettes from the original sample. These vignettes provide in-depth illustrations by way of follow-up, which helps capture the participants' lived experience (Langdridge, 2007). This is done in order to achieve the depth of understanding akin to the concept of *Verstehen* and obtain meaning through 'thick' descriptions as recommended by Geertz (1973). The following section (4.5) presents an examination of the significance of the findings relevant to this group of participants while comparing the six respondents' similarities and differences according to the four key themes. Finally, there is a summary of the chapter's most salient points.

4.1 Introduction to participants and their context

This first section focuses on the profile of the first six (three male and three female) respondents and the schools/ institutions where they work. Although there are common aspects to the six participants (e.g., generation, nationality, religious affiliation), one remarkable aspect of this group of participants is that there is also some diversity within the group, mainly in context. For instance, there are differences in terms of their educational sector (i.e. primary and secondary), location (i.e. northern, southern and Midlands contexts) and arguably more significantly for the purpose of this piece of research, different Ofsted ratings (i.e. ranging from Outstanding to Inadequate). Information about the specific profiles of the six participants and their contexts are detailed in Table 4.1. It is crucial to bear in mind that although pseudonyms have been used *in lieu* of actual names for participants and institutions throughout the thesis (see section 3.6), the contextual information included in the table corresponds to actual data.

Table 4. 1 Key information relevant to the profile of Roman Catholic participants and their contexts

Professional Profile		School Profile		
Participant	Role	Institution	Context	Ofsted Rating
Theresa	Head of a school federation	Sadler Teaching Alliance	Teaching alliance in the primary sector; it consists of three outstanding primary faith schools; the alliance supports twenty-seven struggling schools in the area; urban/ inner-city context; 34% of children in the area live in poverty*; ethnically diverse community; the alliance supports faith and secular schools; located in the Midlands.	Outstanding (1)
Maria	Academy principal & Alliance head	St Michael's School	Primary school; urban/ inner-city context; 33% of children in the area live in poverty*; ethnically diverse community; principal and head of a teaching school alliance; the alliance works with faith and secular schools; located in the Midlands.	Outstanding (1)
Paul	Headteacher	Rivergrey Catholic College	Very large voluntary aided secondary school and sixth form; inner-city context; 47% of children in the area live in poverty*; most pupils of Mirpuri Pakistani heritage; over 2000 eleven to eighteen-year-old pupils; located in the north of England.	Requires Improvement (3)
Dominic	Headteacher	St Mark the Evangelist School	Voluntary aided secondary school and sixth form; inner-city context; 42% of children in the area live in poverty*; most pupils of white British heritage; result of the amalgamation of three schools; almost 1500 eleven to eighteen-year-old pupils; located in the northeast of England.	Requires Improvement (3)
Julie	Headteacher	St Francis RC Primary School	Voluntary aided junior, infant and nursery school: inner-city context; 32% of children in the area live in poverty*; most pupils of white British heritage: 350 three to eleven-year-old pupils; located in the north of England.	Good (2)
Christopher	Headteacher	Hartstock Catholic Grammar School	Voluntary aided secondary school (only boys) and sixth form (co-ed); inner-city context; 30% of children in the area live in poverty*; most pupils of white British or white European heritage; academy status; over 800 eleven to eighteen-year-old pupils; located in the south-west of England.	Inadequate (4)

*As in 2019/20. Source: End Child Poverty (2021)

4.2 Overall findings

Key values

Concerning the issue of the key values of the participants, it is important to clarify two circumstances that are significant: the first one is that the values of the schools were often expressed in explicit terms. The second one is that all the participants claimed to fully identify with the specific values of the school (e.g., respect, love, inclusivity, humility) often expressed in a list of values or included in the institutional mission statement. However, in line with the epistemological position of this study (see chapter 3), this research project was less interested in collecting a list of values or attributes that could be found freely on the schools' literature but rather in the meaning that participants headteachers attributed to these values. These key values can be summarised as reverence, service, fellowship, and wisdom.

This first key value is 'reverence' or respect for what is holy. From a Catholic perspective, reverence makes reference to having a genuine, deep respect for what is divine. This value is based on the biblical principle of holiness, understood as the qualitative separation between the Creator and His creation. Overall, the participants took the responsibility of leading their schools with an extra layer of seriousness because they felt that their role and the work that was carried out in the schools had spiritual as well as human/professional implications. In their view, Catholic education was simply "a wing of the Church" with a strong *a priori* spiritual element that distinguished them from other institutions. During the interviews, this belief was often expressed in unequivocal and yet implicit terms. For example, both Dominic and Paul commented that, as leaders of Catholic schools, they had to do what was "on the tin" and fulfil a professional and spiritual responsibility towards their pupils in line with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. This distinction was echoed by all participants who expressed their desire to work almost exclusively in Catholic as the perfect context to stay faithful to their convictions and provide a type of education that was both unique and useful to the wider population. These expectations were often expressed in the format of values that form the foundation of bold leadership ethics and ethical leadership practice. More specifically, these were collected under the term 'Gospel Values' and were often included in both the schools' objectives and mission statements. This value resonated with the idea expressed by Brick (1999) that a "Catholic school is [only] as good as its ethos" (p.88).

Another important value shared by all the participants was their understanding that the main way to achieve good educational leadership was through the application of moral principles included in the biblical texts. The most important of these was that true leaders rest their leadership on the principle of service to others as commanded

by Jesus in the Gospels (e.g., Mark 10:45; John 13:14-15). For some of the participants, the opportunity to serve as an educational leader stemmed from the fact that teaching is, in the view of many, a selfless vocation. Christopher, for example, claimed that when he was deciding on a career, he “wanted to do something that was of service to other people and obviously, teaching fulfils that. You are in service to your pupils”. Moreover, none of the participants expressed a desire to become leaders in order to feel somehow superior. This was described very graphically by Maria, who commented that as a leader, she is always ready to take on ordinary and often unpleasant activities such as “cleaning sick in the toilet” when necessary. She emphasised the point that a leader should never ask “people to do anything that you wouldn’t be ready to do yourself”. Willingness to regularly “muck in”, as expressed by Maria, is considered the only way to be a true leader. Julie agrees, and she said that when she asks the staff to do something is because they have seen her doing it previously.

A third highly significant value for the participants was fellowship. Whereas service could be described as an individual attitude, fellowship shifts the focus to the collective as it emerges from the interaction between members within a community. All the participants mentioned how they work to benefit their whole school communities in the first instance and wider society ultimately. Theresa, for instance, commented that although in one school in the Sadler Teaching Alliance, 91% of the pupils were Muslims, the school was, in her words, “a *beautiful* school” (emphasis on the original). This would indicate that religious affiliation is not a deterrent for caring. All the participants expressed similar ideas with regard to the whole community.

It can be argued that there is a solid theoretical connection between the last two values. The adoption of specific moral values is an approach based on positive and mutually supportive relationships between different members of the community, as seen in the Relational Leadership Theory described in chapter 2. Catholic headteachers receive support from the school communities and families and perceive their leadership as an eminently relational and ethical endeavour in which the two parties involved benefit greatly from positive and frequent interactions.

Finally, a fourth key value shared by the participants was the value of wisdom. Wisdom is the skill to envisage the link between actions and consequences. In this context, wisdom relates to the ability to reflect on their own thoughts and behaviour and make the necessary changes to be better leaders. Christopher was certain that he had become a better leader due to a better understanding of his own values, especially his understanding of human dignity, which, interestingly, he linked to his experience becoming a headteacher. Having to deal with struggling staff or difficult pupils made Christopher more aware of the fragility of the human

condition, including his own. The experience of Paul is similar, and he now considers himself to be a good leader that has “grown and matured” thanks to his experience. This final value is embodied in secular values and virtues (see Tables 2.4.A and B) that Roberts (2019), inspired by the findings of the 1995 Nolan committee, recognises as non-negotiable for the effective, ethical leader. This is fully consistent with a morality based on the exercise of wisdom that can be traced back to Scripture, especially the Gospels, Pauline letters and biblical ‘wisdom’ books included in the Old Testament (e.g., “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of *wisdom* (Psalm 111:10, emphasis added)).

Main influences on those values

The participants were clear that although these values were of great importance in the experience of headteachers, these values often had accompanied them throughout their lives. In other words, they indicated that their current set of moral values is the result of a not-finished-yet, life-long process that commenced in childhood. Four primary sources of influence have been identified: family life, personal faith, role models and anti-role models.

The first source of influence was the family. The most important aspect of family life was that all participants grew up in Catholic families that paid a lot of attention to spiritual matters. All participants expressed a firm emotional connection combined with loyalty to the faith inherited from their parents that could be traced back to their childhoods. It was noticed that their upbringing often included regular partaking in Catholic life, which included “prayers in the morning and in the evening and Mass on Sundays” (Christopher). Three of the participants mentioned the term ‘traditional’ when describing their upbringing. Some of the participants also expressed how they found a strong sense of sense of identity in the Catholic faith. For example, Julie commented that growing up as a Catholic was at times difficult because she “lived in an area where there wasn’t a great Catholic community” and made the point of saying that they were “quite of an oddity for some”. Another interesting point was that, in at least two cases (i.e. Theresa and Maria), some of the parents were not only committed Catholics but also involved in education. For example, Theresa’s mother was a schoolteacher, and Maria’s mother was the headteacher of a Catholic school. Both participants expressed their conviction that their mother’s example was fundamental in shaping the values and inspired them to work in education.

Another aspect that influenced the values of the participants was their own faith. They were taught the fundamentals of the faith from their parents and their communities but also, as adults, the participants had continuously identified as

practising Catholics, often heavily involved in activities in their parish churches (e.g., Maria) despite having a really busy professional schedule. For example, for Christopher, his faith is not only important but definitely fundamental. He argued that his faith was the source of their values and vision for the school that he led. Similarly, Paul claimed that “you can’t do this job if you don’t have a faith... it is very important that you have a very committed personal faith in order to lead 2500 people”. A majority of the participants expressed their belief that they had an obligation to act in accordance with these values, which are values traditionally promoted by the Catholic Church. It is interesting that two participants (i.e. Dominic and Paul) used the word ‘fraud’ to describe a type of leadership that would fail to integrate their own faith-based values, the values of the school and the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.

The third influence on their values was the influence of colleagues and other significant people (e.g., clergy) who helped them to develop a more understanding of educational leadership, especially at the very early stages of their career in leadership. For example, Maria expressed appreciation to her parish priest, who offered his support when she was going through some moral difficulties that affected her leadership. She also expressed admiration for fellow school leaders who had a great experience at leading schools well. Another example was Theresa, who mentioned how she learned to be an ethical leader by mimicking other leaders. She was particularly impressed by a female headteacher at the start of her teaching career. Theresa explained that she was impressed by the headteacher’s determination to make the school a child-centred institution. The aspect that impressed Theresa the most was the fact that, although the headteacher was “really tough”, all her actions were focused on benefiting the pupils and giving staff the necessary tools to help pupils succeed. Theresa had no problem in explaining that this particular headteacher had functioned as a template for her own leadership.

The last influence shared by many of the participants was the negative influence that weak, and at times unethical, teachers and school leaders had had on them. Concerning the latter, Christopher made the point that he learned the importance of combining strategic thinking with moral principles when he worked under the leadership of a headteacher who “valued effort rather than outcome”. Christopher learned that nuance, wisdom and attention to detail were required in order to be a successful leader. This sparked a reaction from Christopher and encouraged him to pursue a career in educational leadership. Similarly, Maria found herself “at the receiving end of poor leadership” at the beginning of her career in education. This incident eventually confirmed not only her desire to become a headteacher but also served as an illustration of the opposite of what she believed her leadership should be like.

Application of values

All the participants expressed the conviction that these values were not just items on a list but rather non-negotiable principles that played a fundamental role in the life of their institution and their leadership. Because of its practical dimension, the application of values on a day-to-day basis was facilitated or hindered by different aspects and factors. With regard to what facilitated the implementation of these values, the first aspect that the majority of the participants mentioned was having a strong, personal faith. Paul, for instance, stated that he found security and confidence in his leadership through his faith. For Christopher, his faith was not only the source of his values but the practical tool that enabled him to carry out his leadership duties. It became evident that having a moral stance based on the practical application of moral values demonstrates their commitment to the Church to 'transform' their school community was *sine qua non* for these leaders (see Section 2.1).

Another facilitating factor was the fact that the participants worked in professional contexts with almost identical values and based on the same beliefs, minimising the chance of conflicting cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Furthermore, this explicit complete alignment between personal and institutional values was deliberate as all Catholic schools were, in their opinion, unique and clearer in terms of values and mission. Christopher, for example, mentioned that both sets of values aligned completely, and he pointed out that that was because of the religious nature of the school and his own faith. In his view, this alignment was desirable and to be expected. All of them expressed a preference towards working in Catholic schools whenever possible because of this moral coherence.

One final facilitating factor expressed by the participants was it is largely accepted that all Catholic schools have a clear moral identity that is well-known and accepted in the community. This was a facilitating factor of collaboration between home and school, strengthened by shared values rooted in the Catholic faith. In the case of Catholic staff and pupils, the application of these values as a matter of course, was for the vast majority a welcomed expectation, especially but not limited to Catholic parents. Participants also felt that for staff and pupils from a different faith background or none, having these clear expectations made the application of values an easier affair as the expectation was there before they joined the school. For instance, all parents who choose to send their children to one of these schools (irrespective of their religious affiliation) accept that the schools belong to a faith tradition that encourages and promotes moral values such as forgiveness, peace, compassion or respect. Participants expressed their conviction that this fact

provided not only clarity but moral and formal authority to exercise those values. One example of this is illustrated when Paul admitted that he expects all his staff to promote these values because “the kids expect it, the parents expect it, so you have to deliver it”. Although he agrees that this might make some staff slightly uncomfortable, he expressed his conviction that this issue warranted a reasonable but firm response to be able to deliver what “it says on our tin”, and by ‘tin’ Paul meant the Catholic identity of the school. It was evident that for these participants, whenever there was a conflict between secular values and religious values, they would always defend and enact the latter.

The barriers that affect the participants fall into two categories: barriers with respect to external factors and internal factors. Concerning the former, the main hindrance to the application of values, as expressed by the participants, was the fact that in order to succeed in the current English education system, the participants needed to adopt attitudes that were, at least to some degree, not congruent with their own values. For example, one recurring theme was the opinion that the current obsession with performance, league tables and Ofsted ratings, at least partially, hindered the application of traditional Christian values. Dominic, for example, commented that he is frequently faced with “the choice between pragmatism... and value-based decisions”.

Another problem is the difficulty that some schools have been pressured by educational authorities to conform to new policies in terms of assessment or curricula. Julie explained that all these changes contributed to a “challenging and stressful” atmosphere that hindered the application of values such as trust. All these external pressures and changes were, in her opinion, a determining factor for staff losing “confidence in themselves”. Similarly, Christopher, for example, considers that “Ofsted has been harmful to education” as, in his opinion, the focus of these inspections is short-sighted and seemingly obsessed with ever-changing standards that force schools to second-guess the authorities all the time and thus, hindering the process of establishing a robust moral rationale that could be applied in practice. All the participants in this group shared these views. It is important to point out that the participants willingly embraced the *internal* imperatives for change but were more cautious accepting *external* ones as exemplified by the sometimes questionable pressures imposed by external agencies (e.g., Ofsted). In their view, these agencies often demand “imposed changes” (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2000, p.154). In such situations, the headteachers did their utmost to resolve such tensions as what Day, Harris and Hadfield (2000) describe as effective “mediators” (p.154) in reconciling external demands with the defence of their religious values and leadership actions driven by what they believed to be in the best interest of their staff and students.

However, headteachers were undoubtedly hindered in these efforts to enact their leadership values. A significant hindrance reported by half of the participants was not only with Catholic staff but also staff of different faiths and beliefs, a challenge attributed to the “recruitment, retention and development of [Christian] school leaders, staff and governors” (Scott and McNeish, 2012). It was argued that non-Christian teaching staff especially had serious problems understanding the rationale behind the moral expectations of the leaders, often leading to conflict and misunderstandings that often are “the toughest part of my job” (Paul). Theresa, for example, lamented the fact that because “there is [sic] not enough Catholic teachers anymore. We are in some sort of decline”, teachers do not always understand the specific meaning of the values that underpin the organisation. This issue is further complicated by the fact that often families do not share these values either. In the words of Paul, “the biggest obstacle is convincing parents that everything that we do is underpinned by these values in the Gospels”. Therefore, conflict based on clashing values is sometimes unavoidable because, as pointed out by Christopher, “Christianity is countercultural to a certain extent”. Because the application of values can lead to problems, conflicts, tensions and dilemmas, leaders were expected to intervene to find a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved.

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

One of the responsibilities of a good school leader is his/her capacity to cope with tensions and dilemmas of moral nature, which often transcend the purely technical realm and require careful consideration. This last subsection focuses on the approaches undertaken by the participants in order to resolve moral dilemmas and how the participants coped with the inevitable tensions brought by such situations. These conflicting situations nearly always involved other members of staff going through difficulties, either by experiencing undesirable professional situations (e.g., underperformance), involvement in questionable practices (e.g., romantic involvement with another member of staff) or poor mental health due to pressures of the role (e.g., emotional engagement with pupils from struggling families). The other source of tension was in the relationship with pupils and, more precisely, their families, who do not always agree with the actions and decisions of the school.

The overall opinion when dealing with situations like these required to be dealt with great care, nuance and compassion and, if required, “err on the side of forgiveness” (Christopher), which often involve lengthy, complex and challenging processes rather than the more common (and more straight forward and expedient) process of dismissal of underperforming staff or permanent exclusion of difficult pupils. There was an acknowledgement that ethical leadership in the short-term is

frequently unpopular and unrewarding (see Connock and Johns, 1995). Similarly, Paul made an astonishing admission when he explained that although the core business of the school was “teaching and delivering the curriculum” as expected by parents and society, there were members of staff “not good enough to be in front of children”. He recognised that sustained poor teacher performance (see Fullan, 2003) was a very serious issue that could impinge on the wellbeing of all stakeholders, but because of his convictions and values, he was ready to risk criticism from authorities, colleagues and parents in order to protect, at least temporarily, vulnerable staff.

Maria also admitted that dealing with human beings was often one of the most difficult dimensions of her leadership and recognised that dealing with colleagues who might be perceived as struggling is part of her role. She also understood that when giving ‘bad news’, the message had to be delivered with great care and always acknowledging that such messages are always difficult to deliver and receive. In her view, it was fundamental to avoid approaching the situation from a pre-empted “black and white” perspective that often oversimplify the situation for the sake of convenience and contributes to, at least partially, dehumanising the member of staff in question. She recognised that under such circumstances, it is fundamental to recognise the dignity of the other person and recognise that “not everything is black or white, there is grey”.

Participants also expressed that they often needed help when engaging in such situations. There was an acknowledgement that, ultimately, they had to deal with “the brokenness, the dysfunctionality, the weaknesses” (Paul) inherent to the human condition, including, naturally, their own. The strategies to cope with such situations and their own emotional needs included different strategies that could be either rational or relational but always dependent on having a spiritual, moral perspective. Christopher, for example, recognised the advantages of taking a rational approach. When confronted with dilemmas, he would remove himself emotionally from the issue in the first instance in order to be able to “look at each situation on its own merits”. Such an approach would give him enough perspective to accurately understand the problem. Then, he recognised that once the facts were understood, a more nuanced approach was necessary in order to demonstrate the Christian values of the institution (e.g., compassion and forgiveness). This is in consonance with the example of Jesus as depicted in the Gospel of John, where he often displays great insight and sensitivity towards others (Serrano, 2021). The combination of both approaches helped to achieve a resolution to the problem that was congruent with the values of the institution whilst protecting the well-being of both parties involved. However, for such an approach to be successful, Christopher recognised the need for the support and trust of other members in the institution

(e.g., governors). Other participants expressed the belief in the convenience of the involvement of religious authorities external to the organisation. For example, Julie mentioned that she required help from the diocese when confronted with a particularly difficult moral dilemma involving two members of staff who were engaged in a romantic relationship as she felt that the problem was simply too complex and potentially damaging to the reputation of the school to be dealt with internally. The headteachers recognised the importance of leadership practice consistent with Relational Leadership Theory. From their perspective, establishing strong relationships through shared values with all members of the school and the wider community is essential to gaining wide support and guarantees better outcomes.

Although a good understanding of the opinion of the group as a unit is important, an in-depth understanding of rich descriptions, concrete experiences and narratives of lived experience (Langdrige, 2007) of carefully selected participants is equally significant. An analysis of two participants is therefore included in two different vignettes that serve as rich illustrations: Theresa and Dominic. The reason to choose these two specific cases was twofold. On the one hand, these vignettes illustrate the experience of a male and a female participant. This offers a wide range of perspectives that could be lost otherwise. On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, these two participants provided really detailed descriptions of their experience of ethical leadership with practical examples of their values, how they put these into practice and the way in which difficulties and dilemmas are dealt with and resolved.

4.3 Vignette 1: Theresa

Theresa's key values

Theresa's central moral values are communication, honesty, respect, humility, and tolerance. She takes great care in applying them consistently in the educational sphere where she works. Leading the Sadler Teaching Alliance seems like a suitable working environment for Theresa as her values and the values of the federation overlap to a large extent. Theresa believes that the same moral principles apply to her personal and professional life and, in her view, communication and honesty are the two main values. The need to communicate effectively is a logical requirement for a leader who works across many schools (see Table 4.1). Communication as a moral value goes beyond the sharing of information and implies the interlocutors' willingness to listen and be listened to, thus demonstrating mutual appreciation. Honesty (i.e. being trustworthy and the ability to tell the truth) is also required as a necessary tool to tackle institutional weaknesses. These values are understood from a

Christian perspective applied directly to the three schools in the federation. She explained that it is an expectation in all three schools to model behaviour and strive “to be at all times as faithful as possible to the teachings of Jesus Christ”. Moreover, she considers the values of humility, respect and tolerance (in the sense of acceptance) of great importance. These are required to construct a good platform where Christian educators can work with individuals who do not subscribe to the Christian worldview to achieve a common good (e.g., children's education).

One specific aspect of Theresa’s personal ethical stance is her preference for collaboration rather than competition. Theresa explained her position explicitly:

I’m not in competition with anybody. I’m not. I *really, really* aren’t [sic]. If we all got top grades, I’d be absolutely thrilled. I’m not in competition... I think that every time somebody goes into leadership without a great, big ego, actually we win (emphasis in the original).

This approach seems surprising for a successful leader in today’s educational climate, where competition is perceived as the primary motivator for achieving educational excellence. The fact that Theresa has achieved excellence while staying true to her values seems a remarkable achievement. In the case of Theresa, it was apparent that her values are not only essential but useful in her role as an educational leader. These values seem to be perfectly integrated into her personality and derived from clear sources of influence. Theresa looked for the complete integration of her values with the school's values and professional, secular values (e.g., objectivity, accountability and openness) and personal virtues (e.g., kindness, courage and optimism) as described by Roberts (2019). She did not perceive her values as incompatible with current expectations for effective headteachers. It can be argued that Theresa agrees with the assertion that sometimes effective leaders “do not see any division between acting ethically and professing a religious ideology in a public setting” (Kramer and Enomoto, 2014, p.37). For Theresa, her leadership required enough flexibility to achieve consensus and mediation (i.e. being able to accommodate external pressures and demands with personal values).

Influence on Theresa’s values

Theresa’s values were shaped by her upbringing, her faith and the influence of specific individuals. Concerning the first category, Theresa and her siblings received a strict and moral Catholic upbringing that she thought was positive. Her mother was a devout Catholic woman who instilled strong moral values in her three

children. Theresa attended a Catholic primary school which she enjoyed. However, due to a family problem, Theresa and her siblings joined the local comprehensive secondary school, which she found “*completely* weird” (emphasis in the original) and very different from her caring but also very “closed and coy” Catholic primary school that she had attended until then. Her opinion was in a way rather mixed and not dissimilar to the principled approach that she adopted in her adult years. In her own words:

I wouldn't say it was a very good secondary education. I wouldn't say it was nice. I don't mean this in terms of terms of passing exams. I mean it in terms of the atmosphere of the school.

Theresa felt helpless because the personal circumstances of her mother had had the unintended consequence of preventing her from receiving the secondary Catholic education that she was hoping for. However, Theresa eventually adapted to her new environment, and she admitted that her experience in a secular secondary school was, in the end, positive. In her view:

[Going to a non-Church school] really did me good. I'm sure that the reason I can do this job is because of that experience. Really, really. In terms of getting on with people from different places, with different beliefs in different moral codes, different ways of using language...it does teach you something.

It is crucial to point out that this experience did not weaken her faith or change her favourable opinion on Catholic education but instead made her aware of other prevalent and pervasive non-Christian worldviews.

