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# Catholic School Principal Job Satisfaction: Keys to Retention and Recruitment

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# CATHOLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL JOB SATISFACTION: KEYS TO RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

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*This article presents a study on principal retention in New South Wales, Australia. Factors in job retention included economic security, role enjoyment, and the opportunity to contribute. Disincentives to the principalship included lack of support from the employing authority, inadequate pay, isolation, growing responsibilities, difficult parents, and interfering pastors. Findings suggested that the ideal principal role would include greater remuneration, a more supportive employing authority, clearly defined role expectations, and job recognition.*

## INTRODUCTION

It is not difficult to find persons who are leaders. It is quite another matter to place persons in different situations where they will be able to function as leaders. (Stogdill, 1948, p. 65)

What job factors attract and retain Catholic school principals? In past years, a strong commitment to Catholic education was the primary incentive to become a principal. School leaders emerged, largely unsolicited, from a cadre of dedicated teachers and embraced the principalship more as a vocation than a job. This sense of vocation was demonstrated by veteran principals in the study who attributed lengthy tenures to their “commitment to Catholic education, commitment to teaching and learning, and commitment to the mission of the church.”

Today, fewer teachers are aspiring to the principalship (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Moos, 1999; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003). The demands of the job have become less appealing to the cadre of teachers from whom principal positions are filled. Teachers are discouraged by perceptions that prin-

cipals are overworked, overstressed (Moos, 1999), underpaid, and overloaded with administrative details that have little to do with educating students (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001). Additionally, teachers, especially those with master's degrees, have a wider variety of career choices from which to select, many of which pay higher salaries without the long hours and stress of a principal's position (Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003). Thus, commitment to Catholic education, as a singular incentive, may no longer be adequate motivation to aspire to the principalship.

## **PREVIOUS STUDIES OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

Recent studies, anecdotal reports, and media have given much attention to principal attrition and the shortage of candidates for principal positions. As the population of current principals nears retirement age, the pool of applicants for principal vacancies continues to shrink. Internationally, the scarcity of candidates has made the selection of principals by employing authorities a challenging task (Holdaway, 1999). In New Zealand, a study of principal retention in rural schools revealed that principals averaged only 2.63 years per position (Whittall, 2002). For the last several years, concerns have been raised in Catholic education circles in New South Wales (NSW) regarding the availability of suitable candidates to fill principal vacancies (Canavan, 2001; d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, & Goodwin, 2001). Fewer applicants are applying for advertised positions in parish and diocesan Catholic schools as well as congregational or private Catholic schools. In many instances, positions for principals have had to be re-advertised due to lack of suitable applicants (Bond, 2002; d'Arbon et al., 2001). According to Bond (2002), schools have been forced to throw in a government car as an incentive. To facilitate better planning for future leadership in Catholic schools, the Catholic Education Commission, NSW, launched a study to determine why people are not applying for principal positions (d'Arbon et al., 2001).

The shortage of principals in U.S. public and nonpublic schools has raised nationwide concern (National Association of Elementary School Principals [NAESP], 2005). An Educational Research Service (1998) survey of 403 school districts revealed that 50% of districts had shortages of qualified applicants for principal positions. The typical public school principal in the United States had a median age of 50 and plans to retire by age 57. School districts in rural and urban areas reported difficulty recruiting and retaining administrators (Howley & Pendarvis, 2002). In addition to a decline in the quantity of candidates, some districts experienced a decline in quality, reporting that candidates lacked adequate teaching and administra-

tive experiences (Cusick, 2003).

Why doesn't anybody want the job? Although "the social, political, and national context may vary, the challenges facing principals each day are common and often quite daunting" (d'Arbon et al., 2001, p. 2). Several researchers attribute the disinterest in the principalship to complexities of the job, the ever-increasing workload, long hours, and stress associated with the job (Holdaway, 1999; Moos, 1999) and insufficient compensation (Cusick, 2003; NAESP, 2005). In 1998, the average new principal worked 9-hour days, 52 weeks per year, for a salary approximately 10% more than veteran teachers (NAESP, 2005). A study by Rayfield and Diamantes (2003), reported principals' dissatisfaction with the enormous time commitment and the requirement to become an expert across many disciplines. Principals have little time for the real work of educating students.

