Middle Leadership in Catholic Primary Schools:

Religious Faith, Instructional Leadership and Servant Leadership

by

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Statement of Originality

I, POON, So Mai, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis, and the material presented in this thesis is my original work except those indicated in the acknowledgment. I further declare that I have followed the University's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copyright, and Plagiarism in writing the thesis, and no material in this thesis has been submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

Abstract

Exploring middle leaders' attitudes toward religious faith is an important subject for educational researchers. This is the first study to explore the relationships between religious faith, leadership styles, and duties of middle leaders in Catholic Hong Kong primary schools. Although local Catholic school leaders may consider that servant leadership is more compatible with their faith, instructional and servant leadership styles are not mutually exclusive. Leadership practices, roles, and duties are intertwined. Leaders, with or without religious faith, may have a similar impact on their leadership practices, as well as the academic versus non-academic aspects of student outcomes. Therefore, this study examined the tentative variations through the lens of religious faith, the role of leadership, and leadership practices (i.e., servant leadership and instructional leadership). The researcher adopted a case study approach using qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews of two principals, fourteen middle leaders, and four groups of regular teachers (half novice teachers and half experienced teachers) with or without religious faith in two Catholic primary schools. The results indicated that the words of God had a considerable effect on the middle leaders in Catholic primary schools. They could feel the power of faith, hope, and love in their souls and be thus eager to take the lead to serve others. This study contributes to the literature in clarifying the effect of religion on educational leadership styles and practices. Religious faith acts as a chain to connect the inner serving heart and the outer instructional leadership practices. A synergy of the two leadership styles showed empirically more profound effects and practically more admirable than either leadership styles theoretically implied. However, further investigation on such a synergy is warranted for a sustainable school development for all Catholic or religious schools in Hong Kong.

Keywords: middle leadership, religious faith, instructional leadership, servant leadership

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List of Abbreviations

EDB   Education Bureau

GS   Graduate School

EdUHK   The Education University of Hong Kong

IL   Instructional leadership

Sl   Servant leadership

QA   Quality Assurance

PI   Performance Indicator

SSE   School Self-evaluation

ESR   External School Review

PIE   Planning-Implementation-Evaluation

Apaso   Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes

TSA   Territory-wide System Assessment

SARS   Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

SPSM   Senior Primary School Master / Mistress

DH   Deputy Head

PSMCD   Primary School Master / Mistress for Curriculum Development

PSM   Primary School Master / Mistress

APSM   Assistant Primary School Master / Mistress

CM   Certificated Master / Mistress

STEM   Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

STEAM   Science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Chapter one illustrates the impacts and challenges of the quality assurance policy of the Education Bureau on Catholic schools in Hong Kong and explores how leadership styles could be enacted as critical factors to institutionalize and operate effective quality assurance mechanisms and nurture a quality culture in school organizations.

As the core business of schools, improving students' academic performance requires collegiality and professional collaboration between middle leaders from different school departments (Ko, Hallinger, Walker, 2015). It is natural for subject panel heads to develop instructional leadership styles and practices because promoting teaching and learning is their responsibility as middle leaders. However, apart from academic learning outcomes, middle leaders of Catholic schools also have a strong mission to cultivate whole-person development in students and to make the school a caring community. This mission naturally reflects the religious background of Catholic schools and favors a people-oriented leadership style like servant leadership. Leadership styles and practices are also often shaped by the different stages of development of schools (Day et al., 2007). This study, therefore, reveals how different leadership styles support the development of Catholic schools, a topic theoretically and practically meaningful to the researcher as a middle leader in a Catholic school.

1.2 Background of the study

Accountability not only has significance in the commercial field but also in the educational sector since providing quality education is the key concern of the Education Bureau. Consequently, the Hong Kong government has formulated many education reforms and policies to improve the effectiveness of school education. For example, a quality assurance

mechanism, which advocates both internal and external reviews of schools, has been imposed by the Hong Kong government. Schools need to conduct school self-evaluations (SSEs) each year. External school reviews (ESRs) are also considered essential. Accordingly, the government's quality assurance teams visit schools approximately every four to five years. In addition, between the ESRs, there are focus inspections. However, most middle leaders lack the self-evaluation capacity to conduct effective strategic planning, which is important for effective school development. They are not familiar with the requirements of a quality school culture in a quality school culture. This may be due to school culture and school leadership. The effectiveness of the SSE mechanism is likely very different among different schools. The challenges and impacts of the quality assurance policy in Hong Kong motivate school leaders to place more emphasis on quality assurance and sustainable school development. This thesis, therefore, explores how middle leaders adapt to a quality culture, with the objective of identifying an effective mechanism for Hong Kong schools to implement when conducting SSEs and tackling ESRs.

1.2.1 Quality assurance policy for schools

For schools fostering sustainable school developments, the School Development and Accountability (SDA) Framework was introduced by the Education Bureau in 2003 (Quality Assurance for Schools, 2013). It emphasizes that School Self-evaluations (SSEs) are vital for school improvements. Schools are, therefore, strongly encouraged to use the recommended performance indicators as tools to evaluate school performance during different stages of school development. SSEs, complemented by school inspections and ESRs, help promote sustainable self-improvement in schools by putting in place a systematic Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (P-I-E) cycle. Schools are expected to make use of SSEs and ESRs to promote sustainable development and accountability and thereby improve

students' learning. Accordingly, most schools have a special focus on teaching and learning. However, at the same time, many schools, like Catholic schools, place more emphasis on student support and the school ethos as they are eager to create a more caring school environment for all stakeholders.

1.2.2   Performance indicators

Performance indicators are important tools that have served as a common platform for the evaluation of school performance by schools and the Education Bureau for more than 15 years. There are four vital domains in the performance indicator framework set by the Education Bureau: management and organization (domain 1), learning and teaching (domain 2), student support and school ethos (domain 3), and student performance (domain 4) (Quality Assurance & School-based Support Division Education Bureau, 2002, 2008, 2016, 2018).

Under the existing quality assurance mechanisms, schools diagnose their performance in management and organization, teaching and learning, guidance support, and student learning using a set of standardized, policy-driven key performance indicators (Education Bureau, 2008; Cheng & Lee, 2014). However, most of the key performance indicators have been designed to measure the level of compliance with the education policy rather than to elevate the leverage points to promote school development (Pang, 2003). In addition, the recent Impact Study on the Implementation of the 2nd Cycle of the School Development and Accountability Framework on Enhancing School Development in Hong Kong showed that schools are struggling to gauge their outcomes, interpret the results, and formulate plans in relation to the standardized performance indicators (Education Bureau, 2014). Consequently, schools have struggled to fulfill the standardized requirements of the education policy and have overlooked

the process of developing knowledge assets for school-based improvements (Cheng & Lee 2014). According to Cuttance (1990), effective indicators should help schools identify their potential capacity for improvement.

However, middle leaders do not know how to develop school-based indicators to measure the effectiveness of their development plans or devise improvements based on the results of the SSEs because the government has not provided sufficient training for middle leaders. This lack of leadership training is a significant challenge for schools as middle leaders play a critical role in operating the SSE mechanism and formulating improvement plans. This raises the question: which leadership style should they apply? The performance indicators provide guidance in this regard in that the "management and organization" (domain 1 of the performance indicators) of good quality can facilitate the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the relevant plans in "learning and teaching" (domain 2) and "student support and school ethos" (domain 3), which together contribute to self-improvement.

1.2.3   Leadership styles of middle leaders in schools

Middle leaders represent both authority and responsibility in their organizations (Samson & Daft, 2012) and perform the role of first-line managers as they usually manage junior staff (Davidson et al., 2009). Middle leaders can adopt different leadership styles in schools. Nowadays, due to their extensive responsibilities and time constraints, school leaders often find it difficult to exercise their leadership practices using a single style. Teacher leaders, as middle leaders in schools, have begun to play a significant role in exercising the instructional leadership that used to be the preserve of school principals (Klar, 2010, 2011; Lashway, 2002; Timperley, 2005). Many principals have found it necessary to adopt a distributed model of leadership to encourage staff to share the responsibilities of instructional management (Heck

& Hallinger, 2014; Hulpia et al., 2011; Spillane & Healey, 2010).

As the decentralization of schools is the key focus of reforms in education, distributed and team-based leadership styles are vital in contributing to the effective development of schools. (Cheng, 2008; Hallinger, Ju, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Mok, 2006; Murphy & Beck, 1995). The principal, teachers, and administrators also need to collaborate with other key stakeholders, including parents and alumni, when implementing a holistic program for the further development of a school (Gronn, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2009; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). It is, therefore, essential to investigate the extent to which the different leadership styles of middle leaders in schools contribute to school governance in Catholic schools as these institutions are often regarded as prestigious and outstanding in terms of their academic performance.

1.2.4   Catholic education in Hong Kong

Catholic schools in Hong Kong have established a reputation for quality education over a period of 170 years. Children who receive pastoral care from teachers perform well academically. Many parents are eager to send their children to Catholic schools, even though they may not be Catholic (Mok, 2007). Over the years, Catholic schools have contributed to the development of Hong Kong's young people as well as the local education system (Mok, 2007). It is, therefore, important to explore the characteristics of school leadership and management that have made Catholic schools outstanding and popular.

1.2.5   Mission and vision of Catholic education and the nature of its leadership

One of the expected strengths of Catholic schools is its pastoral care for students. According to the Constitution of the Incorporated Management Committee for Catholic Schools in Hong

Kong (2016), the main target of every Catholic school is to create a caring school environment for all the school's stakeholders. One of the missions and visions of Catholic schools is to promote leadership through pastoral care. While principals with common missions and visions have contributed to the holistic development of their serving schools (Gold, 2003), there is an empirical question regarding whether their religious faith and beliefs also shape the leadership of Catholic principals. Since Catholic education emphasizes loving-kindness and serving others, educational leaders are servant leaders who serve others as servants and develop a servant role to facilitate successful changes in the organization (Greenleaf, 1970; Wilkes, 1998).

While principals have played an important leadership role in schools, the contributions of middle leaders in fostering school improvements have become increasingly important since the education reform was initiated in 2001 (Ko et al., 2012; Walker & Ko, 2011). As a middle leader in Catholic schools for more than 20 years, the researcher recognizes the significance of middle leaders in daily school operations. Middle leaders tend to have a deeper understanding of the school mission and show a stronger commitment to it than other teachers. Like Catholic school principals, their commitment may be influenced by their religious faith, their desire to serve others, or simply their genuine professionalism and beliefs in learning and teaching. Their leadership development is often shaped by having had experience in different roles in schools, from more academic ones in their capacity as subject panel heads to administrative roles as vice-principals, for example. As previously mentioned, the education reform started in 2001 (Ko et al., 2012; Walker & Ko, 2011) because it was considered vital to have a common platform to evaluate the performance of schools led by principals and middle leaders.

1.2.6 The theoretical and empirical basis of school leadership in Catholic schools

As discussed, both instructional leadership and servant leadership theories are considered relevant and important in accounting for leadership practices in Catholic schools. The former stresses the coordination of the curriculum and monitoring student learning outcomes (Li, Hallinger & Ko, 2016). Instructional leaders are learner-centered and put their efforts into monitoring and enhancing learning and teaching. In contrast, servant leadership theorists argue for the importance of leaders serving followers to nurture a caring school (Greenleaf, 2003).

Figure 1 presents a framework with the continuums of academic and religious emphasis suggested by instructional and servant leadership, respectively. Two Catholic schools have been invited to join this study. There are four quadrants (zones 1–4) in the diagram. Schools in zone 1 place heavy emphasis on academia and relatively low emphasis on religion, while schools in zone 2 emphasize both academia and religion. In contrast, schools in zone 3 place low emphasis on both academia and religion, whereas schools in zone 4 place heavy emphasis on religion and relatively low emphasis on academia.

Figure 1: The proposed framework of the degree of religious faith that affects educational leadership practices

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
Academic Emphasis

Zone 1:
Heavy emphasis on academia
Low emphasis on religion

Zone 2:
Heavy emphasis on both
academia & religion

Influences of Catholic faith and mission of education

SERVANT LEADERSHIP
Religious Emphasis

Zone 3:
Low emphasis on both
academia & religion

Zone 4:
Heavy emphasis on religion
Low emphasis on academia
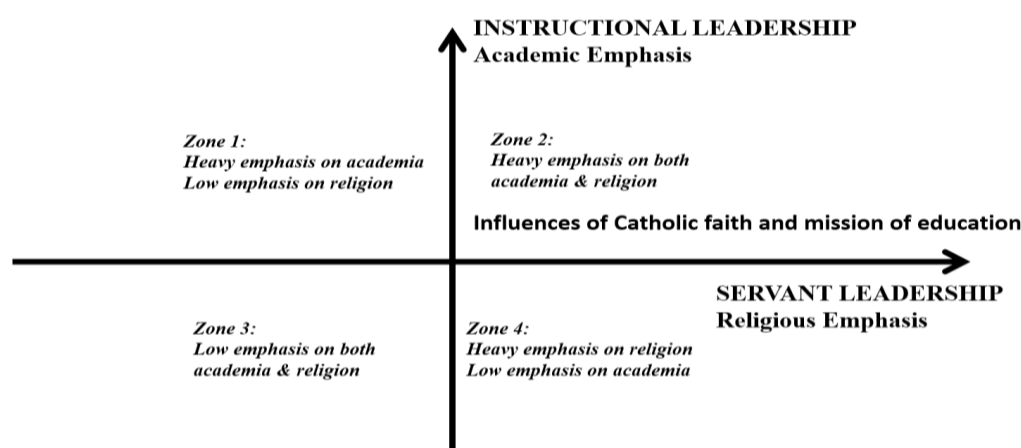
1.3 Objectives and research questions of the qualitative study

Given the aforementioned background, the objectives of this qualitative study were:

1. to examine the relationships between leadership styles and the duties of middle leaders within the school context;

2. to explore the impact of religious faith on the leadership styles/practices of middle leaders in Catholic schools.

Leadership practices, roles, and duties are intertwined. Leaders with or without religious faith have an impact on their leadership practices, especially the academic versus non-academic aspects of student outcomes, for example. Accordingly, this study examined these variations through the lens of religious faith, the role of leadership, and leadership styles/practices (i.e., servant leadership and instructional leadership). Finally, the implications of the project results are expected to contribute to the future development of school leadership in Catholic schools.

For achieving the above objectives, the following research questions were formed to direct the collection of data for analysis:

1. What is the relationship between the leadership styles of middle leaders and their leadership roles and duties in schools?

2. To what extent does this relationship depend on the school context and the stage of school development?

3. How do leaders with or without religious faith differ in their leadership practices?

1.4 Significance and/or impacts of the proposed study

This is the first study to explore the relationships between religious faith, leadership styles, and the duties of middle leaders in Hong Kong Catholic primary schools. Although Catholic school leaders may consider servant leadership more compatible with their Catholic faith, instructional and servant leadership are theoretically not mutually exclusive. Many religious educators aspire to foster both academic focus and pastoral care. However, the relative dominance of these two leadership styles on middle leaders may reflect the tensions between religious faith and accountability for academic excellence.

On the one hand, middle leaders from Catholic schools in Hong Kong are expected to be influenced by the ethical doctrines suggested in servant leadership through their religious contacts. They may take this leadership approach in their daily school management. On the other hand, in the case of Hong Kong Catholic schools, since both academia and the well-being of students are crucial, instructional and servant leadership styles are expected to have similar influences. The results of this research may contribute to our understanding of the nature of educational leadership in a religious context in general and the relative significance of instructional leadership and servant leadership in Catholic schools in particular.

As school improvement is a journey (Fullan, 2002), there may not be a single leadership theory that can explain all the development stages that a school may go through. It is also postulated that the leadership styles applied are strongly related to the stage of development of a school. A particular leadership style and its practices may be dominant in addressing the needs of a school at a particular stage of the school's development (Day et al., 2007). Notwithstanding, some types of leadership may become obstacles to the further development

of the school. For example, instructional leadership may be critical when teaching and learning are well established in a school, but it may hinder student development in non-academic areas if the focus of the school is confined to academic matters. While servant leadership is considered more compatible with the religious backgrounds of most schools in Hong Kong, the synergies between servant leadership and instructional leadership may explain the popularity of Catholic schools better.

An effective quality assurance mechanism could be implemented using the appropriate school leadership styles, which could foster the sustainable development of schools, as illustrated by the performance indicator examples in the domain of quality school management and organization (domain 1 of the performance indicators) in which "professional leadership" and "school management" are highlighted to enhance the effectiveness of the other three domains. This study will help schools strengthen their quality assurance outcomes through both servant and instructional leadership.

1.5   Definition of terms

1.5.1 Middle leaders

The term "middle leader" is used to describe a leadership position in a school that involves additional responsibilities outside of the classroom. These include four domains in a school. They are management and organization (Domain 1), learning and teaching (Domain 2), student support and school ethos (Domain 3), and student performance (Domain 4), respectively (Performance Indicators, 2018). Vice-principals, curriculum developers, and department heads are middle leaders in a school.

1.5.2 Religious faith

According to Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic philosopher and theologian, religious faith is our belief in God, an act of the intellect assenting to a Divine, which is itself moved by the grace of God (Gilson, 2013).

1.5.3 Servant leadership

A servant leader often puts others' needs first and desires to serve rather than be served. They are eager to build a caring community for everyone and for them to be equipped to be quality servant leaders in the future (Greenlesf, 1977).

1.5.4 Instructional leadership

It is the type of leadership that gets schools to move in the desired direction through a strong academic focus, with leaders playing a more active, hands-on role in monitoring curriculum development and instruction (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

1.6 Chapter summary

Middle leaders play a very vital role in operating self-evaluation mechanisms effectively in schools. They prioritize and formulate appropriate development plans by considering the school's mission and vision, the students' needs, and self-evaluation findings carefully and wholeheartedly. In addition, the operation of the P-I-E cycle is essential for quality enhancement and needs to be put into practice by integrating it with the school routines of learning and teaching as well as student support and ethos. To cultivate a school as a caring and learning community, middle leaders are required to foster their capacity for school self-evaluation and to apply appropriate leadership styles during the different critical stages

of school development and, hopefully, performance through the implementation of an

effective quality assurance mechanism.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1   Instructional Leadership

2.1.1 Development of Instructional Leadership Theory

Instructional leadership emerged from the effective school movement in the 1920s, and its theory became well-known in the United States. Effective schools are related to successful student performance and do not take students' socioeconomic background into account (Lezotte, 2001).

With a rich knowledge base, this movement stirred up the field of educational leadership and was the driving force for an external policy that advocated changes in school leaders' practices, as well as enriching the knowledge base so as to bring school improvement (Barth, 1986; Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger, 2020; Hallinger et al., 2014; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992; Rigby, 2014).

Notwithstanding, the research and the movement are not able to explain what an instructional leader is. Finally, some researchers point out that instructional leaders are able to cultivate an effective school in a different context (Bossert et al.,1982; Neumerski, 2013; Sammons et al., 1995).

Instructional leadership is vital for the sustainability of effective learning and teaching in schools (Hallinger & Lee, 2014). Instructional leadership theory has developed over the past 25 years despite challenges from transformational leadership and distributed leadership theories (Hallinger, 2003). Instructional leaders have been found to be target-oriented and thus are able to lead followers with a clear mission and drive everyone in the right direction, "turning their schools around" (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990, p.2; Murphy, 2009, p,796).). Instructional leaders attract others to participate in the journey of achievement. To

transformational leaders, vision, goals, and mission are the key vocabulary of principals who are eager to lead organizational change successfully. However, while transformational leadership theory does not maintain a particular direction for school improvement, instructional leadership (IL) theory specifies that instructional leaders have to stress a primarily academic focus by applying appropriate actions, such as the inclusion of a coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instructions that align well with the mission of the organization (Hallinger et al., 1996). Regarding leadership development and organizational learning, instructional leaders are expected to make coordination of the curriculum and monitoring of student learning outcomes sustainable through staff development and are expected to develop a learning culture that can nurture professional learning communities (Li et al., 2016).

2.1.2 Instructional Leadership and School Improvement

IL is understood as a model of leadership for school improvement. It is the type of leadership that gets schools to move in the desired direction through a strong academic focus, with leaders playing a more active, hands-on role in monitoring curriculum development and instruction, choosing suitable instructional strategies to promote learning outcomes that lead to school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Table 1

The Three Domains of Instructional Leadership (IL) Based on Hallinger & Murphy, 1985

The three domains of IL	Defining the school mission	1. Framing clear school goals
		2. Communicating clear school goals
	Managing the instructional program	1. Supervising and evaluating
		2. Coordinating the curriculum
		3. Monitoring student progress
	Creating a positive school climate	1. Protecting instructional time
		2. Promoting professional development
		3. Maintaining high visibility
		4. Providing incentives for teachers
		5. Providing incentives for learning

If principals define the school mission well, they successfully create a positive school climate, making managing the instructional program in schools effective (Hallinger, P., & Kantamara, P, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Principals who create clear goals and support teaching and learning with enriching environments (Bolman & Deal, 1992a; Bossert et al., 1982) motivate both students and staff to maintain a strong academic focus (Hallinger & Heck, 2003).

IL is the most frequently investigated educational leadership model (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). As depicted in Figure 2, it comprises three dimensions (with 10 factors): defining the school's mission; managing the instructional program; and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a). The key responsibility of a principal is to make sure that all stakeholders know the goals of the school and to give them their full support (the first domain). Educational leaders are expected to define the mission and lead the staff to develop the organization with a clear vision and good communication in order to get the school to move in the desired direction through a strong academic focus.

Principals have a role in the coordination and control of instruction, the curriculum, and monitoring student progress by managing instructional programs. The second domain requires the principal to have a strong commitment to the school's improvement and to be involved in the curriculum program (Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1984; Dwyer, 1985. They have to work together with their staff in the evaluation, assessment, development, and implementation of the curriculum and instruction. Moreover, principals need to coordinate the curriculum and monitor student progress to make sure that students have received appropriate instruction and have active roles in their learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

The third domain includes five factors, all of which help to maintain the sustainable development of schools in different stages. This becomes the culture of schools. Leaders make everyone work hard so as to fulfill the goals of the school, with positive rewards as well as full support. Hence, a positive school climate is nurtured. All stakeholders are involved deeply in the school-development program (Barth, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck et al., 1990).

Instructional leadership conducted by middle leaders fosters both learning and teaching at schools (Blase & Blase, 1999; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). There is evidence showing that this leadership approach effectively enhances student learning (Halverson et al., 2007). Positive school culture is extremely vital to facilitate this powerful leadership practice. It brings improvement in both learning and teaching at schools (Harris, 2002; Hopkins, 2000). Accordingly, the key to instructional leadership is the efficacy of leaders to effectively implement internal accountability in schools, enabling them to meet the standard of external accountability, too (Halverson et al., 2007).

2.1.3 Instructional Leadership in School Development

As school improvement is a journey of leadership, there is a sustainable development of the school, and there is a climate of high expectations (Fullan, 2002; Jackson, 2000). During different stages of school development, instructional leaders apply a variety of leadership strategies when leading the organization in order to achieve sustainable development. Furthermore, there are many key elements that work alongside this, which enhance and facilitate positive school development, such as strong leadership, a sustainable and holistic teacher-development program, and a team-leadership atmosphere (Ko et al., 2016).

Many expert teachers are encouraged to conduct instructional leadership in their organizations (Frost & Harris, 2003). At the same time, teachers with or without a proper role start to lead when there is a highly administrative structure in a school (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Harris (2003) believes that the key focus is distributed leadership in organizations and the nurturing of potential teacher leaders (Smylie et al., 2002).

There are some important tasks that need to be implemented in schools. First, teachers take on the role of the leader in the form of mentors or by leading core groups. Then, teachers take on the vital task of fostering the improvement of both learning and teaching. Lastly, teachers take on the leadership of pedagogy in teaching (Harris & Muijs, 2004).

Instructional leaders manage the curriculum, arrange teaching resources, and engage in collaborative lesson-planning meetings as well as conduct educational research (Harris & Muijs, 2004; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 2003; Rutherford, 2006). Consequently, these daily collaborative activities, including catering for learner diversity, become routine each day (Campo, 1993).

2.2 Servant Leadership

2.2.1 The Connotations of Servant Leadership

Robert K. Greenleaf is a leading scholar in servant leadership and argues that leaders are servants (Greenleaf, 1977). In other words, a servant leader often puts others' needs first and desires to serve rather than be served. In fact, in order to achieve the well-being and self-actualization of members in an organization, servant leaders are eager to lead. There are important results in the servant leadership inventory (Chang et al., 2016), which contains ten essential personality characteristics, as suggested by Spears (1998).

Caring for others and the more able serving, the less able are the vision of Robert Greenleaf (1972). He pointed out the urgent need for servant leaders. Since there are a lot of "half people," it is the responsibility of servant leaders to nurture them to become whole. As a result, a caring community will emerge in our loving world.

