

**A Comparative Analysis of Lynne Sedgmore's Spiritual Leadership and its Potential
Usefulness in the Irish Post-Primary Setting**



Master in Education Studies (Leadership in Christian Education)

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly. This work has not been submitted previously at this or any other educational institution. The work was done under the guidance of Denis Robinson at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. I agree that the Library may lend or copy this dissertation upon request.

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Abstract

The past two decades have seen a heightened expression of interest in the field of spiritual leadership, and a growing body of literature and research has proven that spiritual leadership can yield positive consequences for schools and organisations. This thesis investigates and explores Lynne Sedgmore's spiritual leadership, and identifies the positive implications of spiritual leadership.

Insights into Sedgmore's career as a spiritual leader in the Further Education sector have been presented, with her legacy as Chief Executive at the Centre for Excellence in Leadership most thoroughly examined. Her work with this organisation saw her cultivate an energetic, creative, and motivated working community, which led its corporate success.

Louis W. Fry, Yochanan Altman, and Parker J. Palmer have written extensively in the area of spirituality and leadership, and their insights have also been presented. Their work in this field and their understanding of the concept affirms the positive nature of Sedgmore's spiritual leadership. This can be seen through comparisons drawn between her and each of these academics and practitioners.

The findings of the analysis revealed the beneficial implications of spiritual leadership in the Irish post-primary context. Practical suggestions and recommendations have been made to inspire principals in their role as a spiritual leader.

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I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.

(Philippians, 4:13)

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	
Acknowledgements	
Chapter 1	Introduction
1.1	Overview of thesis
1.2	Context for the research
1.3	Research methodology
1.4	Thesis structure
1.5	Personal motivation
Chapter 2	An exploration of Lynne Sedgmore' spiritual leadership
2.1	Introduction
2.2	Understanding Lynne Sedgmore
2.3	The origins of Sedgmore's spiritual leadership
2.4	The development of Sedgmore's spiritual leadership
2.5	The consequences of Sedgmore's lived spiritual leadership
2.6	Conclusion

Chapter 3 **Fry, Altman, and Palmer: Expert voices on spiritual leadership and education**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Fry: A masterful insight into spiritual leadership
- 3.3 Palmer: An esteemed figure in the world of spirituality and leadership
- 3.4 Altman: A commentary on Sedgmore's career
- 3.5 Conclusion

Chapter 4 **Comparing key insights on spiritual leadership: Sedgmore in dialogue with Fry, Altman, and Palmer**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Sedgmore in dialogue with Fry
 - 4.2.1 Spirituality, leadership, and its consequences
 - 4.2.2 Workplace spirituality
 - 4.2.3 The inner life of a leader
- 4.3 Sedgmore in dialogue with Palmer
 - 4.3.1 The inner self
 - 4.3.2 A leader's identity
 - 4.3.3 The universe is not against you
 - 4.3.4 Delegation
 - 4.3.5 Spiritual leadership and different faith traditions

4.3.6	Confronting risks, fears, and failures
4.3.7	Spirituality: personal, not private
4.3.8	Be not afraid
4.4	Sedgmore in dialogue with Altman
4.4.1	Organisational spirituality
4.4.2	Response to dialogue on spirituality at work
4.5	Conclusion
Chapter 5	Conclusion: Spiritual leadership in the post-primary setting
5.1	Introduction
5.2	Spiritual leadership
5.3	Implications for spiritual leadership
5.3.1	Valuing diversity
5.3.2	Diversity and sexual orientation
5.3.3	Diversity and the Traveller community
5.3.4	Diversity and religion and spirituality
5.4	The well-being of a school community
5.5	Creating a shared vision
5.6	Workplace spirituality
5.7	Conclusion
	References

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Overview of thesis

The aim of this thesis is to study Lynne Sedgmore's unique style of spiritual leadership, along with the work of other renowned spiritual and educational leaders (Fry, Altman, Palmer). The researcher will analyse how the combined experience of these practitioners and academics may potentially serve as inspiration to leaders (principals) in the Irish post-primary setting.

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- To explore Lynne Sedgmore's lived experience as a spiritual leader, and how she positively influenced those who worked for and with her throughout her career.
- To examine the work of Louis W. Fry, Yochanan Altman, and Parker J. Palmer in regards to their understanding and experience of spiritual and educational leadership.
- To investigate and determine the inner life of a leader; its features, and how it should be nurtured.
- To describe and define various understandings and interpretations of spiritual leadership.
- To consider the potential usefulness of spiritual leadership for principals in the Irish post-primary setting.

1.2 Context for the research

As of late, studies in the field of leadership are moving towards spirituality. In his book, *Meeting the ethical challenges of leadership: Casting light or shadow*, Craig Johnson alludes to the growing interest in spiritual leadership. He states that there were 72 books published on spirituality in the workplace between 1992 and 2012, and 50% of those books were published between 2007 and 2012 (2012, p.137). As research into this subject progresses, it is becoming clearer that spirituality in leadership can yield positive consequences (Gibson, 2011). This research aims to apply these positive insights into the Irish post-primary context, with a hope to provide a basis for post-primary principals in Ireland to reflect on how they, along with their staff, students, and school community, may best benefit from spiritual leadership.

Among many definitions, spiritual leadership can be described as “a state of mind or consciousness that enables one to perceive deeper levels of experience, meaning, values, and purpose than can be perceived from a strictly material vantage point. Spiritual leadership, then, is leading from those deeper levels” (Thompson, 2008, p. 152). What is distinguishable about spiritual leadership is that its foundations lie in the nourishment of the inner life of the leader. Leading from ‘deeper levels’ within requires reflection and open and honest dialogue with the holistic self. Sedgmore has proven that spiritual leadership can result in positive consequences, those of which will be examined throughout this work. She provides profound insights into the life of a spiritual leader that may significantly influence and help to evolve the work of post-primary leaders in Ireland - primarily principals, but also staff, students, and the wider school community.

1.3 Research methodology

The research will be conducted through a documentary analysis. This method involves examining and interrogating documents “in the context of other sources of data. Data from documents can be used to highlight a range of perspectives on a particular event, activity, group or individual and can be further utilised to determine the representatives of such a document.” (Fitzgerald, 2012, p. 297). This methodology is considered most suitable for this research as Sedgmore, and Fry, Palmer, and Altman have published numerous academic works between them that examine the nature of spiritual leadership, and highlight its theoretical and practical implications. Through a process of combining content and thematic analysis, the researcher can acquire understanding, draw meaning, and give voice to the data chosen (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Care was taken to ensure that the documents sourced, especially those from the internet, were relevant, reliable, and credible.

Sedgmore’s spiritual leadership will be the primary source throughout this research. To investigate her work and her career, the research will review her doctoral thesis, as well as analyse commentary from others who have studied her work. Fry, Altman, and Palmer have been chosen as subjects for comparison as they are renowned academics and practitioners who are considered experts in the field of spiritual and educational leadership.

The research will not include surveys or interviews, however, the researcher will maintain a precise and unbiased approach to the literature being investigated. The researcher endeavors to

allow findings and conclusions within the investigation to surface naturally through the literature analysed.

1.4 Thesis structure

Chapter one outlines the context, rationale and motivation for undertaking this project. It presents the scope and sequence of the chapters, the aims and objectives of this research with the intention to discover the characteristics of spiritual leadership as it applied to second level leadership. The following chapters will present and engage with the work of Sedgmore, and Fry, Altman, and Palmer, as well as identify the practical implications of spiritual leadership.

Chapter two, *An exploration of Lynne Sedgmore's spiritual leadership*, will investigate and analyse Sedgmore's life and work. Attention will be paid to her spirituality, her inner work, how she presents herself as a spiritual leader, and the consequences and outcomes of her spiritual leadership.

Chapter three, *Fry, Altman, and Palmer: Expert voices on spiritual leadership and education*, will explore the work and experience of Fry, Altman, and Palmer. One primary document for each will be examined in light of spiritual leadership and education.

Chapter four, *Comparing key insights on spiritual leadership*, will identify commonalities evident between Sedgmore and Fry, Altman, and Palmer. Themes such as workplace spirituality,

the inner life of a leader, identity, fear and failure, and spirituality as something that is personal, but not private, will be explored.

The conclusion, *Spiritual leadership in the post-primary setting*, offers some practical recommendations for Irish principals with regard to effective spiritual leadership in the post-primary setting.

1.5 Personal motivation

Personal experience as a teacher in the Irish post-primary setting today has allowed me to reflect upon the concept of spirituality in schools; although students are encouraged to flourish to their fullest potential throughout every aspect of their lives, including spiritually, the same encouragement does not always seem to be afforded to teachers and staff. Barry affirms that “teachers, if they so desire, deserve the opportunity in ‘solitude and community’, to explore the spiritual dimension of a teacher’s life.” (2003, p. 54). Sedgmore’s inclusive, pluralistic, spiritual, and respectful way of leading mirrors this statement. Throughout her career, she ensured that those who worked for and with her were aware that they were in an environment where they felt comfortable, where they could blossom and thrive, seeing the emergence of their best selves. This, consequently, benefitted the organisations for which she worked. Her doctoral thesis included a statement from a staff member at the Centre for Excellence in Leadership, who asserted how positive their experience at the organisation was due to Sedgmore’s style of leadership:

It's rare (in my experience) to work in an environment where the spiritual dimension of leadership is thought about, and where those working in the organisation are encouraged to reflect on their growth and development that incorporates spirituality...the reality is that creating a climate which promotes this exploration of self and relating to others, and working in this environment is both challenging and rewarding...I am also enjoying being part of a community that can create spaces for people to grow and develop and experience themselves in new ways. (2013, p. 80)

With increasing teacher workload, pressure, and anxiety in the Irish education setting, there is a chance that Sedgmore's style of leadership may be fitting for principals when it comes to leading their staff and school community to success, in every sense of the word. Ultimately, the motivation for this research comes from my experience as a teacher, a yearning to intertwine my spirituality and my career, and from a place of total admiration of Sedgmore's work as a spiritual leader.

Chapter Two

An exploration of Lynne Sedgmore's spiritual leadership

2.1 Introduction

There are four principal sections in this chapter: (i) Understanding Lynne Sedgmore (ii) The origins of Sedgmore's spiritual leadership (iii) The development of Sedgmore's spiritual leadership, and (iv) The consequences of Sedgmore's lived spiritual leadership. In order for this research to provide a detailed insight into the life and career of Sedgmore, this chapter will primarily draw from Sedgmore's doctoral thesis, from Altman and Fry's book, *Spiritual leadership in action: The CEL story*, and Mary Gao's doctoral thesis.

2.2 Understanding Lynne Sedgmore

Lynne Sedgmore was born to a working class family in Staffordshire in 1955. Throughout her childhood, she was aware of her parents' financial stresses and she knew that they did not like their jobs. With that in mind, she promised herself that as an adult she would work in a profession that she loved, and she realised that the education sector was the area she was most passionate about. She acknowledges that she has kept this promise to herself (Exley, 2015).

Sedgmore began work in the Further Education (FE) sector in 1982. It was 2002, however, when her leading-edge spiritual leadership style began to be noticed by those in the field of doctoral academia, with Michael Joseph choosing Sedgmore as the subject of his case study on leaders and spirituality. At this point, she was principal of Guildford College of Further and Higher

Education, UK. In 2003, she was appointed Chief Executive at the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL), the organisation for which she is primarily known. Based in the UK, the role of this FE organisation was to foster and encourage the advancement of leadership skills in the learning and skills sector. Her achievements at CEL were noted by Fry and Altman, who published a book in 2013 comprising reports and papers that followed her journey in spiritual leadership during this time.

Sedgmore's career at CEL led to her advising the Further Education Skills Minister on Extremisms in FE in 2008, and from 2009-2010 she held a seat on the Prime Minister's Review of Public Sector Development (Gao, 2013, p.124). Sedgmore documented her personal spiritual leadership journey in her PhD, published in 2013, entitled: *Fostering innovative organisational cultures and high performance through explicit spiritual leadership: A chief executive's integrative journey of spiritual leadership in the workplace*. Her accreditations have seen her earn a place in the field of spiritual leadership, as she has contributed to written academia and has lived experience with spiritual leadership.

2.3 The origins of Sedgmore's spiritual leadership

Through the research and writings of Sedgmore, Gao, Fry, and Altman, it has been documented that Sedgmore exhibits qualities such as calmness, flexibility, empathy, and non-judgemental awareness. Sonia M. Goltz (2011) has suggested that these are essential when it comes to being a spiritual leader, and academics such as J. Oswald Sanders (2017) and Margaret Benefiel (2008) have agreed that such qualities should be upheld by leaders.

