

South Australian Catholic Primary  
Principals Conference  
Catholic Leadership and Moral  
Agency:  
*A model for moral decision-making*

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## The National Catholic Education Commission (2013) suggests that Catholic schools exist because they:

- Contribute to the Church's mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ;
- Offer the Catholic community and the people of Australia an educational foundation for life to the full, meaning the full development of the person - intellectually, spiritually, physically, morally and emotionally;
- Fulfil parents' rights in a democratic, free society to choose the schooling for their children which reflects their own values, beliefs and hopes as Australians; and
- Have proven over successive generations that they contribute significantly to the development of the Australian community.
- But what is happening to the tribe now and how do the leaders lead?

## Some Demographics about Catholic Schools and Their Churches

- Source National Church Life Survey(2013)
- Increasing
- 1. Numbers of Catholic Schools and students(12% in 10 years to 22% or 670,000. Independent are 500,000 and Government 2.3mil)
- 2. Non Catholic Students (25%)
- 3. Mass attendance and students from non-English speaking backgrounds. North V Southern Hemisphere being lived out here.
- 4. Catholics as a percentage of Australian population.(25%)
- 5. The Age of church attenders (10% are 15-30 (25%) and 28% are 70 +(12%))

## Some Demographics about Catholic Schools and Their Churches

- Going Down:

1. Religious affiliation
2. Acceptance of moral authority of Church.
3. Mass attendance and other religious practices.
4. Catholics in Catholic Schools.(53% of Catholic students)

argue that Catholic education contributes to the Church's mission? How will it proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and offer the Catholic community and the people its choice in education? The Catholic community in Australia will diminish if the current trends continue (National Church Life Survey 2006). As such, the need for a well-defined and articulated moral purpose that links the purpose of Catholic Education to its mission will be critical for the future. This presentation will present a model to help Catholic School Leaders understand and meet this challenge to be moral agents for the Mission of the Church.

## What do people want of their Leaders?

- To act morally whereby they will not produce harm but rather will show the virtues of doing good, of honoring others, of taking positive stands, and of behaving in ways that clearly show that their own self-interests are not the driving motivation behind their leadership (Cameron, 2003)

*Moral Agency* is the courage to act ethically and persevere in the face of adversity and challenges. This moral potency is seen as being a combination of the strength of ownership of the moral aspects of ones environment, reinforced by belief in ones efficacy to achieve moral purpose but subject to variability due to the psychological, philosophical, professional and emotional demands of different organisational and cultural contexts

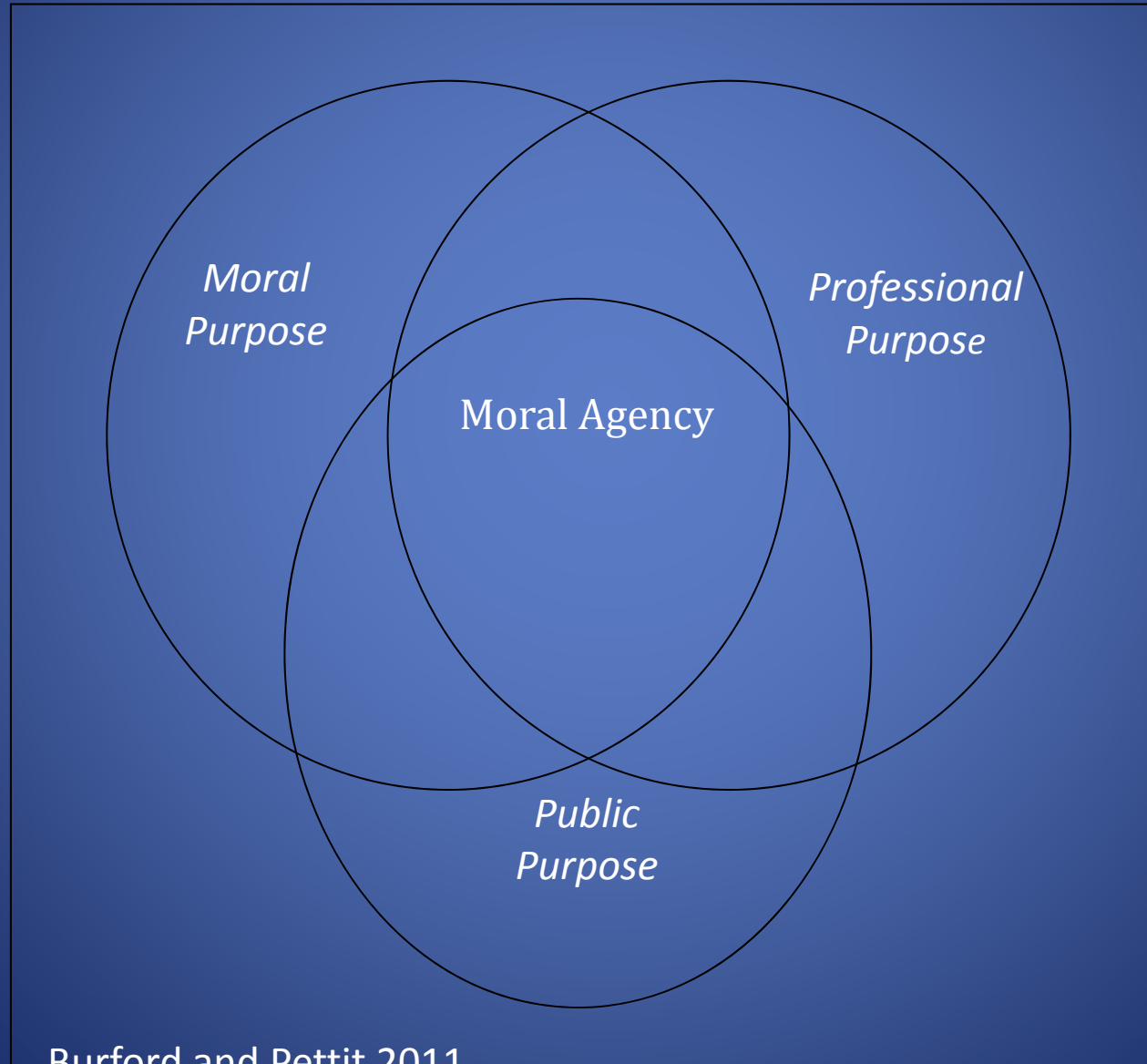
## The Australian Catholic Primary Principals Adopted Model