2.2.2 Definition of Servant Leadership

Greenleaf (1977) stated that the mission and vision of servant leaders are to be leaders who serve first and lead second. He emphasized the need for others to come first under the care of servant leaders, with followers becoming better than before. They are wiser, healthier, and are eager to be servant leaders too.

There are important elements for the effective development of a servant leader. Spear (2000) shared some vital elements of servant leadership. Servant leaders are active listeners. They have a calling from God to lead others through serving. Moreover, they have a strong ability to conceptualize different ideas. In addition, they have a passion for making people grow. Lastly, stewardship and foresight are the symbols of servant leaders. They are eager to build a caring community for everyone and for them to be equipped to be quality servant leaders in the future.

Servant leadership is a social good for the group. It is a team-based development that empowers the team members through wholehearted serving and help. Besides, members' interests are vital (Gorman et al., 2008). Finally, difficulties are solved collectively by the team through effective planning and tasks. This is what Greenleaf (2002) considers as servant leadership. The service is from the leaders, not the followers (Liden et al., 2008). In addition, the sharing of power for the common good is the central focus of servant leaders (Laub,

1999). Hence, Kotter (1996) suggested that the key to sustaining a successful 21st-century organization is leadership that does not only focus on the top of the hierarchy.

One of the key tasks of a servant leader is to nurture their followers to become servant leaders too. Turner (2000) mentioned that servant leaders serve and meet the need of others first and develop them to be leaders in the future. This is the overall vision of servant leadership. This leadership style is different from the traditional one, which relies on only one leader at the top.

The holy words of God describe servant leadership well. Jesus said that "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." (Mark 10:43 New American Standard Bible). Robert Greenleaf developed servant leadership after reading Herman Hesse's book *Journey to the East*. The character Leo acts as a loving and kind servant when he goes with people on a journey to the east. He is humble and kind. He heals people spiritually. Everyone misses him when he disappears one day.

Bowman details Jennings and Stahl-Wert's view that servant leaders place themselves at the bottom of the pyramid and try to understand the needs of their people. Teachers do a similar thing. They passionately serve and teach students the knowledge that they need to succeed. (pp. 257–259). It is evident that higher levels of servant leadership perform better on school effectiveness measures than schools that exhibit lower degrees of servant leadership.

2.2.3 The Objective of Servant Leadership

Chang, Tsai, Zhang, and Chen (2016) suggested that leaders should care for and cherish their members. Under the umbrella of loving-kindness, everyone is important, and they make

decisions collaboratively. They are being nurtured with favorable development of their souls, which, eventually, enables everyone to learn and grow (Chang et al., 2016).

The main objective of servant leadership is to build a more caring organization (Greenleaf, 2003). It stimulates thought and action and creates an enviable organization. In education, it brings transformative experiences to the realm of the ordinary. It is best expressed by Wilkes' (1998) four key operative concepts, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

A Servant Leadership Framework by Wilkes (1998, p. 20)

Vision	Mission	Equipping the capacity of followers	Team Building
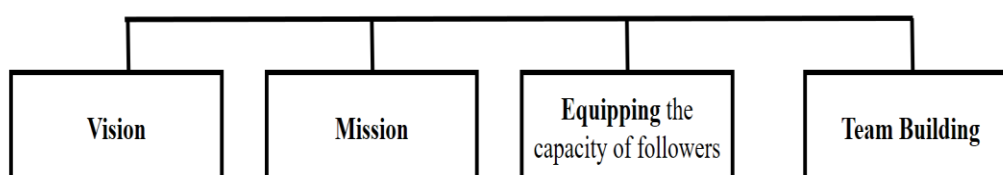
2.2.4 Servant Leadership Operated in Schools

Servant leadership is motivated by a desire to describe true leadership in terms of the characteristics of helping others (Greenleaf, 2003). Spears (2003) studied Greenleaf's ideas and proposed ten characteristics of a servant-leader, namely listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and community building. Based on these ideas, Wilkes (1998) proposed a theoretical framework, as depicted in Figure 3. There are four key operative concepts, which are mission, vision, equipping, and team building, contributing to high team efficacy under the leadership model of Jesus.

a) Mission and Vision. Maintaining the well-being of others, transforming followers, and developing trust among stakeholders are considered to be God's call to a servant leader's life

(Wilkes, 1998). The mission is regarded as particularly important for organizations. Leaders have to maintain the well-being of others; they are expected to be able to transform people (Spears, 2003). Accordingly, the belief of this leadership puts followers as the most important treasure of the organization. Followers' well-being and interests are put ahead of everything (Noland & Richards, 2015). Leaders who are practicing servant leadership lead people in an organization to achieve its mission by helping them establish interpersonal as well as organizational trust that holds everyone in the organization together (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Middle leaders are vital to enhancing interpersonal communication in the organization, so servant leadership plays a significant part in the development of the learning community.

Servant leaders focus on framing and communicating clear objectives. A caring school and a knowledge-sharing community are the visions of their organizations. *Vision* is a unique undertaking of the mission (Wilkes, 1998). It emphasizes serving. Servant leaders are eager to "help make whole," as individuals are not whole. Serving others is the way to complete themselves (Spears, 2003). Hence, one of the objectives of servant leadership is to build a more caring organization (Greenleaf, 2003).

Furthermore, trust is especially essential in an organization. Trust in relationships between the leaders and teachers, as well as among teachers, is important for the development of a teacher-learning community (Hallinger et al., 2014). American (Bryk et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Louis & Miles, 1990) and Australian schools (Mulford & Silins, 2009) share similar findings, emphasizing the positive impact of organizational learning on school improvement.

b) Equipping. As the third operative concept, equipping followers is an important pillar or servant leadership, with the objective of building a knowledge-sharing community. Through knowledge sharing, everyone is better equipped to achieve organizational objectives. Some

reports show that servant leadership positively affects the knowledge-sharing culture of the organization (Song et al., 2015). In addition, findings also indicate that servant leaders need to be employed in order to successfully create a knowledge-sharing culture in the organization (Song et al., 2015).

It is the development plan of the servant leader to *equip their followers* to fulfil the mission and make the vision come true (Wilkes, 1998). Servant leaders do not force their followers to fulfil goals but persuade them to take proactive actions, reconceptualize a problem, and search for the best solution (Spears, 2003). Hence, those who apply servant leadership will elevate members of their teams where they use a holistic approach to sustain both learning and teaching, the driving force for everyone to serve and contribute to the organization. As a result, all followers or stakeholders grow personally, professionally, and spiritually (Joseph & Winston, 2005).

c) Team building. The significance of team building in organizations is evident in many studies (Hoyle, 2006. Servant leaders put forth all their strength to equip their followers to carry out the mission and make the dream of the vision eventually come true (Wilkes, 1998). Under the leadership of servant leaders, followers' voices are important. Leaders care about what is being said. They try their best to understand and empathize with others in order to maintain the well-being of their followers (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Spears, 2003) as well as to promote a positive climate in the organization. Furthermore, servant leaders heal themselves and others effectively in a loving-kindness organization (Joseph & Winston, 2005). In fact, most of the time, both leaders and followers are strengthened by general awareness and self-awareness (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Spears, 2003).

Servant leaders are proactive and are able to foresee the possible outcome of a decision or a

condition in the future (Song et al., 2015). They will lead the team on to the right track. It is the responsibility of the servant leader to build a sense of belonging. Everyone is treated as a meaningful member of the organization (Spears, 2003). Additionally, leaders are able to serve the needs of others at the right moment (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Therefore, followers are eager to carry out the mission cooperatively and wholeheartedly.

It seems that servant leadership is able to build up a good foundation for everything to be better or to transform someone into a better stage of well-being. Fullan (2002) pointed out that, in different stages of an organization, different kinds of leadership can be applied at the appropriate time, such as servant and instructional leadership, since they both emphasize carrying out the mission and the vision. In order to fulfil the goal of achieving the well-being of the organization, leaders equip their followers and lead the team with different strategies or leader characteristics at different development stages. Hence, in the organization-improvement journey mentioned by Fullan (2002), it seems that leaders can sometimes apply both. It may be that the weight is different, but the outcome will be unexpected.

The wonderful qualities of servant leaders bring about interpersonal and organizational trust within the team (Joseph & Winston, 2005). This is extremely important as it can help people or followers wholeheartedly carry out the mission and vision of the organization. Will this happen in a Catholic primary school? This question has already been answered.

2.3 Linking Instructional Leadership and Servant Leadership in Catholic Schools
2.3.1 Instructional Leadership in Catholic Schools

Under the educational reforms and external school reviews (the four domains of school performance) by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong, Catholic school leaders also put

emphasis on management and organization as well as learning and teaching. Most of them maintain a direction for school improvement. They stress a primary academic focus by applying to coordinate, control, supervise, and develop a curriculum and instruction that align well with the mission of the organization (Hallinger et al., 1996).

2.3.2 Servant Leadership in Catholic Schools

According to the constitution of the incorporated management committee for Catholic schools in Hong Kong, Catholic schools have a challenging mission: "Students nurtured to be the salt and yeast of society." (Matthew 5:13 & 13:13)The aim of Catholic schools is to encourage students to embrace the core values upheld by the Catholic church, namely truth, justice, love, life, and family. Leaders, especially middle leaders in Catholic schools, are expected to lead the school through servant leadership, which takes serving others as the utmost thing and aligns the core values of Catholic education in the learning curriculum. It is the focus of learning and teaching at schools so as to make a leader a servant and also make a teacher a servant.

Servant leaders will affect their followers and become eager to serve the needs of others (Noland & Richards, 2015). Those who adopt servant leadership are more equipped to help students when learning and when facing difficulties. They will turn away from authoritative instructional techniques and will use a friendly way to guide their students to master what they need to know (Fitzgerald, 2015). Hence, the vision of Catholic education is "where sheep stay with their shepherds happily in the kingdom of God." (Matthew 25:31-46). According to Song, Park, and Kang (2015), it is essential to invite servant leaders into organizations so as to foster a professional knowledge-sharing culture at all stages of the organization's development, as servant leaders share the ten characteristics of good shepherds

(Greenleaf, 1970; Spears, 1995, 1996, 2003). The knowledge-sharing climate will not only

positively foster the efficacy of teachers and the effectiveness of teaching and learning, but

also will affect the leadership of the middle management of Catholic primary schools in Hong

Kong.

2.4   Linking Leadership to Performance Indicators in Hong Kong

Table 2

Diagrammatic Representation of the Framework of Performance Indicators From
Education Bureau Government of Hong Kong (Performance Indicators, 2018)

Domain	Area	Performance indicator
(I) Management and organization	School management	-Planning -Implementation -Evaluation
	Professional leadership	-Leadership and monitoring -Collaboration and support -Professional development
(II) Learning and teaching	Curriculum and assessment	-Curriculum organization -Curriculum implementation -Performance assessment -Curriculum evaluation
	Student learning and teaching	-Learning process -Learning performance -Teaching organization -Teaching process -Feedback and follow-up
(III) Student support and school ethos	Student support	-Support for student development -School climate
	Partnership	-Home-school cooperation -Links with external organization
(IV) Student performance	Attitude and behaviour	-Affective development and attitude -Social development
	Participation and achievement	-Academic performance -Non-academic performance

This framework contains three tiers, including domains, areas, and performance indicators.

There are four important domains which are the key concerns of school development and

improvement. All of them are interrelated. For example, quality management and

organization in a school will bring outstanding and effective learning and teaching. To realize

the school mission, school leaders are expected to create a clear mission and vision so as to foster student performance. Student performance is the core business of the school and thus requires maximum attention.

2.5 A Holistic Framework of Instructional and Servant Leadership in This Study

There are similarities and differences between instructional leadership and servant leadership in the four domains. See the comparison in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Suggested Instructional and Servant Leadership Practices in a School Context

Leadership style	Key tasks/roles			
	Domain 1 *Input Management and organization	Domain 2 *Input Learning and teaching	Domain 3 *Input Student support and school ethos	Domain 4 *Output Student performance

Instructional leadership	- Promote professional development so as to maintain sustainable development in both learning and teaching
	- Define the school mission and vision
	  * Framing clear school goals
	  * Communicating clear school goals
	- Maintain high visibility
		- Supervise and evaluate instruction
		- Coordinate curriculum
		- Monitor student progress
		- Protect instructional time
		- Provide incentives for teachers
		- Provide incentives for learning
		- Sustain development in both learning and teaching
			- Provide incentives for learning	- Produce good academic results

Servant leadership	- Serve and transform followers
	- Provide clear school mission and vision
	- Foster professional development
	  * Persuasion
	  * Conceptualization
	  * Commitment to the growth of people
	- Promote team building
	  * Listening
	  * Empathy
	  * Healing
	  * Awareness
	  * Foresight
	  * Stewardship
	  * Building community
		- Equip the followers (all stakeholders)
		
		- Form a knowledge-sharing community
			- Equip the followers (all stakeholders)
			- Maintain the well-being of others
			- Transform people
			- Promote trust
			- Foster a caring school
				- A religious loving-kindness school (a caring school with servant leaders)

It is very likely that both instructional and servant leaders are applicable in management and organization (Domain 1) and are important for schools. Collins (2001) suggested that changing an organization from good to great requires understanding, recognizing, and knowing how to put emphasis on organizational goals and allocate resources to develop its strengths. Hence, both instructional and servant leaders promote professional development for followers to carry out their mission. Instructional leaders maintain high visibility and frame and communicate clear school goal development to maintain sustainable development in both learning and teaching. The school mission and vision are important for servant leaders too. They put emphasis on equipping followers and team building. Moreover, they have clear and specific visions. They are eager to nurture a caring and knowledge-sharing school. They have clear objectives for followers' performance.

There are obvious differences between instructional and servant leaders. Servant leaders put special emphasis on student support and school ethos (Domain 3), whereas instructional leaders focus on learning and teaching (Domain 2). Servant leaders put forth their strength by equipping people well and focus on effective team building. They do all this by serving others. However, instructional leaders put forth their strength through sustainable development in both learning and teaching. They manage the domain of learning and teaching through strict and direct instruction and are expected to monitor this domain effectively.

Both instructional and servant leaders focus on management and organization (Domain 1), as a clear mission and vision in an organization are vital for its development. On the one hand, instructional leaders provide incentives for learning. On the other hand, servant leaders maintain the well-being of others and transform people through wholehearted serving. They

trust and respect people, so team members have a strong sense of belonging.

Nevertheless, both instructional and servant leaders care about students' or the school's performance (Domain 4), since they both have a clear and specific mission. They work through a professional learning community to carry out their visions. Instructional leaders are expected to make sustainable development in both learning and teaching, whereas servant leaders are eager to build a caring school and a knowledge-sharing community.

There is a notable difference between them too. Instructional leaders suggest a supreme rank and position. They give instructions to followers, who follow the instructions strictly. But servant leaders take on the role of a servant; they serve the needs of their followers wholeheartedly and so contribute to high team efficacy under the leadership model of Jesus. There is a positive correlation between servant leadership behaviours and organizational climate in the context of Catholic elementary schools. This also supports the findings that positive culture at school will positively affect student achievement. Servant leadership is affected by Jesus Christ: "Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28 New American Standard Bible). Hence, the Catholic community and the teaching of religious doctrine will help to form a mission and vision for Catholic schools and so provide a holistic education under the loving-kindness umbrella of God (Black, 2010). Hence, it is worth conducting research to study the leadership of middle leaders in Catholic primary schools in order to enhance our understanding of the differences in leadership practices between middle leaders with and without religious faith. Consequently, the result of this project is able to draw implications for school leadership development as it examines the role of instructional leadership and servant leadership of middle leaders as well as the relationship between the leadership approaches and the duties of

middle leaders.

2.6 Theoretical framework of leadership and school improvement

The continuums of academic emphasis and people emphasis by both instructional and servant leaders lead to sustainable school development under the framework of School Development and Accountability (SDA), which was introduced by the Education Bureau in 2003 (Quality Assurance for Schools, 2013). Moreover, performance indicators are important tools too. There are four vital domains in the performance indicator framework. The main focuses are the academic performance of students and holistic student support.

Figure 3 presents a theoretical framework of leadership and school improvement between servant leadership & instructional leadership. There are four quadrants (zones 1–4) in the diagram. Schools in zone 1 place heavy emphasis on academia and relatively low emphasis on people, while schools in zone 2 emphasize both academia and people. In contrast, schools in zone 3 place low emphasis on both academia and people, whereas schools in zone 4 place heavy emphasis on people and relatively low emphasis on academia. The influences of Catholic faith and the school placement have an effect on school improvement. Schools in other zones will gradually move to zone 2, the desired zone of Catholic schools.

Figure 3: Theoretical framework of leadership and school improvement

Continuums of academic emphasis and people emphasis
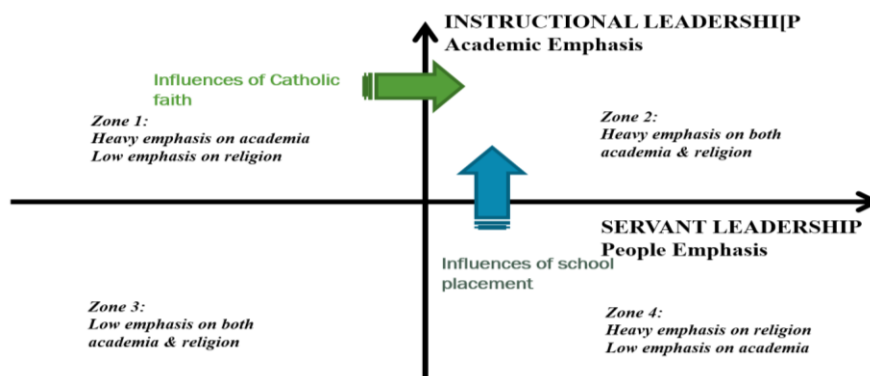
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study has adopted a case study approach using the qualitative data collection method to develop a holistic picture to analyze data. A multiple-case-studies approach has been employed to be consistent with the nature and purpose of this qualitative research. Both Yin (2013) as well as Baxter and Jack (2008) stated that multiple case studies would provide a holistic picture to analyze data within and across cases such that comparisons can be drawn.

This qualitative case study is aimed at examining the complex interrelationships involved in middle leadership in Catholic primary schools. As Baxter and Jack (2008) stress, to understand the whole picture, we need to apply a wide variety of lenses to have a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Stake (1995) also pointed out that understanding the complex interrelationships among the elements is best achieved by conducting case studies. While case study methodologies can provide both richness and depth to issues, the data collected are not ready for generalization (Winegardner, 2001).

Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007) mentioned that qualitative studies contributed insights into existing concepts. Therefore, the implications drawn from this empirical study will foster further development of middle leaders and help principals understand the nature of middle leadership in Catholic primary schools through the lens of instructional leadership and servant leadership.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

Researchers have also found that leadership practices were associated with school improvements (Ko, Hallinger & Walker, 2012) and key staff and that the professional

development of teachers is vital for the alignment within the school (Walker & Ko, 2011). Hence, two schools within the Catholic Diocese in Hong Kong have been invited to participate in this study.

Two Catholic primary schools have been selected mainly on their performance during school visits in 2014 and 2015 by experts from the Catholic Education Office (Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong). The school visits have mainly focused on the four domains of the performance indicators of the Education Bureau of Hong Kong and the core values of Catholic education in Hong Kong. The researcher has selected two case schools: one with excellent performance in student learning and support (in zone 2 of figure 1: Heavy emphasis on both the academic and religious aspects) and the other one with base performance in both student learning and support (in zone 4 of figure 1: Heavy emphasis on the religious aspect and low emphasis on the academic aspect).

Following the University's ethical procedures and the diocesan procedures, written consent from the participants has obtained prior to the study. Qualitative data has been collected from semi-structured interviews of two principals, 14 middle leaders with or without religious faith, including vice-principals, subject panel heads, and Primary School Master / Mistress of Curriculum Development (PSMCDs) in two Catholic primary schools.

In addition, in each school, two groups of teachers, the experienced teachers (>10 yrs) and the novice teachers (0–5 yrs), with or without religious faith, have been interviewed. Eighteen individual interviews (principals and middle leaders in two Catholic primary schools) and four group interviews (experienced teachers <2 groups> and novice teachers <2 groups>) have conducted in schools.

3.3 Instruments

A demographic sheet has been used to elicit basic demographic data for the collection of data on the research questions. The data includes age, sex, religious background, roles, and duties in school, rank, subject, and grade taught, as well as years of teaching experience. Then in the next segment, semi-structured interviews have conducted mainly using both open-ended and more theoretically driven questions to elicit data grounded in the experience of the participants (Galletta, 2013). Semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity for interviewers to collect data and get a deeper understanding of the targets and the phenomenon (Mojtahed et al., 2014). A protocol has been developed to elicit answers in the semi-structured interviews.

The protocol includes the following sample questions developed by the researcher.

1) Please tell me something about your work experience.

2) Do you see yourself as a curriculum leader or an administrative leader?

3) To what extent do you find that your religious faith (a. Catholic, b. Other religions, c. Non-religious) affects your leadership style and practices?

4) Please share some critical incidents that can demonstrate your leadership style.

5) How do you describe your own leadership style (people-oriented vs. task-oriented)?

6) Between teaching and learning (Domain 2 of the performance indicators) and student support and school ethos (Domain 4 of the performance indicators), which one does your school place a relative emphasis on? Why?

7) Between teaching and learning (Domain 2 of the performance indicators) and student support and school ethos (Domain 4 of the performance indicators), which one do you place a relative emphasis on? Why?

8) How will you describe the student performance in your school? Are you happy with it?

Why?

9) Which domain of the performance indicators do you think is the most important? Why?

10) In what ways do your leadership practices relate to your roles and duties in the school?

11) In what ways do your leadership practices relate to school development?

12) What is your greatest professional strength? Weakness?

13) How would you help teachers and staff improve student achievement?

14) What advice would you give to a new teacher in his or her first year?

15) What advice would you give to a veteran teacher (>10 yrs.) in need of improvement?

16) What is the most powerful strategy for improving both teaching and learning?

To elicit responses to the above questions, probing questions have been asked if necessary. In addition, the researcher has raised new follow-up questions during the interview. Seidman (2013) believes face-to-face interviewing is vital. When researchers enter into their participants' stream of consciousness, they are able to understand the life experiences of their participants and the meaning they make of these experiences.

Qualitative data has been collected during the semi-structured interview, as Strake (2010) stated that qualitative research studied the meaning of people's lives under real-world conditions. Hence, both close and open-ended questions have been asked as the interviewees' leadership experiences are better clarified in interviews.

Individual interviews have been conducted to get in-depth information on leadership practices from middle leaders in schools. It allows the interviewer to probe interviewees' attitudes, beliefs, desires, and experiences (Galletta, 2013). Besides, the interviewees have expressed their in-depth ideas freely.

Group interviews have been conducted to explore regular teachers' perceptions of leadership practices of different middle leaders in schools. It is a process of systematic questioning of serval individuals simultaneously (Mojtahed et al., 2014). Additionally, the interviewer has stimulated a group discussion with topical questions and has clarified thoughts too.

To ensure the validity of results coded from interview data, coding, and matrices from the interviews have been member-checked and discussed with the researcher's principal supervisor.

3.4 Research Procedures

Strake (2010) states that the key reason for interviews is to collect first-hand and unique information from the interviewees. Thus, the protocol of the interviews is important. The final version of the interview questions was ready in early October 2018. Then, in early November, the researcher visited the target schools and interviewed the teachers. The invitation letters for the project and the consent letters were sent to the target schools in early October. Apart from the consent forms, the project information sheet, demographic data collection form, and sample questions were sent to the interviewees one week before the interview.

All interviews have been recorded under the consent of the participants. Semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity for interviewers to collect data and get a deeper understanding of the targets as well as the phenomenon (Mojtahed et al., 2014). Hence, semi-structured interviews have conducted by the researcher. During the semi-structured interviews with the interviewees, follow-up questions have asked to obtain more specific or in-depth information. Besides, the interviewer needs probing interview questions when the response could not be fully understood.

The transcribed interview data were initially coded with two coding systems developed in hierarchical matrices of codes, themes, and categories related to team-building under servant leadership (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The following table is an example.

Coded behaviour	Theme / Concept	Category
Leaders invested their time to support colleagues in their work	Stewardship	Collaboration

Then the researcher analyzed the following. (1) What is the relationship between the leadership styles of middle leaders and their leadership roles and duties in schools? (2) To what extent does this relationship depend on the school context and the stage of school development? (3) How do leaders with or without religious faith differ in their leadership practices?