“Personal leadership is a process of developing a positive self-identity that gives you the courage and self-confidence necessary to consciously choose actions that satisfy your needs, enable you to persevere, and allow you to accept responsibility for the outcome.” (2013, p. 16). Here, Fry and Altman have acknowledged that personal leadership is a journey, and their statement is reflective of Sedgmore’s personal leadership. Sedgmore is fully aware that her leadership, as it is now, differs from when she first began her journey as a spiritual leader. She has stated previously that her spiritual journey has been a transformative one (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 30). During her early childhood, she felt consumed by a sense of emptiness and loss, but quickly realised as she grew that it was necessary for her to tap into her emotions and explore her inner self if she was going to affect change not only within herself, but within those around her. She intended “to become less ego-centred in striving to fulfil [her] ultimate purpose through love and service of others.” (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 30). Her intention to promote this change has been her vocation since then, and she claims that she has always been an “active spiritual seeker and explorer since childhood; continually seeking truth, meaning and purpose” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 52). It is clear that Sedgmore has invariably looked to nurture and develop her inner life in order to help others, and has learned to do this through meditation, contemplation, and various spiritual practices (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 20).

Despite her search for spiritual awareness, it was not until 1988 that Sedgmore truly began to appreciate the idea that it was her mission to use her relationship with a transcendent power that she held in awe and reverence to guide her leadership (2013, p. 51):

It happened in a lecture theatre with others. I found my hands lifting as I was flooded with lights into my head and hands. It felt wonderful, as if I was glowing all over from within and without. The person sitting next to me asked what had happened; she did not see the light but told me she could feel that something unusual was happening to me. When I came home, every time I meditated more light flowed, particularly in and from my hands, and I became certain that my path was to become a spiritual healer, as I knew that this light was not just for me but was for others too. (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 29)

From that point on, Sedgmore experienced a number of similar encounters with the transcendent, and these events led to a development in her journey as a spiritual leader. FE was the field that she pursued, however, the intertwining of spirituality and the working environment at that time was not considered appropriate by many. Although she had acquired numerous important roles at Croydon Business School, such as head of various departments and the dean of the school, and was appointed vice-principal of Croydon College, her personal, spiritual journey was more hidden from her work than she had liked or anticipated (Fry & Altman, p. 27). Sedgmore's career and her ability to afford others the education they deserved was incredibly important to her - just as her spirituality was. She could not separate these two elements of her life. Gao states that:

Spirituality has always been central in [Sedgmore's] life, she could not leave her soul and spirit outside of her work; instead, her inner life, spiritual development and [her] mystical experiences have informed, influenced and been integrated into her practice of leadership." (2018, p. 133)

It was imperative for Sedgmore to research what exactly she could do to incorporate her spirituality with her leadership, in a way that would benefit both her own journey as a spiritual leader and those around her. She embarked on retreats, became a Benedictine Oblate, meditated and prayed daily, and visited a holistic therapist weekly. Furthermore, she consciously initiated conversations with coworkers focused on spirituality in the workplace. However, she acknowledged and appreciated that not everyone felt comfortable with the discussion of spiritual values and the idea of incorporating them into the workplace (Gao, 201, p. 134). Although some colleagues may have been reluctant to engage with her spiritual orientation at work, she always aimed to ensure that those she worked with felt satisfied and at ease in their work environment. Inspired by her own focus and nourishment of her spirituality, at Croydon College she continued to focus on:

forming new teams and co-creating a strong sense of membership and a spirited, creative community that placed students at the heart of all they did. Her approach included team building, clear targets and the necessary support for achieving them, authentic dialogue and inquiry for creativity and problem solving, and a rigorous and generous program of staff development for both their personal growth and professional development. (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 38)

Sedgmore's primary focus was the nourishment of her students, and she found that the best way that she could lead them was by actively seeking an awareness of her inner self, of her own spirituality. The more she sought to understand the depth of her spirituality and inner life, the more confident she felt in her role as a spiritual leader:

She could feel a more intuitive responsiveness and the ability to be more in the moment... She also became more able to recognise and contain her own negative personality traits and was gaining better insight into how she was both effective and flawed as a leader. (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 38)

As Sedgmore commenced work as principal and chief executive of Guildford College in 1998, she had to work to erase an undesirable legacy left by her predecessors. As she embarked on this journey, she continued engaging in personal retreats, daily meditation and prayer, and weekly holistic therapy sessions, all in order to sustain her spirituality. Simultaneously, she was focusing on the continuous improvement of the college. As she trusted the significance and importance of her spirituality when it came to her style of leadership, she and those around her began to reap the benefits of her hard work and diligence. It was at this point that she became the subject of a doctoral thesis (Joseph, 2002), of which the primary focus was the relationship between spirituality and leadership. Sedgmore's contentment in her role as spiritual leader started to become more obvious here, as acknowledged in the conclusions of Joseph's findings. He found that her spirituality led her to understand that close contact and proximity with staff was important when it came to the emergence of effective trust, commitment, loyalty, and motivation. He also concluded that "proximity to and regular contact with Lynne was highly correlated with her degree of impact and influence." (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 40). Her spiritual awareness guided how she approached her work with colleagues and staff; it was clear that "her past spiritual experiences had enlightened, reinforced, and underscored her awareness and her sense that she is 'in service' to God and to others." (Fry & Altman, 2013). Sedgmore primarily

valued the flourishing of others in Guildford college. Joseph's findings highlight the fact that the majority of Sedgmore's staff at this time were unaware of her spirituality and the extent to which it influenced her work. Despite this, as she naturally led from her spirituality, staff were impressed with her leadership style in the workplace:

She had a strong sense of mission about her job: a belief that she was 'meant' to be in this role in this specific organisation. She was strongly convinced of the value of integrating spirituality into the workplace and would wish it to be a place where 'people can bring all of themselves here into the organisation.' She attempted to be aware of spirituality in small things and act appropriately on this awareness; 'that's what transforms an organisation, the small little encounters that touch the soul or heart or whichever bit of them that needed to be touched.' (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 41)

At Guildford College, it was clear that Sedgmore's style of leadership went beyond what staff typically expected from a leader. Her spirituality, while pushing her to perform and excel for the betterment of the organisation, also allowed her to tap into and work for the holistic needs of her staff.

In brief, the more Sedgmore nurtured and cherished her spirituality, the greater her success. Clarken (2008, p. 5) suggests that spiritual leadership "comes from an inner core, rather than from a set of techniques, traditions and tips...It enlists and elicits support, dedication and loyalty rather than trying to force and manipulate [staff]." Sedgmore's work echoes Clarken's understanding of spiritual leadership. At this point in the research it is appropriate to consider

and trace the intricacies of the development of Sedgmore's spiritual leadership style in order to understand the impact of her lived spiritual leadership throughout her career.

2.4 The development of Sedgmore's spiritual leadership

Sedgmore's career as a spiritual leader has not always been straightforward; she has faced numerous obstacles throughout her career, from work associates, to personal struggles. These hurdles, however, helped to pave the way for the positive development of her spiritual leadership.

Sedgmore's distinct style of leadership emerged through her work at Croydon Business School, Croydon College, and Guildford College. However, her ultimate legacy was left at CEL. Here, she had the chance to demonstrate the strength of her ability as a spiritual leader. In her thesis she stated that her "professional and spiritual journey in CEL was [her] most significant attempt to live spirituality across a whole organisation in the workplace and to be an overt spiritual leader within [her] professional life" (2013, p. 65). Her spiritual leadership was tested at CEL, the multi million pound organisation she led for over four years. To her dismay, she commenced work at CEL with an array of pre-existing issues impacting the organisation as a whole, and she was challenged as she strived to rectify these problems. Financial stress, no staff directly employed by CEL (rather, by partners), and "serious tensions in working relations between CEL and the government department officials" (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 48) were just a few contributing factors adding to the organisation's, and Sedgmore's, burden. She understood that a serious intervention would be necessary in order to see this company thrive under her guidance. These

obstacles motivated and encouraged Sedgmore as she continued to work for the betterment of herself, her staff, and the organisation. She set several goals for both CEL and herself, and instigated numerous innovative and necessary changes. These would lead to a positive working environment for staff and witness the organisation's success.

As Sedgmore officially commenced her career with CEL she insisted that she be the first employee of the organisation to be employed directly by CEL, despite this having less desirable consequences than if she were employed by a company partner. One reason for her insistence was because she envisaged a culture of commitment and loyalty within CEL, and she encouraged an environment like such among staff and colleagues. As they witnessed Sedgmore's devotion to her role as leader and Chief Executive of CEL, as they saw her insistence in being directly paid by the organisation, and as they grew to admire and favour her values and practices, they began "to abandon their contract status to be directly employed by CEL" (Fry, Sedgmore & Altman, 2009, p. 19). This was a positive development for Sedgmore in her role as Chief Executive. As she progressed in the organisation, she "drew especially on her inner life practices to develop a strong and clear vision of what CEL could be and the difference and impact it could make." (Fry & Atman, 2013, p. 48). Gaining personal insight from her inner spiritual life, she decided to introduce six spiritually explicit interventions within CEL in order to cultivate and develop a high performing and innovative culture in the organisation. Along with her spirituality, Sedgmore's motivation for this intervention grew from the idea that "we cannot will collective wisdom to arise in groups, we can [only] make preparations for it to emerge" (Briskin, Erickson, Ott & Callanan, 2009, p. 11).

The first intervention implemented by Sedgmore was *living collectively from virtues, meaning, higher purpose and service*. Value-led spiritual leadership was important to her. She viewed it as essential that values considered meaningful and influential for the organisation were articulated by all staff at CEL. In order to do this and to assist her, she brought in an external facilitator to the organisation and staff members were encouraged to share personal values and moral purpose so that they could discover a shared vision, mission, strategic aims, and values of the company agreed upon and formulated by all. Opportunities given biannually to staff to reflect upon and affirm their personal values and their vision for the organisation “fostered a thoughtful and conscious connection of the staff to a collective purpose.” (Gao, 2018, p. 141). This open and communal culture, and the acceptance of personal values, was appreciated by staff. The positive, value-led working environment “encouraged open and free expression of who you considered yourself to be, as a person of faith or no faith, and that you belonged in the organisation however you identified.” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 85).

The second intervention implemented by Sedgmore was *fostering a spiritually intelligent, high-spirited community*. Sedgmore challenged the idea that leaders should be at the peak of any organisation, with staff below the leader. She inverted this concept of leadership and made it her own, as she wanted to create “a liberated peer community that was top-down and bottom-up with the structure, flexibility and scope to respond to constant change” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 87). By implementing such a structure, she hoped to “enable and allow all staff, at every level, to develop and lead to their fullest potential, including the spiritual dimension” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 87). In this way, she trusted and recognised the knowledge and expertise of the staff at CEL, and

emphasised the importance of teamwork and interdependency. The opportunity for staff at CEL to nourish and cherish their spirituality and their values was afforded by Sedgmore in a myriad of ways in order to foster a spiritually intelligent and high-spirited community. Sedgmore personally organised staff ‘away’ days, where all staff, for two days twice a year, were taken to beautiful venues and “allowed time for inner nourishment, walking and reflective space” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 114). After these ‘away days’, staff were encouraged to provide both formal and informal feedback on their experiences, which was consistently outstanding. Furthermore, to foster a spiritually intelligent, high-spirited community, Sedgmore provided all staff with access to a coach or mentor that would help them to “explore, clarify, articulate and understand their own spiritual, transcendent or non-transcendent way of being within their life and work.” (Gao, 2018, p. 142). Typically in UK Business Schools, an investment of £500 per person was expected within the staff budget; CEL, however, allocated £3,700 per person, which demonstrated the organisation’s interest in their staff. Staff could choose whether or not they wanted to include themselves in such a programme, and all faiths or none, as well as all personal spiritual paths, were acknowledged, respected, and listened to. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 114).

The third intervention implemented by Sedgmore was *introducing informed policies and liberating processes*. As Sedgmore’s career at CEL advanced, she began to feel as though her inner spiritual life was in need of some extra attention and nourishment. Based on this, she decided to enlist the assistance of a professional, experienced coach and leadership writer, Dr. Simon Western, who would allow her the opportunity to provide her inner life with the special attention it needed, and “to help her focus on and expend more and more energy on ensuring the

success of CEL” (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 56). Dr. Western’s coaching proved successful, and, as their sessions progressed, Sedgmore felt her spirit lift and her energy increase. Through these sessions, the relationship between Sedgmore’s intrinsic spiritual nature and her work at CEL thrived, and at this point, she took a progressive and inclusive approach to facilitating the development of many aspects of the organisation. Staff were encouraged to engage with and involve themselves in “the articulation and decision-making of CEL’s strategic planning through strategic forums, networking, open communication and creativity.” (Sedgmore, 2013, pp. 89 - 90). The program involved three stages: “forums specifically for project leaders; forums for all staff; then an organisation-wide exchange process between all the forums.” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 90). Sedgmore was present for each forum as she felt it was important for her to participate and validate them. Each forum was scheduled to take place during one evening and a day, with allocated time for reflection, communication and the intermingling of ideas (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 65). As the forums ended, three primary themes emerged: “fostering genuine distributed leadership; identifying sustainable success; and, third, designing collectively business models that could really work as a joined-up whole.” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 90). The contribution of this project, in turn, saw a significant rise in staff initiative, creativity, spirit, morale, and accountability, as well as an increase in critical thinking, and more junior staff taking on leadership roles. It is clear that Sedgmore wanted these forums to allow for creative energy. She expected that everything done at CEL should be permeated with spirit and with quality at the core.