- ACPPA adopted a Model that focused on Leadership as Moral Agency and the forces that challenge and compete with that purpose. These competing purposes are natural to all organisations and leaders and can shift and grow in strength and influence in every leaders life depending on context and the individual involved. Why do you feel you are being pulled in six different directions at any one time? Because you are!
- Understanding the model doesn't guarantee moral agency it just makes it easier to understand why it's hard work!
- Lets have a look at how it presents for Catholic School Principals.

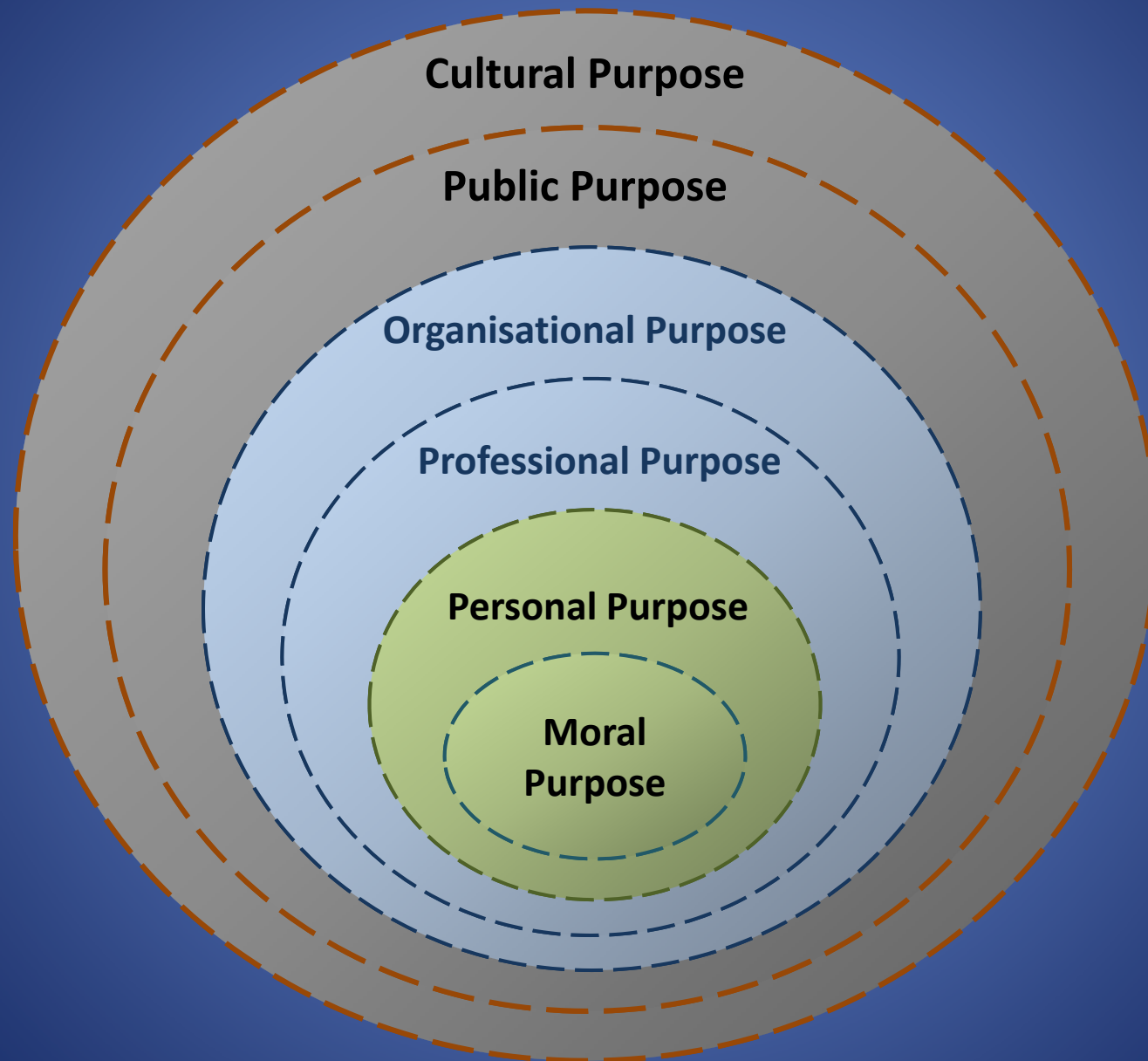


ACPPA EARLY MODEL

# Moral Agency



# The Burford and Pettit ACPPA Model for Moral Decision-making



## First A Credo on The Authentic Catholic Leader

- AUTHENTIC (Personal, philosophical and theological)
- ECCLESIAL (History, traditions, memory, organisation and religion)
- CONTEMPLATIVE (spiritual: pray and reflect)
- INCARNATIONAL (Jesus in all my life)
- SOLIDARITY (My Brother and sister)
- SUBSIDIARITY (Decisions as moral right)

## Credo on Authentic Catholic Leadership

- HUMAN (caritas)
- PROFESSIONAL (my covenant)
- HEROIC (counter cultural)
- COMMUNITY (Relational)
- BUT ESSENTIALLY ALWAYS MORAL IN PURPOSE!

## Some views on authenticity

- Moral Purpose requires authenticity first!
- In Australia an authentic person is :
  - “Fair dinkum”
  - Of undisputed honesty, genuine, reliable, trustworthy (Australian Pocket Oxford)
  - Not false or copied, trustworthy, valid (Encarta)

## My way of being Taylor, 1991

- A certain way of being human that is **my** way. I am called upon to live my life in this way and not in imitation of anyone else's

The point of my existence  
Starratt 2004

- Not to be true to oneself would be to miss the whole point of one's life.

- Since I am a unique being who will exist only once in the whole history of the universe, my originality is something that only I can discover, author, perform, define and actualise.



In relationship  
Taylor 1991

- We define [our identity] always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognise in us.

- In the larger society, we begin to realise that our freedom to perform ourselves depends on others allowing us the space and resources to do that. It depends not only on individual friends .... But on a whole society. ... If I am to enjoy this freedom, then I have to grant a reciprocal freedom to others.

## Authenticity draws us higher Starratt 2004

- Taylor understands authenticity as an ideal that draws us to raise our practice towards it. This we resent societal trends towards greater manipulation, toward temporary functional relationships precisely because we have a sense of the ideal of authenticity. ... [politicians, advertising, corporate practice] ... our cynicism is fuelled by our intuition of the ideal.

## The insides of things Starratt 2004

- Thus, when we say that authentic persons are real, we mean that they attempt to get at the insides of things, not to control or use them, but to dialogue with them as they really are.

## Authentic Leadership

- “Simply put what changes is context, what doesn’t change is human nature.....but human nature just happens to be the essential raw material of education. More, it is also the essence of administration and leadership. (Think character rather than characteristics)” 2004.
- Trust above all else! (Burford 2004)

# Moral Purpose

- Values, ethical beliefs, justice
- Moral reasoning
- Personal responsibility for lives of others

# Model for Moral Decision-making



# Values and Educational Leadership

## Willower (1985)

- A conception of values that would abet advancement in educational administration should have two main characteristics. First, it should furnish broad visions of what human beings and schools might become at their best. Second, it should speak realistically to the problem of concrete moral choice that is such a salient feature of administrative life.

- Common mission, shared vision, core values
- “formative power of meaning” (Wheatley):  
examining purpose and means
- The above are pre-requisite to partnership with teachers and parents. It is at the core of “social capital” and ownership of purpose.



- *“Each party has to struggle with defining purpose, and then engage in dialogue with others about what we are trying to create...Partnership means each of us at every level is responsible for defining vision and values. Purpose gets defined through dialogue.” (Block, 1996)*

The force of Collectives for uniformity and control impact on:

OBEDIENCE TO THE UNENFORCABLE

What we do with members to prepare them for  
Freedom and maturity

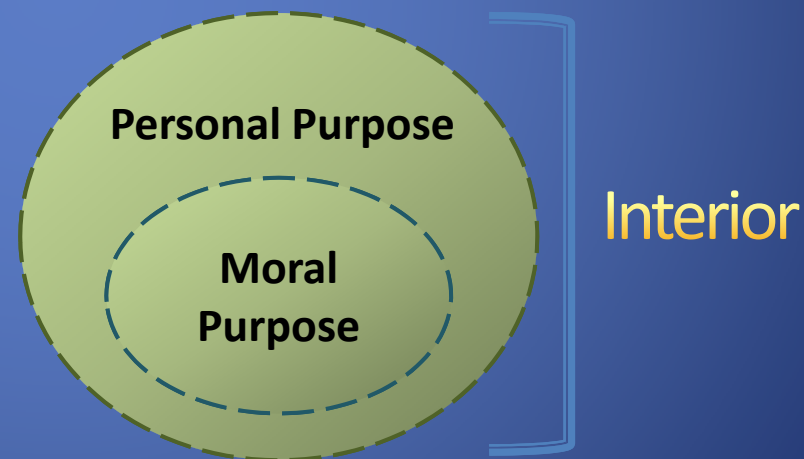
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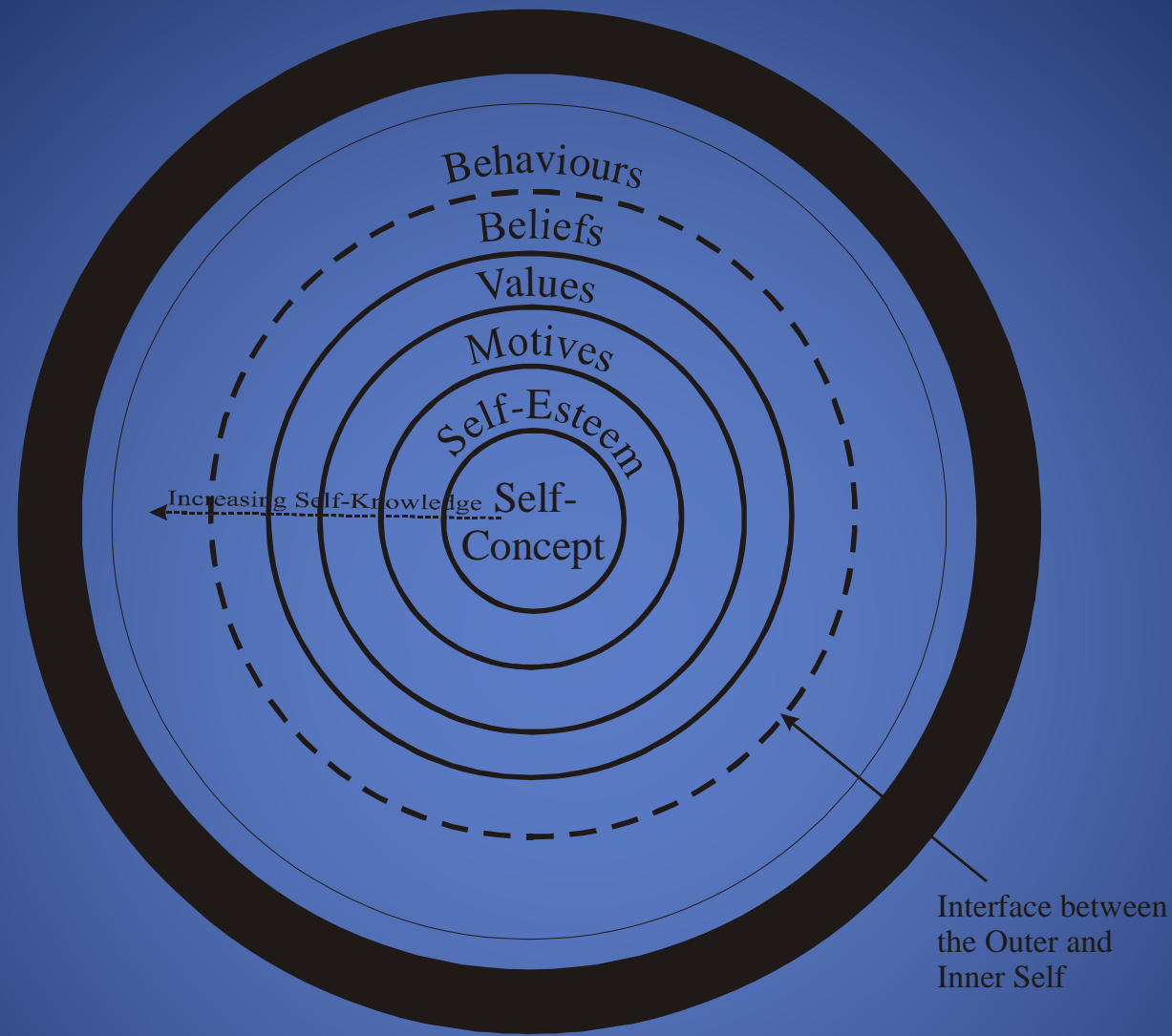
Moral Literacy

# Personal Purpose

- Reflective capacity to understand reasons for acting
- Self-concept and identity
- Moral potency and capacity to act
- Operationalise beliefs into action

# Model for Moral Decision-making





## The Self

diagrammatical representation of the various dimension of the Self which

# Professional Purpose

- Professional expectations, norms and behaviour
- Beliefs about significance of contribution to the profession
- Measures of role performance
- Professional codes of conduct