3.5 Ethical Considerations

As this research project included multiple case studies about personal leadership practices, the confidentiality of the information supplied by research participants must be respected (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). Hence, all information has been kept confidential, and the researcher used the target code instead of names. Participants have been informed fully about the purpose, methods, and intended possible uses of the research (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). In addition, the participants are free to leave during the project. The interviewer must get the consent of the participants in advance. Moreover, all participants will be able to see the analysis of their leadership practice. Finally, the information is restricted to use in research only. Research participants must take part voluntarily, free from any coercion (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

3.6 Summary

The interview is semi-structured, where both close and open-ended questions have been asked, and includes additional clarifying questions during the interviews if necessary. Travers' (2001) analysis would reflect a complicated reality with a different lens. However, we should be careful in some social incidents since they can show some conflicts among participants. The participants can describe and explain what they have experienced in the journey of their leadership lives. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews makes them well suited to answer "how" and open-ended questions and express their feelings naturally (Yin, 2013). As a result, the researcher has a better understanding of the research questions.

3.7 Research limitation

The goal of a multiple case study is to replicate findings across cases (Yin, 2013). However, this case study is small-scale research. It only involves two principals, 14 middle leaders, and 20 teachers in two Catholic primary schools. Hence, it may not be able to enhance data credibility and become a hallmark of the case study (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). Since other leadership styles like distributed leadership, theme-based leadership, collaborative leadership, and conjoint agency leadership may have played a role in the development of Catholic schools, the researcher will acknowledge this in reporting the codes and analyses. Moreover, it includes only a small sample of Catholic primary schools, which limits the generalizability to other primary schools.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings are analyzed and interpreted relative to the twenty

semi-structured interviews conducted in two Catholic primary schools. First, the demographic

details of the interviewees are presented in tables for comparison. The findings are then

discussed according to three themes, based on the research questions: 1) the relationship

between the perceived leadership styles of the middle leaders and their roles, 2) the

relationship between the school context and leadership styles, and 3) the impact of religious

faith on leadership styles and practices. For each theme, two schools are discussed separately,

but with a combined summary at the end of this chapter.

Theme 1 concerns the relationship between the perceived leadership styles of the middle

leaders and their roles in the two schools. First, the people-oriented and task-oriented

leadership styles of middle leaders with different responsibilities will be discussed for each

school. The relationship between middle leaders' leadership styles and their position duties

will then be explored, and their demonstration of those styles when facing various critical

incidents will be analyzed. Last, the work experience *of* middle leaders and others' work

experience *with* middle leaders will be examined.

Theme 2 concerns the relationship between the school context and leadership styles.

Learning and teaching (Domain 2 of the Performance Indicators), and student support and

school ethos (Domain 3 of the Performance Indicators) are important domains in schools. The

preferences or emphases of the schools' management and middle leaders reflected, not only

the school context generally, but also the leadership practices and styles that prevailed therein

and their impact on the schools' development.

Theme 3 concerns the impact of religious faith on leadership styles and practices. Faith is vital for all Catholic schools in Hong Kong; hence, the extent to which religious faith affected the leadership styles and practices of middle leaders will be discussed. Then, the ways in which the middle leaders helped teachers and staff to improve student achievements and advised both new and veteran teachers in need of help or guidance will be examined.

4.2 Demographic summary of the interviewees

The roles and duties of the interviewees, the school context, the stage of each school's development, and the impact of religion on the leadership styles and practices of middle leaders were analyzed. To facilitate discussion of the research questions, Tables 1A & 1B below summarize the interviewees' demographic data, including their age, sex, religious background, roles and duties in the school, rank, subject, and grade taught, as well as their years of teaching experience.

Eighteen interviewees from School Francis participated in two group interviews and eight individual interviews (10 interviews). Ten interviewees had no religious beliefs, seven interviewees were Catholic, and one interviewee was a non-Catholic Christian. The novice teachers were all non-religious, below thirty, and mainly taught mathematics and general studies (GS). The experienced teachers were also young, and three of them were Assistant Primary School Master / Mistress(APSM); most of them were below forty and Catholic.

Most of the middle leaders were also Catholic. They were mainly key subject panel heads and included a curriculum developer and a deputy headteacher who had served in the school for more than ten years. Their roles and responsibilities largely concerned learning and teaching (Domain 2 of the Performance Indicators). The seven middle leaders ranked from Certificated

Master / Mistress (CM) to Senior Primary School Master / Mistress (SPSM) in the schools,

and one senior leader interviewee was the male headteacher of the school; hence, we used

different lenses to examine the leadership styles of teachers, middle leaders, and senior

leaders in this Catholic school.

Table 4.1: Demographics of the interviewees from School Francis

(SPSM: Senior Primary School Master/Mistress   DH: Deputy Head
PSMCD: Primary School Master/Mistress Curriculum Development
PSM: Primary School Master/Mistress   APSM: Assistant Primary School Master / Mistress
CM: Certificated Master / Mistress   PH: Panel Head)

Interviews	School Francis No. of pupils: around 800 No. of teachers: 55						
	Age	Sex	Religious	Roles & duties	Rank	Subject & grade taught	Yrs. of teaching experience
1 * Novice Ts	22 23 23 25 27	F F F M M	None None None None None	Teaching Teaching Teaching Teaching Teaching	CM CM CM CM CM	P.1 Mathematics P.1 Mathematics & GS P.3 Chinese P.2 Mathematics & GS P.6 Mathematics & GS	0 1 2 2 5
4 *Experienced TS	33 33 34 36 40	F M F F M	None None Catholic Catholic Catholic	Teaching Teaching Teaching Teaching Teaching	CM CM APSM APSM APSM	P.5 Chinese P.4 Mathematics & GS P.5 English P.4 English P.6 Mathematics & GS	10 10 11 13 17
5	42	F	Catholic	PSMCD	PSM	P.5 CHI	12
8	38	F	None	CHI PH	APSM	P.1&5 CHI	10
9	45	M	None	Domain 2	DH(SPSM)	P.3,5&6 Mathematics	20
11	30	F	Catholic	MATH PH	CM	P.1 &5 Mathematics	5
15	50	M	None	GS PH	PSM	P.5&6 GS	22
18	42	F	Christian	ENG PH	PSM	P.3&6 Eng	10
19	46	F	Catholic	RS PH	APSM	P.6 RS & Eng	23
20	55	M	Catholic	Mgt	Head	Mgt	40

Eighteen interviewees from School Teresa participated in two group interviews and eight

individual interviews (10 interviews). Five interviewees had no religious beliefs, ten were

Catholic, and three are non-Catholic Christian; thus, most of the interviewees had a religion.

Of the novice teachers, three had no religion, and two were Catholic; all were below thirty

and taught key subjects. Most of the experienced teachers were APSM. The age range of the

experienced teachers was large (33 to 55), and only one of them did not have a religion.

Most of the middle leaders were Catholic and key subject panel heads. The curriculum

developer and the deputy headteacher had served in this school for more than 15 years and

were both Catholic. The roles and responsibilities of the former mainly focused on learning

and teaching (Domain 2 of the Performance Indicators), while those of the latter mainly

focused on school management (Domain 1 of the Performance Indicators) and leadership of

the seven middle leaders (APSM to SPSM in the school). In addition, one senior leader, the

interviewee was the new female head of the school. Again, we used different lenses to

examine the leadership styles of the teachers, middle leaders, and senior leaders in this

Catholic school.

Table 4.2: Demographics of the interviewees from School Teresa

(SPSM: Senior Primary School Master/Mistress   DH: Deputy Head
PSMCD: Primary School Master/Mistress Curriculum Development
PSM: Primary School Master/Mistress   APSM: Assistant Primary School Master / Mistress
CM: Certificated Master / Mistress   PH: Panel Head)

Inter-views	School Teresa No. of pupils: around 800 No. of teachers: 60						
	Age	Sex	Religion	Roles & duties	Rank	Subject & grade taught	Yrs. of teaching experience
2	45	F	Catholic	GS PH	APSM	P.5 GS & P.5 Mathematics	10
3	52	F	Catholic	Domain 1	DH (SPSM)	P.6 CHI	22
6	38	F	None	ENG PH	PSM	P.2 & 6 ENG	18
7	42	F	Catholic	CD	PSM	P.3&5 CHI	19
10	35	F	Catholic	Mathematics PH	APSM	P.4 &6 Mathematics	8
12	42	F	Christian	CHI PH	APSM	P.2 &5 CHI	6
13 * Novice Ts	22	F	None	Teaching	CM	P.2 Chinese	0
	23	M	None	Teaching	CM	P.3 Mathematics & GS	1
	23	M	Catholic	Teaching	CM	P.3 Eng & GS	1
	24	F	Catholic	Teaching	CM	P.2 Eng & Mathematics	2
	28	F	None	Teaching	CM	P.4 Mathematics & Mu	5
14	55	F	Catholic	RS PH	PSM	P.5 Eng & RS	30
16 *Experi	33	F	None	Teaching	CM	P.5 Chinese	10
	34	F	Christian	Teaching	CM	P.4 Mathematics & GS	11

enced	45	F	Christian	Teaching	APSM	P.5 English	22
Ts	50	M	Catholic	Teaching	APSM	P.6 Chinese	27
	55	F	Catholic	Teaching	APSM	P.6 Chinese	32
17	48	F	Catholic	Mgt	Head	Mgt	26

4.3 School context and leadership style

Research question 2: To what extent does this relationship depend on the school context and the stage of the school's development?

The data collected in the semi-structured interviews from the two Catholic schools are analyzed to answer the second research question. In order to obtain holistic data for investigating the leadership styles of middle leaders, the researcher interviewed three tiers of school stakeholders, including the principals, targeted middle leaders, and other (experienced and novice) teachers in the schools. This ensured the reliability of the findings.

4.3.1 Middle leaders in School Francis

To find out the relationship practices' relation to school development, data collected from the semi-structured interviews about the specific school context, the key concern of the performance indicators, the critical incidents, and student performance are analyzed.

4.3.1.1 School context

School Francis serves over 800 primary school students as one of the most reputable schools in the New Territories of Hong Kong for over 25 years. Over 30% of the teachers and over 25% of the students are Catholic. The pastoral care and students' academic achievements were good in the district overall, as evaluated by the external school review team of the Education Bureau and the Catholic Education Office a few years ago.

4.3.1.1.1 Leadership practices' relation to school development

Based on the IQ-11 summary of School Francis, we notice that leadership practices are closely related to school development in School Francis. Most of the middle leaders altered their leadership practices during different stages of development at the school.

Table 4.3: Perceptions of leadership practices' relation to school development

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.11)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Leadership practices & school development
1	Novice Ts	22	No	Yes
		23	No	Yes
		23	No	Yes
		25	No	Yes
		27	No	Yes
4	Experienced T1	33	No	Yes
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	Not so related
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Yes
8	CHI PH	38	No	Yes
9	DH	45	No	Yes
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Yes
15	GS PH	50	No	Yes
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Yes
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Yes
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Yes

There may not be a single leadership theory that can explain all of the development stages or even a single development stage of schools. In these two schools, they reflect that a supportive atmosphere and harmonious relationships among teachers are essential for the wellbeing of the organization. It is vital to apply different effective leadership practices; to combine them appropriately at the right stage; or to align them with the school context to produce a greater positive effect than applying a single leadership style homogenously.

Leadership practices of middle leaders changed during different school

development stages. However, the belief of leaders with religious faith constantly

exists as it is rooted deeply in their minds. Hence, they are always people-oriented

and care about the feelings of others. A caring community is their common goal.

(Interview 20, Principal, School Francis)

This principal has been working in School Francis since 2018. He observed that the leadership practices of middle leaders changed according to different school contexts and development stages. Improvement has been shown at different stages of school development. Fullan and Jackson have mentioned that school improvement is a journey of leadership (Fullan, 2002; Jackson, 2000). During different stages of school development, middle leaders can apply a variety of leadership strategies in leading the organization to ensure sustainable development.

Nonetheless, some middle leaders are people-oriented and have religious faith view pupils and teachers as their key concern in different school contexts. It is because their mission is to nurture students to be the salt and yeast of society and to make the school a caring community, as is stated in the constitution of the incorporated management committee for Catholic schools in Hong Kong.

School development plays an important role in the leadership styles of middle

leaders. If the main focus of the school is the academic performance of students,

panel heads will tend to be target-oriented leaders to achieve goals. On the other

hand, if the emphasis is on the professional growth of novice teachers, coaches

will be assigned to new teachers, and they will nurture teachers holistically and

whole-heartedly in the caring community.

(Interview 1, Novice Teacher 1, School Francis)

The major concerns or policies of schools always influence the kind of leadership that middle leaders demonstrate. Hence, it is crucial for both principals and middle leaders to study and define the mission and vision of their schools carefully and to take measures that can promote the incentives of both pupils and teachers to foster a positive school climate and personal growth.

> *School development and leadership practices are mutually influenced. If schools are led by dictators, the outcome will be totally different from a distributed instructional leadership where members make decisions collaboratively. Hence, School development and leadership are mutually dependent.*
>
> *(Interview 1, Novice Teachers, School Francis)*

All novice teachers believed that school development and leadership practices influence each other. Distributed leadership provides an opportunity for members to bring up ideas and make decisions together. This kind of team leadership is popular nowadays. Due to extensive responsibilities and time constraints, middle leaders in schools have begun to play a significant role in exercising instructional leadership that used to be taken up solely by the school principals (Klar, 2010, 2011; Lashway, 2002; Timperley, 2005).

> *There were some changes or focuses during different development stages of schools as well as the arrival of new principals. However, the leadership practices of middle leaders did not change significantly. They applied their own leadership practices to achieve the goals of the school projects.*
>
> ***(Interview 4, Experienced Teacher 3, School Francis)***

This experienced teacher shares that middle leaders usually maintain their individual leadership practices to implement their panel projects due to deeply rooted beliefs persisted in the minds of some middle leaders.

> *There is a close relationship between leadership practices and school development. For example, the leadership styles of the principals and the middle leaders would have a significant influence on the development of the schools. In addition, during different stages of school development, it will affect the leadership practices too. When the schools had to implement some innovative projects with which most of the teachers are not familiar, principals and middle leaders would take the initiative and work together with the core team. Then, they would take the role of coaches to serve the needs of other teachers. Conversely, when the programs were implemented for a certain period of time and needed to have further development, middle leaders would let the second echelon to involve more and even be the coordinator of the programs.*
>
> *(Interview 5, Curriculum Developer, School Francis)*

The school placed emphasis on the development of the second echelon and nurturing them within a caring school environment as people are the most important component of the organization (Noland & Richards, 2015). The school's coaching system is quite professional. Middle leaders vary their roles and leadership practices during different stages of school development. Since school improvement is a journey of leadership (Fullan, 2002; Jackson, 2000), the curriculum developer shares her ideas of leadership. During different stages of school development. Middle leaders applied a variety of leadership strategies in the organization to ensure sustainable development.

Transforming teachers and developing trust among core team members are God's call for servant leaders' lives (Wilkes, 1998). This mission is regarded as being particularly important for caring schools, where leaders are expected to be able to transform people (Spears, 2003). This mission is seen in the coaching system in School Francis.

> *At different developmental stages, my leadership practices are different. I am the panel head of the Chinese department. Twenty years ago, there were many novice teachers, and so I needed to instruct them and guide them to do different tasks or projects in schools. I worked with them, too, like a coach or an instructional leader. I put emphasis on teaching and learning. Now all of them are experienced teachers; I form different core teams and invite them to be the team leaders. They can work on their own. I train them to be trainers as well as servant leaders in the future.*
>
> *(Interview 8, Chinese Panel Head, School Francis)*

The Chinese panel head is a good leader and a coach. She provides appropriate support and opportunities for novice teachers to become experienced teachers or even future servant leaders. During different stages of teachers' professional growth, she varies her leadership practices.

She formed different core teams and invited the experienced teachers to be the team leaders. This sharing of power for the growth of the school is the central focus of servant leaders (Laub, 1999). Hence, it is essential for leaders to realize that the key to sustaining a successful 21st-century organization is to institute leadership that does not solely reside at the top of the hierarchy (Kotter, 1996).

School development in different stages influences leadership practices at school. The development of the learning community at school is an example. I believe that people-oriented leadership focuses on the growth of its followers. In our school, middle leaders will alter their leadership practices in different development stages of the community so as to maintain the sustainable development of the school. In the early stage, when most of the teachers were inexperienced, middle leaders led them to implement learning and teaching projects in the role of coaches like instructional leadership. After a certain period of time, middle leaders nurtured someone with potential leadership talent to be the second and the third echelons. Both servant leadership and distributed instructional leadership practices were applied. Middle leaders became the supervisors of those project coordinators or leaders. They provided proactive advice and creative ideas to the second echelon. Additionally, they provided opportunities for them to make decisions over some low-risk cases.

(Interview 9, Vice-Principal, School Francis)

The development of a learning community at the school is an example of how school development can influence leadership practices at a school throughout different stages. Both servant leadership and distributed instructional leadership practices were applied in the learning community in School Francis to nurture the potential second echelon.

The vice-principal focuses on framing and communicating clear objectives. A knowledge-sharing community is one of the school's visions, and this vision is a unique undertaking of the mission (Wilkes, 1998). A professional learning community is formed as a result. It emphasizes serving and promoting a positive school climate for teachers. School

Francis is eager to "help make whole," as individuals are not yet whole at the early stage of the learning community.

> *I have been the panel head of the Maths department for a few years. I am an*
>
> *innovative middle leader, but I do not have much confidence to implement some*
>
> *innovative or creative projects to foster learning and teaching, as there are many*
>
> *experienced teachers in the panel. They might think it was not necessary. However,*
>
> *I did try some as I am a student-centred panel head when there is a drop in*
>
> *academic performance in the exam. I tried to find out the key difficulties of*
>
> *teachers to carry out the new project and helped them solve the problems. Finally,*
>
> *the new project was implemented smoothly.*
>
> **(Interview 11, Maths Panel Head, School Francis)**

Improved student academic performance made the Maths panel head alter her former leadership style as she now believes that the core business of schools requires professional collaboration among middle leaders from different departments (Ko, Hallinger & Walker, 2015). Additionally, the key business of the Maths panel requires the professional collaboration of panel members. Thus, she acted as an instructional leader and monitored the instructional programs in her panel whole-heartedly.

> *Self-directed learning is the major concern of the school. Teachers are not*
>
> *familiar with this idea. As I am the panel head of General Studies, it is necessary*
>
> *to carry out self-directed learning and sharing the work among panel members.*
>
> *Hence, I apply some change management in my panel so as to implement*
>
> *self-directed learning in both teaching and learning at school successfully.*

Besides, coaching and team building are vital too.

(Interview 15, GS Panel Head, School Francis)

Leadership practices are often shaped by the different stages of development within schools (Day et al., 2007). Self-directed learning is the major concern of the school development plan. As a result, the GS panel head altered his leadership practices to more effectively foster the capacity of panel members and connect with peers. He also engaged in coaching and team building skillfully, leading to the program's eventual success.

Self-directed learning is the major concern of the school. As it is new for some teachers, peer learning and sharing are essential in the English panel. Hence, I put emphasis on the professional development of teachers so as to make sure the proper performance on student learning. Besides, co-planning meetings are vital for teachers. As a middle leader, I put forth my strength to maintain the proper standard of both learning and teaching. I supervise all things which are able to facilitate effective learning and teaching at schools. Most of the times,

I worked with my panel members, whole-heartedly.

(Interview 18, English Panel Head, School Francis)

The English panel head tried to be an instructional leader as she was eager to implement the program plan for self-directed learning successfully. She coordinated curricula and monitored student learning outcomes through professional teacher development in the form of collaborative lesson planning meetings. She finally developed a learning culture that nurtured professional learning communities (Li, Hallinger & Ko, 2016), focusing on self-directed

learning. At the same time, she also provided a positive school climate.

Self-directed learning is the major concern of the school. We put heavy emphasis on student support. Our major focus is to foster the intrinsic motivation of the learning of pupils. Hence, in the Religious Studies panel, we focused on spiritual meditation where love, serving others, and prayer was the key for personal best. Middle leaders in the panel were servant leaders, they nurtured and equipped panel members to teach students, and the student is servant leaders in their classes too. Hence, school development relates to our leadership practices.

(Interview 19, RS Panel Head, School Francis)

Servant leaders like the Religious Studies panel head are eager to "help make whole." Serving others is also a means to complete themselves (Spears, 2003). Hence, one of the objectives of servant leadership is to build a more caring organization (Greenleaf, 2003) where people could eventually become whole. This is the key emphasis of the Religious Department of School Francis.

It is evident that the Religious Studies panel head applied a people-oriented approach to help pupils master self-directed learning. The panel focused on fostering the intrinsic motivation for pupils to learn. It is based on the theory of personal best in psychology. The panel members help pupils starting from the inside. It is significantly different from the other department panels. Hence, we can conclude that there are different kinds of leadership practices that contribute to different levels of the program plan's success. In order to ensure the holistic and sustainable development of pupils' self-directed learning habits or self-autonomy completely and successfully, a synergy of the servant and instructional

leadership practices is extremely crucial in a caring school under the umbrella of God since this synergy will produce an effect that is greater than the sum of its parts. Take the school development plan for self-directed learning as an example; the servant leaders emphasized the inner qualities of pupils or the "software" of the learning mindset, while the instructional leadership practices focused on the outer part consisting of the knowledge input or the "hardware" of the curriculum

4.3.1.2 Performance indicators

4.3.1.2.1 Teaching and learning (Domain 2 of the performance indicators) as well as student support and school ethos (Domain 3 of the performance indicators)

Based on the IQ-7 and 8 Summary of School Francis, we notice that only the principal, curriculum leader, and novice teachers find that Domains 2 and 3 are both important and interrelated. The principal of this school might promote the experienced teachers to be the middle leaders in this school.

Table 4.4: Learning and teaching & student support and school ethos

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.6 &7)	
Inter-view No	Role	Age	Religion	Learning and teaching (Domain 2) and student support and school ethos (Domain 3)	
				School	Middle Leaders/ Teachers
1	Novice T1	22	None	Learning & teaching	Both
	Novice T2	23	None	Learning & teaching	Both
	Novice T5	27	None	Learning & teaching	Both
4	Experienced T4	36	Catholic	Student support & school ethos	Student support & school ethos
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Both	Student support & school ethos
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Both	Both
8	CHI PH	38	None	Learning & teaching	Student support & school ethos
9	DH	45	None	Student support & school ethos	Student support & school ethos
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Both	Student support & school ethos

15	GS PH	50	None	Student support & school ethos	Learning & teaching
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Both	Student support & school ethos
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Both	Student support & school ethos
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Both	Both

Middle leaders in School Francis know the strengths of their school well. Everyone contributes to the fruitful result. The panel head of General Studies puts emphasis mainly on learning and teaching while the deputy head, panel heads of Religious Studies and key subjects, and middle leaders in charge of Discipline and Counselling are eager to put a significant focus on student support and school ethos.

4.3.1.2.2 The most significant domain of performance indicators

Based on the IQ-9 Summary of School Francis, we notice that experienced teacher 5, English panel head, and the principal understand the inter-relationship of the four Domains of Performance Indicators. They are proactive and able to think critically about what is important for the sustainable development of their school.

Table 4.5: The most significant domain of performance indicators

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.9)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	The most significant domain of performance indicators
1	Novice T1	22	None	Domain 3
	Novice T2	23	None	Domain 1
	Novice T3	23	None	Domain 2
	Novice T4	25	None	Domain 1
	Novice T5	27	None	Domains 1 & 3
4	Experienced T1	33	None	Domain 2
	Experienced T2	33	None	Domain 3
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	Domains 2 & 3
	Experienced T4	36	Catholic	Domains 2 & 3
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Domains 1 to 4
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Domain 2
8	CHI PH	38	None	Domain 2
9	DH	45	None	Domain 1
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Domain 2
15	GS PH	50	None	Domain 3
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Domains 1 to 4

| 19 | RS PH | 46 | Catholic | Domain 1 |
| 20 | Principal | 55 | Catholic | Domains 1 to 4 |

Note: Domain 1: Leadership and Management; Domain 2: Learning and Teaching; SS

Domain 3: Student Support and School Ethos; Domain 4: Student Performance

Leading with a critical mind is vital for both principal and middle leaders. The four domains are inter-related common platforms and are useful indicators to evaluate the performance of a school. In addition, a systematic Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (P-I-E) cycle in Domains 1 to 3 is essential as it is a school self-evaluation mechanism.

4.3.1.2.3 The most powerful strategy for improving learning and teaching

Based on the IQ-16 Summary of School Francis, we notice that good relationships, teamwork, and loving care are vital to learning effectively. Some novice teachers have mentioned that eagerness to serve is important for improving learning and teaching. Serving is a loving-kindness attitude; it is embraced with responsibility and love.