Sedgmore also considered implementing a spirituality policy at CEL, and she conferred with numerous colleagues, from her executive team, to external staff, followed by managers and the academic board, in order to gain insight into its suitability for the organisation and how it could be presented. Although she received some positive feedback, the concluding advice was that the timing was not right for CEL, and it appeared to be a risk, as spirituality in the workplace was still quite contentious. Despite her strong enthusiasm, she decided not to pursue the matter. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 91).

The fourth intervention implemented by Sedgmore was *developing the whole person through fostering inner life, spiritual awareness, growth and inquiry*. Sedgmore believed that the inner and personal development of individuals was crucial for staff wellness, satisfaction, and morale, but she also understood that this development was important when it came to the success and performance of CEL. The annual budget for individual staff members was £3,700, and this money was intended to be used for initiatives that would foster spiritual awareness and awareness of one's inner life, and would offer individual staff members the opportunity to seek personal growth and to flourish:

Staff were encouraged to engage in whatever inner work appealed to them, and it was made very clear that engagement was not compulsory, and that individuals could engage to whatever depth they wanted to. Meditation, massage, healing, and yoga were also offered by CEL staff on a voluntary, unpaid basis, as were their own stories, passions and hobbies, such as knitting, salsa dancing, hand massage and poetry on staff development events. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 93)

Any staff member who decided to forgo such activities was reminded and reassured that this was not an issue, however, most staff were willing and keen to engage themselves in this inner work. Their feedback on this intervention was wholly positive. External feedback on the development of the inner life of staff members was also very positive. Thus, it may be concluded that “fostering employees’ inner life can be beneficial for organisational commitment and productivity, employee life satisfaction, financial performance and corporate responsibility.” (Gao, 2018, p. 145).

The fifth intervention implemented by Sedgmore was *celebrating and supporting pluralism and diversity*. As a spiritual leader, Sedgmore was committed to facilitating a diverse and accepting environment in the workplace. CEL “modelled the value of being diverse by truly celebrating and respecting differences while embracing the unity and harmony of the spiritual values that underlies CEL’s vision” (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 73). From gender to ethnicity, disability to faith, sexual orientation to age, the differences between staff members were acknowledged, respected, and celebrated at CEL. In order to support such a pluralistic and diverse staff community, Sedgmore introduced and organised diversity awareness training, ‘walk in each other’s shoes’ workshops, and “CEL produced and launched, in the East London Mosque, the *Faith Communities Toolkit* to assist sector leaders in understanding different faith traditions and belief systems.” (Fry & Altman, 2013, p. 73). Sedgmore’s intervention was a success in many ways: the *Faith Communities Toolkit* was incredibly popular amongst sector leaders, CEL placed forty-seventh in the top one hundred gay-friendly companies under the UK Stonewall Diversity

Champion List, and the organisation also won the British National Diversity award for their work of the Black Leadership Initiative project (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 96).

The sixth intervention implemented by Sedgmore was *respecting and responding to dissent and challenge*. As Sedgmore faced dissension during her time as Chief Executive of CEL, she carefully considered how she responded to it. Sedgmore acknowledged that at CEL, she was still developing as a spiritual being and as a leader, and her journey intertwining both was, at times, challenging. Altman, Wilson, and Ozbilgin (2007, p. 51) noted that sometimes staff “felt, [her] style is not to everyone’s taste, she takes a bit of coping with, and she needs to develop her patience, listening to others, understanding and empathising with others.” In her thesis, she reflects upon comments like such and considers the fact that she had not given “enough in-depth consideration to issues of power and coercion” (2013, p.99). She admits that undertaking her doctorate allowed her the opportunity to explore and reflect upon her narcissism and inappropriate behaviours (2013). Sedgmore worked hard to actively take constructive feedback on board during her time at CEL, and with Dr. Western, she:

worked on a range of negative aspects of her personality, which included acting too fast; being overly convinced that certain projects and new innovations were the right thing to do; forgetting to consult sufficiently; being overly enthusiastic; being too keen to be leading edge; going with the flavours of the month that were not adequately tested; taking too many risks; and being overly experimental. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 99)

Sedgmore was making a genuine and conscious effort to keep her narcissism in check, and apologised to staff at CEL's Annual Dialogue for her mistakes. In his research, Joseph (2002) acknowledged that Sedgmore was someone who purposefully worked on and reflected upon her personality weaknesses, and was aware of her flaws. He also remarked that she was not afraid to show vulnerability in public forums. It appears as though Sedgmore always had the best of intentions when it came to the care of her staff, and this was particularly evident at CEL. She consistently looked to develop and improve her spiritual leadership.

These spiritually explicit interventions led to positive consequences for staff, the organisation, and for Sedgmore herself.

2.5 The consequences of Sedgmore's lived spiritual leadership

The consequences of Sedgmore's lived spiritual leadership were three-fold; she accomplished change within herself, her staff, and CEL as an organisation. Throughout her journey as a spiritual leader, she gained valuable insights into how she developed both personally and professionally. She was keen to overcome flaws she may have brought to her role as Chief Executive of CEL, and she was always eager to better herself as a leader for the sake of others. Not only this, but she constantly worked to nourish and cherish her inner life and spirituality in a myriad of ways, as she learned what worked best for her. In her thesis, she states that throughout her career, she learned that leadership is about being authentic and true to one's self:

My integrative journey illustrates that to be a truly effective, authentic, empowering and impactful leader one needs to bring one's authentic whole self into the workplace, being

as fully present as possible. In my case, this involved bringing in all of my mystical self and exploring this fully to be able to fully integrate my spiritual expression with my temporal leadership contexts. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 114).

Sedgmore also came to realise that what matters most to her as a spiritual leader does not concern ‘being spiritual’, rather, “the fostering of the ability to bring the fullest potential of others, their wholeness and their whole self into the workplace” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 114). As Gregory has claimed, “spiritual presence enables the individual to engage in transformative change for themselves and to facilitate the same in others” (2006, p. 4).

This chapter has shown how, over the course of her career, Sedgmore has developed personally, professionally, and spiritually. However, enabling that same transformative change within others was what she truly set out to do. Sedgmore’s ability to effect such change is evident upon reflection on comments made about her by members of staff at CEL. In her thesis, she included examples of such comments left for her in a personalised book given to her by the CEL community when she left the organisation, which contained more than fifty quotes that focused on the positive change she facilitated within those around her during her time as Chief Executive. One staff member commented:

There are some people who are ‘unique’, they add a presence, light up a room and they make you feel special, valued and in a way ‘unique’ yourself. I am new to this organisation and in that short time, I have felt that presence. (2013, p. 70)

Gaining the trust, support, and loyalty of staff members can see productivity and efficiency rise within an organisation, as witnessed in CEL. Sedgmore's ability to lead from within and guide those around her largely contributed to CEL's success. It is evident that the organisation thrived with Sedgmore as Chief Executive - they won numerous awards, and less than four years after its launch, CEL's customer satisfaction rate was at 97%. There was convincing evidence that the organisation had a positive and strong impact on the FE sector, and that CEL had a significant and direct effect on individuals and institutions. Overall, it can be said that the organisation earned a high reputation within the FE sector. (Fry & Altman, 2013, pp. 80-82).

2.6 Conclusion

It is evident that Sedgmore has worked hard to provide credibility for her status as a spiritual leader. Krishnakumar, Houghton, Neck, and Ellison (2015, pp. 17-18) have stated that "spiritual leadership suggests that feelings and beliefs of spirituality expressed and felt by a leader will influence followers to see work as a calling (and intrinsically motivating), subsequently resulting in better organisational outcomes". Sedgmore's work as a spiritual leader aligns with this suggestion. As the research progresses, Fry, Altman, and Palmer's understanding of spiritual leadership will be explored.

Chapter Three

Fry, Altman, and Palmer: Expert voices on spiritual leadership and education

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide insight into the work and lived experiences of Fry, Altman, and Palmer. Each of the three have extensive knowledge in the fields of spirituality, leadership, and education. While the primary focus of Fry, Altman, and Palmer differs, their insight into the life of a leader is what links them. As the chapter progresses, the research aims to draw attention to the work of these academics and practitioners, in order to set the foundation for a comparative analysis of their experience with Sedgmore's. Due to the limited nature of this research, attention will be given to one focal piece of writing each from Fry, Altman, and Palmer.¹ The researcher has chosen these chapters, articles, or publications in the hope that they will accentuate and validate Sedgmore's experience of spiritual leadership.

3.2 Fry: A masterful insight into spiritual leadership

Louis W. Fry, professor, author, and researcher, provides a detailed and renowned insight into spiritual leadership. His work over the past two decades has seen him lecture at the Texas A & M University-Central Texas, where he is the coordinator of their MS Management and Leadership Program. He consults with public and private organisations, and his work has been published in numerous scholarly journals. He is currently the editor for Information Age Publishing and is editing a book series, *Advances in workplace spirituality: Theory, research, and application*. He

¹ Fry: Toward a theory of spiritual leadership, an article published in *The Leadership Quarterly*. Palmer: Leading from within, his chapter in L. C. Spears' book on leadership. Altman: Living spirituality in the workplace - the CEL way, document published by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership.

is also a member of the editorial review boards of The Leadership Quarterly and Public Inquiry (Texas A & M University). Fry is the founder of the International Institute for Spiritual Leadership and a commissioned spiritual director. Presently, his research and interests are focused on maximising the triple bottom line through spiritual leadership in order to co-create a conscious, sustainable world that works for all (International Institute for Spiritual Leadership).

Having written extensively in the area of spiritual leadership, Fry has provided his understanding of the concept with a structured definition: spiritual leadership comprises “the values, attitudes, and behaviours that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership.” (2003, pp. 694 - 695). He explains that this includes:

1. Creating a vision wherein the organisation members experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference;
2. Establishing a social/organisational culture based on altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others, thereby producing a sense of membership and feel understood and appreciated. (2003, p. 695)

Upon reflection of Fry’s suggested definition, it may be concluded that the spiritual leader must be compassionate, motivating, empathetic, and understanding. It is a concept that is community-driven, inclusive, and value-driven, and it should typically lead to high levels of

productivity and organisational commitment. Fry sums up the ultimate effect of spiritual leadership with the following statement:

The ultimate effect of spiritual leadership is to bring together or create a sense of fusion among the four fundamental forces of human existence (body, mind, heart, and spirit) so that people are motivated for high performance, have increased organisational commitment, and personally experience joy, peace, and serenity. In a very real sense, spiritual leadership is...like a nuclear reactor in that it generates the fusion necessary to power the learning organisations of the new millennium. (2003, p. 718)

As the research progresses, this quote will be unpacked in order to gain a valuable insight into how, for Fry, spiritual leadership is largely based on motivation, commitment, community, and a personal sense of joy.

The mid-to-late 1900s witnessed the rise of research in a variety of niche areas within leadership. For example, charismatic leadership has been thoroughly investigated by renowned academics such as Klein and House, who have stated that this particular style of leadership is like “a fire that ignites followers’ energy and commitment producing results above and beyond the call of duty.” (1995). Transformational leadership is rooted in the idea that the leader must be attentive to the motives and needs of their followers, and help inspire them to develop into leaders, reach their potential for development and growth, and go beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group (Bass, 1998). Such styles of leadership can often overlap in various areas. Commonalities evident between spiritual leadership and charismatic and transformational

leadership include the commitment and energy of followers, and the inspirational and motivational qualities within the leader that will allow their followers to thrive. What separates spiritual leadership from other styles of leadership, like those mentioned above, is that it is rooted in workplace spirituality. This research will now highlight how Fry demonstrates that spiritual leadership is intrinsically linked with workplace spirituality, and must be, in order for it to effect positive change within any organisation.

The use of the term 'spirituality' and those who have an interest in the concept has increased significantly since the beginning of the 21st century. As part of their spiritual journey, people are struggling to comprehend what this means for their work (Mintroff & Denton, 1999). While people yearn to find meaning within their personal lives, they also want to find meaning within their professional lives. As leaders allow their spirituality to integrate with their work, most would agree that this integration can lead to very positive changes in their effectiveness and in their relationships (Neal, 2001). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) have also shown evidence to support the idea that workplace spirituality not only leads to beneficial personal outcomes such as increased joy, peace, serenity, job satisfaction, and commitment, but that it also allows for improved productivity and a reduction in absenteeism and turnover. They define workplace spirituality as:

A framework of organisational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy.

As well as being of benefit to leaders and their organisation, workplace spirituality must demonstrate its utility by impacting performance, turnover, and productivity (Sass, 2002).