Changing demands and growing responsibilities have made the principal's job unattractive. Over the last 10 years, changes made to the role of principals in Western countries, particularly Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have altered the principal's job. Numerous reforms, such as higher standards, greater accountability, more parent demands, and site-based management, have resulted in additional responsibilities for principals and head teachers. Management responsibilities and increased paperwork have diminished the time available for supervision of instruction and curriculum development. Salaries and benefits have not increased proportionately with the new responsibilities (Whitaker, 2003).

Ribbins (1999) suggested that the principal role is complex with the number of realities being equal to the number of individuals. According to Bond (2002), principals in Australia have been forced to become pseudo-accountants, financial managers, counselors, behavioral managers, and public relations officers in increasingly litigious environments. Studies of principals in the United States report similar findings. In a study by Cusick (2003), principals expressed satisfaction with many aspects of their job, particularly work with students and teachers, but were overwhelmed by a multitude of demands, including legislated expectations, increased parental demands, student safety, gender and equity issues, staff development, curriculum alignment, accreditation, school improvement plans, annual reports, accountability, and legal constraints.

A recent study of the attrition of Catholic school principals by Durov and Brock (2004) revealed that in spite of enjoying their work and impact on Catholic education, principals left positions due to inadequate compensation, lack of career opportunities, or conflict with governing authorities. Conflict with pastors was reported as an issue in principal retention in a study by Brock and Fraser (2001), who reported that principals viewed a harmonious

working relationship with the pastor or governing body as a critical factor in job satisfaction.

A study of the shortage of principals in NSW Catholic schools (d'Arbon et al., 2001) revealed that contributing to Catholic education was a motivator, but that the challenge of leading a faith-based school community in which personal lives, faith commitment, and religious practices were scrutinized by Church authorities, the education system, students, and parents, was a deterrent to seeking a principal's position. Additional deterrents identified in the study included too much red tape and bureaucracy, gender bias, complexity of the selection process, inadequate salary, and the impact on personal and family life (d'Arbon et al., 2001). One solution that has arisen from the study is the possibility of shared leadership – identifying areas of the principal's role and delegating appropriate responsibilities to assistants.

Other researchers have suggested reconfiguring the principal's role to a two-person team. Tasks would be divided among two or more leaders who possess skills in different areas, or hiring business managers so principals have time to devote to instruction and curriculum, professional development, and networking (Hertling, 2001). In another model, co-principals would share the work with a support staff of social workers, and counselors to assist with student needs (Hopkins, 2000).

Other solutions to solve the shortage include recruiting more women and minorities, publicizing the satisfactory aspects of the principalship, improving salaries and benefits (Tallerico & Tingley, 2001), providing realistic expectations (Cusick, 2003), altering the role and reducing time demands of principals (Whitaker, 2003), and offering induction, mentoring, and continuous training (Cusick, 2003; Whitaker, 2003). An article in *Education World* (Hopkins, 2000) suggested establishing staff-to-administrator ratios, setting school size standards not to exceed 300 students, including more practical applications in principal training programs, and allowing principals more leverage in staffing decisions.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Concern for the declining numbers of candidates for Catholic school principalships, prompted researchers from a New South Wales elementary school and Creighton University to investigate the factors that contributed to principal job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Since most of the research on principal recruitment has been conducted in public school settings, many questions remain about incentives and disincentives for principals in Catholic schools.

Identifying the incentives and disincentives to the Catholic school principalship is the first step in addressing the barriers to attracting and

retaining quality leaders. Principals who love their jobs have better retention rates and are the best advertisement for attracting future leaders. Teachers who work with happy and satisfied principals are more likely to have positive perceptions about the principalship and view it as a career choice. Principals who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to encourage teachers to aspire to the principal position (Grady, Carlson, & Brock, 1992).

The purpose of the study was to ascertain from principals currently employed within Catholic schools the environment that gives them satisfaction and the circumstances that would continue to attract them to the role. Such information would be useful to prospective principals and employing authorities.

## **METHOD**

### **PARTICIPANTS**

Acknowledging the workload of the intended population, the methodology needed to be relevant to the time demands of respondents, yet provide rich, valid data. A qualitative paradigm, using narrative surveys and structured personal interviews for data collection, was selected. Data were collected from a random selection of principals in two dioceses in New South Wales. The two dioceses were selected for their geographic accessibility and practicality of conducting personal interviews.