Another source of influence comes from paying close attention to good school leaders. Theresa admitted that she admires other school professionals, and she often caught herself mimicking them. Theresa remembered one particular headteacher who inspired her to become an effective educationalist by trusting in other people:

The leader that has had the most impact on me was a female leader, a great woman but really tough, really tough... always knew -more so than I ever did - exactly what she wanted people to do. When she trusted you, she would say, “go and do it!” She put her faith in that you're going

to do it. She wasn't necessarily nicely looked at by a lot of people, but she was completely driven by children. Everything she did in school, she did because it would make the children in her school do better. That's it; there was no compromise. It was never about her.

This story of an influential role model suggests one contributing factor to Theresa's focus on children and their success. This headteacher's example served as a template for Theresa's leadership, especially regarding how to act when faced with opposition as long as their behaviour was motivated by righteous motives. In a way, Theresa's words were consistent with the main ideas of Aristotelian virtue ethics but interpreted from a Christian perspective, where virtuous individuals know how to act and what to say in any given circumstance. One example is the Biblical text when Jesus told his disciples not to be "anxious beforehand, or premeditate what you will say, but say whatever will be given you" (Mark 13:11). Similarly, Theresa based her confidence on her trust in God. Furthermore, it seems evident that Theresa followed the example of a former mentor and developed a strong emotional attachment with her, which, as noticed by Day and Miscenko (2016), often contributes to more effective and committed engagement with the organisation.

Theresa's implementation of values

For Theresa, the implementation of values is facilitated or hindered based on circumstances and other people's attitudes around her. Theresa's deliberate decision to trust in people based on her belief that people, when treated right, produce 'good fruit' has led to different results in the short term. Something that hinders Theresa's application of values is when others take advantage of them for personal gain. For example, she shared a recent story that illustrated this point: she was asked to attend a training meeting for newly qualified teachers along with a small number of other heads of school federations. She was told that somebody had already volunteered to be the public speaker. When Theresa arrived, the person who had invited her turned around and said: "Theresa, do you want to go first?" Theresa felt shocked as this contradicted the previous arrangement. Theresa interpreted this as a deliberate attempt at public humiliation. Theresa realised that this lady took the opportunity to put down a competitor. Despite considering the whole incident a "setup", Theresa decided to forgive a colleague and looked for reconciliation less than twenty-four hours after the incident.

On the other hand, Theresa considers that having the respect and support of others is a great facilitator for her leadership and the application of values. Theresa used the word "friendship" to describe the reciprocal, genuine appreciation that regularly

occurs within her professional context. She expressed that the same day of the “setup” incident, she had to attend a meeting in one of the schools she supports. Unexpectedly, one of the youngest teachers turned around to whisper a very sincere compliment to Theresa during the meeting. She praised her support, enthusiasm and commitment to education. Theresa was encouraged by this person’s compliment and described it as an “answer to prayer” as the previous experience that same day had damaged her confidence considerably. Theresa explained that she thought that compliment was probably explained by her consistently positive attitude towards all staff members, naturally including the young teacher. She explained the following:

Every time I go into that school, I pop in and see her and ask, “how are you? Is there anything you need?” I think that friendship has just built up, and she gave me that compliment absolutely when I needed it.

Theresa believes in a leadership model that demonstrates respect, tolerance and care. She recognises that although working in environments that share the same values help immensely, it would be naïve to assume that everybody is motivated by the same principles.

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

Theresa acknowledged that tensions and dilemmas are unavoidable and often part of educational leadership. Theresa had to deal with these situations recently when she was involved in an incident in one of the Catholic schools:

A member of staff...encouraged one boy to hit another boy. Which was *desperately* wrong, and the member of staff was a friend because you come to know some members of staff quite well, and he was a friend. We were all very shocked by this, and the headteacher immediately suspended him. Then I was asked to sign a sort of “can we get him back?” slip. And I didn’t because I felt very strongly that the way that the head had acted was right. That was very difficult because a lot of friends were signing it because obviously, he was a friend! That was quite tough, really. (emphasis in the original)

Theresa decided that defending the teacher on this occasion was not justified because of her belief in the non-violent resolution of conflicts. Given her belief in nonviolence, the risk of jeopardising her relationship with those who signed the slip was justified. In the end, she resolved the problem by applying the value of communication, as exemplified by Jesus (see Wood, 2021). Rather than ignoring the dilemma, Theresa chose to be proactive and talk directly to those people involved, making her rationale explicit and, as she put it, “explaining how you feel and sticking to it if you think you’re right”. Again, she saw dialogue and communication as a way to conceptualise leadership ethics and a way to achieve ethical leadership. Theresa was very keen on demonstrating key moral values that are expected of moral leaders of educational institutions (Christian or otherwise). On this occasion, she demonstrated courage that was required to protect the safety of children and young people under her watch (Roberts, 2019).

Interestingly, there have been occasions when dilemmas have had an outright positive outcome despite initial difficulties. Theresa told the story when she was working successfully in an excellent secondary school at the beginning of her teaching career. After a while, she was approached by her headteacher, who asked Theresa to leave her class and go and help in a nearby struggling school. Although sending a relatively inexperienced teacher to a school in Special Measures could have been interpreted as a questionable decision, Theresa eventually realised that it demonstrated a significant amount of trust from the headteacher and a good opportunity for her development. In the end, she thoroughly enjoyed the experience, as it provided an opportunity not only to contribute to the improvement of the school but also to share her beliefs and values with children who had no experience of the Christian faith or any other religious belief. Eventually, this encouraged her to pursue a career in educational leadership, focusing on helping those struggling rather than concentrating on schools in more salubrious conditions. In her own words:

I thought, “You know what? If we can make an impact, if we can make a difference, then I’ll do it”, knowing that eventually, I will have done what I was supposed to do, and then I can retire and relax.

Theresa’s upbeat attitude and willingness to learn by following her headteacher’s suggestion eventually paid off as it provided an opportunity to share her faith, improve children’s education, build up confidence in those around her, and help her find a long-term, meaningful, fulfilling professional career. In the current climate,

where many teachers struggle to find meaning in their careers, Theresa's case was both inspirational and compelling.

4.4 Vignette 2: Dominic

Dominic's key values

Dominic is an engaging, value-driven Catholic leader who appreciates the nuanced complexity of life in general and education in particular. Dominic defines himself as a servant leader who leads a "learning community" that identifies two moral principles as truly foundational: inclusivity and 'Gospel Values'. Regarding the former, Dominic believes that leading an inclusive institution involves making a deliberate effort to cater for all pupils, including those who do not always fit well in the educational model mould. For Dominic, St Mark's inclusivity is understood as the willingness to take on "anybody whose needs we can meet", a stance consistent with Catholic morality. He expressed his conviction that inclusivity implies engaging with the difficult but also with the able, hard-working and emotionally stable pupils. Dominic shared that if St Mark shied away from taking on challenging pupils, it would be at the cost of betraying its identity. Dominic appreciates that this demand implies sacrifice, but he stands firm in his expectation that staff in Catholic schools must always strive to "go the extra mile".

Regarding the term 'Gospel Values', Dominic admitted he often struggles to explain what they are. However, he shared his justification and an effective way of communicating its core message:

I find it really hard to articulate the 'Gospel Values'. When you're indoctrinated in them from childhood, and I'm using this word really deliberately, you sort of live them and sense them rather than being able to articulate them. [However] my favourite is to articulate it with the Beatitudes because I think the Beatitudes is a reasonably good expression of what those 'Gospel Values' look like.

By comparing the 'Gospel Values' to the Beatitudes, a widely-known list of blessings recounted by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, Dominic demonstrates how these values that exemplify God's favour for those who, for example, lack material goods or experience hardship, are applicable in his school. This comparison is pertinent as the blessings in the Beatitudes have been used to encourage people in difficult circumstances not dissimilar to the struggles of many pupils at St Mark's.

On a personal level, Dominic identifies with the Christian principle of ‘unconditional love’, a principle that he defines as the “‘Gospel Values’ in one phrase” that underpins his approach to leadership. Dominic links it to the parable of the Prodigal Son (see Luke 15:11-32), a story that “most teachers don’t like” but that he finds reassuring:

I’ve always loved the story for the exact reason that most people don’t seem to like it. My faith has always been in this eternally-forgiving, all-loving God who, because I’m flawed; because I’m human; because I’m really not very good, He will always help me to find a way back. That’s a big part of who I am.

Dominic believes that his compassion towards others is the direct consequence of the unmerited, ‘unconditional love’ that he had experienced in his own life. It is evident that his experience, filtered through his faith experience, has shaped his values first and his approach to leadership after. According to Kramer and Enomoto (2014), dealing with ethical problems can be particularly complex when there are multiple and competing perspectives on how to resolve these dilemmas. One very common option is for the leader to take ultimate responsibility. Although tempting and sometimes courageous and noble, this option can also be highly controversial because it can lead to disgruntled followers and dissent. However, in the case of Dominic, his decision to adopt these Gospel Values (agreed by the community) as reference points minimises the risk of tackling the most controversial factors.

Influence on Dominic’s values

Similarly to the rest of the participants in the group, the first source of influence on Dominic’s values was his experience growing up in a Catholic family. According to Dominic, his family lived out an overtly Catholic and yet “humble faith” in which values played a significant role. Dominic recalled vividly that his family “wouldn’t talk about faith at home; we lived it”. This experiential approach to spirituality left an indelible mark that has accompanied him in his life endeavours. Furthermore, his time as a pupil in a Catholic school was largely positive and reinforced his homebred values. A unique feature in Dominic’s values is the impact that biblical narratives have had on his understanding of faith and values. He recalled a story when he stayed by his terminally-ill mother one Maundy Thursday. At one point, she sat up and asked Dominic to stay awake. He complied as his mother was “one of the least demanding people ever”, but he fell asleep eventually. When he woke up,

he remembered how Jesus asked the apostle Peter to stay awake just before being taken captive and how Peter failed as well (see Matthew 26:40–41). Dominic's mother passed away that day. The similarities between both stories had a lasting effect on Dominic and have influenced his passion for deducing moral principles for his life from Biblical narratives.

An important source of influence in terms of values was derived from his experience working in Catholic schools with other leaders who had a solid understanding of ethical leadership. Dominic mentioned how meeting a colleague named Ian (not his real name) was fundamental to his development as an ethical leader. Dominic explained it in the following manner:

Ian really was an inspiration in terms of bringing values, not just looking after children ... Ian was one of the first people who clearly articulated values in what they did in education. My values were living them out with children, but Ian was one of the people who opened my eyes to value decision-making about curriculum decisions, about teaching and learning, etc. Prior to that, mine had been about caring for that individual... which widened my scope a little, and I became a curriculum deputy rather than a pastoral deputy, ironically.

This new experience was significant for Dominic because it influenced his understanding of values, from belonging almost exclusively to the pastoral sphere of education to a fresh understanding of values in which they affected every aspect of education. In Dominic's view, this change in perspective contributed to a better understanding of education, contributing to his decision to become the headteacher of St Mark School. In his view, working with colleagues with a strong passion for ethics has had a lasting effect on his own leadership.

However, Dominic explained how negative examples also shaped his values during his time as a pupil. Dominic told a story when a chemistry teacher unfairly reprimanded him for sliding his homework under the door rather than leaving it on top of his desk as requested. As a consequence, he had to stay behind and miss an important basketball match that day. The unfairness of the situation made such an impression on him that he then decided to become a teacher and try his best to behave ethically with all his students. Here we can appreciate that Dominic decided to adopt the value of 'justice' as a moral principle (based on a Christian underpinning) for his personal and professional lives. This principle would become one of the most significant moral pillars for him and consistent with the idea that all

educationalists must be “*fair* and work for the good of *all* children” (Roberts, 2019, p.11, emphasis added).

Dominic’s implementation of values

Dominic thinks that different factors facilitate or hinder the application of values in a school setting. One aspect that in his view facilitates the application of these values is that in faith schools, there is a moral narrative that parents, pupils, staff and authorities accept. In Dominic’s view, the school’s narrative is expressed in different yet complementary ‘languages’: the language of Christ; the language of forgiveness and the language of unconditional love:

We can use the language of how we live out the ‘Gospel Values’. We have a language that we have permission to use. A lot of [secular] schools seek for that language, and the message gets rejected because they can’t get the language. I feel we have an advantage in living out those values because we have a gift of permission to use the language of Christ.

The explicit use of this narrative is beneficial when explaining the values for the first time and provides pupils and staff with a shared moral lingo that facilitates understanding. Furthermore, Dominic expresses that he is convinced that using the language accelerates the enacting of values as values become overt and explicit.

Another aspect that facilitates Dominic’s application of values derives from his own faith. His conviction that the Christian message is true has contributed significantly to growing in confidence when facing difficulties and explaining his motivation to others. This is reinforced by the fact that the school’s governors are also committed Christians who speak and believe the ‘lingo’ (see above) when supporting and challenging Dominic in his leadership decisions:

If you’re making a tough decision from a position of values on Christ’s teachings, and the people challenging you are saying that they agree with you and support you in doing that because we have the same values system, that can be incredibly supportive.

Dominic is aware that this approach can only work as far as those close to him share those values. For that purpose, he has been careful to appoint “people who operate daily under those values”. For Dominic, it is also essential that the values themselves

(not his opinion or preference) are the criteria to select the most suitable people for those critical roles. This conviction can be linked to his childhood years when he appreciated his parents' focus on the importance of moral values.

The aspect that seriously hinders the application of values is “the compelling nature of some of the ‘real world’ challenges out there as people would say”. He cited Ofsted and league tables as hindering factors but not because he did not believe in accountability but because these pressures contribute to behaviour that is professionally questionable and morally unacceptable. He explained a situation that illustrated this point well:

I know of a school down the road with results that are slightly better than mine this year...and I know that that school has achieved it in ways that I couldn't achieve it. I know, for instance, that there are seven children in my year eleven that if I had permanently excluded them in year ten...which is what that other school did, my results would have gone up by 5%.

Dominic pointed out that the leadership of other schools in his context were choosing to act in questionable ways in order to appear better than they are. In his view, situations like the one above are “the biggest hindrance to value leadership” and, unfortunately, increasingly common. Therefore, it can be argued that the strict application of values can have negative consequences for the community and the leaders as they are left vulnerable to criticism by the authorities. Although Dominic felt unfairly disadvantaged by the other head's alleged lack of morals, he strongly asserted that he would not act unethically, even if it meant risking his job and status. It could be argued that although he lamented not ‘competing on an even playing field’, he recognised that his accountability was towards secular authorities but also his conscience and God. This one was an approach that, in the face of a moral dilemma, removed him completely from consequentialist ethics.

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

Dominic stated that he had different strategies for coping with tensions and dilemmas, especially if the leader's values and the institution's values are sufficiently different. Fortunately, that is not the case for St Mark, as Dominic's values align “very, very, very closely” with the school's values. Dominic explains that is the reason is twofold:

One is that I chose to be in the school in terms of being a Catholic school. I've chosen to be part of a system whose values I buy into. The second thing is that there is a part of those values that I created, developed [that is] intrinsic to the institution because of the context of the school in a really quite deprived area...that I chose to be part of that.

When he applied to become the school's headteacher, Dominic was aware of the inherent difficulties of working (like many Catholic schools do) in disadvantaged areas. Dominic was also aware that working in a Catholic school would also mean having at his disposal a common narrative, a shared set of values –fully supported by the school's religious denomination– that would help him overcome difficulties.

In terms of tensions, Dominic shared a situation that was particularly important to him:

We refer to ourselves as an [Christian] inclusive learning community ... [but] the key thing is if this is a real value statement?... we do have some children whose mental and emotional health is so severely damaged that they cannot control themselves outside the classroom situation. For instance, in my first nine years of headship, I permanently excluded seven children. This year I have permanently excluded six... How much is that my values being compromised by myself, and how much these are compromised by society or things around me that I have no control over? I'm wrestling with that at the moment.

This is one example of how Dominic sometimes struggles to maintain a balance between his morals and the reality of the extreme nature of some of his pupils' behaviour.

In order to resolve this situation, Dominic took a proactive approach and invested £60000 per year in creating an inclusion centre that provides in-school alternative education to pupils who regularly get caught in the behaviour system. Although these pupils often get excluded, thanks to the inclusion centre, they should remain in mainstream education and, therefore, contribute to the reduction of exclusions. Dominic explains that this provision is not in any way second-class this ten pupils unit is staffed with one pastoral officer, two teaching assistants, one full-time teacher and an assistant headteacher who oversees it. This investment is hard to defend in purely monetary terms, but Dominic uses the parable of the Lost Sheep (see Luke 15:1-7) to justify this considerable investment. Furthermore, he explained that “any

child out of the 1200 can become part of that minority at any point should their circumstances change”. Ultimately, Dominic defends his belief that being proactive is always more effective than “putting yourself in the horns of a moral dilemma”. Although principals in England, compared to headteachers in other countries, have a much higher degree of autonomy in terms of budget, the adoption of such attitudes based purely on spiritual grounds is not always perceived as sufficiently justified in order to ‘transform’ the school where he worked so it could become increasingly inclusive as described in its objectives. This is one example where the specific policies required for the transformation of an institution need to be integrated with the idea of others, so the followers do not feel ignored (see Lussier and Achua, 2015)

4.5 Comparative insights

Key values

With respect to the participants’ personal values, it can be said that these are significantly more similar than dissimilar, with high levels of overlapping. The interviews revealed that all participants identified with the Catholic Church as the institution through which they meet their spiritual needs and the source of moral values. All of them have remained in the Catholic faith that they first received in childhood. For Julie and Christopher, their Catholic heritage is an important element of their own identity. In their case, it became apparent that growing up as Catholics in England, a country where Catholicism has been viewed with a degree of suspicion has reinforced Roman Catholic identity. For the rest, this narrative was either absent or more nuanced. In any case, they all agreed on the continuing relevance of Catholic Christianity in their personal and professional lives.

There are some fundamental similarities in the values of all the participants, respect being one of them. Respect for people, mentioned explicitly or implicitly, was a common theme found in all the narratives and one that participants often linked to the principles of care and compassion. Respect understood as the deliberate act of valuing other people’s preferences, opinions and circumstances even when those clash with our own, was explicitly mentioned by Paul and characterised as a way to serve others in order to live “fulfilled lives because that is what Christ promised in the Gospels”. Similarly, Julie is intentional in modelling how to treat others with respect, a principle that she has now made explicit in her school. Theresa justified her commitment to showing respect to every pupil as “every child is a child of God, whether they know it in themselves or not; they are loved, and it is our duty to look after them”.

In some cases, participants disclosed their appreciation for such value in an indirect way. For example, when sharing his approach to values, Christopher expressed his conviction that he is deliberately respectful and compassionate. Interestingly, he referred to a tragically well-known case of unethical behaviour to justify the significance of this claim:

If you're haphazard about [ethics], you can see things going wrong. Not just in education. In the case of...the Staffordshire Hospital Trust, where the values should have been care, respect, upholding dignity, somehow, different values, probably not even well understood in the minds of those people who were doing it, came to the fore.

It is interesting that Christopher referred to the Staffordshire Hospital scandal, an example of how tragedy is often the consequence of unethical leadership.

Although values such as care, compassion and respect were at the top of their value lists, others were also mentioned as important, although the level of agreement diminished considerably. For instance, one highly significant value for Theresa and Julie was 'collaboration' (i.e. being able to work with trust and honesty in a mutually beneficial way). Both argued strongly that this approach was preferable to working in isolation and that applying this value has improved their general well-being and job satisfaction. Julie mentioned how she regularly works with other Catholic leaders and how her staff at St Francis has been encouraged to liaise with other teachers in the area. By contrast, Maria, Dominic and Christopher do not consider collaboration as one of the most important values. They rather focus on a more 'singular' approach that avoids the possible distractions that working with others could bring. This is not to say that they do not value collaboration, but they are more inclined to focus their efforts in their most immediate environment.

When questioned about whether or not their values have changed over time, the response varied considerably. For example, Maria and Julie believe that their values have remained unchanged. A different type of response was obtained from Theresa and Paul. Paul admitted that he has matured and grown into a better understanding of his values over the years, whilst Theresa explained that at the beginning of her teaching career, she focused too much on exam results. By contrast, she now focuses on providing children with tools to best confront their next challenge successfully in life and "end up being where they are supposed to be". Christopher explained how his understanding of values has deepened. For instance, his appreciation for human dignity has been enhanced since becoming a school leader, which is rare in the current climate. Similarly, Dominic explained that he now feels more

“enlightened” about his values, although he admits that “the pragmatism of some of the pressures that you’re under as a head” often slows down progress. This would mean a questioning of what Johnson (2000) called “hard-headed pragmatism” (p.130), which was a recurrent theme for all participants in their approach to ethical leadership.

Main influences for those values

The high degree of agreement does not seem to be coincidental but rather related to common experiences that have shaped the participants’ moral framework and behaviour over time. All participants shared a similar family background: all were born in England to Catholic parents and were brought up as practising Catholics. When summing up their experience, they offered rather warm and candid recollections of their upbringing, and most of them described at least one of their parents as devout Catholics. All of them expressed their determination to bring their childhood years faith into adulthood as a robust reference framework that provides certainty, familiarity and meaning. However, the participants’ identification with the Catholic faith is hardly surprising as one of the requirements for Catholic headship is to be a baptised, practising Catholic.

Despite the significance of their upbringing, not all participants shared about this influence in equal measure. The level of detail about the impact that their families had on their faith and values varied. For example, Paul mentioned how his Catholicity shaped his upbringing:

I was brought up in a family of ten; six sisters and a brother with a very strict Catholic father. My middle name is the first name of one of the Italian popes, for whom my father had great respect. That was the sort of environment that I was brought up; I went to church every Sunday and every day during Lent.

This is consistent with the study by Baker-Sperry (2001) that identified the importance of the faith of fathers in the development of a child’s personal faith. For Paul, the Catholic faith and rituals had a lasting effect not only in what he did but also in his own identity, as, for instance, demonstrated by his father’s choice of names. By contrast, Julie revealed the influence of life events in her life using a slightly different approach and preferred to provide information implicitly rather than explicitly. For instance, when she mentioned that she grew up in a non-Catholic area, she added that almost none of her neighbours were Catholic, and

they thought them a bit odd. Julie also added that “children can be cruel”. She did not elaborate any further, but a possible interpretation is that, as a child, she felt discriminated against for being Catholic.

Theresa, Maria, Paul, Dominic and Christopher pointed out the importance of attending Catholic schools as children. Again, their overwhelming opinion was positive. In the majority of cases, the participants stayed in Catholic schools throughout their time as pupils. Christopher explained that he chose to study and work almost exclusively in Catholic schools. He explained that during his whole teaching career, he only worked in a non-Catholic school during his first year teaching as he found the ethos of the secular school lacking in substance, moving to a Catholic setting “as quickly as possible”. Christopher does not consider himself a more ‘moral’ leader because of his faith and upbringing. However, he does explain that he believes that his convictions are connected to Christian principles and that they “are slightly different because they are faith-based”.

Although many participants expressed gratitude to positive role models in the past, there were also occasions in which negative examples shaped their values. For example, Dominic shared that due to past negative schooling experiences in his role of headteacher, he has still problems with teachers “that I perceive don’t like children”. Paul described how he became convinced that he could do a good job as a headteacher after working for a weak leader:

I was a deputy, and I thought that and this might sound terrible, I could do a better job than the fella who was head... although I’m not making any judgement on his faith, it was a very simple one. For him, this might have been okay, but for geeing up adolescents and geeing up staff, it was lacking because the light didn’t burn brightly in himself... this specific experience in my life made me think that I wanted to get on that stage, knock him off for a minute and just be a little bit more enthusiastic about the joys of working in a Catholic school, or any school for that matter!

It is interesting to notice how influential the role of anti-role models can be for giving certain individuals the ‘final push’ towards pursuing a career in leadership. It is also interesting that the main element absent from the professional profiles of these reluctant ‘anti-heroes’ was not their credentials or technical ability but a moral disconnect that render their leadership at best dull, ineffective or at worst, damaging.

Application of values

Common sense dictates that values matter and leaders reveal their values in what they do. The application of values is often a complex process riddled with difficulties due to its ad hoc nature. Again, there was a high degree of agreement between the factors that facilitate and hinder the application of values. One group of participants (i.e. Dominic, Theresa, Paul, and Christopher) established that the main factor that supported the application of values in their leadership was their faith. On some occasions, they were referring to their personal faith exclusively, but frequently, they were making reference to the confluence of their faith, the faith of other members within the school and the spiritual identity of the organisation as a whole. From the data collected from the participants, it became evident that the separation between personal faith and the third spiritual context in which this faith was put into practice was not always clear cut but rather dynamic, changing and prone to an osmosis-like interaction. For example, Paul said that “it is very important that you have a very committed personal faith in order to lead 2500 people”. He clearly made a strong connection between his faith and his responsibility was the spiritual health of all his pupils and staff. Only a few lines later in the interview, he clearly stated that “whenever *we* are faced with a difficult decision, *we* always have a faith, *we* have something to refer to. It’s *our* security. It’s *our* confidence whenever it comes to making big decisions” (emphasis added). Paul transitioned quickly from talking about his faith to talking about a collective faith that helped them apply the right value and make the right decision. As noticed by McClish (2001), the use of pronouns is always significant in people’s speech (especially for native English speakers) and often reveals the speaker’s most profound convictions.