In order for workplace spirituality to be of value to a leader and their staff and organisation, the leader must look to nourish and sustain their own personal spirituality in numerous ways. As denoted by Fleischman (1994) and Maddox and Fulton (1998), one can nurture their spirituality through acknowledging transcendence or their vocation, and through social connection and membership. Fry explains that having a vocation, or a 'calling', "refers to the experience of transcendence or how one makes a difference through service to others and, in doing so, derives meaning and purpose in life." (2003, p. 703) To make a difference to the lives of others while simultaneously finding meaning in oneself, leaders who seek to incorporate workplace spirituality into their practice should adhere to key spiritual practices that will allow them to progress personally and professionally as a leader. Such practices include knowing one's self, respecting and honouring the beliefs of others, being as trusting as one can be, and maintaining a spiritual practice, such as meditation, or yoga, for example (Fry, 2003).

Pfeffer (2003) notes that at work, people value their affiliations and being able to feel part of a larger community or being interconnected. One of our fundamental needs as human beings is to be understood and appreciated, and so, while seeking inner awareness, leaders must look to nourish their spiritually by promoting the community around them. Workplace spirituality concerns providing the community with a sense of purpose, empowerment, and support. Fry (2003) acknowledges that a leader can do this by supporting staff autonomy. Staff should be

given the autonomy to make responsible decisions through self-managed, empowered teams. Furthermore, the leader must be trusting and willing to let people be who they are to use and develop their gifts and skills. For workplace spirituality to thrive, however, the leader must ensure that this work is interesting, meaningful, provides a sense of purpose, and allows for positive relations between co-workers.

Fry maintains that “any theory of spiritual leadership...should incorporate theoretical components of workplace spirituality” and methods through which leaders should nourish their spirituality. (2003, p. 711). Workplace spirituality requires the leader’s efforts to sustain their spirituality in order to attain inner awareness. The leader can seek this inner awareness while working to create meaningful relationships amongst staff within their working environment, which should increase motivation and productivity. Fry notes the link between this concept and spiritual leadership, as his definition of spiritual leadership highlighted the importance of inner values and attitudes, and a sense of calling and membership. In light of this, it can be contended that spiritual leadership must entail both a personal and communal dimension in order to see individuals and organisations flourish and thrive.

Fry’s concept of spiritual leadership is akin to Sedgmore’s in numerous ways, from the value he places in nourishing one’s own spirituality, to the importance of community. The research aims for the commonalities to become explicitly evident throughout the following chapter. As the current chapter continues, the research will focus on Palmer’s experience of spiritual and educational leadership.

3.3 Palmer: An esteemed figure in the world of spirituality and leadership

Writer, speaker, and activist, Palmer has spent the past five decades of his life “intentionally and intensely devoted to” (Palmer, 2009, p. 1) education and its connection to issues of meaning, purpose, faith, and spirituality. He holds a Ph.D. in sociology, as well as ten honorary doctorates, along with numerous accolades and citations for his work. Among many are the following: In 1998, the Leadership Project, a national survey of 10,000 educators, named Palmer as one of the thirty ‘most influential senior leaders’ in higher education. He is the author of nine best-selling and award-winning books that are centred on spirituality, leadership, education, and social change (Centre for Courage & Renewal).

This section on Palmer will predominantly draw from his chapter (Leading from within) in L. C. Spears’ book *Insights on leadership: Service, stewardship, spirit, and servant leadership*.² In this chapter, he comments on how leaders can bring the best of themselves to their role, and how they can avoid falling into the ‘shadow side’ of leadership.

In his chapter, Palmer discusses his understanding of both leadership and spirituality. Palmer reflects on a speech by Vaclav Havel, former president of Czechoslovakia, delivered to the U.S. Congress in 1990. Havel declared that “the salvation of the human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility.” (1998, p. 198). This statement struck Palmer, and he realised that it aligned with his comprehension of leadership - it is more than just tactics and charisma, it is about the

² The following examples of some of Palmer’s work will prove a broader pattern of his understanding of leadership, education, and spirituality: *Teaching with heart and soul: Reflections on spirituality in teacher education*, *A hidden wholeness: The journey toward an undivided life* and *Let your life speak: Listening for the voice of vocation*.

qualities that lie deep within us. He understands that leaders are responsible for creating their external world by projecting either a spirit of light or a spirit of shadow on that which is other than us. We have a choice in how and what we project; this consciousness can help deform or reform our world. A leader is someone who has an unusual amount of power through which they can project onto other people their shadow or light (Palmer, 1998, p. 200). Palmer has shown concern for those leaders who end up falling into the shadow side of leadership - the antithesis of how a true leader should act.

Palmer notes that leaders are typically considered extroverts, and aim to radiate positivity and confidence; yet, some have never sought to reflect inwards, or journeyed towards an inner awareness:

The problem is that people rise to leadership in our society by a tendency towards extroversion, which too often means ignoring what is going on inside themselves.

Leaders rise to power by operating very competently and effectively in the external world, sometimes at the cost of internal awareness. (Palmer, 2003, p. 200)

It is evident that an inner journey and inner awareness as a leader is imperative when it comes to undertaking such a role. He acknowledges that this awareness can be inhibited by leaders who get caught up in a culture where people tend to only focus on the 'positives'. Often faced with numerous issues and challenges, leaders tend to externalise everything, psych themselves up, and feed themselves on the power of positive thinking. When problematic situations arise, leaders can tend to ignore their inner shadow, reluctant to search within themselves for answers or

insights to difficulties they may be facing. This can result in negative consequences for both the leader and their community (Palmer, 1998). Palmer worries for those leaders who deny their inner world.

When it comes to leading from one's spirituality, Palmer argues that inner reflection is essential. We must understand ourselves before we can understand others. However, as leaders search deep within themselves, they can often encounter characteristics which frighten them, or fears that they do not feel ready to face:

We will meet the violence and terror that we carry within ourselves. If we do not confront these things inwardly, we will project them outward onto other people. When we have not understood that the enemy is within ourselves, we will find a thousand ways of making someone "out there" into the enemy - people of a different race, a different gender, a different sexual orientation. (Palmer, 1998, p. 201)

Many are afraid of the shadow within them as they believe it may make them appear incompetent, weak, or vulnerable to others in their community. Yet, a leader cannot guide others to become the best version of themselves when they do not understand who they are as individuals. Journeying inwards to discover the best version of oneself may not be an easy ride; Palmer refers to the work of Anne Dillard in his chapter, and she claims that going down and in within ourselves can lead to personal confrontation with 'monsters'. These 'monsters' can appear in the form of the realisation that one's inner self is deformed in some way, or unintegrated with the outer self. However, from this often dreaded confrontation arises strong, passionate, and

willing leaders. “Great leadership comes from people who have made that downward journey through violence and terror, who have touched the deep place where we are in community with each other, and who can take the rest of us to that place.” (Palmer, 1998, p. 202). Palmer uses Nelson Mandela as a means of highlighting the positive light and leadership that can come to fruition from deep self-reflection. Rather than spending his decades in prison in despair, Mandela spent his time preparing for enlightened leadership. He did not project his anxieties and fears onto others, but instead used his inner awareness and spirit to effect positive change in an area he was so passionate about. For Palmer, this is a remarkable image for the spiritual journey that leaders must take (1998).

Palmer also allows for anecdotal reflection on his own life during a period he felt was a mid-life crisis. He comments on how journeying inwards allowed him to grow personally, professionally, and spiritually. He spent ten days embarking on a retreat in a place called Hurricane Island. One task he was faced with during his time there was abseiling, which seemed dangerous and terrifying to him. He did not know what to do as he began to lower himself down the cliff. As he continuously asked the leaders of the task to instruct him, he simply could not drag himself away from the cliff face. The leaders prompted Palmer to lean back, but he felt as though he could not. Eventually, he trusted himself and made headway. However, as he encountered a hole in the rock face, his body froze. He thought that he would have to somehow manoeuvre around the hole and change direction completely to avoid it. As his instructor called down to him asking if he was okay, he replied by asserting that he did not want to talk about it. He was avoiding facing the shadow within him. Palmer’s instructor replied by stating: “If you can’t get out of it, get into it”.

He realised at that point that nobody could rescue him except himself, and so, he got back into the swing of things and started to move again. His journey was tough, but he made it safely down the cliff face. The moral of Palmer's anecdote is to prove to leaders that although journeying inwards may be painful, it is worth it. He reasons that "there is no way out of my inner life so I'd better get into it. On the inward and downward spiritual journey, the only way out is in and through." (1998, pp. 203 - 204).

Palmer acknowledges that many leaders, including teachers and principals, often struggle with a deep sense of insecurity about their own identity and self-worth. This can often be one of the biggest shadows that leaders experience. Leaders, particularly men, Palmer claims, contend with "external, institutional functions", and live in fear of what could happen if their institutional identities were to disappear (1998, p. 204). As leaders undertake their roles without ever reflecting inwards or searching for the root of their insecurities, these insecurities can begin to infiltrate and undermine the identity of those who surround them. This occurs as leaders strive to find a way to deal with their unexamined shadow side. In his chapter, Palmer provides a typical example of this struggle with one's identity, and how leaders can end up corroding the identity of those who work within their community:

I am astonished at the number of times I call an office and hear "Dr. Jones's office - this is Nancy speaking." The leader has a title and a last name; the person who answers the phone has neither; and the boss has decreed that it be done that way. This is a small but powerful example of depriving someone else of an identity to enhance your own. (1998, p. 204)

This example is common to many offices and working environments today. It may occur with or without the leader realising that they are doing it. In order to allow others in the community to be comfortable within themselves and their identity, the leader should endeavour to be fully self-aware. In many cases, leaders are inhibiting others from sustaining their own identity by focusing on how they can best enhance their own, so that it appears strong or reputable. In the education system, Palmer witnesses this taking place as students are “passively memorising information delivered by experts. These students have been deprived of an identity by the educational system so that teachers can have more identity for themselves” (1998, p. 204). According to Palmer, this kind of leadership should be redefined and challenged.

Palmer notes that the leader will not become deflated or unnerved if a specific role they had been given is quickly taken away. One’s identity is not dependent on the role they have been assigned. These kinds of leaders will inspire and empower others to become the best version of themselves. The enlightened leader will be assured within themselves as they have gone ‘all the way down’, and they understand that they are not reliant on titles, degrees, or functions. They are confident in themselves, and realise their value. Once the leader appreciates this, they can fully realise their true potential (Palmer, 1998, p. 205).

As Palmer’s chapter continues, he comments on a second shadow side of leadership that carries negative consequences. “The perception that the universe is essentially hostile to human interests and that life is fundamentally a battleground” is a struggle that many leaders contend with (1998, p. 205). Comparing the concept of leadership to battle suggests that if one is not competitive

enough in their role, they will fail. This creates a narrative in our minds that one must fight and push to witness successes and positive results. As leaders grapple with “‘do or die’ tactics and strategies...allies and enemies...wins and losses” (1998, p. 205) they allow their inner shadow to dominate their mindset. Ultimately, their personal fear of failing is projected into reality, and success becomes the sole centre of focus. Leaders themselves end up creating a shallow and stressful reality as they ignore what is inside of them.

As leaders go down and inwards, they have the potential to realise that “there is another way of going about things, a way that is consensual, cooperative, communal” (Palmer, 1998, p. 205), a way that allows the leader to work towards fulfilling a different prophecy and creating a different reality. Once fear of failure is disregarded, and as one journeys within, the leader receives a spiritual gift that provides them with:

knowledge that the universe is working together for good. The universe is not out to get anybody; the structure of reality is not the structure of a battle...That is the spiritual insight that can transform this particular dimension of leadership and thus transform our institutions. (Palmer, 1998, p. 205)

As such, it can be acknowledged that positive leadership can affect positive change within our communities and organisations.

Palmer presents a third shadow side of leadership that he refers to as ‘functional atheism’. This is “the belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with *me*.” (Palmer, 1998, p. 205). He

is alluding to a particular idea that can appear inherent within leaders; if anything good is going to come of their work, they alone are the ones who need to make it happen. This mindset can lead to unhealthy priorities, burnout, and workaholism, among many other negative consequences. Palmer advises that the manner in which to avoid this is to journey inwards and realise, therefore, that positive change is made by delegating and working as a community. For the leader, it can be empowering to share one's load with others, while staff will appreciate being trusted with their designated tasks. This open, symbiotic, and confident environment is one that should be cultivated by leaders (Palmer, 1998).

Fear is a feature of the shadow side of leadership that inhibits leaders from performing positively in their role. In this instance, Palmer is referring specifically to "fear of the natural chaos of life." (1998, p. 206). In order to feel as though they have control over what is going on around them, leaders can blindly aim to organise their environment to show that they can combat change, challenge, innovation, or dissent. There may be no rationale for this other than to look like they are performing positively, or doing 'good' work. While doing so, however, their shadow gets projected outwards in the form of rigidity of rules and procedures. Rather than the open, symbiotic, and confident culture aforementioned, this shadow side of leadership can create a static and unchanging community. Palmer argues that leaders should take inspiration from our spiritual organisations in order to appreciate that "chaos is the precondition to creativity." (1998, p. 206). Fear of chaos can generate a stagnant working environment, and can prevent movement and change. To travel down and inwards, one will receive the spiritual gift of knowledge;

knowledge that organisations and people both thrive and survive in chaos, and that there is vitality in the midst of chaotic energy (Palmer, 1998).