Principals of 47 randomly selected elementary and secondary schools from two New South Wales dioceses were mailed invitations for participation. Total respondents included 20 elementary school principals. Close monitoring of potential respondents to the study by the employing authority in one of the dioceses might have contributed to the low response rate from principals in that diocese. Of the 20 principals, 17 agreed to participate in an additional telephone interview. The purposive sampling procedures and small number of participants decreased the ability to generalize the findings of the study.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE IN NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

Australian's education system is egalitarian and inclusive in that within the eight states and territories, elementary and secondary schools that are government, independent, or Catholic coexist, thus allowing parents a wide choice. Government schools are fully funded from state and federal grants, while independent and Catholic schools receive funds based on specific formulas devised through consultation with the agencies responsible for them.

Federal government funds to assist Catholic schools are distributed through the National Catholic Education Commission to state and territory Catholic Education Commission offices. Funds from individual states and territories are distributed through the same body.

In New South Wales, Catholic schools exist in all 11 dioceses with over 450 elementary schools, ranging in size from 40 to over 900 students, and 163 secondary schools, ranging in size from 300 to over 1,500 students. Although some of the larger secondary schools are classified as independent because they are owned and operated by religious congregations, they must satisfy state government requirements in order to be registered and accredited.

All schools in New South Wales use curriculum that is developed by a separate body known as the Board of Studies. In order to satisfy criteria for funding, all schools must adopt the curriculum developed by this board.

To select a principal, a panel is formed by the individual Catholic Education Office (CEO), consisting of a community representative, the pastor, a peer principal, and the school's consultant. Although the local pastor has input into selection of the principal, the CEO is considered the principals' employing authority. Principals are accountable to both the diocesan CEO and the local pastor and are compensated according to a salary scale that is set through agreement with the employing authority and the Independent Education Union. The employing authority (CEO) contributes to a superannuation fund for all employees, provides 22 days sick leave per year, maternity leave, and in some dioceses, principals are provided with vehicles while in other dioceses principals are compensated for mileage in the course of school-related travel. Principals in Catholic elementary and secondary schools are contracted and toward the end of the contract period undergo an appraisal. The appraisal process varies from diocese to diocese but the process usually results in recommendations that will assist the participant in his or her professional development during the next period of contract.

The principals who participated in this study were contracted to specific schools in two different dioceses, and were expected to follow the Board of Studies guidelines.

## **PROCEDURES**

The 20 principals who participated in the study completed written narratives that were returned by mail. Additionally, 17 of the participants participated in a telephone interview. The principals who agreed to an additional interview were asked a series of follow-up questions. Interview questions were based on themes emerging from an analysis of questionnaire data.

Narratives and interviews were coded for content and analyzed for themes. The qualitative methodology of member checks, multiple sources of information, and coding and reviewing data for verification enhanced the validity and reliability of data (Creswell, 1994; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996).

## **RESEARCHERS**

The researchers who conducted the study were experienced in the field of elementary school administration. One researcher was a principal of a Catholic primary school in New South Wales. The other researcher was an associate professor of education who formerly administered Catholic schools in Nebraska. The study evolved from the researchers' interest in the continuation of quality leadership for Catholic schools.

## **FINDINGS**

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

The initial portion of the survey asked respondents to report gender, age, religious affiliation, years as principal, academic qualifications, size of current school, and role related to family economic support. A summary of group data follows. Of the 20 principals in the study, 7 were female and 13 were male. They ranged in age from 39 to 65. All of the respondents were Catholic. They ranged from 1 to 32 years of experience as a principal. Formal academic qualifications included 4 participants with a Bachelor's degree, 12 with a Master's degree, and 4 with a Doctoral degree. School sizes varied from 180 to 600 students. Regarding economics, 11 males and 4 females indicated that they were the major economic support of the family.

All of the participants were employed by contractual agreement and their contracts applied to a specific site. Most participants were due for appraisal or contract renewal between 2002 and 2006.

### **EMERGING THEMES**

The following themes emerged from the analysis of data:

- Factors that encourage job retention
- Drawbacks of the principal's role
- Factors that prompted a change of schools
- The ideal principal position

Few major distinctions between male and female respondents, other than those specifically identified in the findings, were noted.