Dominic, similarly, focused on his own faith and his relationship with God as a practical tool to help him apply these values in a first instance to then move to the importance of collective faith:

[Faith] helps decision-making because it gives you a very tangible basis for making decisions. If you have a strong sense of faith, then it almost helps you deliver a particular message... I think your own faith facilitates but also the fact that many governors, who are there to challenge and support you, have the same faith.

In the case of Dominic, the separation between both realms is more apparent than in other cases, but the overall opinion is that faith is both personal and collective and that it is useful when shared. Interestingly, Maria and Julie take a less metaphysical

approach, and when asked about the factors that helped, they made specific reference to the teams and the ability to collaborate and establish healthy and effective teamwork relations.

In terms of what hinders the application of values, there is a revealing consensus that interference from external institutions was a hindrance. Maria expressed her belief that pressures to make her institution a success after transitioning to becoming an academy put unnecessary stress on the organisation. The principle of competition and league tables was also mentioned by nearly all the participants as the most destructive element against the traditional values of the schools. Surprisingly, there was no strong correlation between criticism of competition and Ofsted rating. In other words, highly successful leaders (e.g., Theresa) were as critical of league tables and grading schools as less successful leaders (e.g., Dominic). Finally, both Paul and Christopher mentioned that the most significant hindrance was not external but inherent to humanity. Obstacles to the application of values in their view were instances such as weak faith and human tendency to act carelessly and selfishly. This reflection was an important opportunity to confirm their commitment to leadership as a relational, dynamic process based on responsibility, solidarity and mutual care.

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

The process by which the participants coped with unresolved tension and dilemmas in their organisations was fascinating. On the one hand, tensions and dilemmas were accepted as part of the role of the leader. However, it was apparent that many of the participants did not have a worked-out system by which they approached such situations. The responses from the participants seemed to indicate that tensions and dilemmas were dealt with reactively. This was the case for, to some degree, all the participants. They expressed their belief that they were equipped to deal with these situations but the mental preparation for dealing with such circumstances were very much left open rather than pre-empted. From a theoretical perspective, it could be argued that the participants embraced (arguably without even realising it) a virtue ethics approach. Under that approach, they trusted in their ability to come up with acceptable ethical responses to tensions and dilemmas by the application 'on the spot' of an honest synthesis of their own ethical knowledge as it is derived from their experience, their faith, their knowledge of Catholic theology, the support of other members of the school community and even in some cases, the intervention of external individuals or bodies (e.g., diocese).

One example of such an approach was given by Julie, who explained that by applying values such as fairness and trust, the right atmosphere would emerge, which would minimise conflict, tensions, and dilemmas. Julie mentioned the word

'trust' on many occasions, and she explained that because of the different external pressures on school leaders, the natural reaction of the school community was to get together under her leadership as a way to protect what they thought was important and precious. Very interestingly, she mentioned that teachers and parents trusted in her because they could remember her when she started volunteering in the school, even before she qualified as a teacher. Because her trajectory and sustained integrity 'made sense' to these individuals, the organisation could evolve based on trust as a way to avoid problems but also as a strategy for coping and resolving conflict. The amount of mutual trust was a reflection of a high level of confidence in the process of leading the transformation of the school (see chapter 2).

Naturally, implicit mention of other ethical models was also included when discussing approaches to conflict and tension resolution. For example, when dealing with the moral dilemmas involving members of staff, there was an acknowledgement that the schools' purpose (i.e. the delivery of teaching for the benefit of the pupils) sometimes warrants more utilitarian approaches "if the pupils are not getting a good deal from the teacher" (Paul). However, this is always done as a last resort and only when it is believed that such a measure would ultimately benefit all the people involved, including the member of staff affected. It could be said that the participants were partial to the adoption of ethical approaches based on strong principles derived from Christian beliefs, traditions and principles (i.e. arguably akin to deontology), as well as the observation of virtue as a way to establish healthy relationships.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has shared the findings of four key aspects of ethical leadership in the practice of six Catholic headteachers. It is apparent that moral values are hugely important for this group of participants and a non-negotiable element of their leadership. These values are very much the same as the values of the organisation where they work and, undoubtedly, in line with the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. One unifying factor for these values is that they belong to the participants insofar they are shared by a community. It was obvious that some of the participants felt that their identity as Roman Catholics (a religious group typically ostracised and marginalised in England in the past) played an important part in their sense of identity and strengthened the solidarity of the Catholic community. This sense of identity played a major part in the shaping and sharing of moral values that have not changed significantly for at least two centuries now.

Many factors have influenced these values, including their upbringing, their personal faith and the influence (both positive and negative) of particular

individuals. The participants found that their personal faith and the application of values facilitated the achievement of a professional, ethical environment in which they could put into practice their leadership. They also perceived past grievances as a persecuted religious minority as an empowering factor and a facilitator in their leadership. Conversely, they also found that external factors such as the current emphasis on competition as well as the inability of human beings to always act in ethical ways hindered the implementation of values. Finally, participants agreed that the resolution of problems and dilemmas had to be assessed on a one-to-one basis but always through the lens of Christian values such as forgiveness, compassion and respect for the dignity of all.

Summing up, the responses from the Catholic participants suggested that these headteachers behaved like mediators (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2000) that collaboratively worked with integrity, acknowledging the difficulties and challenges inherent to leading an educational institution. Furthermore, they did that in a morally acceptable way, integrating the objectives and values of the institution as part of the Catholic vision for education.

CHAPTER 5. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON PARTICIPATING PROTESTANT HEADTEACHERS

This chapter deals with the findings from the second group of participants. Just like the participants, including the first group, all the participants in this particular group are committed Christians. However, whereas the first group was exclusively made up of Catholic headteachers, the participants included in this group identify with different Protestant denominations in England. The chapter commences with a section (5.1) that provides some essential information on the personal and professional profiles of this second group of participants that serves as a backdrop. The following section (5.2) is organised around four key themes and provides an overview of the findings relative to this group of Protestant participants. Following the section on the research findings on the group as a whole, two carefully selected vignettes provide detailed information about two specific participants. Whilst section 5.3 discusses the findings relative to Janet, headteacher of Chesterworth Church School, section 5.4 presents this chapter's second vignette and focuses on Timothy, principal of Telchester City Academy. These vignettes are numbered 3 and 4 to avoid confusion with vignettes 1 and 2 in chapter 4. Both vignettes follow a similar structure and focus on the findings relative to the four key themes relative to the research questions. They provide thick descriptions and insights into the meaning that Janet and Timothy attributed to their experience as educational leaders. The following section (5.5) discusses the findings and wraps up the contents of the chapter. To conclude the chapter, a summary of its contents is provided.

5.1 Introduction to participants and their context

This group of participants comprises six Protestant tradition headteachers working in Christian educational institutions. All six Protestant participants shared some unifying factors. For instance, all participants had similar characteristics in terms of age, nationality, broad religious affiliation and degree of religious commitment. Geographically, the six schools were located in the North of England, although not in close proximity. The main difference between the participants, however, resided in the type of school that they led. Whilst four participants worked in small independent fee-paying Christian faith schools, the other two headteachers worked in much larger, public-funded Christian ethos academies. Another aspect contributing to a degree of variation between all six participants is their Ofsted report which ranged from Outstanding to Inadequate. Specific information about the context of all participants can be found in table 5.1 below.

Table 5. 1 Key information relevant to the profile of Protestant participants and their contexts

Professional Profile		School Profile		
Participant	Role	Institution	Context	Ofsted Rating
Dennis	Headteacher	Wilfred Hill Christian School	Non-selective co-educational private school in the north of England; funded by parental fees; strong Christian identity; inner-city context; 47% of children in the area live in poverty*; around 150 four to sixteen-year-old pupils; ethnically diverse; approximately 75% of pupils come from Christian families who do not always live near the school.	Good (2)
Alan	Headteacher	Pullburn Mission School	Non-selective co-educational private school in the north of England; funded by parental fees; strong Christian identity; inner-city context; 35% of children in the area live in poverty*; around 60 four to sixteen-year-old pupils; ethnically diverse; only a quarter of pupils come from Christian families.	Requires Improvement (3)
Arthur	Headteacher	Moorside Christian Education Centre	Non-selective co-educational private school in the northwest of England; funded by parental fees; strong Christian identity; urban context; 33% of children in the area live in poverty*; around 100 three to sixteen-year-old pupils; most pupils of white British heritage; approximately half of the pupils come from Christian families.	Good (2)
Janet	Headteacher	Chesterworth Church School	Non-selective co-educational private school in the north of England; funded by parental fees; strong Christian identity; inner-city context; 35% of children in the area live in poverty*; around 70 four to sixteen-year-old pupils; ethnically diverse; most pupils come from Christian families who do not always live near the school.	Good (2)
Ronald	Principal	Redrock Achievement College	Large co-educational secondary school and sixth form in the north of England; member of a Christian-ethos multi-academy trust; weak Christian identity; 37% of children in the area live in poverty*; most pupils of white British heritage; most pupils not Christians.	Inadequate (4)
Timothy	Principal	Telchester City Academy	Large co-educational secondary school and sixth form in the north of England; member of a Christian-ethos multi-academy trust; weak Christian identity; 38% of children in the area live in poverty*; most pupils of white British heritage; most pupils not Christians.	Outstanding (1)

*As in 2019/20. Source: End Child Poverty (2021)

5.2 Overall findings

Key values

This second group of participants also shared key values that are applicable to them and their organisations. This subsection describes the four most important of these values and the meaning that the participants attribute to them. The four main moral values for this second group of participants are imitation, confidence, passion and humility. The first key value is the value of imitation (Shenkar, 2010), which in this context relates to the example of Christ as a moral agent (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 John 3:16; John 13:34). Arthur mentioned that “we value what our Lord did, and we use Him as an example”. This desire to imitate Christ is expressed in many ways, but one of the most interesting is the way that all participants described how part of their mission was to present the Christian worldview in the same way that Jesus presented the Gospel: this is, on its own merits and without coercion or violent subjugation. Then, the pupils can make an informed decision with respect to the Christian religion. For example, Alan mentioned that one of his priorities was to “encourage pupils to explore, to assess and to evaluate the Christian faith for themselves...it’s all about their own personal encounter and experience with God and us providing the context for that, but it is up to them which way they choose”. This value synthesises the participants’ desire to share ‘the Good News’ and still act respectfully towards their pupils.

The second value is confidence, or more specifically, confidence in the trustworthiness of God and in the merits of Christianity (John 14:1; Romans 15:13). The participants believe that their role as headteachers is a worthy task because their leadership contributed to the education and improvement of their pupils' life chances and a demonstration of the efficacy of these principles. In their view, God is also the ultimate reason for their careers as well as the source of all true security and strength. There is a belief that the Christian message is as applicable today as it has always been. Ronald explained that his confidence in Christianity is expressed at Redrock Achievement College by applying biblical principles to “everyday examples, bringing things to a more modern context and how to answer the big questions of life”. Similarly, Janet explained that “the reason why children should behave in a certain way is because that’s what the Bible says, God said that if we live in His ways, we will prosper”. Ultimately, it became clear that for this group of headteachers, confidence in God is paramount.

The third value is courage (Colossians 3:23; Matthew 6:21; Philippians 4:6). This is applicable to all the participants, although it was especially pertinent to the headteachers of the four participating independent schools. Given the explicit Christian model and dependency on parental fees, these schools had to contend with a degree of societal mistrust due to their religious character and serious financial challenges. For instance, Dennis explained that “often there is received wisdom that is culturally set or within the profession that dictates how I should respond, and sometimes, I feel that God gives me a different way to respond, which is less orthodox”. Daring to go against what is generally perceived as ‘good practice’ can be difficult to defend, especially in a post-Christian society that is often suspicious of behaviour influenced by strong religious beliefs. Arthur explained that he gladly left a secure “wonderful job” in the public sector to become the headteacher of an independent Christian school for half of his previous salary, no pension and no guarantee of continuity because he was convinced that it was the right thing to do. He expressed not having “a single regret” despite all these difficulties.

Finally, the fourth value is the value of humility, which is the attitude that characterises and envelops their personal and professional lives. In relation to God, humility recognises the inevitability of human shortcomings and their need for embracing a trusting dependence upon Him (James 4:10). In relation to others, Christian humility is linked to the concept of service as an attitude that binds all human beings together (Proverbs 11:2; Ephesians 4:2). This was very well represented by Dennis, who expressed his belief in the necessity of service by all the community members. For example, he expressed that older pupils at Wilfred Hill School would regularly engage with younger students to help them read and make progress. During the interview, Dennis was wearing casual clothing as he had been working with the caretaker and some volunteering students sweeping up slippery dead leaves from the yard just a few minutes before. In his opinion, “not glamorous” activities such as sweeping leaves are as important as any other dimension of his leadership. Alan has a similar perception, and he describes himself “as a servant; somebody who enables and facilitates”.

For these Protestant headteachers, values play a very important role. For them, these values generally come from their own experience and are not so much bequeathed from parental pressure or from an external organisation. Of course, these often are a combination of the interpretation of religious values, often combined with the current interpretation of professional values (see Roberts, 2019) and the result of the unique relationship (Bauer and Erdogan, 2015) they have with the rest of the school community.

Main influences for those values

There are four main sources of influence on those values. The main one is the participants' faith. The whole group clearly believed in a strong connection between their faith and their moral stance. Dennis explained:

I became a Christian as a teenager. I wasn't particularly capable at school. I left with quite low grades, having tried quite hard. So I had to learn that my significance wasn't necessarily in what I could or couldn't do, but in my own value and significance as an individual and, as a Christian, I found that in God, through forgiveness and acceptance... those Christian values shaped my personal values as a teacher and a headteacher.

Dennis admitted that his faith made him reconsider his whole worldview and convinced him of the need to work diligently for the sake of every student, regardless of natural ability. His faith made it easier to admit to his former academic shortcomings as he perceives them as a testimony of the positive influence of this conversion and as a tool to benefit others. Similarly, Alan shared that one of the reasons he did well in school was because he discovered Christianity at the age of eight years old. Unbeknownst to his parents, he had started reading a New Testament, and he discovered the importance of the metaphysical dimension of reality, governed by an all-powerful and all-loving God that valued certain principles above others. Alan carried those convictions throughout his personal and professional life.

The second most important source of influence for this group was their upbringing. They all expressed gratitude to their parents and described their childhoods as largely positive. For example, Alan recognised that he owed his parents "a huge amount". However, their family experience was not always linked to faith. For example, Janet and Timothy grew up in very committed Christian families that introduced the principles and values of Christianity to them from an early age, whilst other participants related indifference or even antagonism against Christianity on the part of their parents. Arthur explained vehemently that his parents were not Christians and that he and his family were, in his words, "firmly in the kingdom of darkness". However, it is interesting that

from a Christian perspective and irrespective of their parents' faith or lack thereof, they all showed genuine appreciation for their parents' efforts and influence. This could be motivated by the biblical command to respect one's parents but also an acknowledgement that if they now know better, as in the case of Arthur, it is purely because of God's grace.

The third source of influence came from their contact with people involved in schools in both Christian and secular fields who functioned as role models in their lives. Alan described how he was heavily influenced by two previous chairs of governors. One of them was described as "an outgoing guy with a big sense of humour who tries to win people over". By contrast, his other role model was a more authoritarian figure who had a "hard-nosed approach" and who helped Alan to expect high standards from his staff and pupils. Dennis described how he was influenced by the work of a female headteacher in a struggling school who had great ability in "turning issues around". Although this "superhead [sic]" was not a Christian, Dennis could not help but to be impressed by her as she had genuine zeal in improving children's life chances through education. This is one instance where a positive example gave Dennis a desire and the tools to become an effective leader himself (see Kouzes and Posner, 2007).

The last source of influence was specific books on leadership. All the participants acknowledged their leadership is a very complex process that requires the integration of practical skills, self-reflection and the ability to learn from other people's experiences. They acknowledged that gaining access to other people's experience of leadership can be difficult if the intention is to witness the process 'in the flesh'. However, they all agreed that there is excellent information available in books. Some of these books relate to leadership more broadly, and others are written by Christian authors with a Christian perspective in mind. Concerning the former, Ronald conceded that his leadership had been influenced by leadership books written by secular politicians and managers, although he recognises that "you can't apply all of it to your situation". From his perspective, all the contents from the book need to be filtered through a Christian understanding that fits the context of a secondary school in the north of England. Dennis explained his experience reading a book on Christian leadership:

I had a period in my life when I had an internal struggle. Somebody recommended me a book that I took away with me. I reflected on it, and the insight of this Christian [author]

became a quite important tool in working through some of my problems...he was just analysing why Christians failed in their leadership tasks, and I found out that it spoke into my life quite skilfully.

What is significant in this case is that Dennis' willingness to accept that he was struggling opened up an opportunity to learn about successful Christian leadership through the written pages of an author with experience in the field. It is also interesting that Dennis mentioned how acting on a friend's recommendation positively affected his life. Furthermore, he demonstrated gratefulness to his friend for making such a good recommendation. Timothy expressed a similar experience when he explained that "when somebody recommends me something, I really try to read it on the basis that there is a good reason why they are recommending it". In both cases, there is an element of humility and trust in the opinion of other people that ultimately benefit them. By reading books, one can establish an indirect relationship with the author and extract the relevant information that is pertinent to their case. This is another example of how relationships, albeit indirect, can be beneficial in creating mental leadership models that function ethically.

Application of values

It was evident for all the participants that the application of values was as important as the values themselves. Three factors facilitate the application of values: working with other Christians, having a personal relationship with God and working in a school community where these values are appreciated. Concerning the first factor, one of the most important aspects was having the chance of working with other Christian colleagues. This is especially important in the case of the independent Christian schools where all staff is expected to be Christian. In the words of Arthur, "you can call it a core occupational requirement". In the case of principals of schools with a Christian ethos (i.e. Ronald and Timothy), there is no such expectation, although staff is required to be sympathetic towards the school's ethos. In any case, the opinion of the majority of participants was that working with other Christians or, at least, with people who are sympathetic to the Christian faith contributes to the successful application of moral values. The reason is that this 'soft uniformity' in terms of belief helps establish a common language and a moral baseline applicable to every member. Although there was an acknowledgement that it was difficult to

quantify the size of the effect, it would make sense that such circumstance has an appreciable positive effect on the application of Christian values.

The second factor that facilitates the application of values is the personal relationship that all the leaders have with God and the sense of accountability that they have developed over time due to having a firmly held personal faith. The leaders feel compelled to act ethically, not only because it is a professional or legal requirement, but because it is their unavoidable duty as practising Christians. In the words of Alan, “I strive to be accountable to people because I am accountable to God, and the best way to show my accountability to God is to demonstrate how I am accountable to others”. This spiritual discipline helps put the leaders in the right ‘frame of mind’ to act ethically in every interaction when dealing with pupils, families, staff, or the authorities. As expressed by Dennis, “we would all want to teach with a clear conscience towards God in our handling of our students and our colleagues and parents”. Arthur described the situation as a reasonable “double whammy”, which they all accepted as part of being Christian leaders

The third and final factor contributing to the successful application of values was establishing good relations with all school community members. Sometimes sharing religious convictions with others and being determined to always act in good faith is not enough to guarantee the successful application of moral values. All the participants explained that the one factor that unified the community was having strong and sincere relationships with every school community member. Alan explained that it is “through relationships that I build trust and understanding and mutual respect. It’s the quality and the strength of those relationships that is often the most successful vehicle for me to transmit those values”. This is particularly important when staff do not share the same beliefs as the leader. For instance, Ronald explained that “to lead effectively you need hearts and minds, you have to have both. How do you win hearts unless you’re trying to be winsome and speak to people and get to know them, meeting them at their need?” Ronald works from the assumption that to make schools effective, leaders have to ‘win hearts’. This process would be impossible without having a relationship based on trust and care to begin with. Again, the value of finding common ground (Glover and Coleman, 2005) and working in a community governed by Christian principles was considered of capital importance in terms of establishing relationships where there is a common understanding about what truly is fundamental, non-negotiable and immutable versus what is expedient, circumstantial and transient.

The factors that affect the application of values can be divided into external and internal. These hindering external factors include the often deleterious influence of the current education model in England. One example is the pressure that educational authorities put on schools and that indirectly promote some values that are barely compatible with the school's values. In the opinion of Janet, “the current education system is driving the stress that children are under...it's causing children to fear failure even more”.

Some of the internal factors were shared by Arthur, who explained that although all staff is highly committed to the Christian message, this could be a problem too for several reasons: one of them is that some members of staff spend too much time talking to the pupils rather than teaching maths, English or chemistry. He describes his experience when “sometimes I walk into a classroom and according to a timetable that should be an English lesson taking place, but it is not”. Another instance is when the staff gives personal opinions about faith issues to students. Because of the cordial relationship that pupils and staff enjoy at Moorside Christian Education Centre, this is not a rare occurrence, but Arthur agrees that can be irresponsible and unwise.

Ronald explained that sometimes he found that some staff in his school would use these values disingenuously. For instance, he mentioned one occasion in which he was confronted by a colleague who accused Ronald of hypocrisy for not applying the Christian value of compassion. Ronald noticed that this value was brought to the fore in the conversation only because it benefited this specific member of staff. In other words, this teacher used Ronald's values against him for spurious reasons. Ronald admitted that although he was not surprised, he was disappointed in the situation.

Other participants considered that the main hindrance to the values is their own leadership. This is not cost by negligence, ignorance or deliberate malpractice but due to their own inadequacies. Dennis explained that ethical leadership is sometimes absent because of his:

Own weaknesses and limitations...my own lack of insight and understanding and, sometimes, my own lack of courage to do what is right. Sometimes, I just don't have the wisdom to know what to do, though I do seek it through my relationship with God.

This is a very frank, although not entirely unusual amongst Christian leaders, admission from Dennis. This is significant because it reveals both significantly high levels of self-deprecation (see Ten Elshof, 2009) and high standards in terms of personal ethical thinking (see Needham-Penrose and Friedman, 2012). As a consequence, because Dennis is aware that he can ‘get it wrong’, the organisation is indirectly protected against the likelihood of unethical leadership.

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

There was an apparent distinction between the group, including the four headteachers of independent schools and the group of principals in Christian ethos schools. Whilst the latter led much larger, more robust and resilient organisations with a weak Christian identity, the former felt that they often had to face dilemmas based either on the characteristics of their chosen school model (e.g., funding), their explicit Christian identity or the behaviour of their students.

The issue of staff wages was consistently mentioned as a grave problem by all the participating headteachers in independent schools. These schools depend on parents/carers paying fees or carrying out duties in the school for their survival. This means that if the number of students drops for any reason, the whole organisation becomes highly financially unstable and vulnerable. In order to minimise this situation and maximise savings, their teachers agree to be paid less than half what they would get in the public sector. This is also applicable to the area of professional development. Arthur explained that:

As an independent school with no funding in any way, shape or form from the government...we depend on ourselves, and we can become pretty insular. I used to be an advanced skills teacher, very cutting-edge because of training, training, training. Once I became an employee of the school, very quickly, I became deskilled.

Once again, this is a very frank admission that reveals one of the main vulnerabilities of this type of school. The way that most of these headteachers cope with these situations is by trying to reduce any superfluous spending whilst praying for God to allow the project to continue.

Another problematic area is the issue of the schools’ strong religious identity, which often clashes with the current *zeitgeist*. For instance, Arthur mentioned

the issue of homosexuality. He admitted having difficulties finding a satisfactory approach to the issue as the traditional Christian understanding of such behaviour is often at odds with the attitude now espoused by current educational authorities, many parents and even, in recent years, some progressive Christian denominations (see Bean and Martinez, 2014; Ramsay, 2018) that serve individuals who identify as Christian and gay (Harris *et al.*, 2020). This is one example of clashes between secular values and traditional Christian values, as previously discussed in section 1.4 of the introduction. This issue could prove of existential importance to the institution, but it does not seem likely that the headteachers of these schools would compromise on their beliefs or the belief of those who conform to the school community. This attitude could be described as a rejection of the ‘subcontractor’ leadership model as described by Day, Harris and Hadfield (2000), where decisions are external to the organisation and responsibility is often shifted by some leaders.

Finally, one area that sometimes can be problematic is the issue of the behaviour of particular students and, more specifically, the way in which the leadership of the school should approach the issue. Dennis shared a fascinating story that illustrated a situation in which Dennis had to apply his wisdom to resolve a situation. A pastor in a big church in the north of England called Dennis and asked him to take his daughter in as she was on the verge of being expelled from a local school. The girl had developed a confrontational and antagonistic attitude against both her parents and the Christian faith, but, reluctantly, she agreed to join Wilfred Hill Christian School as a better alternative to being home schooled. After only a few weeks, she was sent on work experience to a beauty salon, and after a few days, the owner informed the school that she would not be taking the student back for the rest of the work experience week. The reason was that some stock had been stolen since the girl had started to work for her, and she was convinced that the student had been taking these with her without permission. Dennis described how he decided to confront the student firmly but without unnecessary harshness. They agreed for her to apologise to the owner, ask for her forgiveness and return the stolen goods. Dennis explained that the girl fulfilled her promise, and the owner agreed to take her back. The situation was resolved in the end as Dennis described:

The girl apologised to me when she came back to school. It gave me the opportunity to talk about some of the real issues in her life, and fortunately, this episode was a real turning point for her. She changed

and discovered a real faith for herself. I felt at the time that I had been able to demonstrate a Christian definition of mercy, namely that she had not been punished as her behaviour had deserved and also offer her grace in giving her an opportunity that her behaviour had not deserved. I think this real act of mercy and grace spoke volumes to her, and she was able to change.