# Model for Moral Decision-making



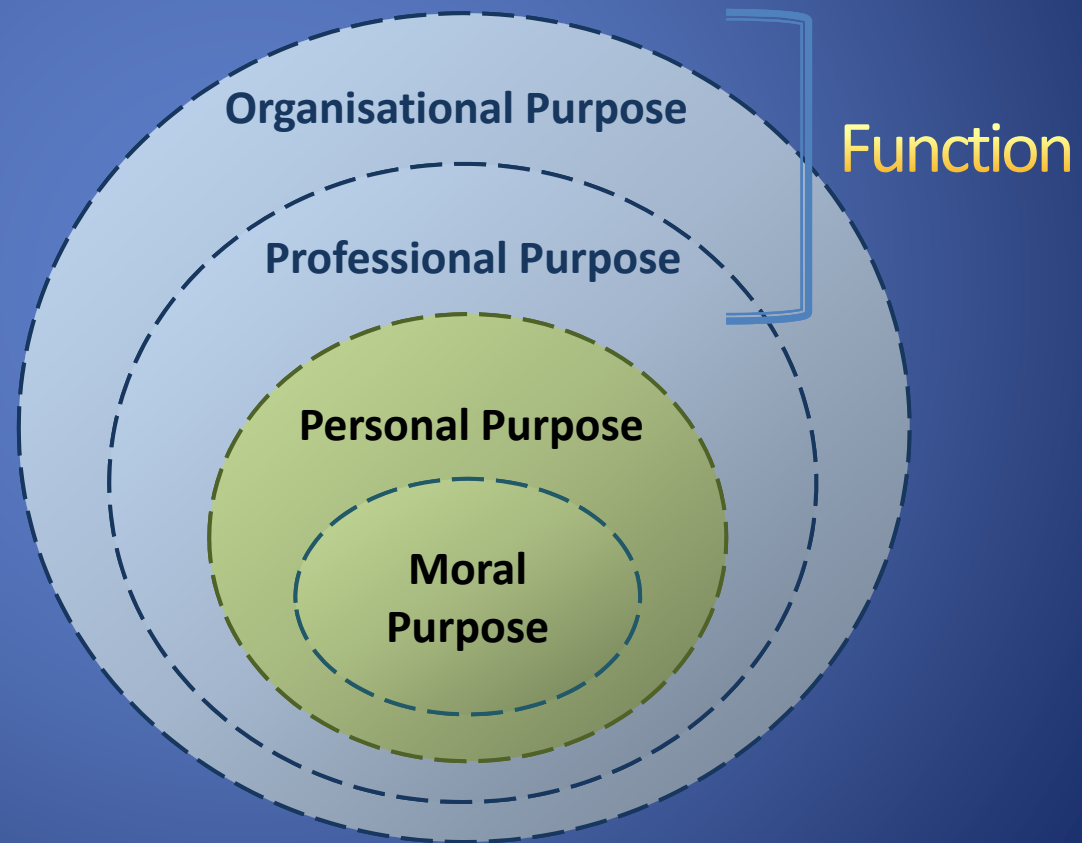
- Greg Whitby (2013) his book Educating Gen Wi-Fi says, “I am amazed at how much the world has changed today from when I was a student. The problem is that schools have not changed as rapidly as the world we live in”. He goes to say that just a generation ago, school was a simple affair: students learned from set texts, graduated and got a job. Now, when almost every child has access to vast networks of information through computers, phones and social media, there is no longer a wrong and right way to learn, no longer a single model of teaching, not even a familiar classroom environment.

- Covenant V Contract (Sergiovanni)
- My Covenant of teaching
- A to E : See the tension? For and as learning!
- Teachers as leaders making the difference.
- Dialogue, evidence based and collegial.
- Learning communities.

# Organisational Purpose

- Core organisational mission influences worldview
- What is valued and celebrated influences decisions about leadership, management, resourcing, relationships

# Model for Moral Decision-making





## The Concept of Coupling

- Coupling is an attempt to understand how the linkages between leadership, management and organisational members can be used to explain how the organisation functions.
- When leaders are close in operation and supervision of followers the linkage is described as “tightly coupled”. Supervision and technology are tightly linked.

- But in educational institutions the linkages between supervision (read management and leaders) and teachers or other professionals (like you) usually are not close physically or operationally close.
- This was described as:
- “loosely coupled” (Sergiovanni) and seen to reflect the elements of “Chaos Theory”
- (Wheatley).

- I have viewed it differently.
- The linkage is clearly not loose as school and educational organisations are full of complex processes that require accountability and tightness of organisation. They are not loose so what binds the processes together?
- I claim it is caused by ethics (and there read values and morality) The coupling is around the common values and ethics we hold as leaders and followers.