Table 4.6: The most powerful strategy for improving learning and teaching

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.16)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	The most powerful strategy for improving learning and teaching
1	Novice T1	22	None	A harmonious communion
	Novice T2	23	None	Mutual support
	Novice T3	23	None	An effective co-planning meeting
	Novice T4	25	None	Eagerness to serve
	Novice T5	27	None	Eagerness to serve
4	Experienced T1	33	None	An excellent lesson plan
	Experienced T2	33	None	Good observation
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	Leading children to learn
	Experienced T4	36	Catholic	Sharing
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Knowing the needs of pupils
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Good relationship between teachers & students
8	CHI PH	38	None	Passion for teaching, love for pupils
9	DH	45	None	Teamwork
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	A learning community, team spirit, sincerity among stakeholders
15	GS PH	50	None	Ability learning groups, active listening
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Open-mindedness of teachers, active listening, sustainable development of the school-based curriculum

| 19 | RS PH | 46 | Catholic | Love & care |
| 20 | Principal | 55 | Catholic | Motivating pupils to learn, being responsible, persevering to reach the final target |

Based on the IQ-16 Summary of School Francis, we notice that good relationships, teamwork, and loving care are vital to learning effectively.

Summary

The religious faith of teachers fosters the spiritual and moral development of pupils. They love and care for others. Besides, they are eager to serve and are responsible.

Pupils are nurtured joyfully and peacefully in this community of loving-kindness. As a result, the relationships among school stakeholders are good. They act like siblings at school.

Furthermore, the school is eager to make progress in different areas and fosters and motivates pupils to learn and understand their responsibility.

Teachers and leaders understand that D1–4 are inter-related. That means all the departments are inter-related too. Hence, they work as a big professional learning team to nurture stakeholders with love and care. Lastly, all stakeholders are eager to serve.

From the data, we find that middle leaders have a variety of abilities. It would be a miracle made possible by God if they can cooperate effectively. Heaven is here for God's sons and daughters.

4.3.1.3 Critical incidents

4.3.1.3.1 Critical incidents and leadership style

Based on the IQ-4 Summary of School Francis, we notice that during critical incidents at school, such as poor marking performance by teachers, the School Garden project, and Life-Wide Learning Week for pupils, a synergy between servant leadership and instructional leadership is a common practice in School Francis. Thus, instructional or servant leadership, or both will be applied effectively.

Table 4.7: Critical incidents and leadership style

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.4)	
Inter-view No.	Role	Age	Religion	Critical incidents and leadership style	
1	Novice T4	25	None	School project	Servant Leadership
	Novice T5	27	None	Lesson observation	Instructional Leadership
4	Experienced T1	33	None	Panel affairs	Servant Leadership
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Teamwork	Servant Leadership
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	All urgent cases	Servant Leadership
8	CHI PH	38	None	Poor marking performance of Ts	Both
9	DH	45	None	School-based curriculum	Instructional Leadership
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Maths competitions	Servant Leadership
15	GS PH	50	None	The School Garden project	Both
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Design Exam Paper	Servant Leadership
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Angry Teacher	Servant Leadership
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Life-wide learning week	Both

Supervision and evaluation are essential in managing instructional programs properly. As a result, deadlines for different school tasks are set to maintain the proper performance of schools. However, as both a servant leader and panel head of Religious Studies, a synergy between servant leadership and instructional leadership is vital to helping and healing the lost sheep.

> *Though managing the curriculum properly is important, when we facing critical events, we need to act what Jesus would act as school is a loving-kindness community. Though deadlines at school are important as we need to maintain the proper performance of the school, people are more vital. Hence, we will help teachers to finish his job and give them more time and more teachers to help her and heal her at the same time.*
>
> ***(Interview 19, the Religious Panel Head of School Francis)***

4.3.1.4 Student performance

4.3.1.4.1 Student performance in school

Based on the IQ-8 Summary of School Francis, we notice that most of the pupils have good

academic performance. They have positive values and attitudes too.

Table 4.8: Student performance

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.8)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Student performance
1	Novice T1	22	None	Good
	Novice T2	23	None	Very good
	Novice T3	23	None	Good
	Novice T4	25	None	Good
	Novice T5	27	None	Good
4	Experienced T2	33	None	Both academic & non-academic performances are good
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	High expectation causes pressure
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Love & care for each other, good academic performance
8	CHI PH	38	None	Good academic performance, eager to serve
9	DH	45	None	Fair academic performance
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Good academic performance
15	GS PH	50	None	Some pupils show good academic performance
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Some pupils show good academic performance
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Responsible, eager to share
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Good academic performance and good discipline

Middle leaders try hard to provide a caring school for both teachers and pupils. Although

some of the pupils do not have good academic performance, they can get a sense of

achievement in non-academic areas like *religious programs or activities*. Hence, middle

leaders must ensure a successful experience for pupils of different abilities since pupils who

receive pastoral care from teachers perform well academically.

4.3.1.5 Summary

To a significant extent, leadership styles are closely related to the school context and the stage

of the school's development. It would be better if all the middle leaders were able to maintain

sustainable professional collaboration among themselves rather than implement the school

development plan individually because the core business of schools requires effective

connection and co-operation among middle leaders representing different panels within individual schools (Ko, Hallinger & Walker, 2015). Hence, it is effective to move from good to great through sustainable professional collaboration and the synergy of the servant and instructional leadership practices.

4.3.2 Middle leaders in School Teresa

To find out the relationship practices' relation to school development, data collected from the semi-structured interviews about the specific school context, the key concern of the performance indicators, the critical incidents, and student performance are analyzed.

4.3.2.1 School context

School Teresa serves over 800 primary school students and has been one of the most reputable schools in Kowloon for 57 years. Some of the teachers and students are Catholic. The students' academic achievements are good in district terms, as measured by the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA)results, but the school has experienced a slight slump recently.

4.3.2.1.1 Leadership practices' relation to school development

Based on the IQ-11 summary of School Teresa, we note that leadership practices are closely related to school development. All middle leaders varied their leadership approaches during different stages of development at the school.

Table 4.9: Perceptions of leadership practices' relation to school development

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.11)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Leadership practices & school development
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Yes
3	DH	52	Catholic	Yes
6	ENG PH	38	No	Yes
7	CD	42	Catholic	Yes
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Yes
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Yes
13	Novice T1	22	No	Yes
	Novice T4	24	Catholic	Yes
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Yes
16	Experienced T1	33	No	Yes
	Experienced T2	34	Christian	Yes
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Yes

Important incidents in different developmental stages result in the need to alter different leadership styles to lead and manage the school well. For example, the External School Review (ESR) has provided a common platform to evaluate the performance of schools in using the tools in four important domains.

Since school improvement is like a journey (Fullan, 2002), outstanding middle leaders will vary their leadership styles as needed at different stages of school development in order to meet the mission and vision of the school. Day (2007) mentioned that a particular leadership approach would have a significant role in meeting the particular needs of a school.

> *Before the Chinese focus inspection, the Chinese panel head was so strict that she did not want to change anything in her panel. However, when she learned that focus inspection was approaching, she was eager to listen to ideas and gave her hand to someone in need.*

> *(Interview 17, Principal, School Teresa)*

Middle leaders varied their leadership practices according to different school contexts or in response to external inspection by the education bureau. The Chinese focus inspection is a good example. Teamwork and whole-hearted caring are extremely vital during any internal or external review.

Furthermore, there are many key elements that work in conjunction with each other to facilitate positive school development, such as a sustainable and holistic teacher development program and a team leadership atmosphere (Ko, Cheng & Lee, 2016). Middle leaders should apply them appropriately.

> *The expertise of the Chinese panel head has been shown. She is professional. She*
> *is ready to help during the focus inspection. I respect her so much!*
>
> **(Interview 13, Novice Teacher 1, School Teresa)**

The Chinese panel head demonstrated a major change in leadership style because the Chinese focus inspection was important for her panel. It motivated her to become an instructional leader, monitor the instructional program, and promote a positive school climate.

> *The school development team mainly includes middle leaders from academic*
> *departments, and so teaching and learning are always the key concern.*
>
> **(Interview 16, Experienced Teacher 2, School Teresa)**

School Teresa's focus on academic performance has been shown by the core members of the school development team since most of them are subject panel heads. In this school context, supervision of the curriculum by instructional panel heads is common. It would be more

effective to include some department heads from the administrative or student support domains to facilitate more well-rounded, and expert ideas regarding the holistic development of the school since effective communication among departments heads is the core concern of schools to facilitate sustainable development of an organization (Ko, Hallinger & Walker, 2015).

> *The panel head of the Moral & Civic Education department is nice. She implements Life Education, which is the new program this year. She lets her panel members experience the program by involving them in the planning, implementation, as well as the evaluation of the project. However, she doesn't like to overload teachers. She works with the panel members and supports them too. I believe that overloading teachers is not smart. It will hinder fruitful improvement.*
>
> ***(Interview 13, Novice Teacher 4, School Teresa)***

The panel head of the student support domain had a different leadership style than the key subject panel heads. The latter applied instructional leadership in supervising curricula. However, the panel head of the Moral & Civic Education department also had a different leadership style when implementing new programs in her panel compared to the others. She was people-oriented and effectively nurtured her panel members within a caring panel. She helped people grow too. This is a similar leadership style to that proposed by Greenleaf in 1977.

> *There is a close relationship between curriculum development and school development. However, leadership practices are not so closely related to school development. Leadership style of myself is not related to school development. I*

have my own mindset in leading my panel members.

(Interview 2, GS Panel Head, School Teresa)

The panel head of General Studies shared that her leadership practices remained constant as the school context changed. She had confidence in leading on her own.

At the very beginning, the school was like a big family. Everyone was eager to contribute. We cooperated well. However, after the first external school review (ESR), we learned that there was room for improvement in the leadership and management domain. Then we established the school administrative framework to distribute leadership among senior teachers and panel heads.

(Interview 3, Vice-Principal, School Teresa)

The external review stirred up the minds of many school principals and middle leaders like the vice-principal in School Teresa. She learned that leadership practices had to be altered to fit the different developmental stages of the school. Top-down leadership was suddenly not as appropriate. Distributed leadership practices among middle leaders were suggested by the ESR team leader. Thereafter, middle leaders were not only followers. They started learning leadership skills in their roles and duties. It is evident that the leadership of school principals is vital to the growth of people and schools as well.

As middle leaders, we understand the core values of Catholic education are important. I put emphasis on it and align them with the school curriculum. Panel heads focus on learning and teaching as well as positive values. In order to implement the school-based curriculum effectively, I apply the leadership and management practices suggested by the education bureau in the 1980s. It is the

Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (PIE) cycle.

(Interview 6, English Panel Head, School Teresa)

The English panel head studied leadership practices suggested by the education bureau and tried implementing PIE leadership and management practices in the English panel after the ESR. When the Catholic Education Office recently suggested that all Catholic schools infuse the five core values in their learning curricula, she started to supervise the instructional program using the PIE method. She also aligned the core values with her panel members in the English curriculum. She focused on both learning and teaching, as well as student support. She is a target- and people-oriented middle leader.

School development and leadership practices are related. I am a curriculum developer. When I took this post four years ago, the vice principal was my coach. This year is different from before when the new principal came. I had the chance to be more involved in the school curriculum and to give instructions and advice in all academic panels. I lead the panel heads to implement new projects and work with them. I can feel that my role is really different when compared to 4 years ago. I was just following the instructions of the vice-principal and the work of the former curriculum developer.

(Interview 7, Curriculum Developer, School Teresa)

The curriculum developer stated that leadership and school development are related. Her leadership practices changed following the arrival of the new principal.

Many principals have been found to adopt a distributed instructional model of leadership to encourage staff to share responsibilities in leadership and management (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Hulpia et al., 2011; Spillane & Healey, 2010). The new principal of School Teresa is a good example. She nurtured and supported the curriculum developer to lead and coordinate all panel heads to work together on the school development plan.

> *Leadership practices are related to school development. Recently the academic performance hit a slump as pupils from middle-class families move to schools with a direct subsidy. Hence, most of the pupils come from low-income families in these few years. Besides, some of them are SEN (Special Education Need) pupils. As a result, most of the middle leaders put emphasis on learning and teaching. I am the panel head of the General Studies department. I have to maintain the proper performance of both teaching and learning in my department. Hence, I set the goals of the high academic achievement of pupils and became target-oriented. Most of the middle leaders at that time focused on learning and teaching.*
>
> **(Interview 10, Maths Panel Head, School Teresa)**

The Maths panel head agreed that leadership practices were related to school development. Since effective schools are related to success in student performance (Lezotte 2001), she started to supervise the curriculum and strictly monitor student progress with the recent drop in academic performance. As a result, she became a highly target-oriented instructional leader. This case supports the conclusion that leadership styles are shaped by school contexts (Day et al., 2007).

STEM is vital in this era. I am a Chinese panel head but unfamiliar with STEM. Luckily, the curriculum leader manages the instructional program, creating a positive climate to promote and motivate pupil learning through STEM projects. Middle leaders guide us to share the same mission and vision and foster our team spirit too.

(Interview 12, Chinese Panel Head, School Teresa)

The STEM era has accelerated the leadership role of the curriculum developers in this school. The new principal has influenced her leadership practices as well. Moreover, sharing the same mission and the vision of the school by all stakeholders is essential. It is helpful for everyone to communicate clear school goals and to connect with one another effectively.

The arrival of the new principal altered the leadership practices of some of the middle leaders. They changed slightly from target-oriented to people-oriented. The new principal focuses on student support, which is the third domain of the performance indicators of the external school review (ESR).

(Interview 14, RS Panel Head, School Teresa)

The arrival of the people-oriented principal changed the leadership mindset of some of the middle leaders. Her major concern is student support, which is one of the missions and visions of Catholic schools in promoting leadership through pastoral care. The new, devout Catholic principal, like other servant leaders, made a holistic commitment to their serving school (Gold, 2003).

4.3.2.2 Performance indicators

4.3.2.2.1 Teaching and learning (Domain 2) and student support and school ethos (Domain 3)

Only the curriculum leader and the experienced teachers feel that Domains 2 and 3 are important and interrelated—thus, the school principal might consider promoting the experienced teachers to the level of middle leaders at School Teresa.

Table 4.10: Teaching and learning & student support and school ethos (Domain 3)

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.6&7)	
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Teaching and learning (Domain 2) and student support and school ethos (Domain 3)	
				School	Middle leaders/ teachers
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Student support and school ethos	Student support and school ethos
3	DH	52	Catholic	Both	Teaching and learning
6	ENG PH	38	No	Both	Teaching and learning
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Teaching and learning	Both
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Both	Student support and school ethos
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Both	Teaching and learning
13	Novice T1 Novice T2 Novice T3 Novice T4 Novice T5	22 23 23 24 28	No No Catholic Catholic No	Both Both Both Teaching and learning Both	Teaching and learning Both Teaching and learning Teaching and learning Both
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Teaching and learning	School ethos
16	Experien	33	No	Both	Both

	ced T1 Experien ced T2	34	Christian	Teaching and learning	Both
		45	Christian	Both	Both
		50	Catholic	Both	Both
	Experien ced T3 Experien ced T4 Experien ced T5	55	Catholic	Both	Both
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Both	School ethos

School Teresa heavily emphasizes student support and school ethos, as evidenced by most of their pupils coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and receiving insufficient family support. Nurturing pupils with positive values and attitudes is both urgent and vital.

A significant proportion of the experienced teachers of School Teresa (teaching experience ranging from 10–32 years) perceive that teaching and learning, as well as student support and school ethos, are important and interrelated. In the case of Hong Kong Catholic schools, both high academic achievement and students' well-being are crucial; thus, Domains 2 and 3 of the performance indicators serve as a common platform for evaluating school performance under the leadership of principals and middle leaders in 2001.

4.3.2.2.2 The most significant domain of the performance indicators

All the experienced teachers stress the importance of all four domains: the students must be proactive and learn to think critically. Further, the new principal, the CD, and some of the novice teachers suggest that student support and school ethos is vital (Domain 3). The language department panel head placed a heavy focus on Domain 2: teaching and learning. The deputy head cites Domain 1 as key for school improvement.

Table 4.11: The most significant domain of the performance indicators

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.9)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	The most significant domain of the performance indicators
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Domain 1 and Domain 2
3	DH	52	Catholic	Domain 1
6	ENG PH	38	No	Domain 2
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Domain 3
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Domain 3
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Domain 2
13	Novice T1	22	No	Domain 3
	Novice T2	23	Catholic	Domain 1
	Novice T3	23	Catholic	Domain 3
	Novice T4	24	Catholic	Domain 3
	Novice T5	28	No	Domain 1
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Domain 3
16	Experienced T1	33	No	All (domains 1–4)
		34	Christian	All (domains 1–4)
	Experienced T2	45	Christian	All (domains 1–4)
		50	Catholic	All (domains 1–4)
	Experienced T3	55	Catholic	All (domains 1–4)
	Experienced T4			
	Experienced T5			
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Domain 3

Note: Leadership and management (Domain 1), teaching and learning (Domain 2), student support and school ethos (Domain 3), and student performance (Domain 4)

Quality school management and organization are built on two key factors: professional leadership and school management. Operating this domain properly will foster effective teaching and learning (Domain 2). In turn, quality teaching promotes student learning. Thus, teaching should stimulate thinking and foster students' learning ability.

4.3.2.2.3 The most powerful strategy for improving teaching and learning

Both the experienced and novice teachers care deeply about teaching strategies and student support. The curriculum developer is concerned with an effective learning team. The English

panel head feels that professionalism is essential. The new principal is direct and to the point.

She is concerned if the pupils can master knowledge. These ideas are not new, but they are

vital elements of a powerful strategy to improve learning and teaching.

Table 4.12: The most powerful strategy for improving learning and teaching

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.16)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	The most powerful strategy for improving learning and teaching
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Discussion strategy
3	DH	52	Catholic	A strategy that can motivate pupils to learn effectively
6	ENG PH	38	No	Professionalism
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	A learning team
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Some that prompt pupils to learn
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Reading
13	Novice T1 Novice T2 Novice T3 Novice T4 Novice T5	22 23 23 24 28	No Catholic Catholic Catholic No	Professional sharing among teachers Drama in learning Catering to learner diversity Provide a safe environment full of support and encouragement Pupils express their ideas and face failure bravely; pupils are eager to pursue success Peer lesson observations
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	A good relationship between pupils and teachers; a loving-kindness community
16	Experienced T1	33	None	Ensure pupils happily master the knowledge
	Experienced T2	34	Christian	Encourage and praise pupils appropriately
	Experienced T3	45	Christian	Apply strategies that cater to learner diversity
	Experienced T4	50	Catholic	Support pupils' learning needs
	Experienced T5	55	Catholic	Promote pupils' motivation to learn and celebrate their success Learn happily; encourage pupils in learning; foster good relationships between teachers and pupils; use different teaching approaches for different learners
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Ensure pupils can learn and master the knowledge

As shown in Table 5B15, the middle leaders have provided different vital elements of a powerful strategy to improve learning and teaching. Overall, learning together or teaching together as a team to exchange ideas is important as it fosters learning effectiveness. The interviewees reveal that catering to learner diversity is crucial in every school, and the teachers have tried to avoid limiting their teaching strategies. They state that the key to success is understanding the students learning needs and styles of effective learning methods.

Previous researchers find that leadership practices are strongly related to school improvements (Ko, Hallinger, & Walker, 2012). At School Teresa, religious faith has played a vital role in leadership and subsequently impacted student learning outcomes.

First, this school has a strong religious atmosphere and a high level of servant leadership. Although some of the middle leaders are not religious, most of this group is willing to follow Catholic doctrine in the school, affirming the sense of living in a loving-kindness community.

Second, the middle leaders with a high level of religious faith lead their followers using a sense of pastoral care, creating a caring organization through servant leadership, as stated in the Constitution of the Incorporated Management Committee for Catholic Schools in Hong Kong (2016). Overall, the Catholic middle leaders place a great deal of emphasis on student support and school ethos.

Third, instructional leadership stresses the importance of coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student learning outcomes (Li, Hallinger, & Ko, 2016). They are vital elements in Domain 2 (teaching and learning) of the performance indicators as instructional leaders believe that teaching and learning is the key task of a successful school. We find that the leaders of School Teresa are keen to contribute to improving academic performance.

Fourth, most of the teachers and middle leaders understand their pupils' needs, such as providing encouragement, fostering a loving-kindness learning environment, and catering to learner diversity. They report that a good attitude, creativity, and confidence are non-academic areas that need improvement. Fortunately, the pupils are eager to serve because their teachers are good role models, especially those with strong religious faith.

4.3.2.3 Critical incidents

4.3.2.3.1 Critical incidents and leadership style

Most of the school's critical incidents are about teaching and learning. Most of the leaders are instructional leaders. They do their best to manage the instructional program in addition to their teaching duties.

Table 4.13: Critical incidents and leadership style

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.4)	
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Critical incidents and leadership style	
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	STEM activity	Both
3	DH	52	Catholic	SEN student	Servant leadership
6	ENG PH	38	No	Seconded teacher	Instructional leadership
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Fun learning day	Both
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Professional sharing	Instructional leadership
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Implementation of the new curriculum	Instructional leadership
13	Novice T1 Novice T5	22 28	No No	Worksheet Design projects	Instructional leadership Instructional leadership
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	SEN report	Servant leadership
16	Experienced T3	45	Christian	Teamwork	Servant leadership
	Experienced	50	Catholic	School annual	*Middle leaders

	T4			plan	with a high level of religious faith Servant leadership
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Chinese focus inspection	Instructional leadership

When the new principal took over, it represents a critical incident. This principal's passion and leadership style greatly impact the deputy head (Interview 3) and the teachers (Interview 13 & 16).

> *I have changed my leadership style after the new principal serving in this school, as a sense of passion stirs me up. I have a dream to lead my followers well and bring them a sense of success. Hence, I care for their need. I work with them, and I try to arrange everything well. I enjoy seeing my followers celebrate our success over different projects.*
>
> ***(Interview 3, the Deputy head of School Teresa)***

4.3.1.4 Student performance

4.3.2.4.1 Student performance in school

Most of the pupils at School Teresa have good academic performance. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in positive values and attitudes. For example, the Maths panel head reflects that pupils lack confidence, whereas the religious studies panel head shares that pupils have insufficient family support and need more encouragement. Lastly, the principal feels that the pupils have poor problem-solving skills and resilience, which they must master.

Table 4.14: Student performance

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.8)	
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Student performance	
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Good academic performance	Pupils' values and attitudes have room for improvement
3	DH	52	Catholic	Quite good academic performance	Pupils' values and attitudes have room for improvement
6	ENG PH	38	No	Good academic performance	Pupils' values and attitudes have room for improvement
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Good academic performance	Pupils' values and attitudes have room for improvement
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Good academic performance	Pupils lack confidence
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Good academic performance	Pupils' values and attitudes have room for improvement
13	Novice T2	23	Catholic	Good academic performance	Behavioural problems;
	Novice T4	24	Catholic	Fair academic performance	do not care about the world; irresponsible
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Good academic performance	Complicated family background
16	Experienced T1	33	No	Make an effort to learn	Lack of family support
		34	Christian	Both are good	
	Experienced T2	50	Catholic	Eager to serve	Need encouragement
	Experienced T4 Experienced T5	55	Catholic	Senior form pupils are eager to serve	
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Good academic performance	Problem-solving skills and resilience need a great deal of improvement

Complicated family situations affect pupils' academic performance as well as their behavior. Many of the pupils at School Teresa face family difficulties. In addition, the majority of the students are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and lack exposure to the world. Hence, School Teresa's urgent task is to place a significant emphasis on student support through students' effective operation in Domains 1–3, which can be operationalized via a systematic planning–implementation–evaluation (P–I–E) cycle to determine the effectiveness of tasks that the school has currently prioritized.

4.3.2.5 Summary

The historical journey of School Teresa shows the need for middle leaders to implement appropriate leadership practices in different periods of school development. Due to excessive responsibilities and time constraints, the principal could not be the sole leader. As a result, she adopted team-based leadership to share responsibilities (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Hulpia et al., 2011; Spillane & Healey, 2010) and to nurture middle leaders, as Greenleaf suggested in 1977. Subsequently, middle leaders began to play a role and took on instructional leadership roles that used to be the sole responsibility of school principals (Klar, 2010, 2011; Lashway, 2002; Timperley, 2005).

To a great extent, individual school context and the stage of school development did affect the leadership styles of middle leaders in School Teresa. Although the school context and the stage of the school development played a role in leadership style, the leadership style of the principals was found to be vital as well.

To a large extent, leadership styles are closely related to the context and stage of development of the school. It would be better if all the middle leaders can maintain a sustainable

professional collaboration among themselves rather than implementing the school development plan individually. Middle leaders have both authority and responsibility in their organizations (Samson & Daft, 2012). They have a vital part to play in schools. In the case of Hong Kong schools, both the well-being and academic performance of students are crucial.

Furthermore, the educational reform in 2001 accelerated the decentralization of schools. Principals have promoted the adoption of distributed and team-based leadership as solutions to dealing with their time constraints and excessive responsibilities at schools. Therefore, to a certain extent, this external factor played an important part in the leadership practices at schools.