Rather than having her expelled from the school, Dennis opted to run the risk of giving the student a second chance. He decided to adopt a completely different approach that could have backfired, but, fortunately, it did not. Dennis expressed how these undesirable situations sometimes can result in personal growth for all parties involved as long as the right values are applied consistently. This is one example of the belief that acting ethically and telling the truth in a deontological manner is eventually beneficial to all parties involved (see Peterson, 2018).

Although a good understanding of the group as a unit is important, in-depth understanding of rich descriptions, concrete experiences and narratives of lived experience (Langdridge, 2007) of carefully selected participants is equally significant to meet the requirements for robust understanding within the limitation of an EdD thesis. Analysis of two participants is therefore included in two different vignettes that serve as illustrations.

5.3 Vignette 3: Janet

Janet's key values

One of the most important values for Janet was the value of collaboration. This value has emerged from her experience in an independent school that encourages and promotes parental engagement. All parents/carers are expected to either support the school via payment of monthly fees or, alternatively, by engaging in unpaid work such as cleaning, maintenance work, teaching or delivering educational sessions in the school. In Janet's opinion, parents are wholly responsible for the upbringing of their own children, and because home-schooling is not always possible or desirable (e.g., lack of interaction with other children), Chesterworth Church School provides a suitable alternative: explicit Christian education delivered by Christian teachers and parents. Due to the very small numbers of pupils and staff (i.e. eight full-time teachers plus volunteers), interaction and collaboration between Janet, her staff, and the families involved

are regular, cordial and fluid. Janet showed her satisfaction when she described that, unlike in many secular schools, her staff do not think that “senior management are [sic] the enemy”. This is congruent with the idea proposed by (Greenleaf, 1977, 1998) that the effective leader ought to engage in a voluntary cycle where his or her leadership is the result of an iterative process of listening, reflection and action.

The second value that is most important for Janet is the value of determination. Janet agrees that working in a successful, small school where conflict is rare is a privilege. However, this is not to say that Janet’s experience of leadership is trouble-free. The most obvious one is that some people in society (including some Christians) and authorities often are suspicious of the school’s explicit Christian identity. Janet is aware that taking uncompromising stances where Christian thinking pervades the whole schooling experience makes the school vulnerable to criticism. For example, Janet explained that she stands by her decision to teach that:

Marriage between a man and a woman is what is right but at the same time saying to [the pupils] that the law of the land says that you can also marry if you are two men or two ladies... whether Ofsted will be able to cope with that, we’ll see when they get here.

In her view, compromising the traditional understanding of marriage and other issues is not possible because acting otherwise would be a travesty of her convictions and a breach of parental trust. However, Janet was clear in her acknowledgement that 21st century England is not a theocracy and that English society allows people to have different and, at times, conflicting viewpoints.

A perhaps less controversial demonstration of determination was her willingness to sacrifice many of the benefits that the vast majority of qualified teachers in the UK enjoy for the privilege of teaching in a context where her principles are less likely to be compromised. One prominent example was the fact that her wage as a headteacher of a school is much lower than what it would be if she worked in the public sector. Another example is the lack of financial support for herself and her family. Once she retires, she will have “absolutely nothing apart from the state pension”. Depending on fluctuating parental fees often means that commodities such as pension schemes for staff are not always possible. However, it is important to point out that the fact that both the headteacher and other staff

receive very similar salaries can contribute to establishing a sense of community and mutual trust that can, in return, reinforce her leadership.

The third and final value is the value of transparency. She described how she was willing to use her personal experience to show vulnerability and encourage others to speak up about their problems and to seek help when necessary. Janet provided fascinating information when she was having serious marital problems:

People in the school knew that that was happening, even the children knew that that was happening, and I had been saying to the children of the need to trust God whenever and whatever the circumstances...so when my personal life started to fall apart, I said that I wouldn't fall apart because I trusted God. Then the children and other teachers looked at me and said that even when life was very tough, I still believed that God was in control.

Her willingness to be humble and honest was greatly appreciated by everyone in the school community and served as a template of behaviour for difficult situations that affect the lives of every human being.

Influences on Janet's values

Three different sources of influence have shaped Janet's values. The main source of influence is her Christian faith. Janet was born into a committed Christian family who attended a small Congregational church. She described herself as a "fairly compliant child" who felt comfortable inheriting the faith of her parents. Nevertheless, Janet questioned her faith when she was at university and tried a completely secular lifestyle for a while. After some time exploring "what the world had to offer", she discovered that she felt truly herself when she was following the Christian faith. At that point, Janet recommitted her life to God and continued being a Christian until the present time. Janet revealed that apart from that very brief period, her submission to God and His principles, as revealed in the Bible, have been a constant in her life and the lens through which she has interpreted all her life.

The second source is the influence that two individuals had in her life: her husband and the previous headteacher of Chesterworth Church School. Her husband, a convert to Christianity from agnosticism, became convinced that

“Christians should educate their own children”. This belief was shared with Janet, who, at the time, was a teacher in the public sector. After some serious reading and careful consideration, Janet agreed to leave her job and join a newly created independent Christian school in Chesterworth as a more professional alternative to home-schooling. Furthermore, they both decided to send all their six children to the independent Christian school. The second most influential person in her life was the founder and previous headteacher of the school. According to Janet, she was highly influenced by this “very strong person” who had enough energy and dedication to teaching, leading the school and being involved in whatever manual work was required in the school facilities. From this person, Janet learnt the meaning of commitment to the institution, although she agreed that her leadership style was rather different in some aspects.

Finally, the third source of influence is the school itself. The influence of the school was perfectly summarised when she explained that “the school has formulated my values more than the other way around”. It became evident that Janet does not conceptualise this school as a mere workplace but rather a life project in which God is trusted “in all circumstances” and where Christian values are promoted and applied consistently:

If we’re representing God to our children and society, we have to represent the best that we can get, really. If we do that, we don’t have to panic, we don’t have to get upset, we don’t have to get worried.

In this short section, Janet included the three values mentioning the previous subsection: determination when presenting their responsibility towards God, their pupils and society; collaboration when requesting a joint effort to give their best and transparency when acknowledging that insecurities and worries are real and part of the human condition.

Janet’s implementation of values

In Janet’s opinion, the most important factor that facilitates her ethical approach to leadership is the excellent relationships that she has with the rest of the staff. In her experience, due to the small number of teachers working in the school, there is no need to make a distinction between senior leadership and the rest. Janet perceives herself as a teacher who has volunteered to be taking headship responsibilities. It is a similar situation with the governors who work very closely

with both Janet and the rest of the staff. Dissent is highly infrequent, and parents are always aware of what is going on in the school. This is further facilitated by the fact that many of the parents actually have a role to play within the organisation.

A more complex situation is the factors that hinder the application of the values. In Janet's opinion, the most common source of difficulty in applying these values does not come from within the organisation or from the families but from the different education authorities. Janet explained that every school is suspected to complete a large amount of paperwork in the shape of policies and because Chesterworth Church School cannot afford to employ clerical staff, she has to undertake all these responsibilities in addition to teaching half of her timetable. This situation would seem unfair but inevitable due to the chosen school model.

Janet was very explicit in pinpointing the difficulties of working with Ofsted. Her experience of working with Ofsted has not been all that positive despite the fact that "we have a really good school here, staff are happy, parents are happy, students are happy, and results are great for GCSE and well above national, local averages". This is so because of the prescriptive nature of Ofsted and their need to ensure rigour and standardise expectations for all schools in England. For instance, Janet commented on the immense amount of time needed to perform, in her opinion, unnecessary staff appraisals. Any time spent doing all these "tick a box" exercises is time that staff cannot be teaching. Janet also showed some displeasure in the fact that the school is expected to pay thousands of pounds in order to be inspected by Ofsted. She found solace in the possibility of making monthly payments towards the inspection rather than having to pay the full amount upfront. For Janet, trying to appease external agencies such as Ofsted is often an inconvenience and a distraction that does not help teachers to feel confident or to value what they do, two crucial elements of effective, ethical leadership (Northouse, 2020).

As the last factor that hinders the application of values, Janet mentioned the need to revise all the school's policies looking for terms that could be controversial. For example, she explained that the school website mentions that the school wants to be 'radical' in the sense of educating children who are willing to put the well-being of others before their own. However, she recognised that describing your institution as 'radical' can be unwise in the current climate. Something similar applies to another message in their literature where the school mentioned their intention to 'put God's kingdom's first', which can be also be misinterpreted as a call for civil antagonism.

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

Janet distinguished between serious moral dilemmas and disappointing situations. One example of the latter is that, although there are many “local people knocking on the door”, she cannot accommodate local children interested in joining the school unless their parents/carers agree to “paying something, even if it is a very small amount” or contributing to school life. Although she acknowledged her disappointment at the situation, she did not conceptualise this circumstance as “a moral dilemma” but as an unfortunate consequence of the model under which the school operates. However, Janet agrees that she regularly faces one moral dilemma: the fact that school staff is gravely disadvantaged when compared to her colleagues working in the public sector. The most obvious example of this was the fact that teachers, on average, received about 40% of the wages that they would receive if they worked in a public-funded or private school. Janet explained with great regret that her staff “can’t afford to buy their own houses, and [have to] live almost like students”. Although the situation had improved slightly at the time of the interview (e.g., the school had been able to provide staff with a “small pension”), she recognised that the whole situation was unsatisfactory. Another problem for the staff at Chesterworth Church School was the lack of professional progression. There are only three professional categories in the school (i.e. teacher, deputy head and headteacher), and even if teachers eventually become the headteacher of the school, the difference in wages would be minimal and “just a lot more responsibility”.

Another dilemma mentioned by Janet was when a nonpaid volunteer teacher had lost her ability to teach well due to old age. In that case, Janet had to protect the best interest of the students and, after a period of support, tell the teacher not to re-join the school in September. In her view, it was not a case of financial difficulty (the teacher never received a salary) but the fact that the teacher was clearly underperforming. Janet agreed that communicating her decision to the teacher felt very difficult because this member of staff had been serving the school faithfully for many years. In terms of the way that all these issues are dealt with, Janet explained that a combination of prayer and genuine conversation generally lead to a satisfactory resolution. Janet believes that the fact that all members of staff are Christians contributes to a quicker resolution.

Finally, Janet mentioned that although the school cannot afford to send their staff to receive CPD, this is minimised to some degree by the fact that other independent Christian schools in the same trust regularly offer free training on

different aspects and subjects. That display of generosity is greatly appreciated by the whole community.

5.4 Vignette 4: Timothy

Timothy's key values

The central values of Timothy are threefold: humility, compassion and integrity as demonstrated practically by Jesus Christ. The first one is humility, a value that he considers to be of most importance. Timothy admits that although humility is not something that “you ever reach”, he pointed out that humility should be the one attitude that characterises his approach to life in general and educational leadership in particular. This understanding emerges from his conviction that any gifting that human beings might possess is only the fulfilment of what was granted by an external source (e.g., God, parents, education received), albeit in potential format. For example, in the instances when he has achieved something considered praiseworthy (e.g., remarkable academic success for all students in a very socially deprived area), he considers that it is all down to acting on God’s plan for his life and making full use of any talent given to him *a priori*. Timothy also relates the principle of humility to having “a servant heart” by putting the interests of others before his own in order to accomplish his mission of training his pupils to be “future leaders” willing to serve. In his view, humility is the overall attitude that surrounds a circular process where humble leadership produces more humble leaders that act responsibly and eventually contribute to the improvement of the lives of others. This is congruent with Greenleaf’s (1977) theory of Servant Leadership that effective leadership is based on the principle that service to others, as opposed to self, is the first and fundamental motivator for the action of the leader.

Timothy acknowledged that “there is a very strong moral purpose at the heart of the school” as the vast majority of his pupils come from very disadvantaged backgrounds. He made this clear when he claimed that:

The school serves the most deprived part of our catchment area. Telchester city Academy exists to serve the needs of people in difficult circumstances by giving an educational opportunity to those who are in the most difficult situation to start with.

Timothy is aware that growing up in such areas present added difficulties to families and young people (see Crenna-Jennings, 2018), and he understands that the main objective of his leadership is to ensure that his academy contributes to the improvement of the life chances of all his students in spite of context or personal challenges. In his view, the moral value of compassion plays a significant role in his attitude towards the leadership of the academy in two ways: on the one hand, compassion is demonstrated by the fact that the *status quo* had been unsatisfactory in the past leading to the systemic neglect and underperformance of the majority of pupils. On the other hand, compassion is also necessary to temper his very high expectations of students and staff. Timothy stated that “we live in a fallen world”, and therefore mistakes are inevitable. However, compassion puts these high standards into context and contributes to a healthy culture in which unnecessary harshness is avoided. He reckons that real changes to the lives of students depend on finding a good balance between high expectations and genuine care. This nurturing of all individuals and their potential provides further evidence of the significance of the idea of ‘Servant Leadership’ (Greenleaf, 1977) to actual practice.

Finally, the last of the most significant values for Timothy is the value of integrity. In his view, overarching moral values are not dependent on context or consensus but factual and objective reference points “built-in within the fabric of the universe”. From his viewpoint, integrity is the level to which one’s life matches up to a set of external objective standards, so “the way that you present yourself and the way that you really are inside are one and the same”. Therefore, it is imperative for any leader to establish perfect alignment between actions and words in order to gain the trust and respect of staff, pupils and families, even when these might not necessarily share his Christian worldview.

Influences on Timothy’s values

There are four sources of influence on his values: his personal faith, his family, former colleagues and books that he regularly reads and studies. The most significant source of influence in terms of moral values has undoubtedly been his Christian faith. Timothy shared that he was determined to “bring glory to God” in everything that he did, following the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. Although he mentioned that at some point in his life “when those values weren’t so precious... and drifted a little bit”, he admitted that he realised eventually that it was vital for him to go back to his faith with a fresh, first-hand perspective which showed that his values:

Have become mine over time... Over time, they have become precious to me. I can now understand why they are important and seek to affirm others in them on the basis of my own experience. I know I am blessed in that regard.

From these words, it could be deduced that for Timothy, faith benefits from the validation from personal experience and sincere self-reflection. In this case, he trusts these Christian values because he had first-hand experience of how the adoption of a Christian worldview has been instrumental for the well-being of others as well as how it has benefited him spiritually. It is very interesting that he pointed out that he had to question his faith for a while “in order to come back” to them eventually. It was clear that after that soul-searching experience, he concluded that his belief in the Christian message is justified and worthy of utmost consideration.

The second source of influence was his family, both the family in which he was born into and the new family created when he married his wife. Concerning the latter, Timothy revealed how his wife taught him highly beneficial social skills and the value of seeking to understand first and to be understood after. Concerning the former, Timothy expressed great admiration for his parents. Not only they introduced him to Christianity, but they also set an admirable example of moral behaviour, which he described as “a wonderful gift”. When describing his upbringing and family life, Timothy shared an insightful description of his parents’ life choices:

My parents were missionaries in a foreign mission field. They lived in a situation of considerable poverty. My father had two Oxford University degrees, and he gave up what would have been a very comfortable life to go and serve in a very needy situation and maintained enormous integrity throughout a forty-year career as a missionary.

In this short snippet, Timothy expressed in subtle terms his admiration for the values of his parents, which incidentally seem almost identical to his own: their decision to leave the UK to serve others in a foreign land (i.e. compassion), voluntary rejection of the comforts associated with having a distinguished career

(i.e. humility) and the determination to continue doing it despite obvious hardships for four decades (i.e. integrity).

Thirdly, he acknowledged the influence of two of his predecessors. Although both were very different from each other, they shared “a passionate commitment to high standards and a refusal to make excuses for children from difficult backgrounds”. Timothy admitted that he became convinced of the necessity of continuing the “culture of aspiration” first developed by these two headteachers. The academy’s sustained academic success over the years is proof that his commitment to excellence in the face of adversity has paid off. Finally, the fourth source of influence was the serious study of available literature on educational leadership which can be linked to the value of humility (see Lauren and Henson, 2021) and a desire to obtain wisdom. He also demonstrated an appreciation for frugality and insight when he mentioned that such readings are usually “incredibly good value for money. You can buy a book for £5.99, and it might contain quite possibly the sum total of what somebody has taken a whole lifetime to discover”.

Timothy’s implementation of values

Timothy mentioned that the practical implementation of moral values at Telchester city Academy was helped by two factors. The first one was that having and utilising a precise vernacular language about core moral values amongst staff, pupils made the process simpler and more effective. The second aspect was the reinforcement of the understanding that all staff ought to have of the biblical narratives, albeit from a purely ethical perspective. In other words, although the more spiritual/metaphysical aspects are not imposed by the leadership of the school, there is an expectation for all employees (regardless of their personal beliefs) to respect and promote relevant Christian values in their job. Developing such understanding not only contributes to the embodiment of the values in their work but also provides a tool for all employees to understand the headteacher’s motivations.

However, one aspect that seems unique in the case of Timothy was his calm, secure and almost nonchalant approach to potential facilitating and hindering factors. It was noticed that he seemed significantly less fazed by this issue than first anticipated. He opined that what indeed facilitates the application of values was the application of values. In other words, when one leader is sincere and consistent in the application of strong, sincerely believed moral values, the factors that could make this application fail to diminish significantly. This is an

original and refreshing approach to educational leadership ethics that transpired through the whole interview. This was demonstrated when he explained his approach to accountability. For Timothy, his first accountability was to God. He believed that God had provided an opportunity for him to serve a very underprivileged group of students. He felt both honoured and responsible for the well-being, progress and eventual success of every student in the Academy. Secondly, he felt accountable to the families that had entrusted him with the education of their children. He also saw accountability to families quite favourably. As he himself puts it, “if I make myself accountable to parents, it’s very likely I’ll be serving their children well... I’ll be seeking to do what is in their children’s long-term best interest”. Interestingly, he saw accountability to the current pupils of the academy as less crucial as children often misjudge what is best for them due to their age.

However, what was very surprising was his disregard for educational authorities on the whole and Ofsted in particular. This is particularly remarkable as Telchester City Academy has been consistently classed as ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted for many years. Timothy did not hesitate to declare that he did not feel accountable to the Secretary of State because the children “don’t belong to the State”. He pointed out that he firmly believed that when headteachers feel primarily accountable to the authorities, they are setting themselves for moral and practical failure. In his opinion, this is for two reasons:

First of all, what the State wants is constantly changing. If you are constantly trying to please the State, you’ll find yourself constantly zigzagging rather than pursuing a straight-line course... the other danger of that is that it robs the school from a moral purpose. I think teachers find it very difficult to be enthused by a message that says ‘this is what Ofsted wants; let’s give it to them!’ As a result, a culture of compliance sets in the organisation as opposed to a culture of aspiration.

Given the indisputable success of the academy, this explanation illustrates Timothy’s belief that when a headteacher has solid values and motivations, there is no need to convince others of the merits of the organisation. It is evident that Timothy embraces what Roberts (2019) describes as the need for ethical leaders to be “accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this” (p.10).

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

In his opinion, dealing with moral dilemmas is often a rare occurrence. Of course, he often has to deal with issues that he categorises as “wisdom required” issues, but he considers all these are an integral part of his leadership and dealt with regularly. In line with what was described in the previous subsection, Timothy believed that having high standards and confidence in the moral nature of leadership in every interaction helps to minimise the chances of significant moral conflicts emerging. In his view, “my responsibility to do what is right. Not what is pragmatic or convenient or politically astute”. However, there are instances in which he needs to intervene. Unsurprisingly, this is very often related to human relations between staff. In his own words:

What is difficult is when two of your staff, both of whom you appreciate and admire, fallout, and I have to mediate in that relationship... Where I seek to help is to assist for each other to understand the other and to recognise the wrong failings. It's a difficult process that requires enormous strength.

Timothy's preference for self-reflection, rationality and obedience is evident in this example. Recognition that we are all flawed individuals and that we can all be wrong at some point is fundamental here. Timothy adopted a taxing albeit useful strategy in which he encouraged all parties involved in the conflict to look at each other's perspectives and submit to the principle of reconciliation.

In the case of staff who are Christians, his approach is slightly different because he considers that all Christians have been given specific ‘tools’ to deal with difficult situations, and it is only through neglect or unwillingness to submit that leads to difficult situations. He explained that:

We need to strive for love. I think that, sadly, it's not impossible to be a loveless Christian. I think that us, as Christians, live *so* far below our privileges. The birth right of the Christian, through the Holy Spirit, must be love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (emphasis on the original).

Once again, it became evident that Timothy believes that the inevitable difficulties of life can be resolved through the application of moral values. In his view, it's only when people in general but particularly Christians neglect or ignore these attributes that situations become truly untenable.

Nevertheless, he admitted that during his time as principal, he has struggled with one unresolved dilemma. Very occasionally, certain school activities take place on a Sunday. Based on his beliefs, Timothy disagrees with working on a Sunday, and he admitted that, for that reason, he found such activities objectionable. However, at the same time, he recognised that this situation was a rare occurrence and that it meant "a lot to a lot of people". It could be argued that in those instances, he chooses (not without a certain degree of internal struggle) to sacrifice his own convictions for the sake of others.

5.5 Comparative insights

Key values

In terms of key values, there was a high level of agreement between all the different participants. This was hardly surprising as the theological foundation for the six participants was very similar. The value of imitation, or more precisely the imitation of Christ as depicted in the Gospels, was recurrent and significant. One example of this was demonstrated by the fact that many of the participants chose to describe their experience of values by using biblical quotes or parables. For example, Arthur quoted Jesus directly when explaining his approach to ethics. He explained the meaning that he attributed to the passage in the New Testament when Jesus said that he was the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). From Arthur's perspective, "he was telling us to be like Him and to do in our dealings with people in the same way that He did. If He was kind and compassionate, we must be kind and compassionate too and talk about the love of God". This concept relates to what Dallas Willard (2009) calls "Christlikeness" (p.ix): the voluntary inner and outer transformation of individuals from mere believers into disciples. This was the most defining aspect of their understanding of true morality.

In general, the participants understood the uniqueness of a faith-based interpretation and use of values. This is illustrated by Alan's comment that "we do things differently because this is what God has called us to do". When the participant explained the differences that existed between the institutions and secular institutions in the area, they insisted that the differences were not so

much in the values themselves but in the reasons for the adoption of the values and the role model where these values were demonstrated in the first place. Ronald, for instance, argued that in his role as principal, he defends the academy's values but also "where you can find them perfectly exemplified" (i.e. Jesus). This generally works well because, whatever opinion people have of the Christian faith, most people tend to agree that, at least, Jesus was an irreproachable moral teacher. A related understanding was described by Dennis, who explained that although values such as integrity, honesty or hard work are not exclusively Christian, they find:

Cohesion with the Christian faith because these are the values that Jesus taught and modelled, which is why they are not a random, arbitrary set of values...they come from a person. They were taught by God through a person, Jesus.

Dennis demonstrated that by adhering to the example of Jesus Christ, he was able to provide a coherent rationale that could be shared with staff, pupils, families and authorities. He finds this approach more convincing and persuasive than the mere adoption of values that lack a strong foundation. In other words, his leadership is shaped by the moral principles of the person Jesus Christ as described by Blanchard and Hodges (2008).

Another area in which this group of headteachers seemed united was in their understanding of the pressures brought by external agencies such as Ofsted. Overall, there was a consensus that Ofsted inspections were necessary. For instance, Janet mentioned that Ofsted's motivation to "protect children and safeguarding [sic] for mistakes made in the past" was legitimate and justified. At no point, any of the participants excused themselves or tried to justify their objection to external accountability. However, what was found was a refusal to recognise Ofsted as the only motivator and judge of what actually happens in the school. As a matter of fact, most of these leaders rejected the idea that Ofsted has the right to be considered the main motivator for policy. Naturally, these leaders considered accountability to God as the ultimate responsibility. This accountability was articulated in the shape of accountability to their own conscience but also to senior Christian figures (e.g., chair of governors). This was very clearly acknowledged by Timothy, who dismissed the idea of internal inspections being an adequate motivator for educationalists based on two principles: the constantly changing nature of standards (compared to the security

and stability of acting according to ‘tried and tested’ moral principles) and his rejection of the idea that teachers can be properly motivated by coercion. This is to say that Timothy believed that the reason his school had been successful for many years was that the solid foundation of their moral reasoning and establishing that the main driver for high standards must be personal conviction and desire to serve the students rather than the fear of criticism, missing professional opportunities or losing their job.