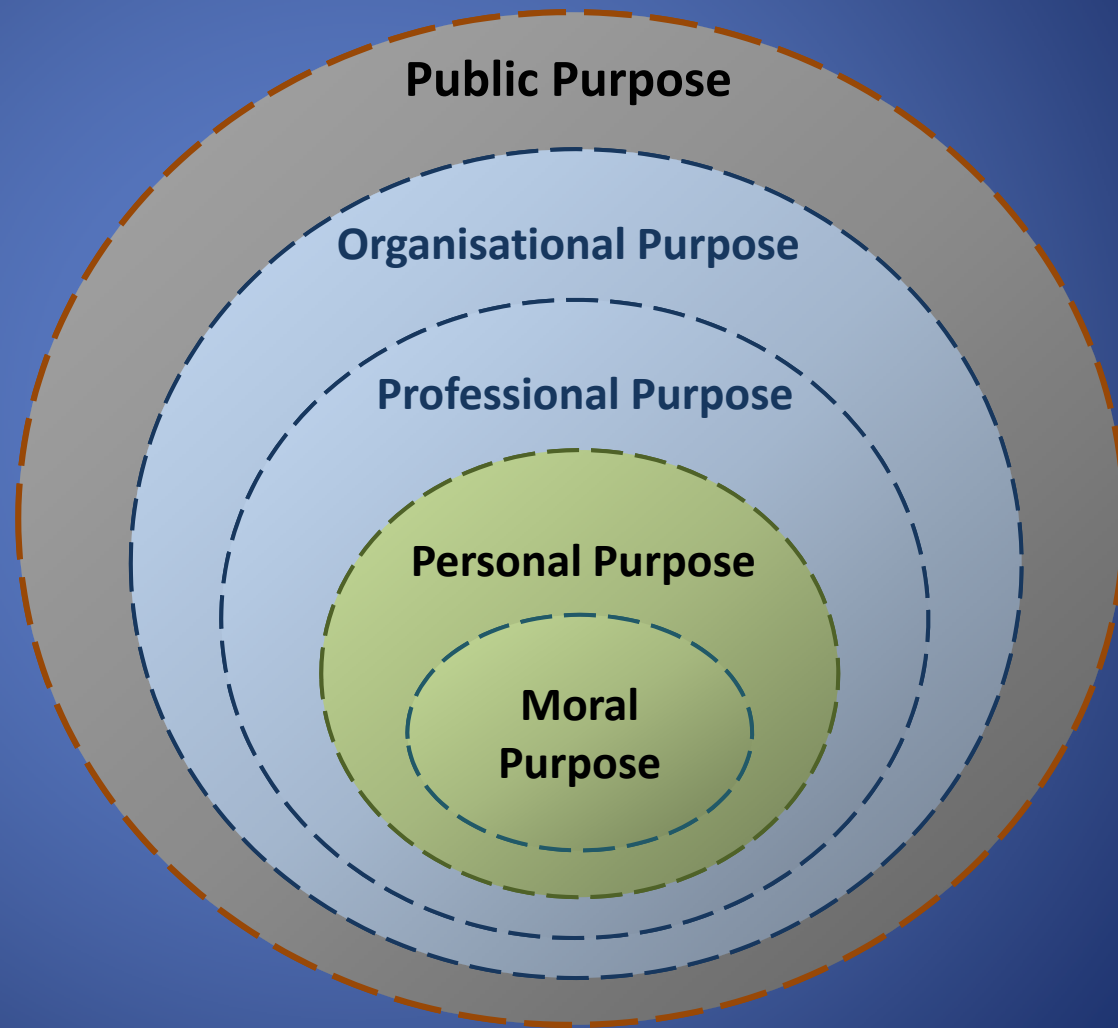
## Coupling cont.

- This ethical coupling concept places a different emphasis on leadership of professionals:
- Leadership now looks to be about morals, ethics, virtues and authenticity.

# Cultural Purpose

- Organisation's role in society
- Cultural and societal norms influence decisions
- Reciprocity between community perceptions and individuals within the organisation

# Model for Moral Decision-making



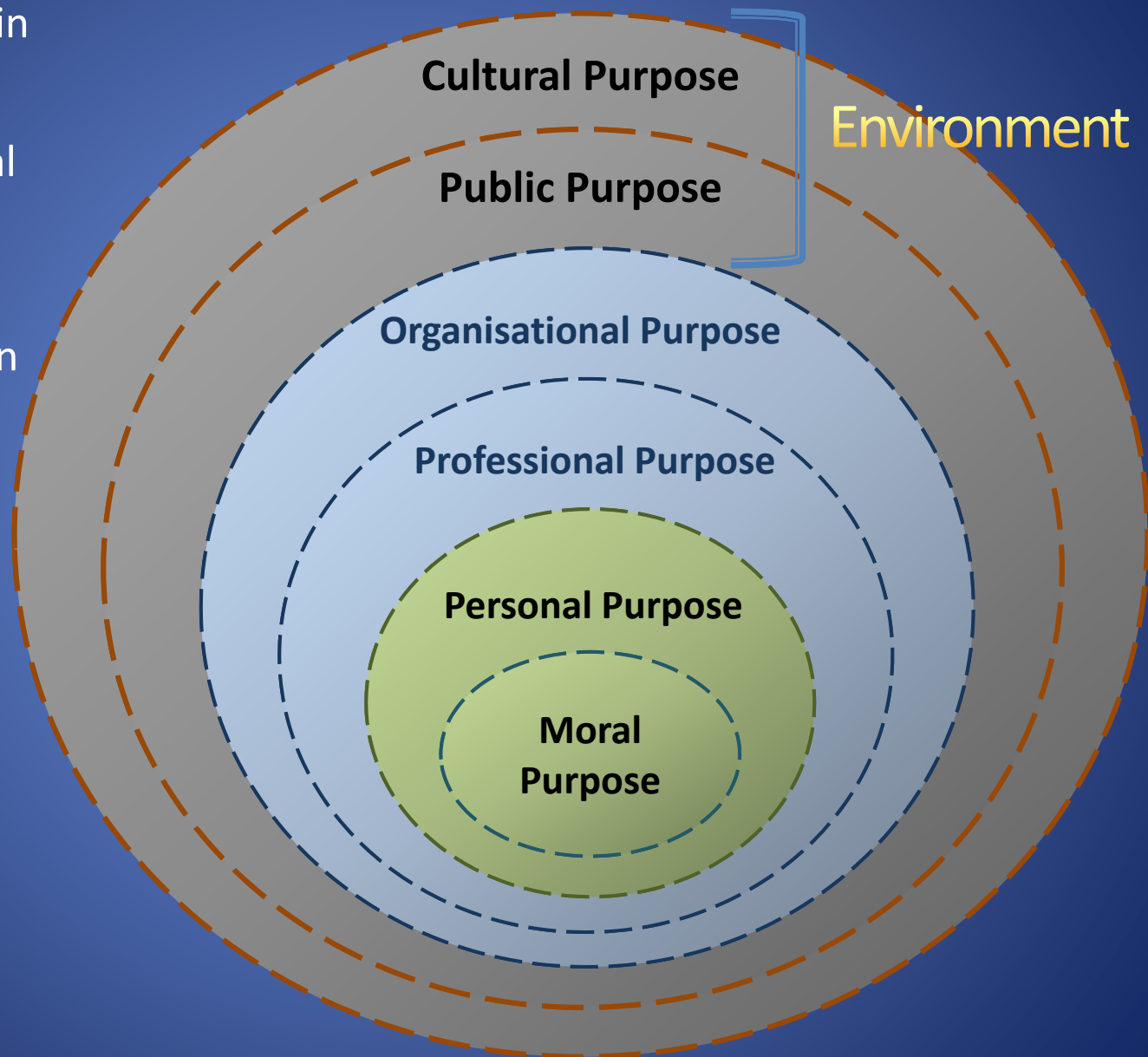
- **Public Purpose:** The compliance agenda of government requires a reasonable level of resources already across Catholic education systems; the scant detail of the NPSI appears to imply that there will be no reduction in demand into the future. Nor does the probability of a change in government promise any respite for Catholic schools as the Federal Coalition's rhetoric around education mirrors the Government's, promising to "deliver better education – by putting local communities in charge of improving the performance of local schools" (Liberal Party Australia, 2013, p.40). There are political points to be scored by all sides in the rhetoric around school improvement, effectiveness and standards (Clarke, 2012, p. 297),