Palmer's final example of the shadows that leaders can project onto others involves the denial of death. In one way, he is referring to the fear of letting things go; for example, unnecessarily seeking to maintain projects and programs that should have been sidelined years previous. He is also suggesting that many leaders demonstrate a fear of public failure, or negative evaluation. Palmer reassures that from failure we can only learn. He acknowledges that the best organisations encourage their community to take risks. Confronting one's denial of death can allow the leader to acquire an important spiritual gift: knowing that "allowing something to die is also allowing new life to emerge." (Palmer, 1998, p. 206).

In order to create a value-led, driven, and positive working environment, leaders must face their inner lives. Organisations and institutions led by those who ignore their 'inner work' will see their 'outer work' suffer. Palmer believes that we should aim to remember a belief common to all great spiritual traditions: Be not afraid.

They do not say you cannot *have* fears; we all have fears, and leaders have fears in abundance. But the spiritual traditions say you do not have to *be* your fears; you do not have to lead from fear and thus engender a world in which fear dominates the lives of far too many people. We can lead, instead, from an inner place of trust and hope, creating a world that is more hopeful and more trustworthy. (Palmer, 1998, p. 208)

True and genuine leadership will take courage. Palmer encourages leaders to take a leap of faith when it comes to facing what exists deep within themselves.

3.4 Altman: A commentary on Sedgmore's career

Altman is recognised for his work in human resource management and comparative management, spirituality, and leadership. Having authored and co-authored books focused on these areas, Altman has also had over 100 articles published in practitioner and academic journals. He has held posts as officer of the Careers Division and the Management, Spirituality & Religion Special Interest Group of the *Academy of Management* (Egel et al.).

In 2008, Altman and his colleagues were commissioned to objectively examine the organisational effectiveness and well-being of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership, the organisation which Sedgmore was Chief Executive of at the time. The purpose of the investigation was also to examine the spiritual essence of CEL as a non-faith organisation striving to do good. Altman's work was carried out by means of interviews, focus groups, observations and questionnaires, which covered a range of performance, well-being and spirituality topics. He and his colleagues also developed theoretical and conceptual models of high effectiveness, performance excellence and spirituality, and measures to evaluate them, based on the extant literature. (Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2008). Through this work, Altman provided a reflection of his understanding of what good leadership is, and what he found during his examination of spiritual leadership in CEL.

Sedgmore constitutes herself a spiritual leader. Although she ran a non-faith based organisation, she promoted organisational spirituality. Altman acknowledges that organisational spirituality is a relatively new field of inquiry, and so he presented definitions of the concept to help his reader better understand it and Sedgmore's work. He quoted Ashmos and Duchon who stated that organisational spirituality can be seen in the "recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community." (2000). CEL's culture and community should in many ways align with such understanding of organisational spirituality. Altman continues by arguing that:

The experience of organisational members is the crucible of the organisation's spiritual sense-making, informed by individuals' personal values on the one hand and the espoused organisational values as manifested by its leadership, on the other hand. In turn, members' experiences shape and are shaped by the values in practice. (Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2008)

As such, it becomes evident that organisational spirituality is present once individual members of a community feel as though their personal values and the organisation's values are strengthened symbiotically through positive spiritual leadership.

Through interviews carried out by Altman and his colleagues at CEL, they became aware that there was a general reluctance on behalf of staff members to discuss areas concerning the spiritual or the transcendent.³ This behaviour was also documented through observations,

³ This observation may resonate with many nowadays. Although society is becoming more spiritual, open, and inclusive, Irish people still see spirituality and religion as something that is private and personal; something that people are not ready to bring to work.

whereby members of the community typically avoided discussing faith in the workplace. Sedgmore, as chief executive, often talked openly about spirituality. Some welcomed this dialogue, while others felt uncomfortable, for personal reasons. Various staff members raised concerns that were centred on the environment CEL was looking to create. For example, as the organisation strove for recognition of the inner life, and for nourishing, meaningful work, staff questioned how much of this was actually possible, due to the strong focus on delivery. Others felt pressure when it came to maintaining a good work-life balance, while some staff members criticised the organisation for not living up to its values in practice, and “that there was an inconsistent understanding of values throughout the organisation” (Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2008).

Despite these critiques, Altman’s findings concluded that ultimately, the organisation is a pioneer for organisational spirituality, and feedback obtained from staff and the community proved CEL to be a positive, spiritual, and productive working environment:

It models servant leadership by listening to customers, encouraging their feedback and responding to their needs; this is mirrored internally through a strong emphasis on trust, empowerment and delegation. CEL offers an impressive combination of spirituality-informed policy and spirituality-guided conduct for the benefit and well-being of its members, stakeholders, customers and the community at large. (Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2008)

With his choice of definitions and the research he provided, Altman has demonstrated that the primary aim of organisational leadership is to promote organisational values that will allow employees to experience transcendence; staff can be afforded the opportunity to become self-aware and should be encouraged to journey inwards. By doing so, the leader will facilitate their community's sense of being connected to others, and will support their feelings of completeness and joy (Giacalone and Jurkievicz, 2003).

3.5 Conclusion

Chapters two and three have provided an insight into the work and experience of Sedgmore, and Fry, Palmer, and Altman. As the research proceeds, a comparative analysis of the work of these academics and practitioners will be presented.

Chapter Four

Comparing key insights on spiritual leadership: Sedgmore in dialogue with Fry, Altman, and Palmer

4.1 Introduction

The findings of this chapter primarily reflect the commonalities present between Sedgmore and Fry, Altman, and Palmer, for they hold a shared understanding of spiritual leadership in many ways. The research has predominantly identified how the work of these academics and practitioners support Sedgmore's insights into the concept, and how they further emphasise the purposeful work she undertook as a spiritual leader.

4.2 Sedgmore in dialogue with Fry

4.2.1 Spirituality, leadership, and its consequences

For Sedgmore, spirituality lies at the core of her leadership style. Although it develops and evolves, her spirituality is not something that she steps in and out of daily. While the foundation of her spiritual leadership style is unique and personal to her, she ultimately strives for the good of her staff and her working community. In her own words:

Spiritual leadership sees people as core to everything. It emanates from love, a deep love, respect and sense of service to and for others. It also transcends ego needs and requires a deep commitment and desire to being the best leader you are capable of being, and to bringing out the best/full potential of others. (Altman, 2010, p. 35)

Sedgmore makes it clear that when it comes to spiritual leadership, people are core to everything. Her definition acknowledges that the concept is centred on community, love, respect, commitment, motivation, and the ability of the leader and staff to flourish as individuals. Fry, in his book, *Maximising the triple bottom line through spiritual leadership* (co-authored by Nisiewicz), states that “spiritual leadership involves intrinsically motivating and inspiring workers through hope/faith in a vision of service to key stakeholders and a corporate culture based on altruistic love.” (2013, p. 4). It is evident that both Sedgmore and Fry place value in similar qualities, such as motivation, commitment, respect, and the centrality of the person.

Despite this, it appears as though Sedgmore holds more interest in a shared vision created by and centred on staff, rather than one that is created with the intention to serve ‘key stakeholders’, as referred to by Fry. Throughout her career, Sedgmore “spent considerable time co-creating collective meaning, higher purpose and identity based on strong staff engagement and influence.” (Sedgmore, 2013, pp. 84-85). Input from staff and how they express their own individual and personal values and moral purpose, as well as how they respond to corporate values, is important for Sedgmore as a spiritual leader. Her thesis highlights how she endeavored to put people first throughout her career; her priority whilst creating a shared vision was not key stakeholders.

Fry, in his work,⁴ focuses much of his attention on areas of spiritual leadership that Sedgmore values. The previous chapter quoted him explaining his understanding of the ultimate effect of

⁴ *Toward a theory of spiritual leadership*, the article from which the research drew in the previous chapter.

spiritual leadership (2003, p. 718).⁵ He suggests that the effect or outcome will be positive, and will see a rise in motivation, commitment, sense of community, and a personal sentiment of joy for both the leader and staff. As Sedgmore reflects on her career as a spiritual leader, she, in a similar manner, concludes that “the fostering of the ability to bring the fullest potential of others, their wholeness and their whole self into the workplace” (2013, p. 114) is of high importance when it comes to spiritual leadership. Overall, Fry and Sedgmore maintain a common understanding of this aspect of spiritual leadership and its consequences.

4.2.2 Workplace spirituality

In her thesis (2013), Sedgmore discusses workplace spirituality (or spirituality in the workplace) and its benefits. She quotes Ashmos and Duchon⁶ who recognise the concept as “an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community” (2000). This definition of workplace spirituality is comparable with Giacalone and Jurkievicz’s (2003)⁷; Sedgmore presents their understanding of the concept as constructive and valuable. She appreciates that spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality are linked, just as Fry does. He claims that spiritual leadership is rooted in workplace spirituality, and also uses Giacalone and Jurkievicz’s definition to support the theory that workplace spirituality leads to beneficial personal, communal, and organisational outcomes.

⁵ “The ultimate effect of spiritual leadership is to bring together or create a sense of fusion among the four fundamental forces of human existence (body, mind, heart, and spirit) so that people are motivated for high performance, have increased organisational commitment, and personally experience joy, peace, and serenity. In a very real sense, spiritual leadership is...like a nuclear reactor in that it generates the fusion necessary to power the learning organisations of the new millennium.”

⁶ Altman also used the same quote in the Centre for Excellence in Leadership document to explain workplace spirituality.

⁷ “A framework of organisational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees’ experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy.”

Fry provides commentary on an essential aspect of workplace spirituality: the importance of imbuing the community with a sense of purpose, empowerment, and support (2003). This includes supporting staff autonomy, delegation, and the opportunity for staff to engage in meaningful, purposeful work so that they can develop their gifts and skills. It is evident that Sedgmore offered such opportunities to staff at CEL. One of the interventions she imposed at the organisation was *fostering a spiritually intelligent, high-spirited community*. Through this, she inverted the typical concept of leadership, and placed staff at the peak of the organisation.⁸ Her intention was to create an “oasis of freedom and autonomy” (2013, p. 87). Her “philosophy held moral purpose at its core and encouraged a distributed, student-centred, empowering leadership approach to enable staff, at every level, to develop and lead to their fullest potential, including the spiritual dimension.” (2013, p. 87). Sedgmore invested in her colleagues and staff at CEL, both as individuals and as a community. Her lived experience of workplace spirituality draws clear similarities with Fry’s understanding of the concept, as both believe in the vitality of personal and communal fulfilment.

4.2.3 The inner life of a leader

As Fry provides insight into workplace spirituality, he comments on how the development and nourishing of the inner life of a leader is essential for the concept to generate positive outcomes. He notes that key spiritual practices must be undertaken in order for a leader to evolve personally and professionally.⁹ Sedgmore, too, maintains that “a daily spiritual practice in which the inner life is deepened and an inner strength and discernment are cultivated is important” (Altman,

⁸ See chapter 2.

⁹ These include yoga, self-awareness, and respect for others’ beliefs.

2010, p. 35). She demonstrates this as, throughout her career, she aimed to exercise these spiritual practices:

She trained as a spiritual director in the Christian tradition, as a spiritual healer with the National Federation of Spiritual Healers, took vows as an Oblate to Douai Abbey monastic community, and began a journey of exploring Catholicism and Christianity in more depth. (Fry and Altman, 2013, p. 38)

Gao also notes:

She was also involved in interfaith dialogue and conferences, and participated in joint services across the major faith traditions. Time away on retreats continued to give her nourishment and inner peace. She acquired new depth to her inner life and developed a strong sense of love and service. (2018, p. 136)

Furthermore, there was a point in her career at which she felt as though her inner spiritual life needed extra attention and nourishment. Based on this, she decided to seek assistance from a leadership writer and coach who could help her provide her inner life with the sustenance it needed. Ensuring she was consistently performing to the best of her ability was a priority for Sedgmore. Both in theory and practice, she was committed to a variety of spiritual exercises so that she could better herself professionally. She believes in the benefits of key spiritual practices, as Fry does. In order for her spiritual leadership style to reap positive change, she maintained effective workplace spirituality at CEL.

CEL was a highly successful company, and this has been confirmed through “several independent studies” (Fry and Altman, 2013, p. 119). In his case study on CEL with Altman, Fry acknowledges that “at the heart of [CEL’s] success was Lynne’s emphasis on personal and organisational spiritual leadership as central to employee wellbeing and performance excellence.” (2013, p. 119). This research highlights how Sedgmore and Fry’s work and experience with spiritual leadership share many commonalities. Not only this, but it is clear that Fry places value in the work Sedgmore undertook throughout her career, particularly at CEL.¹⁰

4.3 Sedgmore in dialogue with Palmer

The previous chapter saw insight from Palmer on the shadow side of leadership, where he examines the responsibility of the leader to ‘journey inwards’, and to become familiar and aware of their inner life. He states that “a leader must take special responsibility for what’s going on inside his or her own self, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.” (1998, p. 200). The insight presented on Sedgmore’s spiritual leadership in chapter one of this research demonstrated how she made sustenance of her inner life a priority; a clear, albeit broad, connection can be drawn between her and Palmer based on this alone. While she faced dissent and challenge throughout her career, and admittedly made mistakes, she strived to lead from her inner self, fully self aware and conscious of what lay within her.