## FACTORS THAT ENCOURAGE RETENTION

Study findings revealed that financial security was one factor, primarily for male principals, for remaining in the principalship. As one principal reported, “[I’m] too young to retire and too old to learn anything new.”

Principals in Catholic schools in NSW are also aware that their options in the education environment, outside the principal’s role, are limited. As one male principal said, “There were not many options unless I wanted a pay-cut.” A return to the classroom as a teacher, or as a school consultant in the office of the employing authority would appear to be the main alternatives. For a principal to return to the classroom after a number of years in an administrative position would involve a diminution in salary and a perception of a loss of status. Principals also realize that the number of consultant positions is limited. All of the 11 dioceses employ principals, who possess specific skills in the area of knowledge of curriculum, human behavior, and an understanding of the role of the consultant, as advisors/supervisors to a group of schools. Their role is to ensure that the principals of the schools to which they are assigned fulfill the criteria implicit for registration.

On the more esoteric side, some principals asserted that they remained in Catholic education due to, “Commitment to Catholic education, commitment to teaching and learning, and commitment to the mission of the church.” Principals working in Catholic education in NSW are required to demonstrate that their commitment to the above is practical and observable, not just to the employing authority, but also to their school staff and the parents who form their local community. In Catholic elementary schools, principals also need to demonstrate their commitment to the mission of the Church to their local pastor.

A number of principals maintained a sense of excitement for their work, reporting,

- “I like the job.”
- “The community is wonderful.”
- “I feel that I contribute to the school’s effectiveness.”
- “Everyday is different as I experience new challenges.”

Principals stated that the ever-changing challenges of the role prevented them from becoming bored or complacent. Contacts with diverse situations and personnel helped in maintaining their skills in leading and managing. One principal stated that, “Wonderful new teachers coming onto staff bring new life.”

Stability of leadership for the school was mentioned by a number of male respondents as a reason for remaining in the principal role. This was not given as a reason by any of the female participants. Male principals also

mentioned that having a vision or a plan for the school was another factor that contributed to their desire to remain in the role.

## **DRAWBACKS IN THE ROLE OF PRINCIPAL**

The principals suggested that a sense of isolation, stress factors, insufficient remuneration, staff issues, demanding and disgruntled parents, and unrealistic expectations from employing authorities were disincentives to the job.

Isolation was expressed in two different ways: isolation from family due to the demands of day and evening commitments and isolation from staff due to their position.

Stress appeared to be generated by a number of non-educational matters. To a majority of the participants, such items appeared to consume the principal's day. The multitude of tasks and responsibilities reported included, the in-service of staff in chemical safety in schools, ensuring that all Occupational Health and Safety requirements were adhered to and the ever-increasing work involved in working within the Child Protection Act. These responsibilities were summarized by one principal who stated that, "The plethora of things you are called on to do suggests that teaching and learning have become secondary issues."

Principals commented that remuneration for the principal's position was not seen as being equated with the role. One principal's words seemed to summarize that overall belief, "Principals perform a role that would be undertaken by many [other personnel] in other employment situations."

Other drawbacks included dealing with staff members who were uncommitted to the team, who appeared cynical to the Church, who were slack and unimaginative, and who were more concerned about issues other than teaching.

Elementary school principals commented on the interference of the pastors as a serious drawback in the role. They also cited the lack of support from the employing authority and colleagues as a drawback.

Parental demands, their threat of litigation, their lack of support on educational, social, and spiritual issues, and their "abuse of staff for unnecessary reasons" were reported as major drawbacks.

## **REASONS FOR APPLYING FOR ANOTHER PRINCIPAL ROLE**

The freshness of a new location – the challenge that a new community would provide – was perceived as both a benefit to the new principal and a benefit to the school community. Principals reported changing schools because they no longer felt satisfied or had contributed as much as they could in their current school. As one principal explained, "I am sick of the same old issues and

complaints.” Other principals sought a new challenge and the feeling of renewal that a new school would provide. In some instances, principals made school changes in response to personal needs or family considerations.

### **THE IDEAL POSITION FOR A CATHOLIC PRINCIPAL**

The ideal job situation for a Catholic school principal favored the employing authority providing greater support in the areas of children with special needs and legal liabilities, and acting as a gatekeeper with regard to unprofessional staff and conflict with unions. A few participants suggested that being a principal in an independent school would be the ideal position.