Main influences for those values

Although faith is clearly very important for all the participants, there were some similarities and differences in how the participants arrived at their faith. For example, Janet and Timothy agreed that they received their faith initially from their parents. Although their parents’ faith was instrumental in shaping their values in the first instance, it must be noticed that both of them expressed their conviction that they needed to find their own faith once they reached maturity. In other words, they both believed that a faith that is simply inherited from your parents is often not strong enough to last, especially if one desires to pursue leadership positions where their faith is likely to be put to the test regularly. In order to defend, promote and put into practice these Christian values, both Timothy and Janet felt that they had to become convinced of the merit of their faith in the first instance. Timothy mentioned that although he went away from these values for a while, he eventually returned to them because “there was a place to go back to”, spiritually speaking.

Other participants had a completely different experience growing up. Ronald, for example, mentioned how his family had a very inconsistent level of interest in spiritual matters. For the first twelve or thirteen years in his life, religious faith played no role whatsoever in his life, but in the space of three years, both of his parents and himself became active Christians. Ronald lamented not having any Christian input earlier but celebrated the fact that there was a high level of conviction that sustained his family’s faith. By contrast, Dennis and Alan grew up in families in which religion played virtually no role. However, they both described how they had an intuition for the correctness of Christianity and how they converted on their own accord at a relatively early age. The last case was the case of Arthur, who was not a Christian and who attended a church meeting only because it was going to be “a big joke”. It was a big surprise for him when he realised that the people attending the event seemed to be in possession of something that he lacked. He had a very dramatic and “incredible salvation

experience” that evening that convinced him of the necessity of leaving his life of petty criminality behind and dedicated his life in service to others, in his words, for the glory of God.

Some of the participants explained that they had had good experiences working in secular schools. For example, Dennis mentioned that he was deeply impressed by a headteacher who managed to improve the culture and outcomes of the school in a very short time. In his own words, “she wasn’t a person of faith at all, but I did admire her skills and abilities to do well for students and to turn things around”. By contrast, Ronald mentioned his very negative impression of working as a vice-principal of a school with no denominational ties and no explicit ethos:

[There were] no values, nothing. That was horrible. It was horrible because there was no moral bedrock; there were no absolutes. It was all arbitrary. Into the chaos, I tried to bring values, and they were fought against, so I couldn’t stay.

In his view, not only the values of the schools were conspicuous by their absence, but more worryingly, the institution had a culture that was hostile to the questioning of its culture and the adoption of new values. As a consequence, Ronald was particularly opposed to the idea of co-leading a school where its prevailing ethos was one of antagonism and hostility towards the implementation of a solid ethical framework.

Application of values

The factors that facilitated or hindered the application of values changed depending on the type of school involved. In other words, the differences between the leadership experience in terms of the application of values between those participants working in independent Christian schools and those working in Christian-ethos schools was evident. The differences between both models were described by Ronald:

An academy with a Christian ethos is different to a Christian academy. We are an academy with a designated Christian ethos, whereas in a Christian school, you might find Christian parents

seeking to send their children there for receiving Christian education... In terms of the amount of children who come to our school from families from practising backgrounds, it's a relatively small percentage.

Ronald correctly identified that there are differences between both models, some of them significant. Whilst Christian-ethos academies are funded and operate in a very similar way to nondenominational academies (with the exception of having a faith-based foundation for their ethical framework), independent Christian schools prefer to take themselves out of the State system completely in order to gain the freedom to teach in the way they think is best. In the words of Dennis:

Starting a school implies a strong criticism of what is available. To me, because God is such a significant part of my life and my staff's life, we felt that God was conspicuous by its absence in the schools that we were working in... [having] just a religious ethos is not necessarily enough.

Dennis admitted that although working in the public sector is a totally acceptable professional option, he felt that to be able to implement his vision of education and to maintain a much closer relationship with students and their families, he had to found his own school even when this meant potentially serious financial difficulties (i.e. no funding from the government). These schools employ Christian teachers exclusively. These professionals very often seek to engage with students at a deeper level and feel free to embrace a type of education that is explicitly Christian. Very often, these professionals only stay in teaching on the condition of maintaining high levels of personal interaction with students and significant academic freedom (Kauffman, 2010). This need comes full circle as most of the students come from families who demand that type of education and that level of personal engagement. Dennis explained how he sometimes gets invited by parents/carers to go to their homes to watch films or read stories to the children. It seems clear that accepting such invitations would be perceived as highly unwise and unprofessional in any other context. Although there is no expectation for the pupils to have a faith, the majority of them come from Christian families. One obvious consequence of this approach is

that these schools operate, at least to some degree, outside the English educational paradigm whilst the schools with a Christian ethos seem to occupy are more ‘mainstream’ position.

Concerning the Christian-ethos academies, the factors that facilitate the application of values is based on the fact that the leaders always act with high levels of self-discipline in accordance with a strict moral code. Furthermore, because the leaders proactively encourage others to hold them to account in this regard, even non-Christian members of staff have appreciation and respect for the leaders. It is very interesting that the qualitative disparity between leadership and staff in terms of moral accountability is a facilitating factor to the application of values. For example, Ronald explained that “to have guiding principles which are your touchstones for the decision-making” helped significantly. On the other hand, this can also be a source of difficulty. Timothy explained that the application of values was harder when he had to mediate between colleagues who had a dispute. Because Timothy has no real control over the real values of the people involved in the conflict, a positive resolution is not always available.

On a more practical level, however, leading a Christian ethos academy where not all staff is Christian can provide some intellectual stimulation that can be beneficial. Having staff from very diverse backgrounds can contribute to finding solutions and ideas that might have remained invisible to the Christian headteacher otherwise. Adopting such approaches is congruent with transformational leadership theory that encourages this diversity (Lussier and Achua, 2015; Niphadkar, 2017) even at the expense of uniformity.

Finally, with regard to the headteachers in independent Christian schools, the main facilitating factor is the common shared faith between all members of staff, which often leads to having good relations. Arthur, for example, mentioned that in his school, they do things that would seem unusual in other schools:

We pray every day. We meet at a staff meeting every week, and we praise God and take every opportunity to say that things are going to get better and that they are all doing a really good job!

In these schools, the concept of power distance (see Hofstede, 2021) is certainly reduced, leading to a more democratic style that applies to students and staff. Janet commented that although having low wages was problematic, the fact that every teacher got paid the same amount each month helped to create a more

collegial culture that promoted values of collaboration rather than competition. However, this could also be seen as a hindering factor because teachers sometimes can misunderstand this faith-based, more democratic style with an opportunity to take liberties such as taking the time of lessons to do other types of activities, as pointed out by Arthur.

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

The issue of moral dilemmas is one that is also perceived differently by the participants. The headteachers working in smaller independent schools often experience high levels of personal involvement that would be unusual in much larger organisations. One of the consequences of working in institutions with a limited number of staff is that the headteacher often feels compelled to get involved whenever there is an issue with a moral dimension. For example, Dennis shared an instance in which he received a phone call from some parents one evening whilst he was having dinner with his wife and some guests. The reason for the phone call was that one of his pupils had attempted suicide. Dennis left immediately to join the family at the local hospital and remained with them for a significant amount of time, and offered prayer and support. Similar, albeit not as dramatic, were shared by the majority of the headteachers in these smaller schools. It is very interesting that the parents decided to get Dennis involved immediately. In such cases, the headteacher of the school adopts a pastoral role.

Furthermore, these headteachers often get involved in undesirable situations that are, at least partially, a consequence of the school model. For example, it was shared that it was not unusual for parents to get the headteacher involved whenever they cannot afford the fees (e.g., one of the parents has lost his/her job). Then, the headteacher had to decide what action to take, which is never easy. Participants shared that situations like these were particularly troubling because these schools are not generally in a very good position financially, but at the same time, headteachers are very hesitant to deny students and education just because their parents cannot pay the fees. Often, circumstances like these create high levels of anxiety in the headteachers. In the words of Dennis:

I feel the responsibility greatly, which is why I don't rely on my own insight and understanding, even though it's been shaped by seeking God's wisdom and direction in all the practical challenges that I face as a leader. As long as I feel I have integrity in my relationship with an

audience of one, I am able to live with all the mistakes, failures and ambiguities of my life as a leader.

It is clear that for Dennis, and this is not dissimilar to the experience of the other participants, there is no point in pretending that he has everything under control and an answer to every question, but perhaps, this is how he finds the courage to fulfil his role in an ethical manner. It is possible that because of familiarity, the personal burden of leading smaller schools is higher than in larger schools.

One thing that the six participants had in common, though, was that whenever confronted with difficult decisions, their first reaction was to ask for wisdom in prayer. This was recognised as a powerful tool that transforms the perspective of the leader and influences his/her behaviour. For example, Ronald told a story that illustrated this point:

We were interviewing for the vice-principal role, and we had a number of candidates. We had gone through the morning process, and we were none-the-wiser. At that point, the executive principal, the other vice principal and myself said to ourselves, 'we need to stop, and we need to pray'. We stopped and prayed, asking God for clarity for wisdom. I often pray for clarity and wisdom; these are the two things that we need of all else as leaders. We carried on, and we found very quickly who we thought had to be appointed. We appointed the right candidate who is still here. It was a good process.

This was a very illustrative example of how the participants completely believe that by acknowledging their lack of understanding and by praying, they found the right candidate for the post being advertised. This could, however, raise questions about the fairness and logic of the recruitment process. This is one example where there could be a clash between secular and religious values.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has presented findings regarding Protestant headteachers working in independent Christian schools, as well as in Christian ethos academies. The findings indicate that the most defining aspect of the group was their belief in

the premise of Christian values and their dependence on their faith in terms of the foundation that underpins their approach to ethical leadership. The participants' personal relationship with God and their complete confidence in the merits of the Christian message framed not only their values but also their interpretation and application of these values.

All of the participants believed that their leadership was part of a plan for sharing their Christian worldview whilst facilitating the academic success of all students. The findings suggest that their faith made a coherent whole of their values and their influences. Although the participants did not experience difficulties adopting secular professional principles described by Roberts (2019), there was a conviction that these lacked certainty and a firm foundation that could otherwise be found in religious texts and traditions. The participants demonstrated a unique combination of genuine humility and passion for their job, along with complete confidence in faith-based moral values (McEwen and Robinson, 1995).

In terms of the application of the participants' faith-based moral values, these varied depending on the two research contexts. In the case of Christian ethos schools, the application of values was more prescriptive from the school leadership. In the case of independent Christian schools, their particular context, size, and school model had a significant effect on these factors.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

This sixth chapter aims to present an interpretation of findings in relation to the research questions. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section (6.1) provides a summary of the findings organised in themes. In this section, the contribution of both Catholic and Protestant participants (in that order) are presented thematically. The following section (6.2) provides an interpretation of the findings and compares the findings of the two groups of participants. It describes the broader patterns, principles and relationships found in the findings. Furthermore, this section provides answers to the four research questions included in chapter 3. Section 6.3 shows the study's contribution and identifies the original elements of the study by way of comparison with the existing literature. Finally, section 6.4 provides a summary of the content of this discussion chapter.

6.1 Summary of the findings

Key values

When describing the most important moral values that affected their professional lives, the Catholic participants expressed appreciation for values that can be summarised as reverence, service, fellowship and wisdom. The first one, reverence, makes reference to their understanding of education in general and in Catholic schools in particular as a human activity with strong links to the Catholic Church and its mission and, therefore, an activity with a highly significant spiritual dimension. It was clear that for the participants, their role went further than just a career choice but an opportunity to fulfil their calling in service to others. The second value is in a way related to the previous one and is the value of service. Catholic participants expressed their devotion and obedience to God through voluntary submission to others, especially children and families. Their interpretation of this value can be summarised as 'humility with a purpose'. Only through becoming a servant of all could they relate correctly to people under them in the hierarchy (e.g., pupils) but also to God and the Catholic Church.

The other two values are fellowship and wisdom. In this context, fellowship means living and working in a community with shared values. Amongst all these participants, there was a deliberate decision to work hard and act with righteousness in order to create a communal context that reflects the teachings of

Christ. They hope that students of all faiths adopt these principles (at least to some degree) and maintain them even when they have left the school to benefit society. Finally, the last principal value shared by all these participants was the value of wisdom. There was an acknowledgement of the moral frailty of humanity, including theirs, and their need for wisdom. This is something that they linked to the honest analysis of their experience as leaders but also their dependence on their involvement with sacraments and religious practices such as prayer.

The group of Protestant participants shared similar values to the previous group. The first essential value was the value of imitation. What is meant by imitation is the imitation of the values, behaviour and attitudes as exemplified by Jesus Christ in the Gospels (1 Corinthians 11:1). Participants were compelled to judge every action and every decision against this standard, as demonstrated by Jesus (see Henson, 2020; Bell, 2021). Participants declared that having such a model for their leadership was encouraging. The second most relevant value was confidence or complete trust in the Christian message. Not only did they accept Jesus as the perfect moral model of a human being, but they also valued the effectiveness and pertinence of the Christian message in their lives in the first instance and, subsequently, in their professional contexts. In line with Protestant theology, these participants emphasised the relevance of their personal relationship with the divine and their personal commitment to biblical moral principles.

The other two values of great importance for the Protestant participants were courage and humility. Courage in this context was the necessary moral fortitude to act on their confidence in God in order to overcome difficulties (see Wright, 2021). This was particularly significant for the group of four participants working in independent Christian schools because of their voluntary separation from the mainstream educational system. These schools regularly face financial difficulties due to a lack of governmental funding. However, their leaders expressed their determination to deal with the consequences of their school model of choice. Moreover, the principals in Christian ethos schools also expressed their determination to advance a Christian worldview in their academies, albeit in a less straightforward fashion. Finally, one value that was also considered highly important for the Protestant participants was humility. They felt privileged to be able to teach and lead schools, but, at the same time, they recognised their limitations and need to focus on leadership as, primarily, a vocation centred on the idea of sacrifice, service and interdependency.

Main influences on those values

Although there is no doubt that the fact that the Catholic participants work in Catholic schools has an effect on their values, it is also true that these values originate from events that took place before joining these organisations. In fact, in all the cases, these values predate them becoming qualified teachers. The first source of influence on these values was their experience growing up. They all mentioned how they grew up in traditional Catholic families where at least one of the parents had a strong faith. The participants expressed the belief that the 'seed' planted by their parents has played a significant role in their values. The second source of influence is their personal faith, as becoming practising Catholic Christians has helped them to develop a moral sense and contributed to the adoption of precise moral values.

The other two sources of influence relate to certain individuals who had a lasting effect on the Catholic participants. On the one hand, there were examples of highly respected individuals who had helped and inspired the participants and their interpretation of moral values in general and, more specifically, in an educational context. Sometimes, these were members of the clergy (e.g., Maria or Theresa), and on other occasions, these were educationalists working in schools. However, this group is very interesting because many participants mentioned how the negative example of certain individuals motivated them to take action and reconsider their values to avoid following their example. In other words, the participants were influenced by both role models and anti-role models. In the case of the latter, participants such as Christopher, Paul or Maria expressed that although these people were Catholic, their shortcomings originated from, in their opinion, a poor understanding of the faith.

The second group of participants (i.e. Protestants) recognised that different factors, events or individuals had influenced their values. The first one, and undoubtedly the most significant, was the personal commitment to their Christian faith. The foundation of their understanding of values and ethics was certainly faith-based. This was particularly important for those participants who went through a conversion experience after having very little input in terms of spirituality up to that point. It is unsurprising then that they associate their faith with their newly found understanding of values and a novel commitment to moral behaviour. Secondly, family played a significant role in their moral systems. This was particularly important for Timothy and Janet, who grew up in

Christian households. However, all the participants expressed heartfelt love and gratitude to their parents, regardless of the religious commitment or lack thereof.

Another source of influence for the group of Protestant headteachers was the consequence of their interaction with other individuals. This links with the value of imitation detailed in the previous subsection. These participants sought to emulate other people they had met and had more experience or wisdom. These individuals were linked to a Christian ministry (e.g., Alan) or educational leadership (e.g., Timothy). Although the majority pointed out that most of these figures were Christians (e.g., Janet), there was also an acknowledgement that secular figures had been equally inspirational and worthy of respect and imitation, especially in terms of technical aptitude (e.g., Dennis). Literature on leadership was one surprising source of influence for this group. Some of the participants mentioned the influence that secular and Christian authors have had on their understanding of good leadership. They also claimed to be always ready to find new insights in new books that they could apply in their context.

Application of values

The Catholic participants agreed that the practical application of values could be affected by different factors. Some of these were internal, and some of them were external. In terms of what facilitated their application of values, the participants recognised that having a strong personal faith was fundamental in order to be prepared for making the right decision when necessary. There was a strong opinion that unless one cultivates his/her own faith, there is little chance of being able to offer moral direction and support to others (see Doring, 1997), especially when these are younger, less experienced or without any firm convictions. The other aspect that facilitated this application was that they worked in organisations that promote moral values that align perfectly with the values of the headteachers. One final aspect that helps the application of values is that the schools' religious affiliation is well known and valued in the local community. They expressed their belief that when parents send their children to a Catholic school or when a teacher applies to work in a Catholic school, most of these are aware of the moral expectations of the institutions.

Concerning what hinders the application of values, again, there are internal and external factors. The majority of the participants expressed their difficulty when, occasionally, some families, pupils and staff persistently behave in ways that are antagonistic to the school's ethos. Although most people understand the schools' expectations (see the previous paragraph), it is also true that occasionally, a small

number of individuals choose not to abide by these. The rest of the hindering factors are external. In general, there is a certain degree of suspicion and satisfaction with some of the attitudes and values of the educational authorities. For example, the expectation for schools to compete and the organisation of league table rankings of schools is perceived as detrimental to their organisations as they, perhaps unintentionally, are the origin of a potential clash in values.

The group of Protestant participants expressed their conviction that the application of values was essential, and they argued for the necessity for actions and words to line up perfectly. In their view, three factors act as facilitators for the application of moral values. The first one is having the opportunity of working with people who share the same worldview. It stands to reason that working with the same beliefs is going to minimise the chances of dissent. This is particularly relevant in the case of independent Christian schools which employ Christian staff exclusively. The second factor is the leaders' commitment to the values. The participants believe that leaders with firmly held convictions have more authority and are more persuasive. Interestingly, this applies to the relationship with staff who share the same worldview (as expressed by Arthur) and others who do not (e.g., Timothy). Finally, the participants believed that whenever there is a good relationship between leaders and followers, the application of values improves. It is important to point out that, in their experience, this relationship has to be sustained over time and be genuine.

Some of the factors that hinder the application of values are external. For instance, some participants insisted on the nefarious influence of competition amongst schools. The participants working in independent Christian schools seemed to be more critical of such circumstances than those from Christian-ethos schools. Other hindering factors were found within the organisation. Sometimes, leaders considered themselves incapable of meeting their self-imposed very high standard for ethical leadership (see Kraft, 2010) and sometimes because the staff (both Christian and non-Christian) take advantage of the leaders' commitment to the values.

Despite these differences, one aspect that united all participants was their conviction of the non-negotiable nature of the application of these values. The application was perceived as dependent on the adoption of an ethical mind that transcends purely pragmatic considerations. For them, the adoption of what has been called ethical 'procedure' leadership where leaders and policymakers act deliberately in ethical ways and place greater "emphasis on methods, procedures and instruments" (Knott and Wildavsky, 1977, p.50) than what is common in

many other modern leadership models which prioritise outcomes whilst, arguably, neglecting the way these are achieved.

Coping with tensions and dilemmas

The vast majority of dilemmas for the group of Catholic headteachers did not relate to personal struggles but rather the behaviour of other people under their leadership. These dilemmas fall into two groups: those related to capability and those related to a failure to act in accordance with the school's ethos. The first group was the most common and included examples of teachers who were considered to be consistently underperforming. All the participants recognised the difficulty of the situation and the need to balance their duty to care, protect and support the struggling member of staff and, at the same time, limit the amount of 'damage' that pupils would experience as a consequence of this underperformance. On the whole, the participating Catholic headteachers nearly always felt that putting staff through capability procedures or dismissal was the very last resort. They recognised that they could not claim to be acting in a Christian way if they did not provide as many opportunities as possible to failing staff.

The second source of tensions and dilemmas originated when pupils but mainly staff displayed unprofessional, unethical behaviours. The participants mentioned different examples that they had in common, not at the difficulty to meet a standard (as in the case of capability) but rather a lack of wisdom and sound judgement (e.g., encouraging students to engage in physical fighting). Although the participants shared that situations like these were less problematic, they still recognised the difficulty of the situation and their commitment to show grace and mercy whenever possible, even if this means having their leadership questioned. The participants shared that prayer, submission to the biblical principles, and occasionally, the involvement of people from the diocese usually helped resolve these situations.

The group of Protestant participants differed in their experience of moral dilemmas. While those who led larger Christian-ethos schools provided few examples of moral dilemmas, the participants from independent schools provided a plethora of difficult situations that sometimes hindered their leadership effectiveness. This is consistent with Kraft's (2010) observation of worryingly high frustration and anxiety levels amongst current Christian leaders. One recurrent theme for the headteachers of independent Christian schools was their difficulty to find funds. Staff salaries were, in general, much lower than in the

state sector. This was a topic of great importance for all the participants in this subgroup of Protestant headteachers. Interestingly, the issue of low wages affected the headteachers directly as well as they were also seriously underpaid. Generally, such issues were dealt with through prayer shared amongst all involved parties and the adoption of complete transparency during the hiring process. One aspect that was a dilemma for some participants was that local children could not attend the school unless their parents/carers were willing to contribute financially or by doing work there. Whilst this was a grave moral dilemma for Dennis, Janet did not perceive it as such.

The headteachers of independent schools expressed one final area of difficulty. They felt pressured to conform to external expectations, at least to some degree, in order to “survive in the world of Ofsted” (Dennis). Generally, these types of conflict and tensions were managed by carefully removing non-essential jargon and potentially controversial content. However, there was a firm determination not to compromise on essential points as this, in their opinion, would be a travesty of their identity and mission as well as a betrayal of the trust of the parents.

6.2 Interpretation of findings

RQ 1: What are the main values of headteachers of selected Christian faith schools in England?

The analysis of the data revealed that there were very high levels of agreement amongst all twelve Christian headteachers in terms of the specific values that they considered to be most significant in their professional lives. The analysis of the data revealed that the values of all the participants were, at first glance, very similar. This is not to say, however, that they were exactly the same. Arguably, the best way to discuss their moral values is to look at three ‘statements of believed truth’ that synthesise their areas of agreement. Each of these will be discussed in turns, pointing out similarities and differences between groups and participants. These three ‘statements of believed truth’ are the following: a) morality is based on the teachings and example of Jesus Christ; b) they feel called to always act on Jesus’ directions and to have complete trust in the values demonstrated by Jesus in the Gospels; c) they believe that their leadership is a voluntary act of service and worship characterised by the value of humility.

With regard to the first of these, it was evident that all participants acknowledged that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the perfect moral

individual. All the participants filtered every decision they made in their professional capacity, especially those with a moral element or dimension, through the character and example of Jesus. For example, the Christian principle of the need to forgive whenever someone makes a mistake is regularly embraced by the participants with no hesitation. All Catholic participants identified with the idea that Christ is not only morally impeccable but also the epitome of a good leader, as described by Farrugia (2011). This is not exclusive to the Catholic participants, though. Protestant headteacher Dennis commented that in his experience, “[in Jesus] there is cohesiveness and an origin to this call set of values and morals that we value in our school”. Similarly, Paul explained that in his school, “we believe in Jesus Christ who has taught us how to live”. One subtle difference was in the way that Catholic and Protestant participants accessed the example of Christ. Although the source for both groups was naturally the four Gospels, the Catholic participants tended to complement their reading of the biblical texts with the teachings and interpretations of the Catholic Church. By contrast, Protestant participants tended to use their own interpretation of the biblical texts in the light of their life experience. Although the outcomes were similar for both groups, it could be argued that in the case of the Catholic headteachers, there was an extra actor (i.e. the Catholic Church) that had shaped to some degree the Catholic headteachers’ understanding.

The second aspect makes reference to a sense of obligation but also of privilege as a consequence of the adoption of Christian morality and values. Participants believe that Jesus remains the perfect example of a human being who knew and practised what is genuinely ‘good’, as seen in the previous paragraph, but their involvement went further than just recognition of Jesus or the validity of these values. They felt compelled to put these values into practice because of the moral and spiritual authority of Jesus. This created a different moral dynamic compared to non-faith education as, in their opinion, this commitment was morally advantageous towards developing a sense of identity. This is not to say that the participants thought that secular institutions lacked moral substance. In fact, most participants recognised that, in their experience, secular schools in their areas often demonstrated many of the same moral values, at least “superficially” (Dominic). Christopher explained that this was unsurprising as “there is a very big overlap [in values]” as a consequence of the fact that “the culture in this country is essentially a Christian culture”. However, both groups of participants agreed that they found it easier to work in institutions that are in alignment with Christian belief because, in the words of Christopher, “if I was the head of the secular school... it would be much more difficult to find out what we stand for

as a school". It is clear that all the participants celebrated that Christian education did not start, or it will not end, with their institution. In other words, in their view, joining the long tradition of Christian education in both Catholic and Protestant traditions is both a responsibility and a privilege.