¹⁰ It is worth noting that in her thesis, Sedgmore commented on the fact that Fry, in his research and feedback, tended to over emphasise the positive elements of her spiritual leadership style with insufficient challenge and critique.

4.3.1 The inner self

Palmer argues that when one's inner self is left unexamined, "we will deal with our fears by killing the enemy, when what we really fear is the shadow within ourselves." (1998, p. 202). In such a case, staff and certain members of an organisation's community can be left feeling marginalised or unappreciated. It may not be easy for a leader to search deep within themselves and accept who they truly are; however, it is essential that they make this journey in order for them to understand what lies within - the positives, the imperfections, and all that exists in between. Once they begin to accept themselves, it is almost inevitable that they will become more open as leaders and accepting of others. As a spiritual leader, Sedgmore clearly valued inclusivity and diversity. She stated:¹¹

Commitment to diversity was a core strand of the CEL mission alongside a core value of being "diverse" in that all differences were truly celebrated and expected, while seeing through to the unity and harmony of what, at the deepest spiritual core, bound staff together in meaningful and common purposes. As part of the values dialogue, CEL was explicit about diversity, including gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, disability and faith; developing a powerful diversity strategy, which [Sedgmore] led personally. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 95)

Palmer asserts that if leaders do not confront the violence and terror they carry within themselves, they will project these things outward onto other people (1998, p. 201). Through meditation, contemplation, and various spiritual practices, Sedgmore readily faced whatever

¹¹ See chapter 2 for more detail on the work Sedgmore did that was centred on diversity.

anxieties she may have carried within herself throughout her career. As she lived harmoniously with her inner self, inclusivity and openness were natural to her.

4.3.2 A leader's identity

According to Palmer, “one of the biggest shadows inside a lot of leaders is deep insecurity about their own identity...they are trying to prove themselves in the external world rather than wrestling with their inner identity.” (1998, p. 204). All members of a staff community are entitled to their own identity, without fear of the leader belittling it or taking away from it. Sedgmore, too, realises that a leader's title or role is not what is important when it comes to running an organisation. She presents an example of this in her thesis: during her time working at Guildford College, Sedgmore looked to introduce a *Spirituality Policy* for the whole college. She sought much feedback on the policy, which was thoughtful and sincere. When she consulted her executive team and external colleagues, they stated that spirituality was “still too contentious an arena on which to introduce a policy” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 91). Overall, the response to introducing such a policy was a definite ‘no’.

A leader whose inner life is uninformed and malnourished may have decided to implement the *Spirituality Policy* despite the feedback received. A leader is one who exhibits a lot of power; one easily could have dismissed the negative responses and continued to work according to their own agenda. Initially, Sedgmore was enthusiastic about introducing the policy and had hoped that it would have been circulated after she had consulted with her expert colleagues and team. While it was difficult for her, she ultimately decided to listen to her team, and “to adapt [her]

behaviour and desire to the organisational context as seen from their perspective.” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 92). Her role as ‘leader’ here and her identity were not a priority, rather, it was doing what was best for the college and the community.

4.3.3 The universe is not against you

Palmer comments on how leaders often believe “that the universe is essentially hostile to human interests and that life is fundamentally a battleground” (1998, p. 205). However, this is not the case. He urges leaders to realise that senior management, middle management, and staff are united through a shared vision for their organisation; they are all working towards the same cause. The universe is not out to get anyone, and is not working against them - the universe is working for good. Sometimes, things may not fall into place for a leader, despite how much hard work has been put in - a leader should understand that that is okay. There are numerous other opportunities for them to excel and demonstrate their competency.

Palmer writes about the weight that comes with being a leader, and highlights the perceived idea “that if we fail to be fiercely competitive, we will lose, because the basic structure of the universe is a vast combat zone.” (1998, p. 205). Despite this negative perception, leadership is not a battleground. It is evident that Sedgmore demonstrates a similar mindset, and understands that the world is not working against her. She highlighted this as she commenced her career at CEL. She insisted on being the first employee to be directly employed by the organisation, even though this involved less desirable consequences than if she were employed by a company

partner.¹² She was not worried about how this might affect the manner in which her colleagues and staff perceived her as a leader, nor did she let the pressure, competition, and struggle of being the ‘ideal’ leader stop her from making this decision. Although it may not have been an easy choice, she understood that she was not in battle against CEL and the organisation's partners.

4.3.4 Delegation

Delegating and working as a community are ways through which a leader can effect positive change within an organisation. Palmer comments on how ‘functional atheism’ is a shadow side of leadership that can only be overcome by an inward journey made by a leader,¹³ and how delegation and working as a community fosters positive change. The research has presented evidence to show that Sedgmore prioritises her inner self. For example, Fry and Altman’s case study on Sedgmore’s career at CEL concludes that she “reports an unquenchable thirst for exploring and developing her inner life and mindfulness through meditation and says she cannot live without daily contemplation and spiritual practices.” (2013, p. 20). Sedgmore’s career proved that she disregarded what is often perceived as traditional leadership; she avoided engaging with the “lone, charismatic, egoic hero model.” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 87). Instead, she focused on effective communication, implementing a no-blame culture, delegating budgets, genuine distributed leadership, and the encouragement of bottom-up organic networks and task groups (Sedgmore, 2013). She expanded on how she implemented these measures as she wrote about *spiritually informed policies and liberating processes*¹⁴ at CEL. Positive change was

¹² See chapter 2.

¹³ See chapter 3.

¹⁴ One of her six spiritually explicit interventions.

something Sedgmore achieved through dialogue and experiments with all of her staff and colleagues. The result can be seen in how, over four years, “CEL moved from being a disjointed partnership and dysfunctional culture to a high-spirited, high-performing, innovative organisation with outstanding reputation, service, fun, and high levels of customer and staff satisfaction.” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 101). Sedgmore credits the fostering of high levels of spiritual capital within the organisation for this, and it is apparent that her six interventions added to the beneficial change that occurred within CEL.

4.3.5 Spiritual leadership and different faith traditions

Palmer identifies as a Quaker within the Christian tradition, while Sedgmore has evolved spiritually throughout her life, drawing inspiration from Christianity and Buddhism. She is not exclusively tied to any one tradition. She has a “deep and open, flexible and inclusive spirituality” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 57), and she articulates her sense of self as “seeing, being and responding with non dual reality as both manifest and unmanifest, as self and non self, through being awake and present in the timelessness of now.” (2013, p. 19). Despite their differing spiritual and religious beliefs, they both recognise that spiritual traditions do inform one's leadership. For example, Palmer encourages leaders to welcome chaos, and to seek the knowledge that chaos can allow for energy, vitality, and positive change. “The spiritual gift of the inner journey is to know that creation comes out of chaos every now and then so that it can be re-created in a more vital form.” (Palmer, 1998, p. 206). Sedgmore has always led from the spirituality within her, and she did not fear chaos. The manner in which she sought to nurture the individuality and spirituality of the CEL community was highlighted in chapter two of this

research. This is particularly evident through one of Sedgmore's spirituality explicit interventions (*Developing the whole person through fostering inner life, spiritual awareness, growth and inquiry*). This intervention reflects how Sedgmore was unafraid of chaos. She quotes Briskin et al (2009, p. 11) who articulate that the "power of collective wisdom lies in its ability to be an emergent phenomenon - from uncertainty, inquiry and dialogue come new meaning, learnt and unanticipated ways to move forward". Taking an educated 'leap of faith' when it comes to new ideas and creativity is important to Sedgmore.

4.3.6 Confronting risks, fears, and failures

"The best organisations and leaders are asking people to take risks that may sometimes lead to failure, because they understand that from failure we can learn." (Palmer, 1998). Palmer urges leaders to experiment, to try and try again, and to be creative. Like him, Sedgmore does not fear failure. In her case, taking too many risks and being overly experimental was regarded as a negative aspect of how she coordinated her decisions as a leader by some staff members. Based on feedback, she and her leadership coach acknowledged her "narcissism and inappropriate behaviours."¹⁵ (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 99). Taking too many risks may not have been a good thing, however, she looked to overcome any flaws she may have brought to her role as a leader. This is most important for Palmer, as he states that it is essential a leader learns from their mistakes.

Sedgmore always strived to lead with altruistic love, but there were times in her career where she needed to work on her "irritation and anger at staff who were underperforming or creating

¹⁵ See chapter 2.

blockages within the organisation.” (Fry and Altman, 2013, p. 59). After one particular incident,¹⁶ she verbally shouted at administrators at CEL for apparently neglecting their duties, without listening to their side of the story. Upon reflection and with the support of her leadership coach, she realised that the right thing to do was to publicly acknowledge what she had done and to apologise at the next staff away day. She wanted to do this in the hope that she could create an open two-way dialogue, and that as a leader, she would become more transparent. This was difficult for Sedgmore (indeed, it is considered trying for any leader to stand up in front of their staff and sincerely apologise for a mistake made on their behalf). However, she learned from this incident and sought knowledge from within (Fry and Altman, 2013, p. 61). Rather than ignoring the shadow side of her leadership, Sedgmore confronted the irritation and anger that was rising within her - and by doing so, it became transformed into something positive. Due to her inner reflection, she was awakened spiritually. Palmer acknowledges how important this is when it comes to confronting one’s inner shadow: “The spiritual gift on the inner journey is the knowledge that death is natural and that death is not the final word.” (1998, p. 206).

4.3.7 Spirituality: Personal, not private

Palmer asks leaders to remember that “although inner work is a deeply personal matter, it is not necessarily a *private* matter.” (1998, p. 207). Sedgmore offered her staff opportunities to work on themselves as individuals, but in a communal way (it was not compulsory to do this inner work). For example, staff were afforded the chance to engage with this inner work on staff away days or with their assigned coaches or mentors. The organisation's culture was conducive to the

¹⁶ Four administrators were found ‘chatting’ outside a conference that was taking place, when they were needed inside to support the speaker (Fry and Altman, 2013, p. 59).

flourishing of individuals in the most communal way possible, where “most, if, not all, CEL staff felt a deep sense of purpose, belonging, nourishment, growth and fun” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 79). Mary Joyce, a staff member at CEL, alluded to the idea that inner work was encouraged at the organisation, and wasn’t necessarily a private matter:

I have the space and ‘permission’ to bring more of my authentic self to work, but this brings with it greater vulnerability and honesty in my relationships, and highlights the importance of trust and respect in work...I am also enjoying being part of a community that can create spaces for people to grow and develop and experience themselves in new ways. This provides limitless opportunities for creative and collaborative work, and my work feels more creative and affirms in turn. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 80)

This inner work that allowed for the rise of creativity, motivation, and growth within staff members at CEL saw the organisation succeed in numerous ways.¹⁷ Palmer remarked that “if we skimp on our inner work, our outer work will be diminished as well.” (1998, p. 207). It appears evident that Sedgmore also believes this is true; inner work was prioritised at CEL, and as a consequence, the community’s outer work thrived.

4.3.8 Be not afraid

The research presented on Sedgmore’s work as a spiritual leader highlights a common belief, be it explicit or implicit, held by both she and Palmer: “Be not afraid.” (Palmer, 1998, p. 207). This mantra is shared by all of the great spiritual traditions - it does not matter if a leader is a Quaker,

¹⁷ These are presented in chapter 2.

like Palmer, or is someone who embraces their own form of spirituality, like Sedgmore. Your faith and spirituality can and will tell you that you do not have to lead from your fears, and you do not have to be your fears. Sedgmore took on the role of Chief Executive at CEL despite the undesirable legacy left by her predecessors. She brought spirituality into the workplace when it was still controversial to do so. She openly and honestly apologised when she made mistakes. She was not afraid, and this is a gift that she received through spiritual awakening:

New leadership is needed for new times, but it will not come from finding new and more wily ways to manipulate the external world. It will come as we who lead find the courage to take an inner journey toward both our shadows and our light, a journey that, faithfully pursued, will take us beyond ourselves to become healers of a wounded world. (Palmer, 1998, p. 208)

While differences may exist between both practitioners when it comes to their faith and spirituality, methods through which one can lead authentically, taking inspiration from personal beliefs, is something that connects them.