- but little to be gained for Catholic education. Additional regulatory and reporting burdens have a negligible cost for the government if mandated but could cost schools and school authorities energy, time and money to implement according to the proposed regulation, thus limiting system and school autonomy and preventing the use of resources in actual school improvement. This is set to remain a critical issue for the future of Catholic School Leaders.

# Cultural Purpose

- Organisation's role in society
- Cultural and societal norms influence decisions
- Reciprocity between community perceptions and individuals within the organisation

# Model for Moral Decision-making





- The Principle of Participation: People have a right and duty to participate in society, seeking the common good of all.
- A preferential Option For The Poor: The Gospels call us to place the needs of the poor and vulnerable first, so that their needs as well as the common good may be realised.
- The Principle of Solidarity: We are one human family, and so our practice of love of neighbour must extend to the whole global community.

## Catholic Cultural Purpose

- Stewardship: We show our respect for the Creator by our responsible use and protection of all of creation, from the use of personal talents and resources to caring for the environment.
- The Principle of Subsidiarity: While leadership has a proper role in promoting the common good, wherever possible decisions should be made by those who are closest to the people who will be affected by them, consistent with the decisions being well made.
- Human Equality: The equality of persons is a matter of their essential human dignity; social and cultural discrimination is not compatible with our understanding that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God.
- The Common Good: Requires that social conditions allow all people to reach their full potential and realise their human dignity

### The Dignity of The Human Person

Every human being is created in God's image and likeness and therefor is valuable and worthy of respect.

### Respect for Human Life

Human life at every stage of development from conception to natural death, is precious and thus worthy of protection and respect.

### The Right of Association

Humanity is social; we grow and achieve fulfilment by association with others in families and other social institutions. Catholic community.

## Pope Francis to Argentinian Bishops (April 2013)

- “Mission” he notes , “is key to ministry”.

“A church that does not go out of itself, sooner or later, sickens from the stale air of closed rooms”. Pope Francis went on to concede that at times, like anyone else, in going out the Church risks running into accidents. But he added “I prefer a thousand times over a Church of accidents than a sick Church”.

Francis said that the Church typically suffers from being self-referential, only looking to and relying on itself. He spoke of a “narcissism that leads to a routine spirituality and convoluted clericalism” and prevents people from experiencing the sweet and comforting joy of evangelisation.”

## The Moral Challenge for Catholic Primary Principals

How can we support our young people to strengthen their identity by sharing in what it means to be Catholic and give leadership on behalf of the Catholic Church in our schools and beyond?

I have suggested, be authentic; moral characters; good educators; responsible citizens; organisationally competent leaders and cultural agents for our Jesus values.

- Educational context
  - System of 55 Australian Catholic schools
  - Leadership in use of results from national testing of literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN)
  - Tensions about:
    - Value and purpose of using student performance data
    - Operationalising an effective analysis and response to results
    - Impact on teaching practices
    - Accountability and public reporting of results

# Moral Purpose

## Tensions in Purpose and Discernment

- Beliefs about the worth of data on student performance
- Imperative to use such data
- The 'right thing to do'
- Best interests of students

Tensions about perceptions of value/worth of data by principals and teachers

→ determined attitudes to testing

→ influenced level of engagement with the data



# Personal Purpose

- Moving from beliefs to action
- Role of 'moral potency'
- Self-efficacy affects engagement with data