### **INTERVIEW RESPONSES**

The second phase of the study involved telephone interviews. Principals were asked to elaborate on each of the issues that emerged from the analysis of data generated by the questionnaire. Two issues generated the most passionate responses during the interviews, each of which will be addressed throughout the following sections of the paper: (a) specific drawbacks of the principal’s role and (b) the ideal job for principals of Catholic schools.

#### **Specifics Drawbacks of the Role**

Though often varying in degree, drawbacks included: unchurched parents and their affect upon the school ethos, demands on the principal’s time, and unrealistic expectations from the employing authority. Interview data supported findings of the questionnaire in describing these drawbacks. Respondents emphasized the negative impact that the number of meetings placed on the principal. As one principal remarked, “Meetings can place heavy demands upon your time. Learn to say no.” Another principal explained, “Incredible demands upon our time...detract from the basic premise of the school which is education.”

Comments regarding unrealistic expectations of the employing authority suggested that some respondents believed it was out of touch with the work place that was the school, and that the school was always expected to coordinate its agenda to that of the employing authority. There was acknowledgement that the employing authority was also the agency that involved the contractual arrangements that each principal was party to.

However, in June of 2004, the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) granted a pay increase to all principals employed in Catholic schools. The employing authority and the Independent Teachers Union agreed to the content of the submission to the IRC. Part of the submission indicated the diverse tasks of principals in Catholic schools. At the time this article was

prepared, a similar pay increase had not been awarded to principals in government schools.

Elementary school principals reported that the interference of the pastor was a serious drawback in the role. Several respondents reported problems in their working relationship with the pastor, namely disagreement over role and responsibilities.

Demanding and disgruntled parents placed additional constraints on the principal's time. There were comments that some parents did not have an understanding regarding the line between management issues and educational issues. Although the majority of Catholic schools in NSW have a separate parent body that meets on a regular basis, there was some unease among principal respondents that a number of these groups assumed too much influence. Some principals reported that unchurched parents affected the ethos of the school, often harming its Catholic identity.

### **The Ideal Position**

Principals who were interviewed reported three basic factors that were of major importance in a position: (a) recognition for a job well done; (b) a supportive employing authority; and (c) clearly defined expectations for the principal's role.

### ***Recognition***

Some form of written or verbal recognition from the employing authority was a major consideration. Participants wanted to know that they were recognized as performing well. Describing interactions with the employing authority, participants' negative comments included:

- "Everyone needs recognition. We always hear the negative."
- "Recognition is not given freely. There is always someone to put you down."
- "There have been few occasions when I have been acknowledged."
- "Never a pat on the back regarding leadership skills, particularly when you are juggling a difficult situation."

Positive comments included:

- "I receive recognition from staff and parents."
- "[I'm] not phased by non-recognition. I like to run my own ship."

### ***A Supportive Employing Authority***

Interviews revealed that a supportive employing authority, that indicated by word and action that it trusted its principals, was essential to the ideal principal position.

***Clearly Defined Expectations***

There was also some consensus regarding the growth of responsibilities with the principal's role. This tended to be viewed as a directive from the employing authority. However, in some instances, the employing authority was perceived as acting as a conduit for government departments. Respondents suggested that many of the functions included in the principal role were perceived to have little relation to teaching and learning and were considered to be onerous.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

**Factors That Encouraged Retention**

- Financial security
- Commitment to Catholic education
- Continuing challenge of the job
- Vision for the school

**Drawbacks of the Role**

- Isolation
- Stress
- Insufficient remuneration
- Staff issues
- Disgruntled, unchurched, and demanding parents
- Interfering pastor
- Lack of support and trust from the employing authority
- Lack of recognition
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Growth of responsibilities within principal's role
- Non-educational aspects of many new responsibilities
- Employing authority acting as conduit for government departments
- Responsibilities with little relationship to teaching and learning
- Inadequate support in the following areas: Children with special needs, legal situations, unprofessional staff

**Reasons for Applying to a Different School**

- Challenge of a new position
- Loss of satisfaction with old position
- Personal or family needs

### **The Ideal Principal Position**

- An employing authority who provided support in the areas of children with special needs, legal liabilities, unprofessional staff, conflict with unions
- An independent school
- Recognition for a job well done
- A supportive employing authority
- Clearly defined expectations for the principal's role

## **DISCUSSION**

Commitment to Catholic education and a sense of personal mission were obvious job motivators for principals in this study. Participants echoed the findings of Durow and Brock (2004) and d'Arbon and colleagues (2001) in their strong belief in Catholic education and desire to contribute to the mission of the Church. However, unlike the findings of the d'Arbon et al. (2001) study on future leadership, none of the respondents expressed discomfort over scrutiny of Catholic practice and faith commitment in their personal lives.