Middle leaders have both authority and responsibility in their organizations (Samson & Daft, 2012), and they have a vital role to play in schools. In the case of Hong Kong schools, both the academic performance and general wellbeing of students are crucial. Instructional leadership and servant leadership are expected to have respective roles to play alongside each other at schools so as to produce a bigger positive effect than applying a single leadership style at schools.

Fullan (2006) also suggests that we all need to institute major change and that leaders and teachers need to go beyond the successes of increasing student achievement and lead organizations toward sustainability as well.

To maintain the sustainable development of their respective organizations, some of the middle leaders in both schools have bright and proactive minds and are willing to take up more work than other teachers. They are also able to collaborate to alleviate the heavy

workload for school, making improvement more affordable.

4.4 The relationship between the leadership styles of middle leaders and their leadership roles and duties in the schools

Research question 1: What is the relationship between the leadership styles of middle leaders and their leadership roles and duties in schools?

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews in the two Catholic schools were analyzed to answer the first research question.

4.4.1 Middle leaders in School Francis

To find out the perceptions of leadership practices and roles, data collected from the semi-structured interviews about the dominant leadership styles, professional roles, and professionalism (including principalship, vice-principalship, panel headship), and the relationship with and support to colleagues are analyzed.

4.4.1.1 Dominant leadership styles

Most of the middle leaders are servant leaders. They are eager to provide a caring environment for both students and teachers.

4.4.1.1.1 Leadership practices and roles

Based on the IQ-10 Summary of School Francis (below), we noticed that leadership practices and roles were closely related. All the novice teachers perceived their panel heads (e.g., the mathematics and Chinese panel heads) and their middle leaders as instructional leaders in School Francis. In addition to coaching on panel affairs, they also guided the new teachers' learning and teaching. The middle leaders with religious beliefs, such as the PSMCD, English,

and religious studies panel heads, perceived themselves as servant leaders, showing that

religious faith played an important role in their leadership practices.

Table 4.15: Perceptions of leadership practices and roles

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.10)	
Inter-view No.	Role	Age	Religion	Leadership practices and roles	
1	Novice T1	22	No	Yes	Instructional Leadership
	Novice T2	23	No	Yes	Instructional Leadership
	Novice T3	23	No	Yes	Instructional Leadership
	Novice T4	25	No	Yes	Instructional Leadership
	Novice T5	27	No	Yes	Instructional Leadership
4	Experienced T1	33	No	Yes	Servant Leadership
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Yes	Both
8	CHI PH	38	No	Yes	Mainly Instructional Leadership
9	DH	45	No	Yes	Mainly Instructional Leadership
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Yes	Instructional Leadership
15	GS PH	50	No	Yes	Instructional Leadership
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Yes	Servant Leadership
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Yes	Servant Leadership
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Yes	Servant Leadership

Middle leaders such as Interviewee 8, the newly assigned Chinese panel head of School

Francis, performed the role of first-line managers. This panel head usually managed junior

teachers, and she agreed that leadership practices were related to the roles and duties of

middle leaders in the school. For example, panel members were expected to adhere to the job

allocations set by the panel head and do their best to contribute. Everyone should follow

instructions. She asserted that instructional leadership is vital for the sustainability of

effective learning and teaching in schools.

Instructional leaders are task-oriented, able to provide panel members with a clear mission, and ensure firm guidance in the right direction. Sometimes they even "turn their schools around" (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a, 1985b, 1986) and build a learning community that fosters the sustainable development of schools as, for example, the Chinese and Mathematics Department heads did in School Francis.

> *On the one hand, leadership is related to job responsibilities. Since job duties differ, middle leaders have to adapt their leadership approaches. On the other hand, personalities, religious beliefs, and roles are also related.*

(Interview 20, The Principal, School Francis)

The job duties of school panel heads mainly involved managing curriculum development and promoting professional development; hence, most of them tended to be instructional leaders. Hallinger claimed that instructional leaders must exhibit a primarily academic focus by coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curricula and instruction. (Hallinger et al., 1996). On the other hand, some middle leaders, (e.g., the religious studies panel head, the curriculum developer, and the English panel head) who had religious faith led teachers as Greenleaf suggested in 1977—by caring for and loving their panel members and being eager to build a caring community for everyone, encouraging them to become quality servant leaders in the future.

The concept of instructional leadership first became famous in the United States during the effective school movement of the 1970s, which promoted the field of educational leadership as a very rich knowledge base and made a significant contribution. Many researchers found that effective schools tended to focus on academic issues and were successful in educating

students, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds; therefore, middle leaders, especially curriculum leaders and subject panel heads, placed heavy emphasis on learning and teaching.

> *I am a member of the Chinese department. The panel head instructs us clearly,*
>
> *and there are a lot of guidelines for teachers to follow.*
>
> **(Interview 1, Novice Teacher 3, School Francis)**

It was this type of leadership that the Chinese panel head aimed to use to move the school in the desired direction, providing a strong academic focus and choosing suitable instructional strategies to sustain effective learning and finally bring about school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

> *They are instructional leaders. I teach Mathematics and GS. There are a lot of*
>
> *handbooks and guidelines for teachers, and teachers follow these guidelines.*
>
> *Middle leaders also guide our learning and teaching in the classrooms.*
>
> **(Interview 1, Novice Teacher 4, School Francis)**

The statements of the novice teachers showed that most of the panel heads concerned themselves with learning and teaching in the schools, as instructional leaders focusing on the sustainability of effective learning and teaching (Hallinger & Lee, 2014). Moreover, they managed the curricula and participated in collaborative lesson planning meetings (Harris & Muijs, 2004; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 2003; Rutherford, 2006).

> *I am a new vice panel head of the Religious Studies Department. My coach is*
>
> *helpful and nice. She is the panel head of the Religious Studies Department, and*
>
> *she is an experienced panel head. She implemented a lot of projects about the*

loving doctrines of God, planned everything well, and taught me how to

implement the programs wholeheartedly. She nurtured me and was ready to help. I

have learned a lot from her.

(Interview 4, Experienced Teacher 4, School Francis)

Apart from most of the instructional panel heads, the panel head of the Religious Studies

Department was eager to develop her partner since this is one of the main goals of servant

leaders. Servant leaders are expected to place others' needs first and serve rather than be

served (Greenleaf, 1977). Care for others as well as the more able serving, the less able was

the vision of Robert Greenleaf (1972). This vision was thoroughly exemplified by the panel

head of the Religious Studies Department because the main aim of religious studies and

religious promotion in schools is to implement the loving doctrines of God, in which love and

service are key elements. Position duties and religious faith may, therefore, be the driving

forces for implementing servant leadership practices in schools.

> *My leadership practices are related to my role and duties at school. I am a*
>
> *curriculum developer. I work with all the panel heads as a team to implement*
>
> *school-based curriculum projects that cater for the learning diversity of pupils.*
>
> *When I work with the novice panel heads, I nurture them and work with them.*
>
> *Conversely, I will acquire professional advice or ideas from experienced panel*
>
> *heads because they are experienced and have professional subject knowledge. I*
>
> *listen to them and accept their suggestions.*

(Interview 5, Curriculum Developer, School Francis)

The role of the curriculum developer in this school was very important. She served as a

bridge to connect all the academic department heads and was ready to share professional

ideas about important curriculum practices in schools. She was both people and target-oriented, always embracing servant leadership in target-oriented instructional leadership practices.

People-oriented leadership practices, such as servant leadership, work for the social good of organizations. This interviewee empowered team members through wholehearted service and helping. As a result, difficulties were solved collectively by her team, exemplifying what Greenleaf (2002) considered to be ideal leadership.

She also assumed the role of instructional leader. Instructional leaders have a strong commitment to their school's improvement and coordinate curriculum programs in the school (Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1984; Dwyer, 1986). This participant was eager to work cooperatively with the panel heads in the evaluation, assessment, development, and implementation of curricula and instruction.

> *A task-oriented leader usually sticks to job allocation even though he or she knows some teachers need assistance. As a newly assigned panel head, I am still learning how to support my panel members effectively. Sometimes, I change the job allocation slightly to cater for teacher diversity.*
>
> **(Interview 8, Chinese Panel Head, School Francis)**

The new Chinese panel head was primarily a target-oriented middle leader. She perceptively noted that promoting a positive school climate is crucial. She motivated teachers with different capabilities by reallocating some task duties among panel members, believing a positive school culture to be vital for facilitating instructional leadership practice and

improving both learning and teaching in schools (Harris 2002; Hopkins, 2000).

> *There is a relationship between leadership practices and role duties. Middle leaders are empowered by the principal, and so they do their best to further develop the school. Besides, middle leaders apply distributed leadership in the school. As a result, middle leaders make an effort to contribute.*

(Interview 9, Vice Principal, School Francis)

Many principals adopted distributed leadership to encourage middle leaders to share their responsibility for instructional management (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Hulpia et al., 2011; Spillane & Healey, 2010). This was the case in School Francis since middle leaders represented both authority and responsibility in their organizations (Samson & Daft, 2012) All the panel heads did their best to effectively manage the learning and teaching programs.

> *To some extent, my role and duties affect my leadership practices. As a mathematics panel head, I have to assign panel members to document the mathematics curriculum and require them to meet deadlines. I place great emphasis on teaching and learning.*

(Interview 11, Mathematics Panel Head, School Francis)

The mathematics panel head strongly believed that effective schools foster students' success; thus, she emphasized supervising her panel members and playing an active, hands-on role in monitoring curriculum development and instruction (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). She acted like an instructional leader in the school.

> *My leadership practice is related to my role and duties. In the GS panel, many new elements need to be integrated into the curriculum every year; hence, I need*

to implement new plans each year and have frequent discussions with the core

panel members because we all want to maintain sustainable development of this

subject. I am a target-oriented middle leader.

(Interview 15, GS Panel Head, School Francis)

Most of the panel heads in School Francis emphasized supervising the curriculum effectively as their key responsibility; hence, their leadership practices related strongly to their roles and duties. The GS panel head was expected to coordinate curricula, monitor students' learning outcomes, and foster a sustainable professional learning community (Li, Hallinger & Ko, 2016). He, therefore, formed core teams and shared ideas with team members frequently, functioning as a target-oriented panel head.

I am sure that leadership styles and roles are related. As an English panel head, I

need to lead and manage both administrative and curriculum tasks. I also need to

listen to my panel members so that sustainable development can be maintained. I

care about the feelings and understand the needs of my panel members; hence, we

share ideas wholeheartedly.

(Interview 18, English Panel Head, School Francis)

The English panel head was a devout Christian. Her main duty was to supervise the English curriculum and motivate both pupils and teachers. Her target-oriented tasks were embedded in servant leadership. She was an active listener and cared deeply about the feelings of her panel members. She made every effort to provide a positive school climate, foster the sustainable development of the English curriculum, and develop people. These are what Spear mentioned in 2000 as vital elements of servant leadership.

I think the roles and duties of middle leaders do affect their leadership styles.

Religious Studies is about religion, God, and the Bible. As a panel head of

Religious Studies, I will always read the Bible. God gave me the ability to do what

I really need to do; hence, I think positively. Faith, hope, and love are important

virtues that I believe are essential. I love my pupils and colleagues wholeheartedly

and want them to become servant leaders. We have implemented programs and

school-based curricula based on love and practised meta-cognition together after

some events. Progress has been gradual.

(Interview 19, RS Panel Head, School Francis)

The main focus of the Religious Studies Department is to promote the loving doctrines of God and serve the needy, as Jesus Christ did. Consequently, the Religious Studies panel head demonstrated Turner's (2000) assertion that servant leaders serve and meet the needs of others first and develop them to be leaders in the future. The Religious Studies panel head had a holy role to play and felt called by God to be a servant leader in her school.

4.4.1.2 Professional roles and professionalism

4.4.1.2.1 Curriculum leaders and administrative leaders

Based on the IQ-2 Summary of School Francis, we notice that more than half of the middle leaders perceive themselves as both curriculum and administrative leaders. But around 80% of novice teachers perceive middle leaders are both curriculum and administrative leaders. The principal shares that all the middle leaders are both curriculum and administrative leaders. It is important to find that the deputy head, who has no religious beliefs, perceives himself as only a curriculum leader.

Table 4.16: Curriculum leaders and administrative leaders

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.2)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Curriculum leaders and administrative leaders
1	Novice T1	22	None	Both
	Novice T2	23	None	Both
	Novice T3	23	None	Both
	Novice T4	25	None	Curriculum leaders
	Novice T5	27	None	Both
4	Experienced T2	33	None	Administrative leaders
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	Curriculum leaders
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Curriculum leaders
8	CHI PH	38	None	Curriculum leaders
9	DH	45	None	Curriculum leaders
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Curriculum leaders
15	GS PH	50	None	Both
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Both
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Both
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Both

Middle leaders are subject experts and are responsible for effective learning and teaching in school. Since STEM is new to his panel members, she applies a systematic Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (PIE) cycle designed by EDB as a tool for evaluating the performance of Domains 1 to 3 at school. Middle leaders are trying to promote schools' sustained development and accountability for improvement of students' learning. Moreover, providing a learning curriculum to cater to learning diversity is important too.

While principals play an important leadership role in schools, the contributions of middle leaders in fostering school improvement have become increasingly important (Walker & Ko, 2011; Ko et al., 2012).

4.4.1.2.2 Greatest professional strength and weakness of middle leaders

Based on the IQ-12 Summary of School Francis, we notice that the middle leader is responsible and have good subject knowledge. A significant proportion of novice teachers consider middle leaders to be good at the systematic Planning-Implementation-Evaluation

(PIE) cycle. However, they still have room for improvement. For example, some of them are not decisive and creative.

Table 4.17: Greatest professional strength and weakness of middle leaders

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.12)	
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Greatest professional strength and weakness of middle leaders	
1	Novice T1	22	None	Good at PIE	Carries things fast
	Novice T2	23	None	Good Implementation	Understands complicated procedures
	Novice T3	23	None	Good at planning	Gives clear explanations
	Novice T4	25	None	Proactive	Delegates well
	Novice T5	27	None	Eager to serve	Not creative
4	Experienced T1	33	None	Gives clear guidelines	None
	Experienced T2	33	None	Listens to ideas	Not decisive
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	Good at job allocation	Not decisive
	Experienced T4	36	Catholic	Resilient	None
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Responsible	None
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Enjoys facing challenges, good observer, self-confident, listens to ideas, trusted by teachers	Not decisive
8	CHI PH	38	None	Promotes sustainable development of the curriculum, good at follow-up work	Not able to take the initiative to do a new project
9	DH	45	None	Good meta-cognition	Good at relationship building
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Good at raising questions, brave	Impatient, tries a new project at a speedy pace that makes panel members feel stressed
15	GS PH	50	None	Good subject knowledge, good administrative manager	Not good at persuading others
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Well-organized, careful	Needs to invite experts to hold workshops for the professional development of teachers
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Responsible, full of passion, love & care others, eager to serve	Perfectionistic
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Co-operative	Tries to be more open-minded

All novice teachers perceive middle leaders as having their professional strengths and eager to share them with others. Although they have room for improvement, they are nice and friendly. They have a good relationship with the teachers.

Summary

Middle leaders with a high level of religious faith want to act the way Jesus would. They are eager to serve first and lead second. To maintain the well-being of people and develop trust among followers is the calling from God (Wilkes, 1998). Besides, Jesus Christ demonstrates the philosophy of servant leadership through the act of personally washing the disciples' feet—an example of one who consciously chooses to serve the needs of others (New American Standard Bible, John 13).

Under a strong religious atmosphere, teachers in School Francis believe that all members are important regardless of their abilities and characters. They are eager to help the one in need to be Catholic middle leaders. They not only help the needy but also heal them, just like Jesus did. This is the reason all members of the school work in a team like brothers and sisters.

4.4.1.3 Relationship with and support to colleagues

4.4.1.3.1 Help teachers and staff improve student achievement?

Based on the IQ-13 Summary of School Francis, we notice that middle leaders and all experienced teachers are eager to help teachers and staff improve the academic achievement of pupils.

Table 4.18: Helps teachers and staff improve student achievement

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.13)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Helps teachers and staff improve student achievement
1	Novice T2	23	None	Learns from experienced teachers
	Novice T3	23	None	Co-plans meetings
	Novice T4	25	None	Provides mentors to help new teachers
4	Experienced T1	33	None	Conducts sharing at school after attending workshops
	Experienced T2	33	None	Does professional sharing during co-planning meetings
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Shares and invites new teachers to attend workshops
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Gives suggestions individually

8	CHI PH	38	None	Observes peer lesson
9	DH	45	None	Does individual conferencing
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Co-plans meetings
15	GS PH	50	None	Applies IT in learning & teaching
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Co-plans meetings
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Works with others
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Knowledge and skill support

Trust is critical in an organization. Trust in relationships among principals, middle leaders, and teachers is an essential ingredient to the development of the teacher learning community (Hallinger, Lee & Ko, 2014). American (Bryk et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Louis & Miles, 1990) and Australian schools (Mulford & Silins, 2009) share similar findings too. They all focus on the positive impact of organizational learning on school improvement.

4.4.1.3.2 Advice to new teachers

Based on the IQ-14 Summary of School Francis, we notice that middle leaders are considerate and nice to new teachers. They support new teachers with an effective coaching system, induction programs, and holistic teacher development practices.

Table 4.19: Form of new teacher support

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.14)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Form of new teacher support
1	Novice T1	22	None	Coaching
	Novice T2	23	None	Panel heads support & induction program
	Novice T3	23	None	Giving advice
	Novice T4	25	None	Providing suggestions for improvement
	Novice T5	27	None	Lesson study
4	Experienced T1	33	None	Coaching
	Experienced T2	33	None	Sharing teaching strategies
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	Sharing during co-planning meetings
	Experienced T4	36	Catholic	Holistic caring (teaching & dining)
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Guidance by middle leaders
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	A brief introduction of school
8	CHI PH	38	None	Coaching
9	DH	45	None	Asking them questions
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Sharing her unsuccessful cases
15	GS PH	50	None	Individual conferencing
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Coaching
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Professional sharing, giving reminders
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Friendly coaching

Relationship building is the key to facilitating mentorship at school. As a caring and comforting zone is maintained, teachers are nurtured well and will probably become the second echelon of the school.

Members' interests are the priority of the organization (Wilson, Van Vugt, & O'Gorman, 2008). Under servant leadership, difficulties are solved collectively through effective planning and tasks in a caring community. This is what Greenleaf (2002) believes as servant leadership.

4.4.1.3.3 Advice to veteran teachers in need of improvement

Based on the IQ-15 Summary of School Francis, we notice that middle leaders are humble and care about the feelings of veteran teachers in need of improvement. The advice given by middle leaders clearly shows that most of them can put themselves in other's shoes and provide assistance with empathy.

Table 4.20: Advice to veteran teachers in need of improvement

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.15)
Inter-view No.	Role	Age	Religion	Advice to veteran teachers in need of improvement
1	Novice T2	23	No	Help and work together with them
	Novice T4	25	No	Give gentle reminders
	Novice T5	27	No	Study for the lesson
4	Experienced T1	33	No	Provide solutions to solve problems
	Experienced T2	33	No	Follow-up after a lesson observation
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	Advise checking to mark
	Experienced T4	36	Catholic	Do individual conferencing
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Do individual conferencing
8	CHI PH	38	No	Cater to different types of experienced teachers with different approaches
9	DH	45	No	Be his / her critical friend
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Be humble
15	GS PH	50	No	Face and solve difficulties together
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Build a relationship and wear someone's shoes
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Praise the good things, then discuss and work together
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Give empathy & work together

Some middle leaders are good observers and provide support even before the veteran teachers ask for support from them. Moreover, some of them will conduct follow-ups to make sure the veteran teachers can perform adequately on their own.

4.4.1.4 Summary

All the interviewees shared positive working experiences in the semi-structured interviews. The leadership practices mainly related to the interviewees' roles and duties in School Francis; however, personalities and religious beliefs also had an important impact. Some of the middle leaders, such as the curriculum developer, the Chinese, and the English panel heads, endeavoured to embrace servant leadership in their instructional leadership practices.

Additionally, the panel head of the Religious Studies Department, a devout Catholic middle leader, believed that she had a holy responsibility to promote the loving doctrines of God. She took her role as a servant leader seriously and made every effort to nurture her panel members. She was eager to foster a caring school, as Greenleaf suggested in 1977.

To embed the core values of Catholic education in practice and guide teachers to act as Jesus would have, the principal supervised most of the Catholic middle leaders in the different departments, such as the curriculum developer and the English and religious studies panel heads. As a result, the virtues of love and service were rooted in the hearts of most of the middle leaders and panel members.

The leadership impact of the principals and middle leaders on the school was vital. They helped to foster a caring and loving school for all school stakeholders and promoted

leadership through pastoral care and servant leadership, based on the ideas of the Constitution
of the Incorporated Management Committee for Catholic Schools in Hong Kong (2016).

4.4.2 Middle leaders in School Teresa

To find out the perceptions of leadership practices and roles, data collected from the
semi-structured interviews about the dominant leadership styles, professional roles, and
professionalism (including principalship, vice-principalship, panel headship), and the
relationship with and support to colleagues are analyzed.

4.4.2.1 Dominant leadership styles

Most of the middle leaders are instructional leaders. They are eager to maintain the good
academic performance of pupils.

4.4.2.1.1 Leadership practices and roles

Based on the IQ-10 Summary of School Teresa, we noticed that leadership practices and roles
were again closely related, and most of the middle leaders were instructional leaders.

Similarly, the middle leaders of School Teresa emphasized learning and teaching (Domain 2
of the Performance Indicators) as a means to maintain the good academic performance of
pupils.

Table 4.21: Perceptions of leadership practices and roles

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.10)	
Inter-view No.	Role	Age	Religion	Leadership styles in practices and roles	
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Yes	Instructional Leadership
3	DH	52	Catholic	Yes	Both
6	ENG PH	38	No	Yes	Both
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Yes	Both
10	MATHEMATICS PH	35	Catholic	Yes	Mainly instructional Leadership
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Yes	Both
13	Novice T3	23	Catholic	Yes	Both
	Novice T5	28	No	Yes	Servant Leadership
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Yes	Servant Leadership
16	Experienced T1	33	No	Yes	Instructional Leadership
	Experienced T4	50	Catholic	Yes	Instructional Leadership
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Yes	Instructional Leadership

The curriculum leader strongly believed that instructional leadership is a good model for school improvement, with its strong academic focus and team-based leadership. As found in the literature (e.g., Hallinger, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a), instructional leaders stress the importance of defining the school mission, managing the instructional programs, and creating a positive school climate as the three core pillars of instructional leadership. Therefore, middle leaders tend to make followers work hard to achieve the mission and vision of schools. As some researchers suggested (e.g., Barth, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck et al., 1990), when all stakeholders are deeply involved in a school's development program, positive and supportive school culture is formed.

There is a need for the right person in the right post. For some posts, the middle leaders do not suit the post character and skill requirements, but other middle leaders will lend a hand if necessary. The discipline mistress performs her job duties well. She communicates with parents well and counsels pupils with

appropriate skills and methods. She is people-oriented and is eager to help pupils

with behavioural problems.

(Interview 17, The Principal, School Teresa)

The new principal, a devout Catholic, was full of passion. She was a people-oriented principal, trying hard to allocate jobs effectively in her school and aiming to provide more support for pupils to build a caring school. Nevertheless, the students' academic achievements had slumped recently. Most of the academic panel heads focused heavily on the curriculum and were also target-oriented. The curriculum developer, particularly, believed that improving student academic performance was the core business of schools, requiring collegiality and professional collaboration between middle leaders from different departments in schools (Ko, Hallinger & Walker, 2015).

By contrast, the discipline mistress focused on student support and the school ethos as her core concerns and responsibilities. According to the Constitution of the Incorporated Management Committee for Catholic Schools in Hong Kong, Catholic schools have a challenging mission: "Students nurtured to be the salt and yeast of society." All teachers are therefore expected to nurture pupils to be pioneers of Jesus Christ.

Middle leaders are student-oriented. Our students come from poor families, and

so our middle leaders place a major emphasis on nurturing them.

(Interview 13, Novice Teacher 3, School Teresa)

Under the umbrella of loving-kindness in Catholic schools, pupils can be nurtured in a favourable environment for the development of their souls, which eventually enables them to learn and grow (Chang et al., 2016). Middle leaders cared about the feelings of their members

in School Teresa. During the group interview, some novice teachers shared their experiences.

> *Some of the middle leaders with religious faith are nice. They do their best to*
> *respect their colleagues and care about their feelings. Usually, they will praise*
> *teachers for doing things wholeheartedly. In some cases, middle leaders will*
> *discuss the key issue or key problems. They make an effort to maintain a*
> *loving-kindness atmosphere in the school.*

(Interview 13, Novice Teacher 5, School Teresa)

The main objective of servant leadership is to build a more caring organization (Greenleaf, 2003). Novice teachers in School Teresa felt the loving-kindness in their school: that leaders wanted the panel members to improve themselves and become wiser and healthier (Greenleaf, 1977).