The last aspect shared by the participants was their belief that the inherent nature of leadership was centred around the idea of servant leadership in a Christian context (see Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002). There was wide unanimity amongst both Catholic and Protestant headteachers about the significance of the adoption of servanthood as the key component of their leadership. This is one aspect that could make this group unique when compared to headteachers in secular schools. The idea of servant leadership is often linked to religious traditions and, more specifically, to Christianity. Dominic shared that he now realises that servant leadership "has influenced my style more than anything". Christopher pointed out that "there is the idea of the leader being a servant ... not lording their authority over the people", and then he went to paraphrase Jesus and said that "if you want to be the first, you have to make yourself the least of all". Servant leadership is also a formal leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977, 2002) which was discussed in chapter 2. However, it seems feasible that these participants subscribed to this model not through the work of Robert Greenleaf but through their Christian education and upbringing. Although the term 'servant leadership' was used frequently during the interviews, no mention of theory was attached to this idea. Alan admitted that he had adopted this idea after many years of school leadership. In his words, "my understanding of the role as authority figure and what it means in practice have certainly developed over time. Much more now I see myself as a servant". This principle is sometimes adopted by the wider school community. Dennis, for instance, described how the group of year eleven pupils at Wilfred Hill School had, by their own initiative, decided to create their own motto: "get yourself a napkin, you're about to be served".

RQ 2: What are the key influences on those values?

The key influences on those values can be summarised into two different categories. The first category relates to family and faith, and the second one relates to role models and anti-role models. The first category relates to the effect that family, the experience growing up, and the influence of faith have had on the participants. The reason why family and faith are combined is that for the majority of participants, both of these experiences started at the same time. All

the Catholic participants narrated how they all grew up in Catholic families who were very committed to their faith. They attended Mass regularly, and many of them got involved beyond what would be the experience of many, perhaps more nominal, Roman Catholics in England. For example, Paul described how he served many years as an altar boy. Similar experiences of high commitment were described by Christopher as well. They all described this involvement as an overall positive and formative experience, and they highlighted how for some of them, their families had to persevere in their faith despite a degree of social suspicion and alienation (e.g., Christopher and Julie). It is interesting that Janet and Timothy shared similar experiences of highly committed Christian parents. It could be argued that because of their religious affiliation (i.e. nonconformist reformed) and the high commitment, they also shared a degree of suspicion from Protestants in different traditions (e.g., Anglicanism).

Furthermore, there is another intersection between faith and families that, albeit less obvious, is still significant. Four Protestant participants (i.e. Dennis, Alan, Arthur and to a lesser degree, Ronald) grew up in families who had almost no connection with Christianity, or at least, not in a particularly explicit manner. Therefore, they had very little spiritual input growing up. In other words, although these participants received some moral direction from their parents, this guidance was not directly influenced by religious belief in any significant way. However, this experience is still significant because, after their conversion to Christianity in their teenage years, they re-evaluated their moral understanding and reflected on the validity of the values that they had received from their parents. Therefore, it could be said that parents were always influential (even when nonreligious), but in some cases, there was a rejection of some of their values in favour of more explicitly Christian ones.

It is important to point out that in line with the findings of Leonard *et al.* (2013), the true extent to which the religious faith of parents and other family members had on the participants remained unknown even to the participants. This is because many different factors (including events, feelings and conversations) as well as “parental support and parent-child relationship dynamics” (p.5) had played a significant role in the formation of the participant’s spiritual identity. These factors have been proven very difficult to fully disentangle, communicate or understand.

The other source of influence was the impact that role models and anti-role models had on their lives. The latter was particularly important in the group of Catholic headteachers and had less of an influence amongst participating

Protestant headteachers. In terms of the role models, it is important to notice that these were not always Christians. Maria, for instance, mentioned that “I pay a lot of attention to good leadership around me. I’m very quick at picking up good practice around me... I learn a lot from them”. She recognised that she could learn from others regardless of their worldview and apply it through a Christian understanding in her school. These words were echoed by Ronald in the Protestant group and Catholic head Theresa, who admitted that she always pays attention to other leaders in order to shape her own ethical leadership. Timothy very clearly stated his admiration for headteachers who have a strong vision of what to do and how to do it. This is certainly an interesting point because what all twelve participants had in common was admiration for individuals who were effective in their role (very often other leaders) and, more importantly, people who acted according to their own set of values. If those values were based on a Christian religious belief, this would be naturally celebrated, but the most important aspect was the alignment between what people said and what people did. Whether or not these people were Christians was a less important consideration. This takes us to the very interesting point of the influence of anti-role models who, at times, were Christians.

It is a fascinating fact that although the Protestant participants did not mention anti-role models in any significant fashion, many of the Catholic participants expressed their dissatisfaction towards colleagues, teachers and headteachers (the majority of them Catholic) who had a lasting negative impression on them. Their criticism included headteachers who demonstrated inability to lead well due to a lack of insight or technical ability and headteachers and headteachers who did not demonstrate the values they purport to have. One example of the former was described by Christopher. This particular headteacher seemed to be unable to make good decisions in his school and demonstrated little insight into what would make the school make progress quickly. Christopher, who was a newly qualified teacher then, realised how crucial the role of the leader is, and he used this negative example as a template to find out what not to do as a headteacher. Interestingly enough, he described this headteacher as “an extremely good head”. This was surprising and unexpected, given the previous criticism. However, this could have been motivated by a sense of compassion and loyalty rather than logical coherence.

A similar experience was shared by Paul. At first, he was hesitant to share this experience, and he admitted that what he was going to share “might sound terrible”. Eventually, he decided to share his conviction that, like Christopher, he could lead better than that head. Interestingly, Paul identified this headteacher’s

problem as “a lack of charisma” and having “a very simple [faith]”. The main criticism was an inability to do “what it says on our tin”. The fact that this headteacher was a Catholic was, for Paul, not a redeeming feature but rather another reason why his leadership had to be questioned. By contrast, Theresa described how her education in a secular secondary school was so disappointing that she eventually decided to work in Catholic schools as much as possible. In any case, what was obvious was that genuine commitment to the values and beliefs combined with technical ability were the factors that had, alongside family influence on faith, the most lasting influence on the participants.

RQ 3: What facilitates and what hinders the application of those values in practice?

In terms of what facilitates the application of moral values in Catholic and Protestant schools, the participants shared really insightful information. Both groups agreed that the most important factor that helped the application of these values was their personal faith. In the opinion of Paul, a headteacher would find the task of leading a group of people with any degree of success very difficult if “the light doesn’t burn brightly in yourself”. Christopher made a very insightful comment when he explained that in his experience, the majority of headteachers, both Christians and non-Christians, are:

People of conviction. They might have a commitment to academic excellence; they might have a commitment to pushing achievement or a commitment to social justice. I’d say that my convictions at slightly different because they are faith-based, but nevertheless, for these headteachers, the convictions are there.

Christopher clearly identified that most people need to find meaning in their lives through some commitment. In his view, and this is shared by all of the participants, meaning is found in faith first and a Christian approach to education second. Protestant participants also shared similar commitments. For example, Alan mentioned how in his professional life, “it was my faith that inspired me. Actually, it was what I see as my obedience to God. It was a step of faith in obedience”. Again, there were subtle differences in how Catholics and Protestants participants expressed their personal faith. For the former, this generally included the regular and willing participation in religious activities combined with a certain degree of personal reflection, prayer, spiritual readings,

et cetera. For the Protestant headteachers, the order seemed to be in reverse. What was particularly important was their relationship with God. Involvement in church activities was also very significant but secondary. However, what both groups had in common was a determination to commit to this faith and to use it as a tool in their professional role.

The application of values was also facilitated by the Christian identity (or at least Christian ethos) of the organisations where they worked. Both groups felt that working in such schools helped them to be more intentional and explicit in their values. However, there were some differences between these groups. As a matter of fact, there were some differences between the participants working in Catholic schools, those working in independent Christian schools and those working in Christian-ethos schools. The most dissimilar group was the independent Christian schools, as they only employ Christian staff and have greater freedom to integrate Christian beliefs in the curriculum. Such an explicit commitment to Christianity was mentioned as a facilitating factor. In fact, Dennis commented that some staff in his school are willing to accept less desirable aspects of working in those schools (e.g., lower wages) in return for greater freedom in the classroom. Interestingly, Christian ethos schools and Catholic schools shared a similar, less explicitly Christian model where, for example, only a minority of staff is Christian. It is worth mentioning that all three types of schools accept pupils from all faiths and none. However, students are aware of the institutions' religious identity (arguably less so in the case of Christian-ethos schools). This is also perceived as a facilitating factor as the leadership of the school can safely assume that parents, pupils and staff agree to the application of Christian principles and values.

Concerning the factors that can hinder the application of values, there was a high level of overlap between the two groups. The most significant one was the significant gap between some of the values promoted by education and local authorities and the values of the organisation. This is not to say that there is no common ground, but it is also true that the majority of participants in both Protestant and Catholic schools disregard concepts such as competition and league tables as unnecessary or even pernicious. Theresa explained that "I'm not in competition with anybody... If we all got top grades, I'd be absolutely thrilled". In the opinion of other participants, the pressures of having to 'appease' Ofsted and other authorities can be detrimental to the well-being of people in school and a significant distraction from other more arguably more important aspects. This is consistent with the pressures described by other Christian

headteachers working in English schools (e.g., Bazalgette, 2006; Cockburn, 2017).

Another very significant factor that can hinder is the fact that not all parents or staff agree with the moral values of the institution. This would seem contradictory with what was shared before about facilitating factors, but in reality, both situations are 'two sides of the same coin'. Although the majority of parents, for example, seek to send their children to an institution that defends Christian principles, it is also true that a small minority might disagree with the application of these values, especially if their children are involved. Paul commented that some parents complained when they found out that the child who had attacked their children had received a lenient punishment. When Paul explained that they had to implement the value of forgiveness, the parents were very oppositional and demanded much more strict punishment for the aggressor. In Paul's words, "the biggest obstacle is convincing parents that everything that we do is underpinned by these values". Unfortunately, with the prevalence of social media, it is likely that this problem can only become worse in the next few years.

Two other very interesting and unusual hindering factors were also mentioned. One of them was the tendency that some staff have to use the values of the headteacher against him/her. Although this is not a very common occurrence, Ronald mentioned how he had experienced situations in which members of staff had demanded from him to 'moderate' his decision with compassion when this member of staff was involved in some challenging situation. Ronald expressed his belief that such situations, although unpleasant, would not deter him from carrying out his ethical approach to leadership. Finally, one surprising hindering factor was the high standards self-imposed by some of the leaders. If not managed correctly, having such high moral expectations of oneself can lead to unnecessary stress and the possibility of becoming incapable of making decisions and consumed with self-doubt. The majority of participants agreed that such situations are a real possibility and that they had to find coping mechanisms to avoid such situations.

RQ 4: How do these headteachers cope with tensions and resolve moral dilemmas?

Although nearly all the participants agreed that their schools were institutions in which pupils, families and staff enjoyed high levels of satisfaction (the only exception was Christopher, who had taken over a school with serious problems), the participants were no strangers to problems, tensions and dilemmas. There

were three main sources of moral dilemmas: one affected mainly the Catholic schools and, to a lesser degree, the Christian ethos schools. The other affected the independent Christian schools exclusively, and the last one affected all of them. Concerning the first, the main problem expressed by the Catholic participants was the problem of having to deal with staff. One of these issues was the difficulty of having to implement obligatory redundancy plans. Dominic explained that he had been through the process of amalgamating three different schools. This meant that he had to make around forty redundancies which were very distressing to a large percentage of those forty members of staff. Dominic explained that the only way that he could “sleep at night” was by “making those [decisions] in a fair and equitable and balanced way by using values that are Gospel values. My accountability is to God in that process”. Dominic was convinced that only through reflection, what he called “self-delivered scrutiny” on his faith and values, could he reach the necessary wisdom that would ultimately lead to a satisfactory solution. Having these ‘Gospel values’ was, in his opinion, highly advantageous because they provide “a very tangible basis for making decisions”.

An even more problematic dimension to dealing with staff is when participants had to deal with staff perceived as underperforming. These headteachers were aware of the costly and damaging effects of the process of having to put staff on a support plan, or even worse, having to have them dismissed or forced to resign. These headteachers realised that the cost is not only financial but also very costly to the whole community and, naturally, to the member of staff affected by the situation. The participants seemed to be totally aware of the dimension of this problem in England (see BBC Radio 4, 2015), and generally, their approach was to avoid taking drastic measures unless the safety and long-term well-being of the pupils were in jeopardy. Christopher, for example, said that “I wouldn’t [dismiss a member of staff] unless I am *absolutely certain* that it is the best thing” (emphasis on the original). One important point is that what would seem like a noble attitude from well-intentioned Christian headteachers can lead to undesirable situations that put students at risk. For example, it is entirely possible that predatory and abusive staff take advantage of this moral predisposition to protect the staff and avoid being more quickly.

The second dilemma that can affect the independent Christian schools is the issue of staff disadvantage compared to other professionals working in other types of schools. Because of the extremely low wages, often accompanied by no opportunity to join a pension scheme, headteachers in these types of schools expressed deep regret. To make matters worse, this is an issue that cannot be

resolved easily. In other words, the situation cannot change unless the school decides to join the mainstream system and become an academy or free school. This is evidently a very controversial issue for these leaders because it impinges directly on the well-being of their staff. Janet described that:

In one sense, that is not my dilemma because it is the governors' dilemma. It's a moral dilemma as we have staff here from whom we expect a lot because, although it's a lovely little school, and the kids are great and the parents are supportive [but] we pay them very little.

Janet understands that although it is not her direct responsibility, it has an effect on her, despite all the good things that she has to say about the institution that she leads. This was an aspect that was shared by the four participating independent schools and that had an effect not only on wages but also on other issues such as the upkeep of facilities, the access to CPD or the possibility of career progression within the organisation. The participants expressed their disappointment in the situation, but they found solace in the fact that staff knew before being appointed that their salary would be approximately half of what they would get anywhere else and that most staff were ready to accept this reduction in exchange for greater autonomy and freedom about how and what to teach (see Kauffman, 2010). The way to manage this situation was to be completely transparent and through time spent praying and reflecting about the situation. It is reasonable to assume that staff understand that praying for the situation regularly is a demonstration of humility (see Nichols, 2014), transparency and trust in the headteacher.

The last dilemma that affected, in various degrees, all the participants was the issue of dealing with students who made poor and even dangerous choices or those who demonstrated deep contempt against the school. Dominic shared one particularly interesting incident that illustrates some of the points made so far. When a student behaved truly badly in school and Dominic decided to exclude him for three days, the pupil's grandfather came to the school and asked Dominic, "I wonder if your values of love and forgiveness would come into this situation?" The intention of the relative was to spare the child his punishment, but he decided to use Dominic's values 'against him'. Dominic admitted that he struggled but, in the end, decided to give the child another chance. Dominic confessed that the child behaved appallingly the next day as the consequence of being morally blackmailed by the relative. Dominic did not blame the student,

though, but recognised that it was his fault for sending “a mixed message”. Another dilemma was when one very young female student at Alan’s school got pregnant; the dilemma was how to handle the situation in a way that protected the well-being of the minor and her access to education whilst maintaining the school’s moral position on the issue of sexual abstinence before marriage. Alan agreed that it was a difficult situation that they managed successfully by seeking wisdom, protecting the female pupil and by being transparent with the whole community. In sum, tensions and dilemmas are common in these schools, and the way that leaders cope with these situations tend to be faith-based, seeking to find wisdom whilst remaining faithful to the Christian principles.

6.3 Comparing the findings to the conceptual framework.

This section discusses the level of agreement between the findings, the five dimensions included in the values-led contingency leadership model proposed by Day *et al.* (2000) and the framework for ethical educational leadership and personal characteristics for leaders included in (Roberts, 2019). This section is divided into five subsections that correspond with each one of the five dimensions by Day *et al.* (2000), drawing from other relative literature whenever is relevant.

Values and vision

One of the key issues for any leader is having a compelling vision that infuses and motivates others (Hester, 2003). In this context, the term vision has been defined as “a mental model of an ideal future state” (Northouse, 2009, p.87) that provokes people into taking action (see Covey, 2004; Loehr, Loehr and Schwartz, 2005) whilst assisting in the process of finding meaning and purpose. Academics have become aware of the relevance and importance of vision in the different leadership theories (Zaccaro and Banks, 2001) as, for example, transformational leadership theory (Bass and Avolio, 1994). One key characteristic of a vision is that it has to be based around values. Any significant change of changing and improving an organisation involves a deep understanding of the stakeholders' values (including naturally the headteacher) and the institution's values in itself as the vision emerges from these values. For instance, in the case of Dominic, St Mark’s the Evangelist School was based on the principle of inclusivity. Dominic explained that everyone should be welcomed and served in the school, so his vision is to create an organisation

where no one feels excluded or alienated. Another example from the data was Janet, who believed that the main role of the school is to provide ‘technical support’ to parents who might not have the necessary knowledge for the complete education of their children. In that case, the value of collaboration is expressed in a vision for a school that is accountable to parents and that interacts as frequently and as fluidly as possible with them.

As correctly pointed out by Day *et al.* (2000), there must be high levels of alignment between the vision and values of the leader and the rest of the people involved. In the case of this study, it was obvious that the group of independent Christian schools had achieved this objective almost perfectly given that all the staff shared the same worldview and they were willing to accept obvious disadvantages (e.g., lower wages) in order to work in such organisation. Although participants from Christian-ethos and Catholic schools agreed that there were high levels of alignment, especially in the case of Christian-ethos academies, as explained by Timothy, some Catholic leaders lamented the fact that this was not always the case in their schools. For instance, Christopher explained that in his case, “people had lost touch with what the values of the school were”. Similarly, Paul explained that some staff was uncomfortable applying these values. However, he also showed great commitment to these values because “the kids expect it, the parents expect it, so you have to deliver it!” It became evident that although dissent was tolerated and even encouraged, this was not applicable to the area of vision and values, which were considered non-negotiable.

Integrity

Integrity was a very important aspect that was central to the participants' contribution. It was evident that there was a desire for consistency and congruence between what the participants thought and what eventually happened in the shape of policies, practices and activities (see Session, 2014). In one way, this is unsurprising as integrity has been unequivocally identified as a crucial topic for all Christians in both the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 29:13), the Gospels (e.g., Mark 7:6) and the Pauline letters (e.g., Romans 7:15). This was very clearly stated by Timothy, who boldly declared that “probably the secret to leadership is to have integrity which makes your actions line up with your words”. Integrity was sought, demonstrated and encouraged by the participants on a regular basis for two reasons. The first one was to practically demonstrate behaviours that were considered desirable and conducive to the achievement of

the vision of the school (see Caldwell and Spinks, 2003). The second one was to gain noncoercive authority amongst staff that could become essential for getting issues of all types resolved.

Day *et al.* (2000) explain that integrity as part of invitational leadership is built on four premises. The first one is optimism or the belief that people can grow and develop. This value was also mentioned by Roberts (2019) as a key leadership characteristic. She explains that “leaders should be positive and encouraging...to change the world for the better” (p.11). This principle is in line with what was expressed by the participants. For example, Theresa expressed her disappointment in the way that school leadership has accepted high levels of mistrust and pessimism as normal. She claimed that cynicism “is wrong! We have less tolerance for each other, less generosity (see Stone Rogers, 2014) and actually, we are all on a journey. I have met people whom I thought ‘Good grief! How fantastic are you!’”. Similar thinking was echoed, albeit often expressed in less colourful terms, by Protestant participants such as Timothy and Ronald. Timothy expressed his hope in people based on his belief that “as Christians, we understand that children are created in the image of God”. Ronald expressed our heartfelt conviction that “you don’t write off a student as soon as they make a mistake because in that case, you are saying in effect that that student is irredeemable and that’s not what we believe *at all*” (emphasis in the original).

Another important aspect was the issue of respect or the recognition that each person is an individual. This was highly significant for all the participants who recognised each person in the organisation as someone of infinite value. Theresa commented that in her view, all her pupils are “children of God. Every child is a child of God whether they know it in themselves or not, they are loved, and it is our duty to look after them”. Arthur expressed a similar idea when he claimed that he shows respect for every child because “they are significant and that God has a plan and a place for each one of them”. One dimension that illustrates this point is the fact that children are offered opportunities to explore the Christian worldview but never coerced into it. Alan summarised this as a principle of respect where pupils were encouraged to “explore and to assess and to evaluate the Christian faith for themselves... It’s about us providing the context for that, but it’s up to them which way they choose”. The idea of respect is also applicable to staff. Dominic shared a story where a struggling teacher rejected every opportunity given by Dominic to ‘put things right’. He agreed that often demonstrating respect made his leadership more difficult but more meaningful as well.

Trust is one aspect that is also recognised by Roberts (2019) and links to the idea of moral reliability. This was a highly significant value for all the participants in both groups as they considered that their colleagues had to trust them in order to apply their leadership with a chance of success. One participant who regularly mentioned the importance of trust was Julie, who expressed her conviction that trust is imperative “especially in this current time with so many changes”. Because she had been working in one capacity or another in the same school for over two decades, she understood that governors, parents and pupils all had witnessed her commitment to integrity in all roles, from being a parent volunteer to her current position as headteacher. Timothy shared his conviction that he is trusted by everyone in his school due to the fact that he demonstrates integrity and commitment to the school’s values and vision consistently.

Finally, the value of intention was also present in the leadership of these headteachers. There was unawareness of the dangers of not being proactive in their approach to ethical leadership. Christopher explained that “if you’re haphazard about your approach to the issue of ethics, you can see things going wrong”. Arthur expressed agreement with this sentiment and the need for leaders to intervene and celebrate the school:

I am an incredibly passionate man about Moorside Christian School. I love the school. It is incredibly important to me. So much so that sometimes, this causes problems at home because I’m still here working when I should be at home. My passion is infectious for the school, is infectious for the parents, it’s infectious for the staff and the pupils... I’m incredibly passionate, and this often spills into how I teach, work, sacrifice, *et cetera*.

Arthur expressed very vehemently his *intention* to make the school a success regardless of personal cost. This idea was pervasive amongst all the participants and showed a belief that only through high levels of commitment others can easily perceive ethical leadership can be achieved.

Context

Many of the situations faced by the participating headteachers were context-bound. It is well known that educational institutions are heavily influenced by their contexts. Teaching in a highly deprived area would not be the same as

teaching the same subject in a more salubrious setting. Also, having to work with staff with high levels of morale should be less problematic than having to 'go back to basics' and start tackling the most basic problems. In any case, one of the most important attributes for any school leader is to incorporate aspects of the context (see Figure 2.1) and to be able adapt quickly and successfully to new challenges whilst maintaining any positive aspects that the organisation might have. Timothy, for example, agreed that because of the positive track record of previous heads at Telchester City Academy, it was a challenge to continue delivering excellent educational leadership in line with what had happened before. A very different case was the situation of Christopher, who was employed to transform the culture of a failing school where there were high levels of dissent, vitriol and apathy. He explained that "I have staff who [sic] don't fully understand what the school's leadership is for and have some governors who, again, don't understand". It would seem that working in a context that seems to be so disengaged would require the ability to remain faithful to the values whilst trying to persuade others in the organisation to work collaboratively.

Continuing professional development

The participants seemed to be committed to providing creative approaches to professional development, including training in the issues of ethics. The overall impression was that although this aspect was hugely important, there was a need to keep making improvements to sustain the school as an ethical institution where teaching and learning occur. Arthur thinks that training on values "is absolutely key. Like any other organisation, we are a growing, changing and evolving organism. Older staff is leaving, and newer staff is coming, and we keep getting it wrong!" Arthur's sincerity is indicative of the need to create systems that talks about the ethical dimension of education in general, and leadership, in particular, are frequent and pervasive. Dennis expressed great insight when he commented that this type of training could not be "left to chance or to assume that people share the same values as you just because you have stated them". His point was that the interpretation and application of values could differ from one person to another, even if they have the same worldview. Although the majority of participants acknowledged that a certain degree of uniformity is desirable, they had to concede that this is not always achievable.

Some participants admitted that they did not do enough in terms of helping staff with moral decision-making. Some Catholic headteachers such as Theresa

lamented that particularly younger staff seem to be disconnected from the organisation's values and as a consequence, “we could do more, I think we could dig deeper”. This circumstance is particularly important for Christian ethos schools and Catholic schools as there is no religious expectation for most posts beyond being ‘sympathetic’ towards the Catholic faith. Paul reflected that not all his staff is Catholic. In fact, he pointed out that apart from nonreligious staff, others are “Catholic, but they have lapsed, some are strong Catholics, some are devout Muslims”. Such a complex and varied landscape, the contribution that non-Catholic teachers bring and the challenges that this entails for Catholic school leaders (see Mihovilović, 2021) would suggest the need for greater investment in this area.