4.4 Sedgmore in dialogue with Altman

4.4.1 Organisational spirituality

In 2008, Altman presented his case study on CEL with conclusions on its effectiveness in terms of organisational spirituality. To explain what organisational spirituality constitutes, he referred to Ashmos and Duchon's definition (2000).¹⁸ In her thesis, Sedgmore also suggests this

¹⁸ "Recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community."

definition when discussing spirituality in the workplace. Both have a similar understanding of what organisational spirituality consists of - this includes how the experience of the staff and community are shaped by an organisation's lived values (Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2008). In the previous chapter, based on the information Altman provided on the concept, the research acknowledged that organisational spirituality is present once individual members of a community feel as though their personal values and the organisation's values are strengthened symbiotically through positive spiritual leadership. It is evident that Sedgmore looked to ensure that individuals within the CEL community felt this way. She stated that "vision, values and virtues have always played a pivotal role in [her] leadership alongside a sincere and authentic desire to articulate and to act on them in a congruent manner, with commitment and engagement from staff." (2013, p. 67). Staff at CEL were encouraged at work to reflect upon their own personal values and moral purpose, and to seek an understanding of how those values resonated, or not, with the corporate values (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 85). Chapter 2 of this research highlights the methods undertaken by Sedgmore that would allow staff to engage in personal work like this. Altman, however, noted that various staff members felt as though the values of CEL were not lived in practice, and they were critical of this. Some members of the community believed that there was not a common understanding and appreciation of values shared throughout the organisation (Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2008). While the majority of staff at CEL may not have felt this way, there is a slight disparity between Sedgmore's understanding of personal and organisational values at CEL, and what had been observed by Altman. Altman recommended that she develop her patience, listen to what others have to say, and that she work on her empathy and understanding (2008, p. 51). Until her time at CEL came to an end,

Sedgmore aimed to integrate value-led work into all parts of the organisation, and she continued to provide opportunities twice annually for staff to reflect on their individual understanding of values and virtues, and to foster a thoughtful and conscious connection to their collective purpose (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 85).

4.4.2 Response to dialogue on spirituality at work

Altman also observed that there was a general reluctance from staff at CEL to engage in conversations concerning the spiritual or the transcendent. Upon reflection, Sedgmore realised that she could have approached this and spirituality in the workplace from a different angle:

One of my flaws was to think that I could speak out on things as Lynne, simply a human being, speaking my mind, expressing my emotions and sharing my spirituality with others, as if there were a more equal power relationship than existed in reality. I was being naive, and possibly unintentionally coercive, with unrealistic expectations of what was possible within a traditional organisational space and power base. The nativity lay in expecting it to be easy, open and safe for others, as it was for me, the person with the ultimate hierarchical power. The potential invasiveness lay in others potentially not being able to resist to the extent to which I felt they could, and would, if they wanted to. I would approach the power issue very differently now, with more sensitivity and with more safe spaces for staff to express their views. (2013, p. 100)

Altman's findings and Sedgmore's reflections appear to be closely associated with one another. As aforementioned, leadership is a journey; one is allowed to make mistakes, the important thing is that they learn from them.

Overall, the research presented on Sedgmore's career as spiritual leader thus far has been, for the most part, positive and affirming. Altman concluded that ultimately, CEL was leading-edge when it came to organisational spirituality. The majority of feedback he obtained from the community reflected how staff appreciated that the organisation allowed for a positive, spiritual, and productive working environment. In his book co-authored by Fry, Altman summarised the legacy of CEL:

Once in a while we find an organisation whose performance so greatly exceeds expectations that it is difficult to believe that its level of success is what it seems. The people of CEL who embrace CEL's ethos...are still working to recreate..CEL's spirit and the success...that came with it. (2013, pp. 131-134)

Sedgmore overcame hurdles, challenges, and mistakes throughout her career; ultimately, it appears that Altman admires and commends Sedgmore for her pioneering work in organisational spirituality.

4.5 Conclusion

The research thus far has identified a variety of themes in Sedgmore's work that are also present in Fry, Palmer, and Altman's writings. These themes include the centrality of the person,

workplace spirituality, the inner life of a leader, shared vision and values, and spirituality as simultaneously personal and communal. The final chapter of this research will address these themes in an attempt to provide insight as to how Sedgmore's practice and experience of spiritual leadership may prove useful for principals in the Irish post-primary setting.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: Spiritual leadership in the post-primary setting

5.1 Introduction

In Ireland today, “new religious movements are flourishing”¹⁹ (Cosgrove, Cox, Kuhling, and Mulholland, 2011, p. 1), and spirituality is becoming increasingly popular. Based on this, it could be suggested that Irish people should have the opportunity to explore the implications of their spirituality in the workplace. Anecdotally, it appears as though conversations concerning personal faith and beliefs are still contentious topics in Irish staff rooms, and spirituality, in the broad sense of the word, is often seen as a private matter for many. It is viewed as uncommon for principals, and in turn, the wider school community, in the Irish post-primary setting to be invited to journey inwards, and to reflect upon and nurture their personal beliefs. Sedgmore’s thesis showed that when staff feel “a deep sense of purpose, belonging, nourishment, growth and fun” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 79), commitment and motivation levels increase. Perhaps it is time for Irish principals to be unafraid as Sedgmore was throughout her career. Taking inspiration from her spiritual leadership style, they may be encouraged to explore their own faith and introduce a value-centred way of being into the post-primary setting, with a focus on diversity, altruistic love, openness, community, and inclusion.

In order to demonstrate the potential usefulness of Sedgmore’s spiritual leadership style, this chapter will focus on themes that have emerged throughout the research: the centrality of the

¹⁹ New religious movements are movements whose followers look to “search for, discover and develop 'the god within' or to get in contact with cosmic forces, or explore 'the spiritual'”. (Barker, 1996, p. 126).

person, workplace spirituality, diversity and inclusion, the inner life of a leader, shared vision and values, and spirituality as personal but not private.

5.2 Spiritual leadership

Kouzes and Posner acknowledge that “leadership begins with you...the quest for leadership...is first an inner quest to discover who you are and what you care about and it’s through this process of self-examination that you find the awareness needed to lead.” (2012). Sedgmore’s thesis and her experience as a spiritual leader emphasise this message. Throughout her career, it is evident that she prioritised nourishment of her inner self. Daily spiritual practices and inner reflection allowed her to lead authentically. Her inner journeys helped her “to create a more liberating, less hierarchical structure and organisational form” (Western and Sedgmore, 2008, p. 338). Palmer also reinforces the positive nature of journeying inwards:

Great leadership comes from people who have made that downward journey through violence and terror, who have touched the deep place where we are in community with each other, and who can help take the rest of us to that place. (1998, p. 202)

If principals in the Irish post-primary setting are to take guidance from Sedgmore’s career, an inner journey is a necessity. As Palmer discussed, this can often be difficult to embark upon for fear of what lies within. For those who, perhaps, do not know where to start when it comes to searching for self-awareness, Melander and Eppley in *The spiritual leader’s guide to self-care* highlight how personal wellness is essential for spiritual leaders, as “caring for ourselves is part of how we minister for others.” (2002, p. XIII). A principal will not be able to provide their

community with the means to flourish as individuals if they do not prioritise their inner selves. The co-authors outline weekly steps that can be taken over the course of a year to care for one's body, mind and spirit, which are separated into categories:

- Creating a life vision. This includes exploring your faith journey, discovering your authentic self, and a focus on retreats.
- Caring for yourself at work. This includes working with boundaries, celebrating successes, and taking time for yourself.
- Nurturing your relationships. This includes approaching conflict effectively, understanding anger, and finding community.
- Caring for your physical and material needs. This includes coping with stress, organising your living space, and maintaining a safe living environment.
- Caring for your spiritual and intellectual needs. This includes attending to your own spiritual life, mining sources of wisdom, and expressing gratitude.
- Sustaining a life vision. This includes leaving a legacy, creating a vision statement, and continuing in a lifetime of self-care.

These experiences, exercises, and reflections are akin to how Sedgmore worked towards inner awareness. For those leaders in the Irish post-primary setting who feel inspired by her work, but are not sure how they can cultivate their own spirituality and inner awareness; these steps may prove useful.

5.3 Implications for spiritual leadership

5.3.1 Valuing diversity

One of Sedgmore's six spiritually explicit interventions for leading highly innovative and high-performing cultures was *celebrating and supporting spiritual pluralism and diversity* (2013). Inclusivity and openness are important for Sedgmore, and it's evident that her commitment to respecting diversity was appreciated by the CEL community. For example, Phil Barnett, a staff member at CEL, commented on her positive support for sexual orientation equality in the workplace:

You have supported and encouraged the work I have done, and this has been fantastic - thank you so much. The work we have done on sexual orientation equality really does seem to have set things in motion across the sector - the issue is now on the agenda, work is springing up all over the place, networks are coming into life, conferences and seminars are being held. The lives of learners and staff are being changed. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 98)

Sedgmore's work allowed staff to feel appreciated and valued; individuals did not have to fear marginalisation based on personal orientation or beliefs.

5.3.2 Diversity and sexual orientation

For the Irish post-primary context, Aoife Neary's case study published on lesbian and gay teachers' experiences of 'coming out' in Irish schools may provide principals with insight into valuing diversity when it comes to staff and students. Neary (2013) outlines how the teachers

(from primary and post-primary backgrounds) in the case study experienced difficulties within the teaching profession because of their sexual orientation, and explores how they often felt closeted, stifled, or restricted in the school setting. This, in part, was due to “a lack of official discussion of policies on diversity and inclusiveness” (Neary, 2013, p. 594) at school, which led to some teachers believing that the environments they taught in were hostile. Most teachers also experienced difficulties when it came to sanctioning homophobic bullying at school and some were reluctant to play a supportive role for students who were reflecting on their own orientation, due to vague policies. One teacher stated:

I’d love to be absolutely open with kids, I’d love to feel comfortable enough that if they asked me a personal question and I feel it might help them to know the answer ... but I’m not sure how management would feel ... (Seán, second-level teacher). (Neary, 2013, p. 594)

It is evident that lack of discussion concerning sexual orientation and the LGBTQ+ community negatively impacts both staff and students.

The teachers in the case study spoke about “the necessity of explicitly mentioning sexual orientation in school policies” (Neary, 2013, p. 594); this would be viewed as a step in the right direction for LGBTQ+ teachers, and would also benefit students and the wider school community. Not only this, but it would “be necessary to (re)educate school communities through whole-school approaches that interrupt assumptions around heterosexuality, uncover silences and break down the dangerous stereotypes and misrepresentations that have been the tools of the

heterosexual imperative.” (Nearly, 2013, p. 597). In order to create a positive school climate that caters for the LGBTQ+ community, Wright and Smith (2013, pp. 10-11) have recommended the following strategies be implemented by principals:²⁰

- School leaders model and require use of non- homophobic language by all students, teachers and staff.
- School leaders intervene when students, faculty or staff use homophobic language.
- School leaders provide professional development to faculty and staff on creating safe and supportive learning environments for LGBT students.
- School leaders provide professional development for faculty and staff on creating safe and supportive working environments for LGBT educators and other school employees.
- School leaders work with educators to review curricula for inclusion of relevant LGBT individuals and topics.
- School leaders communicate to all faculty and staff that it is safe to discuss LGBT matters with them.
- School leaders review school policies to ensure inclusion of non-harassment policies that incorporate sexual orientation and gender identity.
- School leaders review school policies to insure inclusion of a non-homophobic language policy that is inclusive of transgender and gender identity.
- School leaders will model to the community surrounding the school that LGBT students, teachers and staff will be treated with respect.

²⁰ These recommendations are based on findings of a survey of LGBT teachers.

- School leaders will model the inclusion of LGBT educators' spouses and families in school and community social events as well as recognition of their significant life events.

By incorporating and normalising such strategies, principals in the Irish post-primary setting will see staff and students benefit - particularly those in the LGBTQ+ community.

5.3.3 Diversity and the Traveller community

Taking inspiration from Sedgmore's celebration of diversity in the workplace, it is suggested that principals reflect on the marginalisation of the Traveller community in the Irish post-primary setting. In their study of post-primary schools in Ireland, Lynch and Lodge (2002, p. 140) report that three-quarters of school-aged young people have strongly negative attitudes towards Travellers, and these young people feel as though Travellers would not/do not fit into their school. When Tormey and Gleeson undertook a study focused on ethnic minorities in Irish post-primary schools, they found that "the levels of reported negativity towards Irish Travellers are disturbing and need to be urgently addressed by our education system." (2012, p. 17). It is evident that post-primary students from the Irish Traveller community are not widely accepted by their peers, which, ultimately, reflects on the wider school community as a whole. This marginalisation has a knock-on effect for Traveller students when it comes to attendance, motivation, and academic progress.

While focus on policies to safeguard the LGBTQ+ community may be recommended for schools, Tormey and Gleeson suggest the opposite when it comes to combating antipathy

towards the Irish Traveller community: “Dealing with Travellers and immigrant minorities through a separate set of policies and procedures may actually reinforce the perception that Travellers are in some way in a different category. This may, as such, be counterproductive.” (2012, p. 17).

In the UK, Boot’s comprehensive study (2013, p. 267) on Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller students in a mainstream post-primary school detailed strategies school leaders may put in place to promote social inclusion and academic progress of these minority communities. For example, she outlined that offering transport to these students, providing resources, such as laptops, attending college open days with them, and liaising with them at home during periods of absence, were just some of the positive methods used to enable Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller students to flourish at school. Furthermore, working with these students at an individual level and consideration of timetables to ensure pupils could access relevant lessons were found to be beneficial strategies. Boot hypothesised that these interventions and practices led to and “encouraged voluntary attendance of [Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller] pupils because they showed that they were valued and their specific needs were considered.” (2013, p. 267).