> *Panel heads are usually instructional leaders, concerned with learning and*
> *teaching. They do their best to manage the instructional programs well. Middle*
> *leaders in the administrative departments will focus on human resources ... Panel*
> *heads place great focus on academic issues and are mainly concerned with*
> *learning and teaching in the school.*

(Interview 16, Experienced Teacher 1, School Teresa)

It was clear that panel heads' major concern was supervising the curriculum, and they managed the instructional programs effectively. They monitored students' progress to ensure that students received appropriate instruction for their learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010

because they believed that effective schools do not take into account their pupils'

socioeconomic backgrounds but should be based on students' successful performance

(Lezotte 2001). Again, we noticed that leadership practices and roles were closely related.

> *I work in a team and always discuss issues with my vice panel head. As I am the*
>
> *panel head of GS, I need to listen and communicate well with my panel members*
>
> *so that I am able to guide and lead them effectively.*

(Interview 2, GS Panel Head, School Teresa)

The GS panel head listened responsibly to the ideas of her panel members in order to monitor

the instructional programs effectively. She was target-oriented and thus able to lead her

followers with a clear mission, driving the panel members in the right direction (Bamburg &

Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a, 1985b, 1986).

> *I am the vice-principal, and my role and duties definitely affect my leadership*
>
> *practices. My main role is to lead all the teachers to implement the school projects*
>
> *effectively and successfully; hence, I place special emphasis on people and team*
>
> *cooperation so as to carry out things effectively. The vision is very beautiful! I*
>
> *enjoy it a lot. It is the vocation assigned to me by God.*

(Interview 3, Vice-Principal, School Teresa)

The vice-principal was a devout Catholic and had served in School Teresa for over ten years.

Her key role was to lead all the middle leaders and teachers in order to implement the

school's projects effectively and successfully. She believed that her school role was a holy

and graceful vocation assigned by God; hence, as a servant leader, she did her best to foster

team-based development that would empower the teachers to wholeheartedly serve and help. As a result, the projects were implemented fruitfully and successfully, supporting yet another of Greenleaf's (2002) principles of servant leadership.

> *I attended an attachment program held by the Catholic Education Office, where I learned how to be a servant leader. Love and serving are vital in Catholic schools; hence, as an English panel head, I always take the initiative to implement new projects in the English curriculum and work closely with my core team members. I am eager to serve others and willing to take the hardest jobs.*
>
> **(Interview 6, English Panel Head, School Teresa)**

Despite not being a Catholic middle leader, the English panel head successfully embraced servant leadership practices in her supervision of the instructional programs. Her leadership style was affected by the ideas that she was exposed to during the attachment program held by the Catholic Education Office a year previously, which promoted both leadership practices and the loving doctrines of God. She was a potentially promising Catholic middle leader for the coming future; hence, the attachment program for middle leaders was a wonderful way to nurture servant leaders for Catholic schools.

> *Cooperation between teachers is important. As a curriculum leader, I need to lead others and listen to them too. We do things as a team and choose the best ideas of the panel when we implement new projects. Besides, listening to panel members' feedback is vital for the school's sustainable development ... I think my leadership style and role are related. My role is mainly about people. I want teachers to provide ideas before we implement activities. I care about teaching and learning,*

and so I give advice to panel heads. They usually provide feedback after the activities, and I use this information to make further improvements. Since I am a curriculum leader, I need to provide sufficient and appropriate teaching support or resources from outside for all the teachers to help them teach effectively.

(Interview 7, Curriculum Developer, School Teresa)

The main role of the curriculum leader in School Teresa was to maintain the sustainable development of both teaching and leadership in the school. Hence, effective connections between academic panel heads were vital, and she was both people and target-oriented.

Effective schools foster students' successful performance (Lezotte, 2001). Although the curriculum developer was inexperienced, she worked hard to coordinate the curricula, monitor students' learning outcomes, and promote a positive school climate. Additionally, she promoted teacher development, deeming professional staff development necessary for nurturing a professional learning community (Li, Hallinger & Ko, 2016).

The curriculum developer strongly believed that servant leadership positively affected the knowledge-sharing culture of the organization (Song, Park & Kang, 2015). Hence, it was important to increase the synergy between servant and instructional leadership in order to greatly improve the sustainable development of learning and teaching in the school. Song, Park, and Kang (2015) suggested that servant leaders are needed to successfully create the knowledge-sharing culture in organizations that is vital for all schools.

To some extent, my leadership practices are related to my duties. When I have to finish something urgently, I put pressure on my panel members to make them

finish the tasks and meet the deadlines. It is target-oriented. Conversely, I care about the needs and feelings of members when the tasks are not urgent and are people-oriented in these cases. For example, if a teacher does not perform properly during lesson observations, I will discuss the issue with the teacher and find out the main difficulties. Then, I will make suggestions and work closely with them. As I am a Catholic middle leader, it is my responsibility to serve and help my panel members.

(Interview 10, Mathematics Panel Head, School Teresa)

The mathematics panel head was mainly target-oriented, and her leadership practices related to her duties. Supervision of the curriculum and evaluation were her main concerns for the mathematics panel. As a result, most of the time, her panel members were instructed to finish panel documents, examination papers, and similar. She monitored them strictly to ensure that everyone met their deadlines, believing that the key to successful leadership is the efficacy of leaders to ensure the internal accountability of schools (Halverson et al., 2007).

To a large extent, my role and duties relate to my leadership practices. The Chinese focus inspection in November was a good example. In order to encourage all the Chinese panel members to cooperate and prepare for the focus inspection, I arranged teachers into different workgroups to discuss the lesson plans and make necessary improvements. I was both target- and people-oriented on that occasion. Learning and teaching are the key focus of my job. However, in order to make everything run smoothly, I need to oversee the workload of every teacher. At that time, I found that some teachers were overloaded and so I discussed this with the principal and arranged for teacher assistants to help the teachers with the

lunch duties. I also helped another workgroup leader. I care about my people's

feelings and health and serve them with Jesus' love.

(Interview 12, Chinese Panel Head, School Teresa)

The Chinese panel heads believed that the key to instructional leadership is the efficacy of leaders to ensure the internal accountability of schools and meet the necessary external accountability standards (Halverson et al., 2007); hence, she prepared thoroughly for the Chinese focus inspection. Since she was a devout Christian, she aimed to improve the synergy between servant and instructional leadership in her Chinese panel to ensure effective external accountability. She helped the panel members to prepare and practice and reallocated the duties of staff effectively to create spaces for teachers to work. Gracefully, it is suggested to sustain this synergy after the external accountability review.

I am the panel head for Religious Studies. To a very large extent, my role is

related to my leadership practices. In other words, I am one of the key holy figures

in my Catholic school. It is my responsibility to serve others in the school because

I am one of the servant leaders assigned by God. It is my holy vocation, and so I

must do my best to build a caring school … I have a servant role in different

religious projects because I am a Catholic teacher, as well as the panel head of

Religious Studies. When the projects produce fruitful results, I convey my sincere

gratitude to all my panel members through WhatsApp messages … I believe that

teamwork, trust, and love are vital. They are the main ingredients in Catholic

schools. I remember that one of the core members wholeheartedly helped me to do

the data collection for the last project. I am fair and just to everyone, like Jesus

Christ.

(Interview 14, RS Panel Head, School Teresa)

The panel head of the Religious Studies position is a graceful and holy vocation. The main task of which is to promote love and service. Hence, her role-related strongly to her daily leadership practices.

She claimed to be fair and just to everyone, like Jesus Christ. Consequently, teachers were eager to support her in many loving projects, and her panel members trusted her. Maintaining the wellbeing of others and developing trust between stakeholders are considered to be God's calling on a servant leader's life (Wilkes, 1998). Leaders practising servant leadership can lead people in organizations to achieve their missions by helping them to establish the organizational trust that holds everyone in those organizations together (Joseph & Winston, 2005).

4.4.2.2 Professional roles and professionalism

4.4.2.2.1Curriculum leaders and administrative leaders

A very significant proportion of the middle leaders are also curriculum leaders, which implies that the school has made academic performance its main focus.

Table 4.22: Curriculum leaders and administrative leaders

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.2)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Curriculum leaders and administrative leaders
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Curriculum leaders
3	DH	52	Catholic	Administrative leaders
6	ENG PH	38	No	Curriculum leaders
7	CD	42	Catholic	Curriculum leaders
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Curriculum leaders
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Curriculum leaders
13	Novice T2	23	No	Curriculum leaders
	Novice T5	28	No	Administrative leaders
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Administrative leaders
16	Experienced	33	No	Both
	T1	34	Christian	Curriculum leaders

	Experienced T2			
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Followed the past principals; currently, curriculum leaders

Most of the panel heads place significant emphasis on managing learning and teaching performance. They manage instructional programming and ensure people are communicating to create a positive school climate that promotes the teachers' professional development.

4.4.2.2.2 Middle leaders' greatest professional strengths and weaknesses

All the middle leaders in School Teresa are over 35. Some of them are not proactive, lack confidence, and have insufficient IT skills. However, they have good subject knowledge and are experts in their panels. Some enjoy facing challenges, while many have a passion for leadership and for teaching. As these findings show, the middle leaders have room for improvement, but their strengths are vital to effectively fulfilling their roles as Catholic school middle leaders.

Table 4.23: Middle leaders' professional strengths and weaknesses

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.12)	
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Middle leaders' professional strengths and weaknesses	
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Communication	Stubborn
3	DH	52	Catholic	Likes to face challenges; strong religious faith	Not careful sometimes
6	ENG PH	38	No	Passion for teaching	Insufficient IT skills
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Good subject knowledge	Lack of confidence sometimes
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Brave and likes to face	Too hasty

					challenges	
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Proactive; many new ideas; good at teaching	Lack of confidence in approaching teachers with negative mindsets
13	Novice T1	22	No	Good at teaching	Should work with the times
	Novice T2	23	Catholic	Good subject knowledge	Poor communication with other department heads
	Novice T3	23	Catholic	Good subject knowledge	Poor IT skills
	Novice T4	24	Catholic	Good subject knowledge	Not proactive
	Novice T5	28	No	Good administrative skills	Poor planning and implementation skills
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Good at leadership and management; good time management skills; considerate; strong religious faith	Experiences bouts of depression but states that she will heal herself by praying to God and reading books about mental and spiritual health
16	Experienced T1	33	No	Good subject knowledge	Poor administrative skills
	Experienced T2	34	Christian	Good subject knowledge	Insufficient communication with other department heads
	Experienced T3	45	Christian	Good resilience skills	Not familiar with other departments' work
	Experienced T4	50	Catholic	Good subject knowledge	Not familiar with other departments' work; needs job rotation
	Experienced T5	55	Catholic	Good subject knowledge	Only focuses on own job duties; should connect more with other departments

17	Principal	48	Catholic	Good relationship among teachers; good instructor	Too hasty

Our results reveal that all of the panel heads have good subject knowledge and a passion for education, making them invaluable to School Teresa. For example, the Chinese panel head has a deep religious faith and a passion for education. She tries her best to develop the Chinese department but struggles to confront other teachers who have negative mindsets. She reports that she is working on improving this skill set. The new principal of School Teresa makes sure to observe the middle leaders' performance, discovering that they are all skilled in supporting home–school cooperation.

4.4.2.3 Relationship with and support to colleagues

4.4.2.3.1 Support teachers and staff in improving student achievement

The middle leaders are eager to help teachers and staff improve student achievement. They mainly do this through daily collaborative lesson planning meetings.

Table 4.24: Help teachers and staff improve student achievement

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.13)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Help teachers and staff improve student achievement
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Collaborative meetings
3	DH	52	Catholic	Modelling
6	ENG PH	38	No	Panel meetings; teacher development days
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Invite teachers to attend workshops
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Guide them in e-learning
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Share teaching strategies
13	Novice T1	22	No	Co-plan meetings
	Novice T5	23	Catholic	Share ideas in panel meetings
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Share ideas
16	Experienced	33	No	Level coordinators support teachers and

	T1			staff
	Experienced T3	45	Christian	Share ideas in panel meetings
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Panel heads share teaching and learning materials and ideas

School Teresa's middle leaders cite teacher development as an essential practice as it ultimately helps pupils improve their academic performance. Specifically, the middle leaders often share their ideas in co-planning meetings, invite teachers to attend related workshops, and conduct individual conferences with teachers to foster their teaching and counselling capabilities.

4.4.2.3.2 Advice to new teachers

A variety of methods are applied to help new teachers to gain support via mentors, their department panel heads, and the experienced teachers.

Table 4.25: Form of new teacher support

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.14)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Form of new teacher support
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Discuss with them in a friendly way
3	DH	52	Catholic	Remind them of the school's daily practices
6	ENG PH	38	No	Invite them to raise questions
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Mentoring and individual conferences
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Professional sharing about teaching and learning
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Show them examples of pupils' work to guide them in marking
13	Novice T1	22	No	Quality feedback from panel heads
	Novice T2	23	No	A detailed handbook
	Novice T3	23	Catholic	Mentoring
	Novice T4	24	Catholic	Support from panel heads
	Novice T5	28	No	Share advice from experienced

				teachers
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Share the core values of a Catholic education
16	Experienced T1	33	No	Mentoring
	Experienced T2	34	Christian	Support panel heads
	Experienced T3	45	Christian	Mentoring new teachers
	Experienced T4	50	Catholic	Observing lessons
	Experienced T5	55	Catholic	All experienced teachers are eager to help
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Introduction program by DH

All of the novice teachers report perceiving the middle leaders as being helpful and nice. For example, they show them how to mark pupils' work and conduct lessons properly and effectively. Further, the interviewees feel that home–school cooperation is vital. They mention that the experienced teachers offer guidance on how to effectively communicate with parents. The maths department panel head states that providing a caring environment for new teachers is essential because it empowers them and improves their self-confidence.

4.4.2.3.3 Middle leaders' relationship with veteran teachers requires improvement

The results reveal that the middle leaders' collaboration with the veteran teachers needs improvement. In terms of the school's servant leadership style, the interviewees state that helping the needy, healing them, and listening to them are extremely important actions.

Table 4.26: Advice to veteran teachers needs improvement

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.15)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Advice to veteran teachers needs improvement
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Sharing teaching strategies
3	DH	52	Catholic	Discuss with them
6	ENG PH	38	No	Discuss and share useful teaching and

				learning resources
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Help them and work together
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Listen to them and discuss solutions with them
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Work with them
13	Novice T4	24	Catholic	Share new IT skills with them
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Discuss with them and share the school mission with them
16	Experienced T1	33	No	Run teacher development days
	Experienced T2	34	Christian	Run positive individual conferences
	Experienced T3	45	Christian	Arrange workshops
	Experienced T4	50	Catholic	Invite veteran teachers to attend workshops
	Experienced T5	55	Catholic	Invite veteran teachers to attend workshops
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Provide peer support

We find that the middle leaders need to be more concerned with the veteran teachers' needs. Most of the veteran teachers are not up to date with their IT skills and are not familiar with key elements in the new curriculum, such as updates on STEM learning. The panel heads are patient with them and try their best to discuss and work with them. Many of the veteran teachers are afraid of changes when they lack clear explanation by the principal or the middle leaders. Hence, the curriculum developer of School Teresa disseminates a detailed explanation of any changes to all personnel to make sure everyone understands the change and the likely results of said change.

At School Teresa, religious faith is closely related to leadership practices. It plays a very important part in school faith as the school has a strong religious atmosphere, and most of the Catholic teachers have high levels of faith, hope, and love that contribute to the school's

caring community. Overall, this caring and understanding of the teachers' needs is vital. It ensures that everyone is connected and in communication.

In servant leadership, service comes first, and leadership comes second. After attending middle leader training organized by the Diocese of Hong Kong, the English department panel head developed a strong belief that serving others was much more important than leading others. She explains that one of the doctrines of the Catholic church emphasizes that everyone should be the salt and light of the world; therefore, leaders in any field can be servants. For example, she is pioneering several new projects that have to do with English teaching and learning as well as working together with her panel members throughout the design process. In another example, she states that if she were the discipline mistress, she would give herself the most challenging duty at the school so that she could experience and understand the hardship that different morning or recess duties entail.

Some researchers suggest that service comes from the leaders, not from the followers (e.g., Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). In the umbrella concept of loving-kindness, everyone is important and can make decisions collaboratively. In this way, people are supported by the favourable development of their souls (Chang et al., 2016). Leaders with strong religious faith are eager to serve and build more caring organizations. For example, the English panel head points out that her belief affects her leadership style and thus affecting how she leads the English panel. Through her professional training in the EDB and the Diocese of Hong Kong, she has learnt that serving others is vital.

4.4.2.4 Summary

To a large extent, the interviewees' leadership styles and responsibilities were closely related. Some of the middle leaders were wholehearted servant leaders who wanted everyone to grow sustainably and finally develop "from half to whole," as mentioned by Greenleaf in 1977. However, this school's academic achievement had recently slumped slightly. Most of the panel heads and the curriculum developer emphasized academic performance and functioned mainly as instructional or target-oriented leaders. As people are the most precious assets, the devout Catholic and Christian leaders and middle leaders did their best to provide pastoral care to pupils and nurture inexperienced middle leaders and teachers to build caring schools, as suggested by Greenleaf (1977).

4.5   The impact of religious faith on leadership styles and practices

Research question 3: How do leaders with or without religious faith differ in their

leadership practices?

To answer the third research question, the data collected in the semi-structured interviews from the two Catholic schools are analyzed.

4.5.1 Middle leaders in School Francis

To find out the impact of religious faith on leadership styles and practices, data collected from the semi-structured interviews about school mission and vision, perceptions on people-oriented and task-based leadership practices, and religious atmosphere are analyzed.

4.5.1.1 School mission and vision

The school mission and vision of School Francis are to provide all-rounded development of both pupils and teachers in a caring school. Most of the middle leaders are servant leaders,

and their religious faith affects their leadership styles and practices to a great extent.

4.5.1.1.1 Religious faith affects leadership styles and practices

Data were collected from three tiers of teachers, including the leadership level, the middle

leadership level, and the teachers in School Francis.

Based on the IQ-3 Summary of School Francis, we observed that religious faith affects

leadership styles and practices to a great extent. Servant leaders are eager to provide a caring

school for all stakeholders at schools and a nurturing environment that leads students to

become servant leaders in the future. It is one of the great aims of Greenleaf's servant

leadership (1977).

Table 4.27: Perceptions of the effects of religious faith on leadership styles &
practices

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.3)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Religious faith, leadership styles and practices
1	Novice T1	22	No	Large
	Novice T2	23	No	A little
	Novice T4	25	No	Some
4	Experienced T1	33	No	Some
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Large
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Large
8	CHI PH	38	No	Large
9	DH	45	No	Large
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Some
15	GS PH	50	No	Certain
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Large
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Large
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Large

Middle leaders in School Francis with religious faith were nice and considerate consistently.

Servant leadership is a social good for the whole school as through team-based development

would. It fosters the efficacy of the team members with wholehearted serving. Teachers in

School Francis perceive their loving-kindness, are eager to help, and even work together and

share ideas wholeheartedly.

> *Middle leaders with religious faith are people-oriented. They care about people*
> *and try their best to develop them. Non-religious teachers are strongly affected by*
> *the leadership practices of religious teachers.*
>
> **(Interview 20, The principal, School Francis)**

Catholic education emphasizes loving-kindness and serving others. Hence, a caring atmosphere is experienced at school. Middle leaders with religious faith put forth their strength to nurture and make panel members grow by equipping them. They are servant leaders and develop a servant role to facilitate a successful change in the organisation (Greenleaf, 1970; Wilkes, 1998).

> *Middle leaders with religious backgrounds are willing to share a bigger portion of*
> *the workload. They will not overburden their followers. In light of the religious*
> *atmosphere, most of the non-religious middle leaders are nice and helpful too.*
>
> **(Interview 1, Novice Teacher 1, School Francis)**

The religious and loving care atmosphere is strong in School Francis. Middle leaders with religious faith care about the workload of teachers and take care of them wholeheartedly. They often put others' needs first.

> *Middle leaders with religious backgrounds are people-oriented. They are able to*
> *wear followers' shoes and make rearrangement of some job allocation if*
> *necessary.*
>
> **(Interview 1, Novice Teacher 4, School Francis)**

Middle leaders with religious faith use a people-oriented approach to drive people to serve and contribute to the whole. Consequently, all stakeholders grow personally, professionally, and spiritually (Joseph & Winston, 2005).

> *Middle leaders with religious faith are more considerate than others. They understand your needs and try their best to work with you. They love and care for their followers.*
>
> *(Interview 4, Experienced Teachers, School Francis)*

Middle leaders with religious faith live with the love and serving doctrines of God. They are servant leaders and try their best to make a caring school for everyone and to understand your needs.

> *Redistributing jobs among teachers, while some of them are attending workshops outside was an example. I am a people-oriented and student-oriented Catholic middle leader. I try to balance the workload as well as the learning effectiveness of students. I am willing to assign more time to the proper distribution of jobs among teachers. Hence, I did not arrange all class teachers to look after the students and teach their classes the whole day. I reallocated the lesson among both class teachers and non-class teachers. Therefore, pupils learnt effectively and meaningfully.*
>
> *(Interview 5, Curriculum Developer, PSMCD, School Francis)*

The curriculum developer is a devout Catholic. She is both people-oriented and student-oriented. Her religious faith guides her to promote God's loving doctrines through a considerate and fair allocation of duties among teachers and to equip pupils well with a

quality learning trajectory.

> *I studied in a Christian school and was strongly affected by Jesus Christ. I had*
> *some unhappy experiences when working with my Chinese panel members. After*
> *reading the Bible, I discovered that I needed to serve and love my followers. I try*
> *to think positively and try my best to solve problems peacefully.*
>
> *(Interview 8, Chinese Panel Head, School Francis)*

Although the Chinese Panel Head is non-religious, she studied in a Christian school and loved reading the Bible, especially when she is unhappy. The Holy Words guide her to be a people-oriented middle leader. Jesus said whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (New American Standard Bible, Mark 10:43). Besides, the Chinese Panel Head's beliefs help her to think positively and tackle difficulties peacefully.

> *Trust among members of a community is important. I usually take the initiative in*
> *all projects and work together with my panel members. I think a good leader*
> *should not just assign work and monitor the progress only but to work with his*
> *members and understand their needs.*
>
> *(Interview 9, Vice-Principal, School Francis)*

Trust is highly important in any organization. It is important to the development of a learning community among teachers (Hallinger, Lee & Ko, 2014). American (Bryk et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Louis & Miles, 1990) and Australian schools (Mulford & Silins, 2009) share similar findings—there is a positive impact of organizational learning in school improvement.

I have worked in Catholic schools for seven years. I am sure that my religious

faith affects my leadership practices. I communicate well with my maths panel

members and care about their feelings. When there are some arguments over the

content of the exam paper, I will try to apply my professional knowledge to discuss

with my panel members and care about their feelings as well.

(Interview 11, Maths Panel Head, School Francis)

The Maths Panel Head is a devout Catholic middle leader. She believes that servant leaders help others whole-heartedly (Greenleaf, 2003). She also has a strong commitment to the growth of people and community building, which are the crucial characteristics of a servant-leader (Spear, 2003). She cares about the feelings of her panel members and is eager to share her professional knowledge with them. She wants them to grow and become smarter than before. This is what Greenleaf wanted a leader to do in the organization.

Middle leaders with religious faith are different from leaders without religious

faith. The former are people-oriented and are more concerned over the well-being

of their panel members.

(Interview 15, GS Panel Head, School Francis)

The GS Panel Head observed that middle leaders with religious faith are people-oriented. With the aim of securing the well-being and self-actualization of their panel members in an organization, servant leaders are eager to lead (Greenleaf, 1977).

I am a Christian, and I went to church when I was a child. I am an English panel

head at school. Everything that I do is affected by my belief. I monitor learning

and teaching closely and make sure everyone performs properly. When I observe,

or when someone informs me that teachers are encountering difficulties, I will help and heal them at the same time. For example, there is a deadline for exam paper submission. When someone has a special need, I will make rearrangement as I am people-oriented.

(Interview 18, English Panel Head, School Francis)

The English Panel Head is a devout Christian. She shows God's loving doctrines in her leadership practices. She cares about her panel members and is eager to heal them (Spear, 2003) and solve their difficulties. She is a people-oriented middle leader.

There is absolutely an impact of religious faith on the leadership styles and practices. All Catholics are deeply affected by their religious faith. I will make meta-cognition and think twice in a critical moment. I will do what Jesus will do. Then, when I calm down, I will appreciate the differences in everyone. Hence, I change my attitudes towards people. I am eager to be a humble servant leader in my life. Catholic teachers in School Francis have a strong sense of faith, hope, and love. Other teachers are strongly affected by them. They are people-oriented. Empathy is vital to the community. As servants, we need to act what Jesus would act.