Reflection and personal development

Finally, there is the issue of reflection that affects both the leader and every other school community member. Day, Harris and Hadfield (2000) have identified how, in the values-led contingency leadership model, headteachers to have the capacity “to be reflective in different ways about their own values, beliefs and practices and those of the staff”. One key characteristic of most of the participants was their ability to reflect critically on their leadership. Although all twelve participants agreed that they were fully committed to ethical leadership in their schools, they also recognised the need to reflect critically on what they do and why they do it. This circumstance was a consequence of various factors. The first one is their experience as headteachers. They recognised that they made mistakes on a regular basis and that they got things wrong. Christopher, for instance, expresses the belief that “dissent is useful because sometimes dissent is actually telling you that you have made a mistake. I think this is very important because it is possible for students or staff to say that a decision or situation is not right and that something should be done about it”. Paul agrees and concedes that we are all capable of making “majestic mistakes”. The key thing for him is choosing not to focus unnecessarily on those mistakes but to learn from them. This is applicable to mistakes made by others but also to their own mistakes. When reflecting on his leadership, Dominic made the following comment:

I think that the weariness of the world and the cynicism of the world and the pragmatism of some of the pressures that you’re under as a head sometimes means that I would say that in recent years, I have not lived up to those values as well as I would have wanted to... I’m more

able to question things now and more able to reflect, but when you are under extreme external pressure, sometimes you have reacted before you reflected.

This is a very illustrative example of the capacity of the majority of the participants to reflect on the complexities of real life and a demonstration of humility, insight and deep understanding.

The other reason that encouraged this approach is their Christian faith. The participants mentioned that because of their ultimate accountability is to God, they could not afford to become complacent or jaded. Janet explained that “I believe that the Bible is clear that I will stand before God and answer for the way that I have taught these children that He has put under my care”. It seems feasible that their understanding of leadership as a vocational calling put in their hearts by God in the first place makes them more reflective and inclined to re-examine the attitudes on a regular basis. Dominic commented that “would I be as accountable to my values if I was agnostic? I really don’t know”. He seems to suggest that his faith plays a significant part in the amount of self-reflection and commitment to the values. Finally, Timothy mentioned that he works really hard at his job as principal of Telchester City Academy with only one objective in mind, that one day he will be “called by God and hear one thing only ‘well done, good and faithful servant’”.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has provided a synthesis of the findings described in the previous two chapters in order to supply adequate answers to the four research questions introduced in the methodology chapter. It has also looked at the literature and established how the findings are fully consistent with the values-led contingency leadership model proposed by Day *et al.* (2000) and how all the participants avoided successfully acting as subcontractors or subversive leaders by mediating internal school priorities with external pressures. The main conclusion that can be extracted is that there are high levels of similarities between not only the participants belonging to the same Christian affiliation (i.e. Catholic *or* Protestant) but also across both groups (i.e. Catholic *and* Protestant). Despite differences in context and traditions and a relative lack of interaction between these two groups, it became apparent that there are many more similarities than differences in their interpretation of what ethical educational leadership in a

Christian context is. It could be argued that their perspectives of ethical leadership were informed by very similar values that are not at all mutually exclusive.

Concerning the question of the specific moral values of the participants, both groups expressed a very strong link between values and faith. This was so strong that, in many cases, the distinction between both of them was blurry at best. The vast majority of these values were influenced by the content of the Gospels and the instructions given by Jesus on how to behave and act. There was a clear recognition of the frailty of the human condition and a determination to meet the needs of the pupils whilst demonstrating complete respect for everyone involved. In terms of their influence on these values, again, faith plays a significant role, but there was recognition of other people, both Christians and non-Christians, as instrumental for the shaping of their values. In terms of what facilitates and hinders the application of values, there was a consensus that aspects such as faith, good relations and Christian identity facilitated this application. By contrast, pressure from external agencies as well as people taking advantage of the morals of the headteacher were identified as hindering factors. Finally, the overarching idea was that although tensions and dilemmas are unavoidable, these can be managed effectively through their thorough application of strict and genuine moral values.

Despite differences both between groups and within, there was an acceptance that secular values were useful albeit less solid morally than Christian moral values. Both groups expressed great interest in protecting their communities and transforming society by giving their students the best life chances in an environment congruent with the Christian worldview. They were also aware that this explicit Christian worldview is no longer predominant. They also understood that some of the most important principles for them might be seen in today's society as old-fashioned, confusing or even foolish to non-Christians (Newbiggin, 1986) and frequently incompatible with newer forms of faith-based or secular religiosity (Clouser, 2005). Finally, the participants admitted that greater clarity and arguably stronger support in the field of ethical decision-making in the school context would be beneficial for them and other school leaders.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

This final chapter covers four themes contained in four different sections. The first section (7.1) recapitulates the purpose of the study and presents a brief summary of the study's key findings. The second section (7.2) describes the significance of the study and the implications of the research, and its significance in the field of educational leadership. Section 7.3 details the constraints that have affected the study. The following section (7.4) provides several recommendations for further research. Finally, the thesis concludes with an autobiographical reflection (7.5) that highlights, from a highly personal perspective, some of the most significant aspects of this doctoral journey as well as how the whole process has affected my understanding of research in the educational field.

7.1 General summary

This study was motivated by a genuine interest in identifying how headteachers in England conceptualise and implement ethical principles in relation to their leadership responsibilities. It is clear that although society expects headteachers to be individuals of great moral stature, the actual meaning of the term 'morality' and how this is applied to educational leadership is not at all self-evident. As investigating all these issues would have required a research project ar larger in scope than a professional doctorate such as this one, the decision was made to focus on the leadership of Christian headteachers working in English educational institutions with a Christian religious character. This decision was considered appropriate given the fact that, despite church attendance showing a declining trend (Brown, 2009), Christian faith schools and Christian ethos schools remain responsible for educating a large percentage of the English population. Due to the many Christian traditions involved in the field of education, the present study was designed to focus on two groups that appeared a priori very different in terms of both their theology and positioning within the education system: Roman Catholic and non-Anglican Protestants. The original aim was to determine the understandings that Catholic and Protestant headteachers have of ethical leadership and then compare them. Given the dearth of literature concerning this issue, especially studies comparing Catholic and Protestant headteachers, the present study began by focusing on the experiences that a number of headteachers have had of the application of moral values as a means of ensuring ethical leadership.

The results of this study proved highly illuminating. More specifically, they showed that, while there were some contextual differences between the two groups, there were also some significant similarities. In terms of the similarities, there appeared to be a tacit agreement that the education of the child should be performed in collaboration with the parents. Indeed, both groups agreed that the responsibility for education belongs to the parents rather than to the State, with schools existing to assist in this educational project. They also agreed that schools should be characterised as caring communities wherein every involved person is of infinite value, and leaders should constantly look for opportunities to both serve others and promote moral values that will continue to guide pupils after they have left school. Respect for every member of the school community, whether a pupil, a teacher or a governor, was determined to be of paramount importance to the participants, even in very difficult circumstances. Finally, the notion that united both groups more strongly than anything else was their conviction that the justification for instilling moral values was to be found in the person of Jesus Christ and in His teachings. Furthermore, all participants agreed that having such a strong role model provided clarity and simplified their otherwise highly complex leadership task.

The differences observed between the two groups were more circumstantial and contextual than moral. While there were clear differences based on different traditions and theologies (e.g., the Catholic headteachers tended to highlight the importance of sacramental engagement, whereas the Protestant headteachers referred more frequently to having a personal relationship with God), such differences were not directly related to fundamental aspects of moral values or the origins of those values. There were, however, some differences in the types of moral issues that headteachers in different types of schools had to face. For example, the headteachers working in Christian ethos schools and Catholic schools reported how having non-Christian staff could lead to difficulties. By contrast, the headteachers working in independent Christian schools had to face different hardships, often related to finance and funding. Despite these differences, all of the participating headteachers expressed the conviction that the solution to their problems, whatever they might be, had to be imaginative, context-based and, ultimately, faith-bound. Trust in God, a deliberate and persistent dependence on their beliefs, and an attitude characterised by humility and honesty were fundamental to helping them overcome any difficulty.

Perhaps the most vivid image that can serve to summarise the findings of this study concerns something that occurred during the final seconds of the researcher's interaction with Arthur, headteacher of Moorside Christian

Education Centre. When the interview was completed, the two carried on chatting while walking towards the exit. All of a sudden, Arthur turned around and asked the researcher to wait at the school gates. He walked briskly back into the building as if he had forgotten something. He returned with a couple of chocolate bars and a bottle of water from the canteen, which he handed to the researcher 'for the journey back home'. Given the school's desperate financial situation and how unlikely it was that the researcher would ever meet Arthur again, his simple and spontaneous act of generosity towards a complete stranger spoke volumes about what being a 'good' leader really means.

7.2 Significance of the study

The findings of this study are significant because they can contribute to improving the educational sector in a number of ways. First, the findings have provided useful information about the values held by headteachers who work in independent Christian schools. Perhaps due to the small sizes of such schools, there has previously been very little academic work dedicated to this particular group of educational leaders. There are many people in England, including some who are actually involved in education, who are completely unaware of the existence of these schools, their values or the way they operate. In the current climate, with small private schools sometimes being viewed with a degree of suspicion, any study that investigates what is happening in such schools can only prove beneficial for children, parents, society and education in general.

Second, this study has addressed a knowledge gap regarding the similarities and differences between the moral values held by Catholic and Protestant headteachers in England. It is noteworthy that the participating headteachers all indicated that, while they held a generally positive opinion of the other group, they had to acknowledge a lack of real understanding of what other Christian schools do on a regular basis. Enhancing this understanding and promoting more fluid collaboration between schools affiliated with different Christian denominations should prove beneficial for all involved parties and improve the quality of education across these schools in England. Such a development would be in line with prior examples of fluid and sincere dialogue between Catholic and Protestant academics (e.g., Chadwick, 1994). Such contacts have acknowledged that although there are still evident and profound differences between them, there is a slow convergence of both groups (Elias, 2002) that are leading to fresh opportunities for future collaboration and deeper understanding (Noll and Turner, 2008).

This study has also contributed as a first step that could lead towards analytic generalisation. It would be interesting if other studies could build on its findings. Furthermore, others studies could replicate this study in order to collect similar data from other participants that could eventually lead to an accumulation of case studies that would help understand the phenomena at hand.

This research has also investigated and presented the work of very committed and ethical school leaders whose experience can benefit not only those working in Christian faith schools but those working in non-Christian faith schools and secular schools. Although arguably, the origin and the reasoning for the adoption of values might be different for those individuals, there is enough good moral practice to be considered and possibly imitated by other leaders. Finally, educational authorities could also benefit from a better understanding of these major actors in the educational scene in England. It is possible that a better mutual understanding of each other can lead to more fluid relationships, better appreciation and ultimately, better and more varied education provision for every child in England.

7.3 Limitations of the study

Although great care has been taken in how the study has been conducted and constructed (see Simon and Goes, 2013), there is no doubt that this study is subject to particular and significant limitations that warrant some attention. One significant limitation of the study is the impossibility of generalisation. No generalisation (except 'naturalistic generalisation') could be achieved. Given the relatively small number of participants, it is not possible to extract information about what all or even the majority of headteachers in Christian faith schools in England think about ethical leadership. It is not even possible to know what the majority of them think about this topic. However, this was to be expected in any idiographic study that seeks to understand specific cases and not necessarily find out a singular, objective truth.

Another aspect that could have improved the quality of this study is having access to a wider range of participants and not necessarily volunteers. After doing the analysis of the data collected from them, it became evident that all the participants had total confidence in their leadership and had no objection to sharing information about their beliefs and values with the researcher. Although this provided very rich and detailed information about the topic, it could be argued that information from less secure headteachers could be beneficial too. It is clear that the perspective of such potential participants is missing from the

study. Similarly, it would have been interesting to have access to more female headteachers (especially from the Protestant field) or Christian headteachers from more varied age brackets or cultural/religious backgrounds. For example, the study would have benefited from having access to headteachers from different ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, or perhaps even converts to Christianity from a different faith.

The study could have also been improved by having more participants from faith schools working in difficult circumstances. In this study, only two out of the twelve participants were leading schools classed as Inadequate by Ofsted. It would have been better to have more contributors from schools under such circumstances, especially as the study was determined to find out how headteachers dealt with tensions and dilemmas, which might be more common (albeit not by any means exclusive) in struggling institutions.

One significant aspect to bear in mind as well is the age of the data. Due to the fact that the research project had to be spread out over a number of years due to the part-time nature of the study, the data is, in some cases, a few years old. Given the fast pace of change in the world of education, this could be seen as an aspect that has to be taken into consideration when reading the findings and their interpretation. Concerning the interviewing process, it is worth noticing that the study could have been more faithful to Seidman's (2006) recommendation for doing three different phenomenological interviews. Due to the limitation in access to the headteachers, the three interviews had to be condensed into one longer interview, albeit divided into three analogous sections (see chapter 3).

One area that could have made the study stronger is a more extensive use of documentary material. Documents such as Ofsted reports and mission statements were only used to prepare for the interviews with only limited use afterwards. More thorough and systematic use of this material during the analysis could have enhanced the validity of the data collected. Furthermore, the study could have benefited from the inclusion of the viewpoint of other stakeholders (i.e. teachers, parents, pupils and governors from the participating schools) (e.g., Murre, 2017). Gathering their opinion through interviews but also through online questionnaires and using either qualitative or quantitative data to triangulate the information gathered from the headteachers could also have a positive impact on the study's scope and robustness.

One final limitation was the relative inexperience in using qualitative data analysis software Nvivo. This piece of software is undoubtedly very powerful

(Gibbs, 2014), but only the most basic functions were used due to the researcher's inexperience. The study could have been more extensive if a deeper understanding of the most advanced capabilities of the software had been known. However, the use of the software was indeed useful even if only some of all available features were used.

7.4 Recommendations for future research

The recommendations for future research can be categorised into three different groups: empirical, scope and methodological. With regard to the first one, it would be interesting to replicate this study with a different group of a similar number of participants belonging to the same two groups. Although generalisation would still not be possible (investigated population still not statistically significant), it would offer additional insight into the experience that Christian headteachers have of ethical leadership in practice and could provide extra information about whether the time gap between both studies shows any significant variation in results.

In terms of scope, a natural progression of this work would be to research the moral values and their application in practice by headteachers working in schools with a different Christian denomination and not just Roman Catholic and Protestants. The obvious inclusion would be Anglican schools, but other denominations such as Quakerism or Methodism would be very interesting as well. In the case of Anglican schools, it would be particularly interesting to research the values of Anglican and non-Anglican headteachers of Anglican schools. This is one aspect that could not be investigated in this study because of the expectation of Catholic schools to appoint Catholic headteachers and Protestant schools to appoint Protestant headteachers. Interestingly, the Church of England is different to both of these denominations in the sense that it allows non-Anglicans (in fact, it could be people of a completely different faith or none) to become headteachers of their schools. This would be fascinating and a great addition to the material of this thesis by way of comparison.

Finally, in terms of methodology, it would be interesting to see if studies based on the same topic but using purely quantitative methods or a mixed-methods approach that could provide an extra insight that would complement the conclusions of this thesis. As suggested in the previous subsection, it would be helpful to include the opinion of other school community members such as pupils, staff, governors, and families as well as members of the wider community on the topic of the ethical dimension of school leadership. Also, the involvement

of clergy in these studies would be of great interest given the importance of faith communities in some of these institutions. This information could eventually be triangulated with documentary data to generate a robust approach that would complement the findings from more idiographic qualitative studies such as this one.

7.5 Autobiographical reflection

Having the opportunity to undertake a doctoral degree in a prestigious academic institution in the UK has been one of the most significant experiences of my life. It is now that I am writing this final section that I am starting to appreciate this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity fully. Furthermore, not only have I had the chance to research an exciting and timely topic in educational leadership, but I have also done it under the supervision of experienced, knowledgeable, and encouraging academic tutors.

There have been many positive aspects to this doctoral journey. The first one was having the opportunity to complete some helpful research modules during the degree's taught component, which helped enormously in understanding the requirements for the endeavour. During this time, I also had the opportunity of meeting highly insightful and passionate postgraduate students from all over the world who impressed me very much. Also, having access to the library and the online collection of academic literature helped significantly. My most recent experience confirmed that 'non-autopilot' thinking emerges from the interaction between listening, reading and writing, which I practised regularly during my time as a doctoral student. Finally, perhaps the most significant aspect has been the opportunity to meet, interview and learn from twelve inspirational headteachers. Listening (multiple times) to their words was like attending the best leadership and management seminar in the world. Theirs were the words of experienced professionals but also of individuals of integrity (Session, 2014) and high moral stature. There is no question that, on a personal level, the experience has made me feel humble and inspired.

Despite the copious amount of positive experiences, it is also true that this journey has not been free from problems, complications and frustrations. Confronting the differences between higher education in Spain and England was my first difficulty. Although I had acquired academic experience in Spain, I eventually realised that this knowledge was only of relative utility in England. This is because of the significant differences between the Spanish educational model (based on exams almost exclusively) and the one in England. As a

consequence, I experienced a certain degree of self-doubt not dissimilar to the experience of other Spanish researchers when transitioning into the world of academia in the English-speaking world (see Tyrer, 2006).

Another significant difficulty was the need to juggle family life, doing research and working full-time. Such confluence of circumstances was certainly a test of stamina and determination, especially given my job as Head of Department of a large secondary school in one of the most deprived areas of Leeds. Inevitably this meant that the project had to be spread out over several years, and I have to admit that there were times when there was a drop in energy and focus. Furthermore, my experience has been that, in the current educational climate, some educational leaders try to dissuade staff from taking further studies even if it is education-related and carried out in their own time. I suspect that some headteachers believe that the last thing schools need is for overworked and exhausted teachers to commit to doing extra work elsewhere. In my case, I was asked by my headteacher to provide written assurance that these studies would not have a detrimental effect on my performance. Moreover, he reserved his right to make formal recommendations on the issue if unconvinced. Although this position could be justified in the short term, I strongly suspect that such attitudes are short-sighted and detrimental to institutional long term success. Furthermore, it would be reasonable to think that such attitudes contribute to the emergence of unhealthy institutional cultures characterised by subtle intimidation, disrupted collegiality and missed opportunities (Wornham, 2003).

Getting access to participants was a genuine difficulty (even before the situation worsened further due to the Covid-19 global pandemic). Given the extraordinary demands placed on current headteachers in England, the empirical truth is that school leaders are seldom available for academic research unless the organisation demands and organises the research. This factor was further complicated by this project's main focus (i.e. personal values and their implementation), which could have been considered controversial. Finally, although undoubtedly thought-provoking and stimulating, the issue of ethics and values proved to be more challenging than first anticipated. The study of ethics from an academic perspective is very different from the commonly-held idea that it is merely a question of goodwill and common sense. A more careful look reveals that it is most definitely not. I now realise that my original decision to research moral values was guided by genuine personal interest but also, at least partially, by a certain degree of blissful naivety.

It would be only fair to concede that I was regularly confronted with practical difficulties and fresh 'unknown unknowns' that slowed down my progress. However, it has become evident that facing those difficulties and challenges has confirmed my appreciation of academic research as a worthy endeavour as well as strengthened my ability to problem solve and think critically. The whole experience could be described as a fascinating, arduous, often messy, but exultant journey that has provided a new set of skills that has made me a better teacher, researcher, and possibly, human being. I can now appreciate that any past difficulties pale into insignificance compared to the gift that I have received.

After twenty-five years dedicated to teaching children in primary, secondary schools, and Sixth Forms in Spain and the UK, my doctoral experience has whetted my appetite for further engagement with academia. I look forward to the opportunity to participate in future research and publications, commencing with research that builds on this study. I believe the field of ethics and educational leadership is not only fascinating but one crucial area of knowledge that requires further investigation. Furthermore, I am interested in the possibility of exploring other professional avenues. The prospect of utilising my experience and further engagement with higher education is genuinely exciting, especially if this involves working with academics and educationalists from different parts of the globe. I am convinced that the expertise gained from my work as a teacher and school leader since 1997 and my experience as a doctoral student at the University of Leeds will continue bringing meaning to my life as well as being of utility to others. Paraphrasing the words of CS Lewis, the great late Irish theologian, author and academic, the reason for my decision to continue my involvement in the educational field is a desire to fulfil a passion for irrigating deserts rather than just cutting down jungles.

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APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTER

Lower Cross Cottage
5 Hazel Croft
Shipley
BD18 2DY

Mr XXXX XXXX
XXXXXX Christian School
XXXXXX Road
XXXXXX
XX1 2XX

25 September 2014

Dear Mr XXXX,

Research Interview

I am a former primary head teacher from Andalusia, Spain presently teaching in a secondary school in England whilst studying part-time for a doctorate in education at the University of Leeds. I am currently undertaking a research project for my course and I would be grateful if you would be willing to be interviewed, at a time and place convenient to you, as part of that research. The semi-structured interviews will be carried out in two 1 hour sessions.

My intention is to explore the values that motivate head teachers in schools with a Christian ethos /foundation and how those values are put in practice in their specific contexts.

Before you agree to be interviewed, I would like to confirm that:

- *With your permission the interviews will be recorded.*
- *Your anonymity will be maintained at all times and no comments will be ascribed to you by name in any written document or verbal presentation. Nor will any data be used from the interview that might identify you to a third party.*
- *You will be free to withdraw from the research and/or request that your transcript not be used. Also be aware that your data cannot be removed or changed after the interview. Please bear in mind that supplementary questions might be asked as appropriate.*
- *I will write to you on completion of the research and an electronic copy of my final research thesis will be made available to you upon request.*

I sincerely hope that you will be able to help me with my research. If you have any queries concerning the nature of the research please contact email me at ed10hgo@leeds.ac.uk

Finally, can I thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I look forward to receiving your reply by post or preferably by email to the email address indicated above.

Yours sincerely,

Hilario Garcia Ostos

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL APPROVAL

Performance, Governance and Operations
 Research & Innovation Service
 Charles Thackrah Building
 101 Clarendon Road
 Leeds LS2 9LJ Tel: 0113 343 4873

Email: ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Hilario Garcia Ostos

EdD candidate

School of Education

University of Leeds

Leeds, LS2 9JT

ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee

University of Leeds

23 April 2022

Dear Hilario

Title of study: **Influences on Leadership Values in Schools with a Christian Ethos and their Application in Practice**

Ethics reference: **AREA 14-019**

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and following receipt of your response to the Committee's initial comments, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
AREA 14-019 Summary.docx	1	23/09/14
AREA 14-019 Garcia Ostos Ethical Review Form V3 (2).doc	1	09/09/14
AREA 14-019 Fieldwork-assessment-form-low-risk-2013.doc	1	09/09/14
AREA 14-019 Interview Questions.docx	1	09/09/14
AREA 14-019 Letter to school heads template.docx	1	09/09/14
AREA 14-019 Online survey questions.docx	1	09/09/14
AREA 14-019 Pilot Study Questions.docx	1	09/09/14
AREA 14-019 Schools to be invited.docx	1	09/09/14
AREA 14-019 Participant_consent_form_email.doc	2	23/09/14
AREA 14-019 Participant_consent_form.doc	2	23/09/14

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval, including changes to recruitment methodology. All changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment>.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits>.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie

Senior Research Ethics Administrator, Research & Innovation Service

On behalf of Dr Andrew Evans, Chair, [AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee](#)

CC: Student's supervisor(s)

APPENDIX C: KEY POINTS EMAIL FOR INTERVIEWEES



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Dear Mrs XXXXX,

Interview Key Points

Thank you very much for taking part in this research.

Please be reminded that the interview is scheduled for the xxth of XXXXXXX at X.XX pm.

The objective of the first interview is gaining insight into the leadership values in schools with a Christian ethos and how these are exercised. You will be asked about the following:

- 1) The values of the school you lead;
- 2) The nature of these values;
- 3) Role of the school leader in a school with a Christian ethos;
- 4) What facilitates and what hinders the application of these values;
- 5) Professional development of head teachers.

The objective of the second interview is gaining insight into the specific leadership values of head teachers in schools in Christian ethos schools, and how these were formulated. You will be asked about the following:

- 1) Your personal values and beliefs;
- 2) Significant events in your life that have had influence in your career;
- 3) Your leadership style;
- 4) The challenges of your role.