Binding her working community “together in meaningful and common purpose” (2013, p. 95) was important for Sedgmore; in the Irish post-primary setting, it is essential for spiritual leaders to reflect on all members of the community and individuals who may require particular attention when it comes to feeling included and valued within the school setting.

5.3.4 Diversity and religion and spirituality

At CEL, employees were “free to express themselves as they [chose], and no form of spirituality [was] excluded from the organisation” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 96); spiritual leaders in Irish post-primary schools (the majority of which are distinctly under Catholic patronage) can endeavour to create a similar culture. While leaders nurture the Catholic ethos of their school, they can simultaneously welcome, respect, and appreciate the various different beliefs held by staff and students. In Ireland, the population of those who were members of minority religions, such as Hinduism and Islam, grew rapidly from 2011-2016 (Central Statistics Office, 2016). Principals must rise to the challenges that may accompany globalisation in order to “make a significant contribution to peace, openness to other cultures, tolerance and respect for human rights” (Milot, 2007, p. 19).

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland published *Intercultural Guidelines* for post-primary schools in 2006, which explained that schools should celebrate special events in the calendars of a diversity of cultures and that all members of the school community should feel at home and represented, irrespective of their colour, ethnic group, or religion. However, they don’t explicitly outline specific strategies guiding principals to work towards the creation of such an environment. In the UK setting, Jackson recommended that in practice, students should be:

taught skills of interpretation and should be given opportunities for reflexivity, considering the impact of new learning on their own beliefs and values, and applying critical judgments in a constructive, rational and informed way. Moreover, pupils should

be given a role in selecting topics and in designing and reviewing methods of study used, being treated as co-learners with the teacher. There is an increasing amount of research evidence...showing that children and young people are motivated to learn if they are given agency. (2004, p. 46)

He also denotes that students should be afforded the opportunity, when possible, to engage in personal interaction with children and adults from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds (classroom dialogue, outside visits, welcoming guests into the school), and that schools need to explicitly confront issues of racism of all kinds, to promote the equal worth of all members of the school community (2004, p. 47). The implementation of such strategies can allow for spiritual leaders in the Irish post-primary context to celebrate diversity within their communities.

When it comes to sexual orientation, the inclusion of the Irish Traveller community, and religious pluralism in post-primary schools,²¹ principals can reflect on Sedmgore's work on policies and practices at CEL, where "the aim was to build a culture that was emancipatory; a culture where employees had increasing agency to influence change...and create new thinking space". (2013, p. 90). If policies and practices affect all staff and students in the workplace, they cannot be created or imagined by the leader alone - the voice of the community and the centrality of the person should be prioritised.

²¹ This chapter has focused only on these specific issues due to the limited nature of the research.

5.4 The well-being of the school community

The research thus far has made evident the opportunities Sedgmore granted to staff at CEL to ensure their well-being.²² She often prioritised the flourishing of the individual, and consequently, staff were increasingly motivated and driven when it came to their work. Ian Pritchard, a member of the CEL community, stated that:

For me, CEL is distinctive by the way it models its core messages by putting humanity at the centre of its leadership values. It can do all the target-driven ‘stuff’ that happens in any organisation - but it also breathes and nurtures...encouraging people to take risks, challenging them to achieve high goals and helping to find solutions when things go wrong. It brings out the best in people. (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 82)

Principals in the Irish post-primary setting may look to Sedgmore as a source of inspiration when considering the well-being of their staff and students. Research conducted by Briner and Dewberry in numerous primary and post-primary schools across the UK investigated the effect of teacher well-being on school performance. The findings concluded that there is “a statistically significant positive association between staff well-being and SAT results” (2007, p. 3) and that ultimately, “if we want to improve school performance, we...need to start paying attention to teacher wellbeing. How teachers feel on an everyday basis is likely to affect their performance and so, in turn, the performance of the pupils they teach.” (Briner and Dewberry, 2007, p. 4).

²² See chapter 2.

While exam success and school performance is typically considered important for schools, the intention of focus on staff and student well-being should be based on the flourishing of the individuals in the school community.

Based on everyday experiences, many teachers may realise that “most school-based interventions [for well-being] are designed for students. There are fewer efforts to address stress and burnout among teachers and boost teacher’s well-being.” (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Donus, and Davidson, 2013, p. 182). In the Irish setting, there is room for principals to intervene when it comes to the well-being of their staff, as Sedgmore did; not only to increase joy and energy, but to see pupils and the wider school community thrive, too. Mindfulness has been a popular method through which individuals’ well-being can be seen to improve. Flook et al. suggest that “a mindfulness intervention adapted for educators boosts aspects of teachers’ mindfulness and self-compassion, reduces psychological symptoms and burnout, increases effective teaching behavior, and reduces attentional biases.” (2013, p. 189)

Fry and Altman (2013, p. 34) further emphasise that effective spiritual leadership supports the inner lives of those in the community, and taps into their spiritual well-being; this, in turn, can foster significant levels of organisational commitment, teacher/life satisfaction, and student performance. Taking inspiration from this, perhaps Irish principals in the post-primary setting may seek to incorporate mindfulness sessions, retreats, or training for their teaching staff throughout the school year. Jamie Bristow (2017), Director of the Mindfulness Initiative, has

outlined steps to demonstrate how exactly principals can cater for the need for mindfulness training:

- First find a local qualified mindfulness teacher to hold a taster session for teachers and staff, so that they can get a sense for what it's all about.
- Then, for those who are interested, we'd suggest providing an eight-week course for teachers derived from MBSR or MBCT or another evidence-based program.
- Once a cohort of teachers have taken a mindfulness course themselves, perhaps support them to continue with personal practice by organizing half an hour once a week for sitting together – and/or provide access to apps and other support materials.
- Then, if they are inspired to do so, they could undertake teacher training, to learn how to introduce mindfulness to children. Most mindfulness teacher training programs, in the UK at least, require six months of practice.

These steps may prove useful for those spiritual leaders in the Irish post-primary setting who want to prioritise staff and student well-being for the betterment of the school.

5.5 Creating a shared vision

One of Sedgmore's six spiritually explicit interventions was *living collectively from virtues, meaning, higher purpose, and service*. Ultimately, she valued a communal vision for her organisation that involved and was co-created by all. At CEL, staff were provided with “two opportunities annually to reflect on the individuals' living of values and virtues, and fostering a

thoughtful and conscious connection to [their] connective purpose.” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 85). The intention was that through this cultivation of communal vision, values, and virtues for the organisation, staff would develop “collective meaning, higher purpose and identity” (2013, p. 85).

There were few staff at CEL who were reluctant to engage in the process of establishing shared values, and Sedgmore appreciated that and respected their views. However, she found that “most staff enjoy working out their values and...viewed it as a liberating process...feeling deeply inspired when values are actually lived, particularly by senior management.” (Sedgmore, 2013, p. 86). Sedgmore’s authentic leadership style allowed employees to view her with trust and respect, both of which are essential when it comes to creating a shared vision (Huffman and Hipp, 2000).

In a school setting, “it becomes readily apparent...that if you don't have a vision, it is impossible to develop effective policies, procedures, and strategies targeted toward a future goal.” (Huffman and Hipp, p. 7). Taking inspiration from Sedgmore to create a shared vision, the modern leader in the Irish post-primary setting could begin by “honouring the visions of others, maintaining fidelity to one’s own vision, and at the same time working toward a collective vision and coherent institutional purpose” (Barth, 1990, p. 156). This would ultimately benefit those spiritual leaders working towards improving schools from within.

5.6 Workplace spirituality

Irish post-primary teachers today may reflect on their experience of personal faith at work, and how often the topic arises in staff rooms. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this kind of conversation doesn't occur very often, and when it does, it can be uncomfortable for many due to the fact that religion and spirituality are commonly viewed as private and personal matters. Ireland's "history of religious devotion and religious conflict continues to cast its shadow" (Ganiel, 2016, p. 1) over all areas of life, from the broad realms of social and political life, to, more specifically, school life. This may add to the difficulties experienced by many Irish principals and teachers when it comes to discussing their faith at work.

The famous quote, often attributed to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "we are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey", suggests that spirituality is innate to our existence as humans. Although it may be a contentious topic in the school environment, faith and spirituality is something experienced by all in various manifestations. It is something that we share, something that should not be alien to us at work, however uncomfortable it may initially feel. Goçen and Ozgan emphasise that when teachers...

fail to bring their spirituality into work, this could lead to a segmented spirituality...segmented spirituality could be the result of the individual's unwillingness to share a spiritual part of their life—maybe due to fear of reprisal—the inability to enact individual's spiritual beliefs at work, or due to the individual's feeling that spirituality should not be carried into the workplace at all. (2017, p. 213)

In today's ever diverse society, it can be widely presumed that teachers working in schools under Catholic patronage are not all practicing Catholics - some may belong to a different faith system, or come from a non-faith background. The implementation of workplace spirituality in Irish post-primary schools should see this taken into account if teachers are to feel comfortable expressing their individual views on religion, spirituality, and faith at work. Krishnakumar and Neck acknowledge the need for teachers and students to be able to express their own views of spirituality:

In a "religion-based" organisation, the organisation might have a particular belief, and a set of principles according to a particular religion. However, all of the organisation's members might not be willing to accept that particular religion as their only spiritual dimension. This could lead to dissatisfaction and frustration...since his beliefs are different, he or she will not be willing to express spirituality in the particular manner in which the organisation has implemented...we argue that it is necessary that spirituality should be implemented from the individual's perspective." (2002, p. 161)

Goçen and Ozgan emphasise that teachers who experience "a spiritual dimension at work are more inclined to self-reflection; are more attentive to their inner self, both with others and with a greater power than the self" (2017, p. 205). Furthermore, outcomes such as job satisfaction and reduced anxiety for teachers have been associated with workplace spirituality, as well as positive implications for teacher/student relationships and organisational identity (Goçen and Ozgan, 2017).

At CEL, staff were encouraged to “articulate their own personal values and moral purpose, as well as understanding how they resonated, or not, with the corporate values” (2013, p. 85); principals affording their teachers and students the opportunity to reflect on their personal beliefs within the community is essential. Those principals in the Irish post-primary setting who work in faith-based schools may feel some apprehension in introducing workplace spirituality due to a school’s specific religious ethos. However, there can be a balance between ethos and personal spirituality. Like Sedgmore, spiritual leaders can facilitate open and safe reflection to allow the school community to reflect on and understand how their personal values and beliefs align in some manner with the values and beliefs of the school.²³ She encouraged the CEL community to engage in whatever inner work appealed to them.²⁴ Although some of the exercises she fostered may seem atypical in the Irish post-primary context (knitting, salsa dancing), taking risks was something Sedgmore did not hide from as Chief Executive - it may be time for principals to embrace the idea of creative personal reflection for staff and students to focus on their inner selves and their personal beliefs. Voluntary clubs with focus as simple as meditation, yoga, or poetry could allow individuals in the school community to develop personally, whether they are religious, spiritual, or from a non-faith background (Sedgmore, 2013).

5.7 Conclusion

After engaging in this work, I would ultimately define a spiritual leader as someone who leads reflectively and authentically from their personal spiritual experiences. A spiritual leader is one who journeys inwards to self awareness in order to realise how they can afford individuals in

²³ See 5.3.4 for suggestions on welcoming religious diversity at school.

²⁴ See chapter 2.

their working community the opportunity to do the same. A spiritual leader will take risks and be creative in order to empower, inspire, and motivate those around them to rise up to whatever challenges they may face, so that they can thrive and flourish personally. This spiritual leader will witness the cultivation of a successful working community. I suggest that Sedgmore embodies this spiritual leadership. She has demonstrated that one's journey as a spiritual leader will not always be straightforward, which is important for principals in the Irish post-primary setting to remember. When a leader feels as though there are many challenges and obstacles to overcome, they will learn from within, from their spirituality, and from others, in order to piece together the best version of themselves.

As the research concludes, I have spent considerable time reflecting on my own experience of spiritual leadership. Throughout my work, as I pondered the intricacies of spiritual leadership, a memory came to me. In a school I previously taught, I co-led and organised the debating society alongside a colleague and friend of mine. The small group of Junior Cycle students were entered into numerous contests and competitions, yet, over the course of the school year, we only had one win to our name. I was discouraged and frustrated knowing how many hours my colleague and I had invested into the society, seeing the students work so hard yet reap none of the benefits. As I complained to my colleague about this, she agreed that it was disappointing not to have won more competitions. However, she reminded me that such 'success' wasn't the reason we dedicated ourselves to the society. The reason we dedicated ourselves to the society was because we wanted to instil a sense of teamwork into the students, to teach them resilience, to set goals for themselves and to exceed their own expectations, to thrive and flourish, both as

individuals and as a community. She reminded me that if we win more competitions than we lose, then that's a bonus. I had been measuring success in terms of 'points' or 'making the next round', and trophies, rather than celebrating the small wins in our little community - the friendships, the creativity, the risk-takers, the confidence, positive well-being, and the esteem of the students. At that moment, my colleague had inspired me to become a better leader.

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