(Interview 19, RS Panel Head, School Francis)

The RS panel head is a humble servant leader with a strong sense of faith, hope, and love. Her main objective is to build a more caring organization (Greenleaf, 1977) and to stimulate thoughts that lend to building an enviable organization. In addition, it brings transformative experiences to the realm of the ordinary in school too. It is the vision of Catholic education

where sheep stay with their shepherds happily in the Kingdom of God (Song, 2015). Consequently, it is graceful to invite servant leaders in organizations to foster the professional knowledge-sharing culture by following the ten characteristics of good shepherds (Greenleaf, 1970; Spear, 1995, 1996 & 2003).

4.5.1.2 Perceptions of people-oriented and task-based leadership practices

4.5.1.2.1 People-oriented leadership style (servant leadership) and task-oriented leadership style (instructional leadership)

Based on the IQ-5 Summary of School Francis, we notice that regardless of whether the interviewee is a novice or an experienced teacher, he or she tends to perceive the middle leaders in School Francis being people-oriented. Besides, there is a significant proportion of middle leaders who have religious faith, and so School Francis is a place where servant leadership is predominant.

Table 4.28: People-oriented leadership style and task-oriented leadership style

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.5)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	People-oriented leadership style and task-oriented leadership style
1	Novice T1	22	No	People-oriented
	Novice T2	23	No	Both
	Novice T3	23	No	Both
	Novice T4	25	No	People-oriented
	Novice T5	27	No	Task-oriented
4	Experienced T1	33	No	Both
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	People-oriented
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Both
8	CHI PH	38	No	People-oriented
9	DH	45	No	People-oriented
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Both
15	GS PH	50	No	Both
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	People-oriented
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	People-oriented
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Both

Interestingly, interviewees who have no religion did not tend to perceive middle leaders as more task-oriented than their peers with a religious background. One of the missions and visions of Catholic schools is to promote leadership through pastoral care. Hence, principals in Catholic schools put forth their strength to nurture a caring school.

From the findings of interview question 5, there was a significant proportion of novice and experienced teachers in School Francis who perceived middle leaders as people-oriented. Although tasks were important with deadlines, middle leaders did provide support and worked together with the teachers who were facing difficulties to finish their tasks. For example, the Chinese panel of School Francis showed the characteristics of a caring community.

> *Most of the middle leaders are people-oriented. They arrange task for you according to your ability. It is the 2nd year in this school. I can feel that my workload in the first year is less heavy than the second year. Besides, middle leaders are smart. They give you a hand when they find that you need support.*
>
> *(Interview 1, Novice teacher 4 of School Francis)*

Middle leaders in School Francis are mainly people-oriented. They know their panel members well. They are patient and care about your feeling. It seems that the loving-kindness atmosphere affects the leadership style of middle leaders too.

4.5.1.3 Religious atmosphere

Both teachers and students are raised in religious atmosphere. Middle leaders nurture stakeholders of school wholeheartedly. Most of them are eager to help and serve in the loving

organization.

4.5.1.3.1 Work experience with middle leaders

Based on the IQ-1 Summary of School Francis, we notice that all the interviewees share

happy work experience with the middle leaders, no matter what kind of teachers they are

(novice or experienced). Also, regardless of whether teachers have a religion or not, they can

perceive they are working together in a caring and loving school where the members are

helpful and take good care of one another.

Table 4.29: Work experience with middle leaders

Middle leaders in School Francis				(Interview question no.1)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Work experience of or with middle leaders
1	Novice T1	22	None	Middle leaders are helpful
	Novice T2	23	None	Middle leaders are proactive & helpful
	Novice T3	23	None	They give instructions & care about new teachers
	Novice T4	25	None	Middle leaders are responsible & nice
	Novice T5	27	None	Middle leaders are eager to serve & help others
4	Experienced T1	33	None	Cooperates well with middle leaders
	Experienced T2	33	None	Middle leaders listen & share ideas
	Experienced T3	34	Catholic	Enjoys working with middle leaders
	Experienced T4	36	Catholic	Middle are leaders are supportive
	Experienced T5	40	Catholic	Middle leaders exchange ideas, give professional support
5	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Sharing among them is great
8	CHI PH	38	None	Happy to work with them
9	DH	45	None	Enjoys sharing ideas with them
11	MATH PH	30	Catholic	Enjoys co-planning meetings
15	GS PH	50	None	Middle leaders work together
18	ENG PH	42	Christian	Middle leaders work in a caring team
19	RS PH	46	Catholic	Middle leaders sow the seed of love & God guides us
20	Principal	55	Catholic	Middle leaders enjoy teamwork

Catholic schools have established a reputation for quality education for over 170 years. Pupils

who receive pastoral care from teachers perform well academically and nonacademically.

Hence, servant leaders nurture novice teachers wholeheartedly. Consequently, the novice

teachers nurture their pupils properly too. Finally, a pastoral care school is formed.

The principal's leadership plays a vital part in the leadership style of middle leaders. The

deputy head of School Teresa (Interview 3) shared that her roles and duties affect her leadership style. Under the leadership of the new principal, the deputy head has taken up more roles in planning and implementing important projects. She is no longer following the old principal's instructions and instructs teachers to finish their tasks but has started to serve and lead her colleagues. As a result, everyone shares a sense of achievement.

All interviewees shared positive working experiences in School Francis. However, these experiences were heavily affected by religious faith and the religious atmosphere. Most of the leaders shared the same belief to serve the needs of others first. Most of the middle leaders have both academic and administrative duties. For example, the panel head of General Studies is in charge of the Parent-Teacher Association and an academic department. The religious atmosphere there is secure. Not only do Catholic middle leaders follow the doctrine of God, but so do most of the non-religious middle leaders. To put the core values into practice and guide teachers to act the way Jesus would, the principal arranges most of the Catholic middle leaders into different departments. As a result, the virtues of love and service are deeply rooted in the hearts of most of the middle leaders.

The panel head of Religious Studies of School Francis declared that her leading role was to sow the seeds of loving-kindness and to serve others through the school-based curriculum and activities. She studies (Interview 19, the panel head of Religious Studies, School Faith) the Bible and follows the doctrines of God. She always shares that Religious Studies is about religious faith, God, and the Bible. As a Catholic and a panel head, she studies the Bible every day and relies on God for guidance. The words of God affect her greatly. She can feel the power of faith, hope, and love in her soul. Hence, she is eager to serve first. She is a servant leader. Besides, she trusts her panel members, and they trust her. Sometimes when there is room for improvement in some activities or curriculum design, they will make

meta-cognition and make progress gradually. She firmly believes that leadership practices are related to the roles and duties of middle leaders in the school.

> *Middle leader coaches take care of novice teachers, whole-heartedly and smartly. They are kind and are eager to help teachers assimilate into a new environment. They remind you before anything you will go wrong. They are ready for help and give advice to novice teachers. They enable everyone to learn and grow happily. They are servant leaders.*
>
> ***(Interview 1, Novice teachers of School Francis)***

Most leaders in School Francis are people-oriented. They care, support, and nurture people. School performance at its best results in a synergy between servant leadership and instructional leadership can be very productive. As well, a synergy between student support (Domain 3 of Performance Indicators) as well as learning and teaching (Domain 2 of Performance Indicators) may explain the popularity of Catholic schools better, such as School Francis.

4.5.1.4 Summary

It is important to invite devout Catholics and Christians to be middle leaders. However, it is more important and urgent to nurture potential middle leaders or teachers to attend religious courses so as to promote Catholic beliefs among teachers in Catholic schools. Servant leaders do not force their followers to fulfil goals but persuade them to take proactive action, reconceptualize problems, and search for the best solution (Spears, 2003).

All participants in School Francis shared positive working experiences during the semi-structured interviews. The leadership practices are closely related to roles and duties in schools. Some of the middle leaders in School Francis, such as the curriculum developer and the Chinese and English panel heads, always embraced servant leadership in their instructional leadership practices. The leadership impact of the principals and middle leaders on schools is vital. They help make the school caring and loving for all.

It is important to invite devout Catholics or Christians to be the middle leaders. However, it is more critical to nurture potential middle leaders or teachers to attend courses on religious doctrine to promote Catholic beliefs among teachers in Catholic schools.

4.5.2 Middle leaders in School Teresa

To find out the impact of religious faith on leadership styles and practices, data collected from the semi-structured interviews about school mission and vision, perceptions on people-oriented and task-based leadership practices, and religious atmosphere are analyzed.

4.5.2.1 School mission and vision

The school mission and vision of School Teresa are to love and serve others. They have put heavy emphasis on academic performance recently. Most of the middle leaders are instructional leaders.

4.5.2.1.1 Religious faith affects leadership styles and practices

Based on the IQ-3 Summary of School Teresa, we notice that religious faith affects leadership styles and practices to some extent.

Table 4.30: Perceptions of effects of religious faith on leadership styles & practices

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.3)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Religious, leadership styles and practices
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Certain
3	DH	52	Catholic	Large
6	ENG PH	38	No	Some
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Certain
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Large
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Large
13	Novice T1	22	No	A little
	Novice T5	28	No	Large
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Large
16	Experienced T3	45	Christian	Depends on the level of the religious faith of the middle leaders
	Experienced T4	50	Catholic	Some
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Certain

The religious faith of middle leaders affects their leadership styles and practices significantly. It seems that middle leader training by the Diocese of Hong Kong (Catholic Education Office) is very effective and fruitful. The main target of every Catholic school is to create a caring environment for all school stakeholders through servant leadership. For example, the English Panel Head is deeply influenced by concepts of servant leadership and puts these concepts into practice.

> *The religious atmosphere is not very strong here. Middle leaders in the administrative domain with religious faith lead differently compared to non-religious middle leaders. The former love and care about teachers. However, most middle leaders in the academic domain are more target-oriented.*
>
> *(Interview 17, Principal, School Teresa)*

This quotation shows how leaders with religious faith are eager to provide a caring environment for their panel members, which is the key goal of servant leaders (Greenleaf,

1997). However, the religious atmosphere is not so strong. The loving doctrines of God are vital and need to be further promoted by the principal and the religious department. Currently, most of the middle leaders are still focused on supervising and monitoring instructional programs. In other words, they are target-oriented.

> *I do not know the religious belief of the middle leaders. I contact non-religious teachers only. I am not familiar with other middle leaders. Most of the teachers are student-centred. We share the same belief, too.*
>
> *(Interview 13, Novice Teacher 1, School Teresa)*

The commentary from Novice Teacher 1 indicates that there is insufficient connection or communication among different departments in the school. The professional collaboration of middle leaders from different departments of schools is essential to any school's success. Therefore, effective communication and cooperation should be emphasized (Ko, Hallinger & Walker, 2015).

> *I always contact middle leaders with religious faith. They love and care about others. Some middle leaders without religious faith are affected by the religious atmosphere in the school. They will suggest pupils with behaviour problems to pray to God and ask for peace from Him.*
>
> *(Interview 13, Novice Teacher 5, group interview, School Teresa)*

Middle teachers with religious faith put a focus on student support. Their leadership practices affect other teachers, including those without religious faith, in their approach to counselling pupils. Praying to God relieves the pressures that one feels in daily life and provides peace to face and solve problems.

Middle leaders with strong religious faith affect teachers positively.

(Interview 16, Experienced Teacher 1, School Teresa)

Caring for others and having the more able serving, the less able comprise the vision of Robert Greenleaf (1972). Middle leaders with strong religious faith affect people positively and help them to grow in a caring organization. Greenleaf voiced the urgent need for servant leaders as there are a lot of "half people" to be nurtured to become whole (Greenleaf, 1977).

To a certain extent, middle leaders with strong religious faith lead differently.
They always infuse the core values of Catholic education in school projects.

(Interview 16, Experienced Teacher 4, group interview, School Teresa)

Middle leaders with strong religious faith are concerned over the growth of those around them. They see it as their responsibility to nurture others with God's loving doctrines, including the core values of Catholic education.

I am a servant leader like Jesus Christ. I try to solve problems peacefully with my
panel members. For example, when there are some arguments over some ideas in
exam papers, I will listen to them patiently and give suggestions that meet the
needs of different parties.

(Interview 2, GS Panel Head, School Teresa)

Servant leaders are peaceful problem solvers. They respect and care about people around them as they are eager to provide a positive and caring organization for everyone. People like to work with them.

Middle leaders with religious faith are happy guys and eager to tackle difficulties because they strongly believe that God will guide and support them. They always put themselves in other people's shoes and try to understand their followers' difficulties.

(Interview 3, Vice Principal, School Teresa)

God lives in the heart of servant leaders, and so they understand people. They are confident in God to guide them the way they need to go. They have a challenging mission too. They have to nurture people to be the salt and yeast of the earth (Matthew 5:13).

I have attended the middle leader attachment course held by the Diocese of Hong Kong and have learnt what servant leadership is. It tells us to serve others comes first, lead others second. Hence, servant leadership is my core belief in leading others, even though I am a non-religious leader. My role duties and my belief play a vital part in my leadership. I like to work with my panel members and am eager to take the initiative in everything, even the hardest job.

(Interview 6, English Panel Head, School Teresa)

The English panel is a potential Catholic middle leader, as she follows the role of servant leaders. She strives to put others' needs first and desires to serve rather than to be served. This attitude can be partially attributed to the impact of the middle leader attachment course held by the Catholic Education Office.

Teamwork is vital. I often work with the panel heads and teachers. I guide and nurture them. We share our experiences together.

(Interview 7, curriculum developer, School Teresa)

The curriculum developer is a devout Catholic. According to the doctrines of the Catholic Education Office, middle leaders in Catholic Schools are expected to lead the school with servant leadership that holds serving others as the highest priority. It is the responsibility of servant leaders to align with the core values of Catholic education in the school-based learning curriculum.

There is a strong relationship between leadership and the belief of the panel heads. I am a Catholic, and so I should be humble and listen to others first. I always invite the members of the Maths panel to share ideas to foster further development of both the people and the Maths department. Besides, when we encounter difficulties, we are so brave to face it as we know that we share the same belief. It is made up of faith, hope, and love.

(Interview 10, Maths Panel Head, School Teresa)

The theological virtues—faith, hope, and love—are rooted in the hearts of servant leaders. Greenleaf (1977) states that the mission and vision of servant leaders should be to serve first and lead second. The Maths Panel Head is a Catholic middle leader. She serves her panel members first and leads the second. Her main concern is to take care of the needs of others as a caring servant leader.

I am a Christian, and I believe that I should live with my belief, which is to love and to serve. I am a new Chinese Panel head recruited from outside, and so I am not so familiar with my panel members. I humble myself and listen to the ideas of my panel members. They are experienced teachers. Sometimes when they misunderstood my view, were angry with me, and even did not act in the project properly, I would discuss it with them in a friendly way. As a result, they would feel that I did things with love. We have become good colleagues now, and they remind me of a lot of things too. At the very beginning, I encounter a lot of problems in checking exam papers and marking of teachers as well as lesson observation. Now they understand that I am eager to help panel members to make improvements.

(Interview 12, Chinese Panel Head, School Teresa)

Loving and serving others are vital for servant leaders like the Chinese Panel Head in School Teresa. She is a Christian and was recruited from outside for her kind and patient character to communicate with the Chinese panel members. The panel members trust and respect her.

She is motivated by a desire to help others (Greenleaf, 2003), though, in the beginning, it was quite hard for her to lead the Chinese panel. Notwithstanding, maintaining the wellbeing of others, transforming followers, and developing trust among stakeholders are considered to be God's guidance for a servant leader's life (Wilkes, 1998). Hence, she is patient and jumps over the troubles and difficulties to live a life in line with God's word.

I pay special attention to new teachers and try my best to understand their needs. Then I help them immediately. For example, I will share the skills of classroom

management with them… I love and respect my pupils, and though sometimes they

do not behave properly, I will not scold them or hurt their feelings.

I believe in God and am happy to follow God's commandment to love others as I

love myself. I am a Catholic, and so I have to be a good panel head of Religious

Studies.

(Interview 14, RS Panel Head, School Teresa)

The RS Panel Head is a devout Catholic middle leader who follows the ideas of Chang (2016) and is full of passion. She cares about and cherishes her members. Under the loving-kindness umbrella of God, everyone is important. The RS Panel Head tries her best to understand the needs of others and help them whole-heartedly. Hence, people are being nurtured in the favourable development of the souls (Chang et al., 2016).

4.5.2.2 Perceptions of people-oriented and task-based leadership practices

4.5.2.2.1 People-oriented leadership (servant leadership) and task-oriented leadership *(instructional leadership)*

The IQ-5 summary reveals that 50% of the novice and the experienced teachers, as well as the new principal, perceive that the middle leaders in School Teresa are task-oriented. However, when asked, a significant proportion of the middle leaders regarded themselves as having people-oriented or both people and task-oriented leadership styles. Ultimately, we find that instructional leadership is predominant in School Teresa.

Table 4.31: People-oriented leadership style and task-oriented leadership style

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.5)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	People-oriented leadership style and task-oriented leadership style
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Both
3	DH	52	Catholic	People-oriented
6	ENG PH	38	No	Both
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Both
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Mainly task-oriented
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Mainly task-oriented, but concerned with people too
13	Novice T3	23	Catholic	Both
	Novice T4	24	Catholic	Task-oriented
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Both
16	Experienced T1	33	No	Both
	Experienced T5	55	Catholic	Mainly task-oriented
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Mainly task-oriented

Most of the middle leaders have both people- and task-oriented leadership styles. The panel heads manage the instructional programs well and provide assistance for teacher professional development to equip the teachers. As one novice teacher mentions, the life education panel head emphasizes equal work distribution among the teachers, seeing the level coordinator's workload as being high. However, the teacher continues; her main concern should be student support. The interviewee feels that the panel head should discuss her pupils' needs and use these findings to design appropriate school-based moral and civic and life education for the pupils. Overall, the panel head should investigate the pupils' performance in Domain 4 of the performance indicators (attitude and behaviour).

4.5.2.3 Religious atmosphere

Both experienced and novice teachers raised out that they are working in a loving-kindness organization. Middle leaders nurture stakeholders of school wholeheartedly. Most of them are eager to help and serve others.

4.5.2.3.1 Work experience with middle leaders

Based on the IQ-1 summary of School Teresa, we notice that there are many newly assigned panel heads, some of whom simply rotate their role duties. For example, the religious panel head is from the student support department. This job re-assignment might imply that the new principal is eager to change the school's culture to maintain its sustainable development.

Table 4.32: Work experience with middle leaders

Middle leaders in School Teresa				(Interview question no.1)
Interview No.	Role	Age	Religion	Work experience of or with middle leaders
2	GS PH	45	Catholic	Mainly GS panel affairs; five core values of Catholic education affect me so much
3	DH	52	Catholic	Mainly administrative work
6	ENG PH	38	No	Mainly English panel affairs; not familiar with IT
7	PSMCD	42	Catholic	Oversees cross-curricular projects; connects the panel heads of different departments
10	MATHS PH	35	Catholic	Newly assigned Maths panel head; mainly panel affairs
12	CHI PH	42	Christian	Second-year as panel head in this school; works hard on the curriculum
13	Novice T1 Novice T2 Novice T3 Novice T4 Novice T5	22 23 23 24 28	No No Catholic Catholic No	Nice. Give suggestions. Mentor shares skills Gives professional advice They work together Mentor listens to ideas and works together
14	RS PH	55	Catholic	Promoted from SEN coordinator to panel head of religious studies; holds loving and kindness activities
16	Experienced T1 Experienced T2 Experienced T3 Experienced T4 Experienced T5	33 34 45 50 55	No Christian Christian Catholic Catholic	Nice. Listen to ideas. Middle leaders are friendly and helpful. Listens to ideas and collaborates in evaluations and follow-ups. Collaborates.
17	Principal	48	Catholic	Accustomed to following instructions from the principal; they are beginning to lead people

The middle leaders in School Teresa instruct the novice teachers in both academic and non-academic affairs. For example, the English panel head gives quality feedback to her panel members. The panel head of the Putonghua department shares her experience, conducting a choral speaking group. Novice teachers have learnt a lot from them. Overall, the middle leaders have created a positive school climate that promotes professional development and a nurturing learning community.

Most of the middle leaders in School Teresa are not only good instructional leaders but also good cooperators. They try their best to contribute to both their own departments and others.

The school's leadership style is closely related to the middle leaders' roles. However, religious faith and the principal's personal beliefs are also vital. The school has recently engaged in job rotation—some of the subject panel heads are inexperienced, but they are quite proactive and are eager to implement new projects in collaboration with the new and enthusiastic principal. Everyone is eager to help School Teresa improve.

4.5.2.4 Summary

Middle leaders with religious faith are willing to nurture the panel members and help them to become whole, especially the RS Panel Head, the Vice-Principal, the Curriculum Developer, the Maths Panel Head, and the Chinese Panel Head. The theological virtues—Faith, Hope, and Love—guide these above-mentioned leaders, preparing them to bravely and confidently face difficulties in their respective panels.

All of the participants from School Teresa shared positive working experiences during the semi-structured interviews. Their leadership practices are closely related to the roles and duties they perform at their respective schools. Most of the panel heads, as well as the

curriculum developer in School Teresa, emphasized academic performance since their school had seen a recent drop in said performance.

4.6 Discussions

4.6.1 The leadership styles, roles, and responsibilities of middle leaders

The department heads of Religious Studies are servant leaders, while the dominant leadership style in most of the department heads of other key subjects is instructional leadership.

The Religious Studies chairpersons at both schools reflected that their roles symbolized the love of Jesus. Both of them are strongly affected and honored by holy words from God and shared that religious faith guides them to serve at schools. They mention that they always remind themselves that servant leaders have the responsibility to nurture followers in their organizations. Therefore, they care about the growth of their members and serve them wholeheartedly.

Most of the department heads in both schools are instructional leaders, as their responsibilities mainly concern the academic development of pupils. Their main task is to develop a learning community suitable for all school stakeholders. Hence, they assign most of their time to foster teacher and curriculum development as well as maintaining a favourable teaching and learning environment so as to properly facilitate the schools' overall development.

4.6.2 Middle leaders and the stage of the school development

The school context played a vital role in Teresa School leadership, as different dominant leadership approaches were applied during different stages of school development. Principals' beliefs and external school reviews play an important role as well; however, those with strong religious faith will consistently apply a people-oriented approach. The case is similar in the Francis School. Although there were principals with different leadership styles over the past 25 years, they cared for people and were willing to serve most of the time. In a nurturing atmosphere of love and care, teachers with and without religious faith become servant leaders as well. Everyone is eager to help and share ideas. All stakeholders work together to face different challenges throughout the different stages of school development (e.g., different kinds of external school reviews, severe acute respiratory syndrome(SARS), and recent social incidents).

4.6.3 Religious faith and middle leadership styles or practices in Catholic schools

Both department heads agree that the religious atmosphere at schools affects their ability to love and care for all stakeholders at schools, although the Francis School department head is a non-religious leader. A hopeful faith-based atmosphere inspires them to love and serve. Without any religious faith, their followers are affected by this loving-kindness. The servant mentality is a life mission for the department heads and the religious education panel chair. As they grow by serving, so to do their followers. They become smarter and would like to make the servant mentality their life mission, too (Chang et al., 2016). Some of the Francis School pupils started attending catechism classes and will soon become Catholics soon. Although not all followers

became Catholics, they frequently ask what they can do to assist the needy. Most of the teachers, pupils, and their parents have servants' hearts. They do not wait to be told what to do, as they share the view that under the sunshine of God, everyone is brother and sister. As servants, everyone needs to act how Jesus would act.

4.6.4 People- and task-oriented middle leaders in School Francis

To a large extent, most of the Francis School middle leaders are people-oriented as they were nurtured and strongly affected by the doctrines of God, which state that faith, hope, and love are the inner power of their servant mentality. They act as stewards of God at school and take loving care of their colleagues and pupils. They are eager to follow God's plan and the life mission of their school; for example, ***ad summum et perfectionem***, the Latin motto of the Francis School (The Latin Version). It means strike for the best under the sunshine of God. By leading well, leaders serve an institutional vision and the people who realize it, achieve excellence, and establish justice. We are all in one family under the umbrella of our holy God. The five core values of Catholic education employed by middle leaders (and integrated into the school curriculum and teacher development programmes) are truth, life, love, justice, and family. As a result, most of the stakeholders are willing to become servant leaders.

Religious faith grows when the core values of Catholic education are alive in school. Besides, even stakeholders without religious faith grow under this kind, loving atmosphere of God; everyone cares about people first.