Principals in the study reportedly enjoyed the challenges of the principal's job, migrating to different schools only when they sought the excitement and challenge of a new environment. None of the participants suggested a desire to return to a non-administrative role or to leave Catholic education.

Although inadequate remuneration was a concern, the financial security of the principalship encouraged principals to remain in their positions, which enhanced leadership consistency in the schools. Clearly, the school system's financial stability, made possible by state and federal funding, was an advantage that does not exist in all countries. The problem of principals migrating between schools to obtain higher salaries, common in some U.S. dioceses (Durow & Brock, 2004), was non-existent due to standardized diocesan salary scales in New South Wales.

Insufficient compensation was, however, a source of dissatisfaction for principals in the study. If Catholic schools are to continue to attract high quality leadership, compensation must be perceived as proportionate to job responsibilities and time commitment. Potential candidates, especially those with advanced degrees, have many career opportunities available, most of which do not require the workload and time commitment of a principal.

Although work dissatisfaction was not a cause of attrition, respondents reported a number of disincentives to the principal's job, including increased administrative complexity associated with non-academic issues. They

expressed displeasure at the changing demands and growing responsibilities, noting that the new roles deterred them from their primary role as instructional leaders. Their concerns were consistent with literature reporting the growing workload of principals in Western countries (Cusick, 2003; Durow & Brock, 2004; Ribbins, 1999; Thompson, Blackmore, Sachs, & Tregenza, 2002; Whitaker, 2003). Clearly, the work overload of principals in NSW, as elsewhere in the Western world, is high on the list of deterrents to potential leaders.

The literature is replete with suggestions that the job of the principal has grown too large for one person, and that reconfigurations of the principal's position may be necessary in order to attract and retain new school leaders. Canavan (2001) suggested a need to reconceptualize the principalship to make it more harmonious with demands of family and community life. Possibilities for reconfiguring the principalship include shared leadership (d'Arbon et al., 2001), hiring business managers to allow principals time for instructional matters (Hertling, 2001), and having co-principals share work with a support staff of social workers and counselors to assist with student needs (Hopkins, 2000).

In addition to lessening their workload, the accomplishments of good principals need to be recognized. Respondents expressed a need to have their hard work and achievements acknowledged in positive ways. Recognition is one of the easiest motivators for job satisfaction and retention, yet the one most often neglected. When hard work and commitment go unnoticed and unrewarded, disillusionment prevails, putting educators at risk for burnout and attrition. Adopting strategies to improve the recognition process is much easier and more productive than trying to revitalize burned-out principals – or hiring new ones (Brock & Grady, 2000).

Conflict with pastors emerged in the study as a factor in job dissatisfaction. Recent research has noted the critical relationship between the Catholic elementary principal and the parish pastor. Assuring a good match between principals and pastors is essential to the success of the organization and to principal retention (Brock & Fraser, 2001). Conflicts between pastors and principals can be minimized by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of pastors and principals and educating priests assigned to parishes with schools on their appropriate role in the school. Employing authorities should intercede with conflict mediation before situations become serious (Brock & Fraser, 2001).

From the results of the study, it would be reasonable to conclude that Catholic employing authorities in New South Wales will continue to attract people who have a strong desire to remain in the principalship. Yet, a number of disincentives to the role of principal were presented. Although none of

the disincentives caused principals in the study to leave their positions, their continued presence may discourage teachers, who form the cadre of future leaders, from aspiring to administrative positions.

As Canavan (1998) so aptly observed, the schools of New South Wales need more than “ardent prayer” (p. 27) to ensure future leadership for Catholic schools in New South Wales. Although the current NSW principals are committed to Catholic education and enjoy being principals, a new generation of leaders is not clamoring to join their ranks. Identifying the incentives and disincentives to the Catholic school principal is the first step in recruitment efforts. Remaining steps include eliminating job disincentives, promoting the positive aspects of the principal position, and implementing succession planning to ensure future leadership needs.

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