Some important issues to remember:

- *This research has been approved by the University's Research Ethics Committee.*
- *With your permission the interviews will be recorded.*
- *The interviews will last approximately 60 minutes.*
- *Your anonymity will be maintained at all times and no comments will be ascribed to you by name in any written document or verbal presentation. Nor will any data be used from the interview that might identify you to a third party.*
- *You will be free to withdraw from the research and/or request that your transcript not be used. Also be aware that your data cannot be removed or changed after the 30.09.2015.*
- *This is the copy of the key points to be covered prior to the interview. Please bear in mind that supplementary questions might be asked as appropriate.*
- *I will write to you on completion of the research and an electronic copy of my final research thesis will be made available to you upon request.*

Yours faithfully,|

Hilario Garcia Ostos

APPENDIX D: LIST OF INTERVIEWS WITH DATES**PHASE ONE: PILOT STUDY**

Pseudonym	School	Date	Interview type
Dennis	Wilfred Hill Christian School	07/10/2014	Face-to-face

PHASE TWO

Pseudonym	School	Date	Interview type
Alan	Pullburn Mission School	28/10/2014	Face-to-face
Paul	Rivergrey Catholic College	13/11/2014	Face-to-face
Ronald	Redrock Achievement College	26/02/2015	Face-to-face
Dominic	St Mark's the Evangelist School	26/02/2015	Face-to-face
Arthur	Moorside Christian Education Centre	23/03/2015	Face-to-face
Timothy	Telchester City Academy	24/06/2015	Videoconference
Theresa	Sadler Teaching Alliance	09/07/2015	Telephone
Maria	St Michael's RC School	20/07/2015	Videoconference
Janet	Chesterworth Church School	21/09/2015	Face-to-face
Christopher	Hartstock Catholic Grammar School	28/10/2015	Face-to-face
Julie	St Francis RC Primary School	14/12/2015	Telephone

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

School of Education, Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Law



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



Consent to take part in “Influences on Leadership Values in Schools with a Christian Ethos and their Application in Practice” research

Add your initials next to the statement if you agree

I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter explaining the above research project inviting me to take part in the project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. The deadline for voluntary withdrawal from the research is the 30 th of September, 2015. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. Also, should I choose to withdraw from the study, I can notify the researcher (telephone number 07906071778 or email ed10hgo@leeds.ac.uk).	
I give permission for supervisors and examiners at the University of Leeds to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research in an anonymised form. I am aware that although every effort will be made to ensure anonymity in the analysis of extracts from interview data and documents (i.e. by using pseudonyms), there is a very slight chance that certain elements from the data could be identifiable.	
I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Hilario Garcia Ostos
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Ethics approval reference: AREA 14-019. Date of approval: 25.09.2014

Project title	Document type	Version #	Date
Values and Leadership in Practice in Schools with a Christian Ethos	Consent form for recorded interview	2	25.09.2014

APPENDIX F: SWOT ANALYSIS EXAMPLE

SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Your advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership of the school knows what to do to improve and some issues have been resolved - Students feel safe in the school - The school at the moment is meeting the minimum standards for attainment in English and maths - Students in the Sixth Form experience an improvement in results compared to the average results at GCSE level - Curriculum is broad and varied including moral education 	<p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literacy is generally poor and students on the perform at GCSE in all subjects because of this. - Students with disabilities make less progress than other students and there is no consistent approach to minimise this situation. - More able students are not stretched enough - Examinations at the end of Key stage IV show below average results nationally - Teaching quality is weak and it is hindered by poor planning - Students do not know how to improve beyond an absolute minimum
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Situations to apply your advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school is relatively small with fewer students than other schools in the area - School has an on-site learning for life centre for students with special needs - The proportion of disabled students is average - The proportion of students on 'free school meals' is below average - A new headteacher has been recently appointed 	<p>Where you are at risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School leadership has been involved in a recent scandal - Not all students behave properly and there is disruption to lessons - the schools rating for Ofsted has dropped from Good to Inadequate - Staff morale is low - Leadership is classed as Requires Improvement
<p>Key words mission statement: excellence for all – balanced curriculum – holistic – community – moral</p>	

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW

Partial transcript of interview with Arthur, headteacher of Moorside Christian School

<i>1st section. Focused life history</i>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<i>Hilario: How was your upbringing?</i>	
Not Christian background Previous disregard for Christianity Dramatic conversion experience	<p>Arthur: My parents were not Christians and I was firmly in the kingdom of darkness. Paul on the road to Damascus had a very powerful experience. I also had a very powerful experience. I was invited to go to church as a nonbeliever so I went laughing and joking thinking it was a big joke but I understood that those people had something I didn't have. When the preacher said that there was a man in the congregation that needed to pray a prayer, I did (pauses).</p> <p>When I invited God into my life, I was physically thrown off my chair and I landed on the floor. I physically heard a noise above my head which sounded like a roaring wind. It sounded like some wind that was very strong; felt the beating of wings above my head. It felt like a bird or an eagle fluttering. I was on the floor and I heard this roaring wind and it was a very, very incredible salvation experience. I was twenty-three.</p>	INFLUENCE INFLUENCE KEY VALUES
	<i>Hilario: How was your life before that?</i>	
Troubled teenage years Faith changed life Gratitude for the change	<p>Arthur: Well, before I left school, I was in court with GBH. You could say I was going down the road of criminality. Even before leaving school I was in front of the judge. Isn't it fantastic that this man who was walking down this road is now the headteacher of a Christian school? Certainly not this straight and narrow, brought up in a Christian family [man]. God used this blackest sinner to become a teacher and a headteacher! Isn't that powerful?! So if you asked me if I was a Christian, I would say "Was I heck!"; If you asked if God eventually showed up in my life, I</p>	INFLUENCE KEY VALUES

God relevant in his life	would say “Big-time!”. He keeps talking to me every single day but I also hear the Devil talking to me to loud and clear to me that I have made the biggest mistake of my life taking his headship, that the school’s going to collapse, that there’s no money, no pension, no prospect for me when I’m sixty-five. But every day I know that God is good and that He is going to show up by faith. This school will be rebuilt on its old foundations.	KEY VALUES
Temptation to despair		IMPLEMENTATION
God is helper		COPING STRATEGY
Trust in God		
	<i>Hilario: Please tell me how you became interested in leadership.</i>	
Vocation / calling	Arthur: After becoming a teacher in 1987, because of my personality and make up I have always enjoyed, if you like, leading. I always wanted to be somebody who led meetings as opposed to somebody who prefers sitting back and allow other people do it. That has always been my make-up and character. I have always been an outgoing person, and a teacher, then an advanced skills teacher, and a deputy head teacher and a teacher who has got skills out of special educational measures. I have always been a leader as such, even if I was leading children’s youth ministry at school. Maybe this is the way that I have been made. Because I came to this school, I moved from being a leader in the secular, maintained system to be a leader of Moorcliffe Christian School.	MISSION
Agreeable but ambitious		KEY VALUES
Involved in leadership of ministries		KEY VALUES
Previous experience in state sector		KEY VALUES
	...	

<i>2nd section. Details of experience</i>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<i>Hilario: What would you say is the main objective of the Moorside Christian school, Arthur?</i>	
Jesus behaviour is template for	Arthur: In Moorcliffe Christian school, our vision is bringing the love of God into the classroom. We	KEY VALUES

<p>school</p> <p>Love, compassion, grace, mercy key values</p> <p>Love of God in every area of school</p> <p>Each child is significant</p> <p>Faith as important as academic subjects</p>	<p>believe that wherever Jesus went, his words brought love and compassion and grace and mercy. Our value is that we want to be like Jesus. In our teaching we want to teach with love and compassion and grace and mercy. In our words, we want to talk to the kids with love and compassion and grace and mercy. In our relationships, we want to relate to each other with love and compassion and grace and mercy. We value what our Lord did and we use him as an example and we want to demonstrate that. We believe that we're here specifically to bring the love of God into the classroom. That appears in our literature, in every piece of information that we send out, in our webpage. It is really fundamental to communicate the value that we bring the love of God into the classroom. So that the children know that they are significant and that God has a plan and a place for each one of them. They know that they are loved by the eternal Father (pauses). Yes, okay, it's maths, English, science or geography but running alongside that it is very important that we value the love of God in the classroom.</p>	<p>INFLUENCE</p> <p>MISSION</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p>
	<p><i>Hilario: To which extent do your personal values align with the values of the school?</i></p>	
<p>Personal value: passion</p> <p>Work-life balance off but worth it</p> <p>School resembles headteacher</p> <p>Love for the institution</p> <p>Love of God</p>	<p>Arthur: I believe that I'm an incredibly passionate man about Moorcliffe Christian school. I love the school. It's incredibly important to me. So much so that sometimes this causes problem at home because when I should be at home, I'm still here working in doing this thing or the other. My passion is infectious for the school, it's infectious for the parents, it's infectious for their staff and for the pupils. This is an incredibly (with emphasis) important place for me. This often comes out when I speak to people and in how I relate to people. When I tell people how good God is and about the amazing plans that God has for their lives and how I believe that this is the school where they should be. I'm incredibly passionate and</p>	<p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p>

touches every area	this overflows into how I teach, work, sacrifice, et cetera.	
	...	

<i>3rd section. Reflections on meaning</i>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<i>Hilario: Given your knowledge of the school you lead, how do you make sense of the challenges of the school?</i>	
<p>School vulnerable due to financial model</p> <p>Called to make a difference</p> <p>Cope with difficulty through faith</p>	<p>Arthur: Most of my pressures are about the financial pressures of life. Because we are an independent school we have no financial assistance in any way shape or size. We are a fee-paying school but I would say that about 50% of our families don't pay fees at all or very reduced fees. This is a real, real problem. The pressure of keeping going and believing we are still going to be here in five years or 10 years so that we can make a difference. The pressure when people say to me that they need money for a new scheme of work or for training or new textbooks for this area. And I keep saying that by faith things are going to get better although in fact, our budget year by year is getting worse until now when we are in a very vulnerable position at this moment in time. Some of our staff is now working for no salary at all and others are working for a reduced salary.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>COPING STRATEGY</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION</p>
	<i>Hilario: Would you say that this lack of funds is a moral dilemma for you, then?</i>	
<p>Expresses his thoughts by quoting his prayer</p> <p>Trust in God</p> <p>School represents God</p>	<p>Arthur: Yes. Every day, I say to the Lord "you are Lord, you are good, you are wonderful and amazing. I don't believe that you want us to be a school of poverty. I don't believe that you want our teachers to be walking about with holes in their socks. I don't believe God, that that makes you look good. I believe that you have to be celebrated and you look good when the school looks good. I want this school to have a better building; our resources to be better for our pupils because we want you to</p>	<p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>COPING STRATEGY</p> <p>MISSION</p>

Struggles to accept lack of resources	look good.” I want my God to be celebrated and I don’t think it’s going to be best celebrated in a threadbare, poverty environment.	IMPLEMENTATION
	...	

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT OF TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Partial transcript of interview with Theresa, head of Sadler Teaching Alliance

<i>1st section. Focused life history</i>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<i>Hilario: Did you grow up in a Christian home?</i>	
Christian upbringing	<p>Theresa: Yes, both my mum and dad are Catholic. Absolutely (with emphasis). My mum is very old school Catholic, very much so. I went to a Catholic primary school but I didn't go to a Catholic secondary school mainly because my mum had a massive operation and we couldn't get there so we went to the local comprehensive which was completely weird. My sister, myself and my brother went (pauses). We got through it. I wouldn't say it was a very good secondary education. I wouldn't say that it was nice. I don't mean this in terms of passing exams. I mean it in terms of the atmosphere of the school. I think that coming from a very closed Catholic school, to going into big secondary was a little bit too much, really.</p>	INFLUENCE
Christian influence disrupted		INFLUENCE
Conflict between secular & religious		CONFLICT SECULAR RELIGIOUS
Longing for the familiar		KEY VALUES
	<i>Hilario: So it was quite a significant experience?</i>	
Compares with siblings	<p>Theresa: Yes, it was (pauses). My brother doesn't go to Mass anymore but if you ask him he would say that he still has a faith and my sister is possibly the most spiritual, kind, lovely woman that you can ever meet but she doesn't go to Mass. She had a terrible tragedy when she was about twenty that really tested her faith and I really don't know if it got back on its</p>	INFLUENCE
Difficulties		LOST

can test faith	feet. You wonder sometimes if we would have been to a Catholic secondary we'd have had something more to lean on.	<i>FAITH</i>
Faith in Catholic education		KEY VALUES
	<i>Hilario: What was it like to go to a secular school?</i>	
Seeing the positive in struggle; resilience	Theresa: Well, I think it really did me good. I'm sure that the reason I can do this job is because of that experience. In terms of getting on with people from different places, with different beliefs, with different moral codes (pauses). All that sort of thing, you know? Different ways of using the language. It does teach you something because Catholic schools are quite different in the way that we speak to each other; even in the way that we walk down the corridor.	KEY VALUES
Conflict between secular & religious	There's that calmness, that awareness that you're in the presence of God. Obviously that wasn't so in my school.	INFLUENCE
Awareness of God		INFLUENCE
	...	

<i>2nd section. Details of experience</i>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<i>Hilario: How would you describe your approach to leadership?</i>	
Morality is non-negotiable	Theresa: Well, I'd always do what is right even if that gets me in trouble. I'm not scared coming to work, ever. I don't always feel clear about the way forward but I do try to take time to think about it. I think sometimes we rush, don't we? But I do try to think about "what would make this school move	KEY VALUES KEY VALUES

Making good decisions take time	forwards quickly?” and trying to be quite reflective about what I’m doing now.	COPING STRATEGY
	<i>Hilario: What would you say are the main obstacle to your role as school leader?</i>	
<p>Competition undermines trust</p> <p>Collaboration is important</p> <p>Morality does not mean instant success</p> <p>Secular heads lack trust</p>	<p>Theresa: Definitely, our egos. The ability to collaborate takes great trust and that is really hard when we’re in league tables and in competition. When the school over the road is doing better than I am and that’s not looked on very well. That makes it really hard for people to trust each other. The ability of people to realise that we can all (with emphasis) excel; that it doesn’t have to be the competition that the government wants it to be. If we all excel, then we all achieve.</p> <p>For a Catholic school, I think we should try to foster that. It doesn’t always work but I would really always try to foster that feeling. Sometimes when you bump into a different school that is not part of your Catholic team, and doesn’t know you and I suggest to come in and help, they don’t trust you. They think that there must be something that you are after... (pauses). There genuinely isn’t.</p>	<p>IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION</p>
	<i>Hilario: Can you tell me what gets you through those difficulties?</i>	
<p>Faith is important</p> <p>Humility</p> <p>Honesty</p>	<p>Theresa: Personally, I think it’s my faith. Constantly, I don’t know if I am... I don’t think I’m that good at leading but every time I go for an interview I have said “if you want me to do this job, give me the job. If you don’t want to do this job, I’m personally happy doing what I’m doing.” And every time I’ve been for a role, and I get that role, I know there is something</p>	<p>COPING STRATEGY</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p>

<p>Faith in ultimate purpose</p> <p>Prayer is important</p>	<p>that I am supposed to do. I might never realise what it is; I might never realise the person that I have met that you had an impact on 20 years later. But as long as I am doing absolutely my best every day, with prayer of course, then that facilitates my role. I couldn't do anything without prayer.</p>	<p>MISSION</p> <p>COPING STRATEGY</p>
	<p>...</p>	

3rd section. Reflections on meaning

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<p><i>Hilario: Given your experience in faith and non-faith schools, how do you understand the difference between them?</i></p>	
<p>Conflict between secular & religious</p> <p>Religion provides foundation for behaviour</p>	<p>Theresa: They're very different. It's just not as deep. When a child misbehaves here, as children do, we look at how can we build this back? How can we think about what your faith tells you? What you should have done? Why do you think we are so upset? It's not because you have upset ours, it's more than that. It's how your faith dictates the way you behave. That's what we trying to do with the children here.</p> <p>When I go into the other schools and a child has been naughty, they go through something similar. We practice restorative justice which is the term for talking through their behaviour, but because they're not linking it to a faith, it just doesn't seem as deep. I don't think that children learn as quickly... If you</p>	<p>CONFLICT</p> <p>SECULAR</p> <p>RELIGIOUS</p> <p>INFLUENCE</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p>

<p>God has moral expectations</p> <p>Christians should act as moral role models</p> <p>Worldview leads to behaviour</p> <p>Faith is embedded in education</p> <p>Responsible</p>	<p>think about offending your teacher or offending your friends, or offending your mum and dad is bad, but to offend your God is so much worse. That's what we try to impress upon the children. That doesn't happen in a school where faith isn't the driver. I also think that, particularly for the teachers here, we are constantly trying to model our faith and we are challenged to model the faith. Walking down a corridor when you greet another teacher; we are constantly trying to model the very, very best that we can be. I don't think you can see that in other schools: I don't think their moral conviction is quite as strong. I don't know why, I suppose it just can't be. If you believe in something utterly, then you're always trying to show that, aren't you?</p> <p>Part of my job when I walk into these other schools is almost evangelisation. If someone asked me about working in a Catholic school, I tell them it's the Catholic faith and talk to them all about it and that's great. That's what I'm supposed to be doing. It's my responsibility.</p>	<p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p>
	<p><i>Hilario: Does that responsibility bring extra accountability?</i></p>	
<p>Accountable to secular and religious organizations</p> <p>Religious organizations use secular</p>	<p>Theresa: It does in two ways. It does because as well as being judged by Ofsted, we're also judged by the diocese. Because we have an Ofsted style assessment that the diocese does of us. They will grade us inadequate, requires improvement, good or outstanding. The diocese will grade us which is very strange to my mind, but there you go! (laughs) That's what they do.</p> <p>I think the accountability is huge in terms of (big</p>	<p>IMPLEMEN TATION</p> <p>IMPLEMEN TATION</p>

<p>terminology</p> <p>Ultimately, accountable to God</p>	<p>pause) your (pauses again). One day we are going to be judged. That feeling of “have I done absolutely everything that I can to show that child the faith in a good way; never mind their exam results; never mind that. From the Catholic point of view, have I shown them the faith and helped them develop their own faith?” Because so many children now don’t end up with a faith, especially as they hit the teenage years. That’s accountability on yourself, isn’t it? “Have I done enough to get them a strong faith?” As a parent we do that, don’t we?</p>	<p><i>ULTIMATE ACCOUNT ABILITY</i></p>
	<p>...</p>	

APPENDIX I: SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEOCONFERENCING INTERVIEW

Partial transcript of interview with Timothy, headteacher of Telchester City Academy

<i>1st section. Focused life history</i>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<i>Hilario: Thinking about your life, did you grow up in a Christian family?</i>	
Christian upbringing Parental sacrifice for their faith Integrity	Timothy: Yes. My parents were missionaries in a foreign mission field. They lived in a situation of considerable poverty. My father had two Oxford University degrees and he gave up what would have been a very comfortable life to go and serve in a very needy situation and maintained enormous integrity throughout a forty-year career as a missionary.	INFLUENCE KEY VALUES KEY VALUES
	<i>Hilario: It sounds as if you have had some really positive influences and role models in your life.</i>	
Responsible Values passed on to others Importance of growing up in a Christian family Humility	Timothy: Yes. When you are given a lot, a lot is expected of you. I tell that to my children, who are third-generation Christians. I have a friend who converted later on in his life from a non-Christian background. He's a wonderful, talented guy with a CV that runs to about three pages. Very impressive. But he would say that he has scars in his life from his childhood that he can't fully leave behind. He's still battling against the memories of some of the mistakes he made. This is not to say that I didn't make mistakes when I was younger. I made huge mistakes and I had to go away for a bit in order to come back but ultimately, what I was given in terms of the role model of my parents was a	KEY VALUES INFLUENCE KEY VALUES

Parental example	wonderful gift .	INFLUENCE
	<i>Hilario: How did your upbringing shape your values?</i>	
Parental example Same values parents Encouragement Childhood values fully embraced	Timothy: Well, I was brought up with a set of values which I inherited, but over time, these values have become precious to me. I can now understand why they are important and I seek to affirm others in them on the basis of my own experience. I know I'm blessed in that regard (pauses). Many people have been brought up with a set of values and then, they have to do a U turn. That has not been my experience. I did allude a minute ago to a time when those values weren't so precious to me and I drifted a little bit but in order to come back.	INFLUENCE KEY VALUES KEY VALUES INFLUENCE
	<i>Hilario: How did you become interested in becoming a headteacher?</i>	
Wanted to stay in classroom Responsible Obedience to Christian minister	Timothy: I didn't want to be a leader because I wanted to stay in the classroom because I love teaching. More or less a decision not to be. I came to this school and I became head of Maths and I thought that would be as far as I'd take it because being head of Maths is a classroom-based position but with some leadership so I thought it was the best of both worlds. I had to be prompted to become a vice-principal by my minister at the time who told me that it was right for me to do it and necessary. But the experience that cemented it for me, funnily enough, was the interview process which put me through loads of testing experiences, all of which I relished and loved. I realised that if that was what the job was going to be like, I'd love to do it. Having become vice-principal, I had a taste for leadership, so it was the natural thing to go into principalship.	KEY VALUES KEY VALUES KEY VALUES INFLUENCE

Discovered his gifting for leadership		<i>GIFTING FOR LEADERSHIP</i>
	...	

<i>2nd section. Details of experience</i>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<i>Hilario: What would you say are the values of the school you lead are?</i>	
Explicit values Shared school Integrity Accountability Courage Determination Purpose Humility Compassion	Timothy: We make our values explicit. We have a values card that we provide to every student. Here at Telchester we have some core values that are very useful because they give us a common vocabulary with students. These are integrity, accountability, courage, determination, honourable purpose, humility and compassion. These are shared with the other two schools under the umbrella of our charitable trust.	
	<i>Hilario: I see, to what extent would you say those values align with your own values?</i>	
Identification with school values Head values shape values school	Timothy: Entirely (long silence- deliberate). If a leader is in an organisation for long enough, there will be an alignment of the organisation with the leader and the mechanism for that is very interesting but I can only offer a conjecture as to what that mechanism is. But what I have seen again and again is that an organisation will start to look like its leader overtime.	
	<i>Hilario: To what extent are those values shaped by the Christian ethos of the school?</i>	

<p>Jesus behaviour is template for school</p> <p>Glorifying God in their context</p> <p>Leadership is service</p>	<p>Timothy: When we were trying to identify how to describe our value system we asked the question “how would we make our schools look like our Lord Jesus Christ?” We sought to pull out from Scripture a clear understanding of His character and we felt that the Lord Jesus had a purpose which shaped His whole life. Basically, He came to die for His people and everything that He did was to the glory of His Father. Similarly, we wanted our schools to be characterised by this. And that purpose is, essentially, to bring glory to God but also in the specific context that we find ourselves, we should take pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and we should prepare them to be the leaders of the future. Leadership is to be found in service.</p>	<p>KEY VALUES INFLUENCE</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p>
	<p><i>Hilario: Who has influenced your approach to school leadership?</i></p>	
<p>Predecessors wanted success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds</p> <p>Suspicious of some progressive values</p>	<p>Timothy: My main influences are my predecessors: the two principals that came before me, who were very different from each other –and very different to me– but who both shared a passionate commitment to high standards and a refusal to make excuses for children from difficult backgrounds. From them, I inherited a belief that discipline is good for children, not bad, and teachers, who should be subject specialists who communicate their expertise in the subject rather than just facilitate learning. I was trained in the late 80s when progressive education was rife in those days. I would have been swept away with the current if it weren’t for those two men.</p>	<p>INFLUENCE</p> <p>INFLUENCE</p>

<p>'Soft' skills also important</p> <p>Seek to understand</p>	<p>I've also been influenced by my wife. She's taught me whatever ability I have with people. She's taught me to seek first to understand and then, to be understood (long silence - deliberate). In that order. She's also taught me to defuse conflict and to act with integrity and courage and to say sorry.</p>	<p>INFLUENCE</p>
	<p>...</p>	

<i>3rd section. Reflections on meaning</i>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Selected transcript</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	<p><i>Hilario:</i> Would you say there was a faith connection for your decision to take on the leadership of the academy?</p>	
<p>Responsible</p> <p>Humility</p> <p>Responsible</p> <p>Vocation/ calling</p>	<p>Timothy: Yes. There was a specific one and a general one. The specific one was that by that time I had been at Telchester City Academy for twelve years, I cared for the academy very much. So when the opportunity of principalship came up, I wanted to make sure that the person who would get the job would honour what the Academy stood for and perpetuate it. If there was another person to do it, that'd be okay but I didn't want somebody to come along and change the direction and that's why I put myself forward. But more generally, as Christians, we ought to understand the nature of vocation. We believe that there's a God who calls us. We recognise that three things line up: what I'd like to do; what am I good at and what needs to be done. If those three things line up for you in one particular area, you know that you are going to be happy.</p>	<p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>MISSION</p>
	<p><i>Hilario:</i> Could you let me know how do you understand your leadership style then?</p>	
<p>Listen and understand</p>	<p>Timothy: My leadership style is based on seeking to listen and understand. To take people seriously and to seek to solve the problems that people bring to me; affirm them as far as possible and the ideas and</p>	<p>KEY VALUES</p> <p>KEY</p>

Encouraging	ambitions that they bring to me.	VALUES
Clarity High expectations	This means that I need to communicate very clearly the parameters on which I work because I don't like people bringing me ideas that I have to say 'no' to. If I can be very clear about what I believe in and the ideas that we have for the academy, people can then bring me ideas that I can say 'yes' to, listen to them and then say "go for it!"	KEY VALUES
Listen and understand	When people bring me problems, I seek to listen and take them seriously and recognise that there'll be a grain of truth in what they are saying and do my utmost to put right the problem that they are bringing. Or if it's within their hands to address it, encourage them to address it. It's a conscious desire to take people seriously, and to put the ball back in their court to do what is in their hands to do, rather than to take over.	KEY VALUES
High expectations of others	Not necessarily to be a problem fixer but a listener and somebody who brings the best out of others.	IMPLEMEN TATION KEY VALUES
	...	