Conversely, most of the middle leaders in the Teresa School are task-oriented. They are instructional leaders whose responsibilities relate mainly to pupils' academic progress/curriculum development. They seek a favourable teaching and learning environment to facilitate schools' proper development of the schools.

As one of the main focuses of Teresa School is sustainable pedagogy, department heads applied all their strength to managing the instructional programs, as there are many outstanding schools in the same district. As parents have not put much effort into their child's academic performance in recent years, the responsibility has thus been shifted onto the school, including teachers and middle leaders. In order to attract parents to enrol in the Teresa School, most of the department heads heavily emphasized more task-oriented academic issues. However, the new school principal, a practising Catholic, is eager to change the culture, and it is clear that the mission of Catholic education is to provide pasture care to pupils.

4.6.5 Servant and instructional middle leadership in School Francis

Most of the middle leaders in the Francis School are servant leaders with a higher level of strong religious faith, hope, and love. Their work is relatively easier as nurturing servants. Middle leaders perform a high level of servant leadership in this school; therefore, the students' academic achievement is always among the best in the district as measured by the proportion of students studying in Band one secondary schools.

The Teresa School has been one of the oldest and most reputable schools in Kowloon for 57 years. To maintain good Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) results among schools in the same district, most of the teachers display a higher level of

instructional leadership. Most of the parents are not highly educated, and schools face keen competition for enrolment. Middle leaders are usually target-oriented, eager to use students' outstanding academic performance to attract more parents to enroll their children in this school. However, the new principal, who is eager to foster a higher level of religious faith among stakeholders, tries her best to serve first and lead second.

The researcher found two common motives and contrast in driving forces between servant and instructional leaders. The two common motives are to influence people and improve schools. Servant leaders are mainly driven by service, while instructional leaders are driven by tasks. Though both types of leaders influence followers and improve their organizations, followers of servant leaders have a strong sense that they are brothers and sisters under the umbrella of God. They love and nurture each other wholeheartedly as they are eager to help their siblings grow and be smarter than before in order to transform people and society (Brennan et al., 2004). Ultimately, the organization grows as well. Greenleaf (1991) shares a similar view, pointing to conceptualization as one of the prime gifts of servant leaders: "All of this, a truly remarkable social, political, and economic transformation, stemmed from man's conceptual leadership" (p.18).

Conversely, followers of instructional leaders are predominantly target-oriented, valuing the success of the tasks more than the well-being of people. As such, instructional leaders try their very best to gather followers with the ultimate aim of creating a smart and effective organization.

Based on the research findings, the researcher defines an effective cooperating team as an open group that is free to express conflict. Ultimately, mutual trust among the department members (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003; Holtz, 2004; McGarvey & Marriott, 1997) is essential to develop people.

4.7 Chapter summary

The analysis was based on twenty semi-structured interviews of two Catholic primary schools which well-known in their respective districts. They differ in their communities' socioeconomic status, location, pedagogical approach, and student support and leadership.

Though the schools place different emphasis on learning and teaching as well as student support and leadership, the Religious Studies department heads from both the Francis and Teresa Schools display mainly servant leadership. Both department heads exemplify the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. They share the same view that their vocation was given to them by God, so they are sure to try their very best to serve others as Jesus Christ did. Furthermore, they share the same view that it is their responsibility to nurture their followers to be kind and loving servants who are eager to serve equally.

An important study finding was that even when the department heads of Religious Studies were assigned new roles, they still kept their theological virtues. They continue to serve their panel members, wholeheartedly and nurture people to become whole (Greenleaf, 1991). Principals are thus encouraged to arrange for Catholic middle leaders

with religious faith to take turns becoming department heads or assistant department heads of Religious Studies to implement the doctrines of God and effectively transmit the mission and vision of Catholic education (e.g., orienting people in their strategic school development plans).

To foster the positive impact of religious faith on middle leaders and teachers, school principals should put Catholic teachers the department heads of Religious Studies because they are important figures in different key domains of their schools who bridge senior leaders, other middle leaders, and teachers.

The ability to connect people is especially significant for servant leaders in Catholic schools as they need to nurture a caring community characterized by a sustainable development community. In order to do so, it is vital and urgent for schools to establish an Internal Evaluation Committee that will act as a quality assurance inspection team to regularly review the performance of schools regularly (Pang, 2003) using Performance Indicators (PIs).

Middle leaders have both authority and responsibility in their organizations (Samson & Daft, 2012) and play vital roles in running their schools. In the case of Hong Kong schools, both academic achievement and student well-being are crucial. To a large extent, leadership styles are closely related to a school's context and stage of development. It may be more effective for all the middle leaders to maintain sustainable professional collaboration with one another rather than implementing individual school development plans.

We argue the importance of hiring devout Catholics or Christians as middle leaders. However, it may be more efficient to encourage potential middle leaders or teachers already working at the school to attend religious doctrine courses in order to promote Catholic beliefs among teachers in Catholic schools.

Effective leadership and management of middle leaders are vital to both schools' self-evaluation and external review. The 2016 version of PIs uses "Planning," "Implementation," and "Evaluation" as PIs under "School Management" and the concept of PIE is also embedded in the PI categories of "Curriculum and Assessment," "Learning and Teaching," and "Student Support" with the aim of embedding School Self-evaluation (SSE) within the schools' daily practices and development plans (Performance Indicators, 2016). It is obvious that all key domains of quality assurance emphasize effective PIE monitoring. Since the capacity of SSE is a predictive factor for effective strategic planning (Cheng, 2011), school professional development focusing on self-evaluation and extending courses for the school's Internal Evaluation Committee members are necessary.

Surprisingly, middle leaders who are mainly people-oriented did not mention Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO) in the semi-structured interviews when discussing student performance. This implies that the middle leaders seldom share student findings during staff meetings or conduct follow-up work after examinations. Hence, it is urgent for professional teacher development to focus on schools' self-evaluation capacities. Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO) is a useful tool unavailable in other countries that reveals important information on attitudes and behaviour of three to six primary pupils. Such data should be analyzed to provide

additional support for student learning.

Quality school management and organization aligned with the school's mission and vision is extremely vital. Middle leaders are able to plan the implementation of their school development plans. Based on the findings of the Francis School, the dominant leadership style of most of the middle leaders is servant leadership, as they have the passion for Catholic education to account for the mission and vision when carrying out projects in different key domains (management & organization, learning and teaching, student support & school ethos and student performance). A caring school is thus nurturing, and most of the student performance (academically and non-academically) is good according to the data of the school stakeholder and Apaso surveys. It is because of the quality school management that enhances the effectiveness of the other three domains (learning and teaching, student support & school ethos, and student performance).

Chapter 5: Summary of findings, implication, research limitations, and conclusions

5.1 Summary of findings

5.1.1 Dominant leadership styles of middle leaders

There are dominant leadership styles in School Francis and School Teresa. In School Francis, servant leadership is the dominant practice. The school has enhanced the effectiveness of the other three domains (Performance Indicators, 2016) by building quality school management and organization via the middle leaders. She nurtures most of the students in this caring school, which places emphasis on both academic and non-academic performance.

In School Teresa, instructional leadership is the dominant practice. The school has built a learning community via the middle leaders. Most of the students perform well academically. However, there is room for improvement in positive values and attitudes.

5.1.2 Role-dependent leadership styles

In both schools, the panel heads of Religious Studies consider themselves servant leaders. They are aware of their responsibility to nurture panel members. Hence, they care about the growth of their members and serve them wholeheartedly.

Conversely, most of the panel heads in both schools perceive themselves as instructional leaders. Therefore, their responsibilities mainly concern the academic development of pupils.

5.1.3 Stages (contexts) of school development

The school context is vital for leadership development. Middle leaders vary leadership practices to meet the critical needs of both schools, as this fosters their leadership capacity. Examples of critical needs include Chinese focus inspection, IT in learning; and teaching; and science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) projects. Middle leaders are involved in different Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (PIE) stages to develop leadership. Middle leaders with strong religious faith consistently apply a people-oriented approach.

5.1.4 Student achievement as context

Participation and achievement of most students are good in both schools. However, the two schools' emphases on attitudes and behaviours are different. School Francis emphasizes student support and applies instructional leadership dominantly in student learning, but also embraces a people-oriented approach. Consequently, most pupils have good academic performance as well as positive attitudes and behaviours.

In School Teresa, there is a heavy focus on student learning, but a relatively lighter emphasis on student support. The attitudes and behaviours of some pupils have room for improvement.

5.1.5 Leadership faith matters

The deputy heads of both schools agreed that the religious atmosphere at the schools and the doctrine of love promoted by the panel heads of the Religious Studies Department affect their attitude toward other school stakeholders. The middle leaders with religious faith are servant leaders and apply servant leadership consistently. Most of the panel heads at School Francis have embraced servant leadership in their daily instructional

practices in the panels. They are people-oriented, as indicated by their school motto: "*ad summmum et perfectionem*" (The Latin Version). This motto means strike for the best under the sunshine of God. It reminds them to serve both the institutional vision and people to realize the vision of love and serving. They have served by leading well. They have made people grow, achieved excellence, and established justice.

In School Teresa, most middle leaders are task-oriented and have tended to be instructional leaders. They have placed their focus mainly on the academic development of pupils.

5.1.6 Community for sustainable development

It is vital and urgent that schools establish an Internal Evaluation Committee to oversee quality assurance and to regularly review the performance of caring schools. Additionally, teachers' professional development focuses on self-evaluation capacity, so extended courses for the school Internal Evaluation Committee members are necessary.

For sustainable school development, improvement, and accountability, the Education Bureau in Hong Kong has required all publicly funded schools to conduct school development plans and school self-evaluations (SSE) annually according to the school-based management (SBM) policy since 2000 (Cheng, Ko & Lee, 2016; Ko, Cheng & Lee, 2016). In particular, the School Development and Accountability (SDA) framework and school self-evaluation (SSE) were introduced in 2003 to help teachers and school leaders improve the effectiveness of the self-evaluation process through: reviewing school performance indicators; prioritizing the major concerns in their schools; and implementing and assessing measures to enhance teaching and learning as well as

student support and school ethos, as specified in the major concerns in their annual plans and three-year development plans.

To maintain sustainable school development and accountability, school leaders must explore how leadership styles can be utilized. Leadership styles are critical factors in institutionalizing and operating effective quality assurance mechanisms and also successfully nurturing a quality organizational culture.

5.2 Theoretical and practical implications

5.2.1 Leadership style

A synergy of two leadership styles is more theoretically sound than single leadership practices. It conforms to leadership styles and practices to meet the needs of schools. Middle leaders with religious faith in School Francis have embraced servant leadership in instructional leadership practices. On the one hand, servant leaders emphasize the inner sides of teachers, where love and care, or the software of the mind, are vital. On the other hand, servant leaders apply instructional leadership practices in daily panel activities that focus on the outer part, which consists of the professional knowledge, or the hardware of the school-based curriculum, in implementing curriculum programs. Religious faith acts as a chain to connect the inner serving heart and the outer instructional leadership practices together. It will fasten or loosen in different school contexts.

It is evident that the Religious Studies panel head of School Francis has focused on fostering the intrinsic motivation for pupils to learn. This focus is based on the theory of

personal best in psychology. In order to ensure the holistic and sustainable development of pupils' self-directed learning habits, a synergy of the servant and instructional leadership practices was applied, as this synergy will produce an effect that is greater than the sum of its parts. Take the school development plan for self-directed learning as an example: the role of servant leaders emphasize the inner qualities of pupils, or the "software" of the learning mindset, while the role of instructional leaders focus on the outer part, consisting of the knowledge input, or the "hardware" of the curriculum. Religious faith acts as a chain to connect the inner serving heart and the outer instructional leadership practices together. Consequently, there is a successful and sustainable development of pupils' self-directed learning.

Middle leaders in School Teresa put a heavy focus on student learning but put a relatively lighter emphasis on student support even though most students have an urgent need for support. Consequently, there is much room for improvement in the area of attitudes and behaviours. Hence, a synergy between servant leadership and instructional leadership should be conducted properly in School Teresa. To enhance student performance in schools, middle leaders should connect well with all the key domains in the schools, especially domains 1 and 2 of the performance indicators. Since a school's self-evaluation capacity of middle leaders is vital, middle leaders should implement professional teacher development and let all teachers get familiar with Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO) and stakeholder surveys. The feedback from the findings can be used to improve the key domains of the school. Proper monitoring of PIE and appropriate follow-ups are vital as well. Such steps may lead to the sustainable development of schools.

5.2.2 Leadership development

The decision capital of middle leaders is vital for the development of schools. Middle leaders have placed their focus on participating in shared decision making and on experiencing leadership through the PIE school management process. The involvement of middle leaders in the PIE process develops leadership.

5.2.3 Professional learning

A professional, caring community is essential in organizations. Middle leaders with religious faith care for others and share their expertise. They work collaboratively to build caring schools. They have nurtured people to become whole through people-oriented school development plans.

5.2.4 Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment is a powerful predictor of teacher effectiveness (Dee, Hendin, & Singleton, 2006). Organizational commitment of middle leaders is an excellent predictor of potential or outstanding middle leaders since they have empowered teachers in teamwork both practically and spiritually.

5.2.5 Impact of religious faith

Religious faith makes middle leaders more inclined to servant leadership. They have formed a trajectory of school development through the development of self-evaluation capacity. Hence, careful selection of principals with strong religious faith is vital. Furthermore, it is extremely vital for the sustainable development of caring schools in establishing an Internal Evaluation Committee to regularly review the performance of schools.

5.3 **Limitation and suggestions for further research or focusing policies**

for middle leaders

5.3.1 Limitations

This was a case study of two Catholic primary schools in Hong Kong, where qualitative data was collected through 20 semi-structured interviews. As it is a small-scale research study, it may not be able to enhance data credibility and become a hallmark of future case studies (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). Moreover, the data drawn from the two schools was limited to 20 interviews. This limits the generalizability to other primary schools.

The findings were limited to the scope of experiences of two Catholic primary schools. Experiences with other religious schools (e.g., Christian, Buddhist, Daoist) and from non-religious schools were not included. Larger groups of middle leaders and teachers from diverse backgrounds may extend the generalizability to other primary schools.

The interviewees were limited to principals, middle leaders, and teachers. It may be necessary to extend the scope of the interviewees to different kinds of stakeholders of schools, such as school supervisors, school managers, upper form pupils, parents, and non-teaching staff. Such an investigation would be through multiple lenses and might generate more generally applicable findings.

5.3.2 Suggestions for further research or focusing policies of middle leaders

To collect holistic data on the leadership style of middle leaders in Catholic schools, researchers might also consider conducting shadow observation of some key targets after and before the interviews. The reliability and validity of the results may be higher

with this method. Such an in-depth investigation would provide additional quality feedback to schools and middle leaders to conduct follow-ups and plan for a more-focused professional development for the middle leaders. Teacher professionalism is the key to an effective quality assurance (QA) system in Hong Kong (Cheng, 2011).

Given that the findings emerged from cases of successful and improving schools, other research should investigate the relationship of leadership styles, religious beliefs, and the professional development of self-evaluation capacity of members of the school Incorporated Management Committee (IMC), middle leaders, and teachers on the sustainable development or improvement of schools.

5.4 Conclusion

The present study is one of the few studies exploring how leadership styles and religious faith could be enacted as critical factors to establish and implement effective quality assurance mechanisms and to nurture a quality culture in school organizations.

5.4.1 Effective quality assurance mechanism

Middle leaders must explore how leadership styles can be enacted as critical factors to institutionalize and operate effective quality assurance mechanisms. They are encouraged to be involved in the P-I-E process to develop leadership. Ackoff (1970) voices his opinion that participation in planning is more important than the outcome of planning. To help schools to have a sustainable development, the School Development and Accountability (SDA) framework was introduced by the Education Bureau in 2003 (Quality Assurance for Schools, 2013)

5.4.2 Professional development

A caring school accelerates the holistic professional development of both middle leaders & teachers. Servant middle leaders nurture people to become whole.

Greenleaf (1972, 1991) points out that the main aim of servant leadership is to nurture another servant leader and make people become whole.

5.4.3 Religious faith

Middle leaders with strong religious faith focus on people-oriented strategic school development plans. They are eager to be servant leaders and nurture caring schools. Caring for others and having capable individuals serve the less-capable is the vision of Robert Greenleaf (1972). Spear (2000) also shares that servant leaders have a passion for making people grow.

The research data indicate that leaders with serious religious faith tackle problems confidently and effectively. For example, take the panel head of the Chinese of School Teresa. She positions herself as a servant of their followers, where, as a servant, she tries to understand and meet the needs of their followers. She does what Greenleaf (1977) suggests leaders do. During the preparation of the Chinese focus inspection, she empowers teachers to participate in different tasks, which influences organizational commitment. Committed teachers in both School Francis and School Teresa have job effort and involvement. Furthermore, leaders nurture their followers to work smarter than before. This creates not only sustainable growth in their departments but the schools as well.

5.4.4 Student support and school ethos

Student support and school ethos are especially important for Catholic schools because the key mission of Catholic education is to care for students and develop their potential to the fullest. To fulfil this goal, both leadership and religious faith are essential for Catholic schools. Principals and middle leaders are responsible for leading the teaching staff in building a shared vision for the sustainable development of the schools. They must consider the school's mission, vision, and findings from self-evaluation when they formulate school development plans. Middle leaders need to embed self-evaluation mechanisms into strategic planning as well. Additionally, collaboration and support among middle leaders and teachers are critical. The SBM policy also recommends that school leaders involve teacher participation in decision-making and school planning (Cheng, 2008a). Therefore, middle leaders need to foster collaboration among school stakeholders and promote team spirit among teachers. Religious faith is important for Catholic middle leaders and teachers since the key emphasis of Catholic education is to provide a caring community to nurture loving-kindness in children. Hence, Catholic school's policies are mainly student-centred and people-oriented. The strategic plans are mainly people-oriented. They not only cater to learner diversity, but also integrate into school life and develop students physically, mentally, and spiritually.

5.4.5 People-oriented leadership in Catholic schools

Catholic education and management emphasize people-oriented leadership. Middle leaders are nurtured to be servant leaders. Greenleaf (1991) points out that the main aim of servant leadership is to nurture another servant leader: he or she is humble in serving others. Hence, servant leaders should meet the needs of both pupils and teachers.

Additionally, teachers are equipped well by servant middle leaders; for example, via professional development in quality assurance to foster their self-evaluation capacity and provide quality feedback to the proper development of pupils and teachers in schools.

5.4.6 Participation in planning

It is obvious that most of the panel heads, regardless of whether they are mainly conducting servant or instructional leadership, invite teachers to join planning meetings of school major concerns and panel projects. It is essential to involve teachers in the P-I-E process, so they understand the needs of the school and are eager to contribute wholeheartedly. Hence, Ackoff (1970) voices his opinion that participation in planning is more important than the outcome of planning. Participation in planning fosters participants to master a deeper understanding of school mission and vision. As a result, a caring and learning community is cultivated naturally.

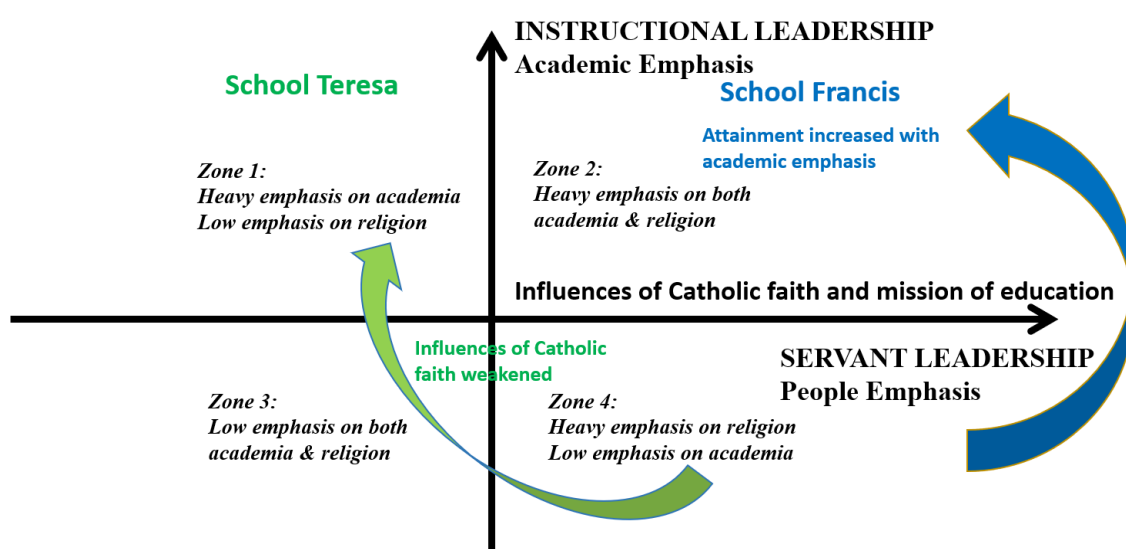### 5.4.7 The synergy between servant leadership and instructional leadership (Instructional servant leadership)

The synergy between servant leadership and instructional leadership may best explain the popularity of most Catholic schools in Hong Kong. As servant leadership focuses on pupil support beyond academic knowledge, it is able to fill the gap of instructional leadership, which puts substantial emphasis on learning and teaching. A synergy of the two leadership styles is more theoretically sound than single leadership practices. It could have a greater effect than the sum of its parts and has caused the popularity of Catholic primary schools in Hong Kong.

Influences of Catholic faith and mission of education act as a chain to connect the inner serving heart and the outer instructional leadership practices together. Consequently, there is a sustainable development of the school.

Figure 4 presents a framework of synergy between servant leadership & instructional leadership. There are four quadrants (zones 1–4) in the diagram. Schools in zone 1 place heavy emphasis on academia and relatively low emphasis on people, while schools in zone 2 emphasize both academia and people. In contrast, schools in zone 3 place low emphasis on both academia and people, whereas schools in zone 4 place heavy emphasis on people and relatively low emphasis on academia. Religious faith has an effect on servant leadership and instructional leadership. Schools in zone 1, 3, and 4 will gradually move to zone 2, the desired zone of Catholic schools.

Figure 4: The synergy between servant leadership & instructional leadership (Instructional servant leadership)

Learning and teaching are vital for Catholic schools. Although the dominant role of middle leaders is servant leaders, they apply instructional leadership in learning and teaching. They embrace servant leadership in instructional leadership, such as managing the instructional programs and creating a positive school climate. Therefore, a synergy between servant leadership and instructional leadership plays a significant role in Catholic schools.

"One-man show" leadership is considered an inappropriate approach for a democratic world (Harris, 2009). Hence, the best leadership approach in the empirical world tends to be studied as scholars continue the existing discussions that reflect the current necessities. For instance, distributed leadership is perceived by its proponents as the leadership approach to replace the heroic type of solo leadership (Grown, 2008).

Finally, practising servant leadership does not require one to belong to a particular religion or religious belief. Sanjaya (2015, p.33) states this idea in the following paragraph:

"For those of some religious affiliation, the follower-first leadership stems from an internal conviction that the servant leader is a servant of a higher being or power, and in obedient gratitude to that higher being or power serves other people. For those with spiritual orientation but no religious attachment, the motivation to practice servant leadership comes from not a higher being, but a set of core values or ideals or causes that partly or wholly define their lives and give them meaning and significance."

Although most middle leaders in the target schools were non-religious, under the loving-kindness atmosphere, and by sharing the core values of Catholic education among teachers, they cared about people and their well-being to finish the task effectively and successfully.

Schools with strong religious atmospheres, such as School Francis, are the best places to nurture leaders to develop their higher causes though the leaders do not have any religious beliefs.

Disclosure statement

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Appendix 1: Interview questions

The protocol will include the following sample questions which are developed by the researcher:

1. Please tell me something about your work experience.

2. Do you see yourself as a curriculum leader or an administrative leader?

3. To what extent do you find that your religious faith (a. Catholic, b. Other religions, c. Non-religious) affects your leadership style and practices?

4. Please share some critical incidents that can demonstrate your leadership style.

5. How do you describe your own leadership style (people-oriented vs task-oriented)?

6. Between teaching and learning (Domain 2 of the performance indicators) and student support and school ethos (Domain 4 of the performance indicators), which one does your school place a relative emphasis on? Why?

7. Between teaching and learning (Domain 2 of the performance indicators) and student support and school ethos (Domain 4 of the performance indicators), which one do you place a relative emphasis on? Why?

8. How will you describe the student performance in your school? Are you happy with it? Why?

9. Which domain of the performance indicators do you think is the most important? Why?

10. In what ways do your leadership practices relate to your roles and duties in the school?

11. In what ways do your leadership practices relate to school development?

12. What is your greatest professional strength? Weakness?

13. How would you help teachers and staff improve student achievement?

14. What advice would you give to a new teacher in his or her first year?

15. What advice would you give to a veteran teacher (>10 yrs.) in need of improvement?

16. What is the most powerful strategy for improving both teaching and learning?