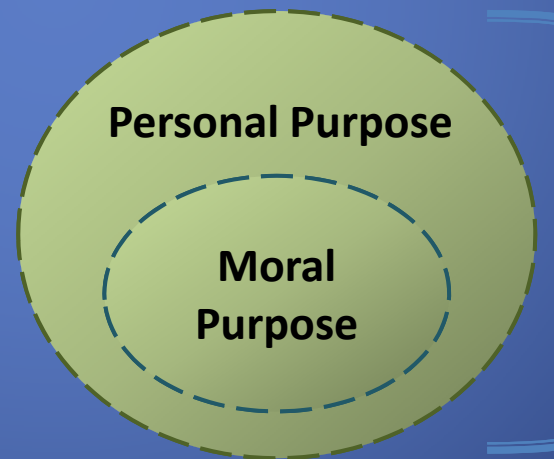
Tensions about personal ability to lead data analysis process

→ causal relationship between beliefs and action did not exist

→ Perceived inability of principals to lead data use

Moral potency: help or hindrance in data leadership

# Tensions in Purpose and Discernment



Leaders to make choices in paradoxical valuing situations



# Professional Purpose

- Role perception of leaders and teachers
- Whole staff engagement with data analysis
- Explicit expectations of leadership

Tensions about Leader's role perception

→ affected teacher and principal engagement with data

→ perceived lack of explicit data leadership

→ role of leader to initiate and drive change using student achievement data

# Tensions in Purpose and Discernment



# Organisational Purpose

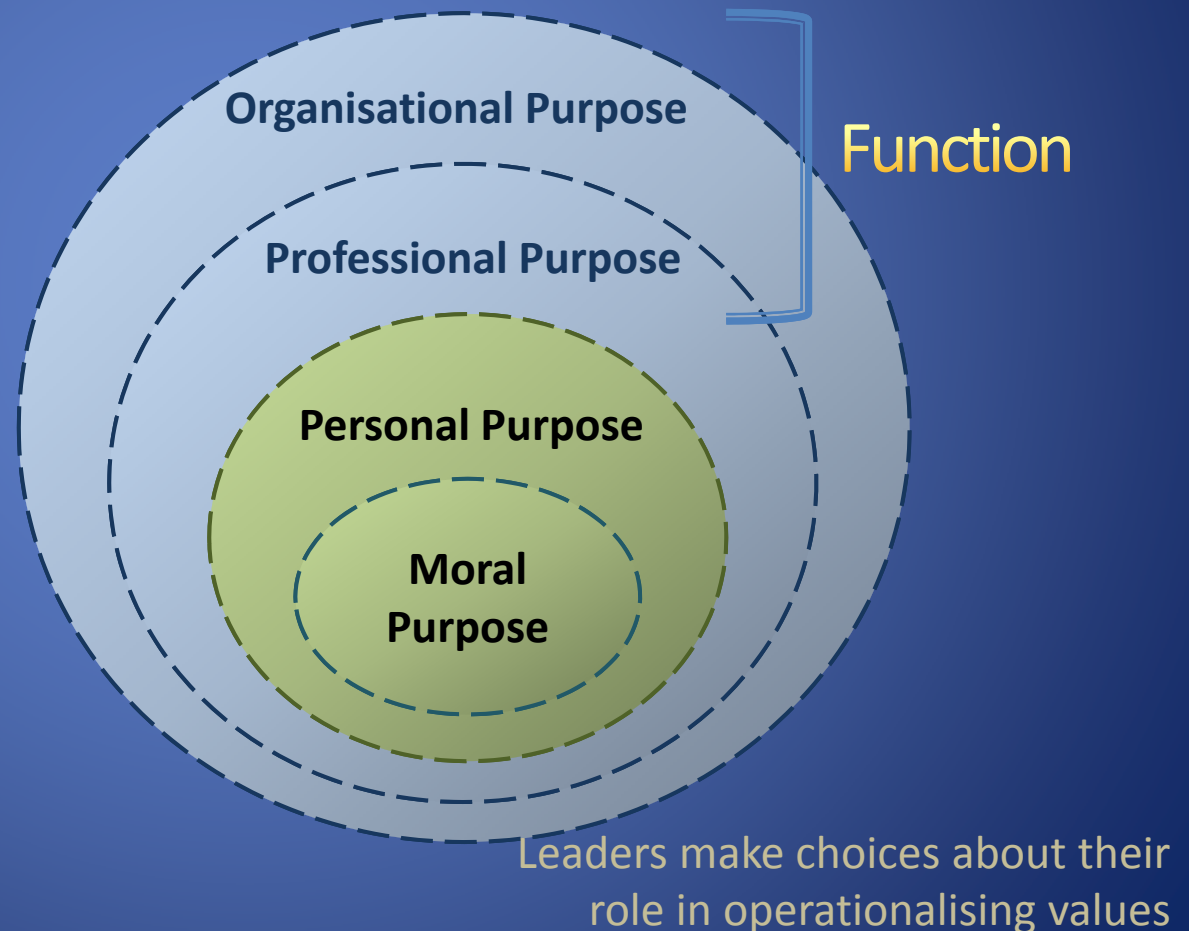
- Core business of schools to organise curriculum delivery and student instruction
- Coordinated approach to analysis and use of student performance data

Tensions involving lack of organisational opportunities (time, resources, structure)

→ inhibited teacher engagement and leader effectiveness

→ reduced impact on teaching practices

# Tensions in Purpose and Discernment



# Cultural Purpose

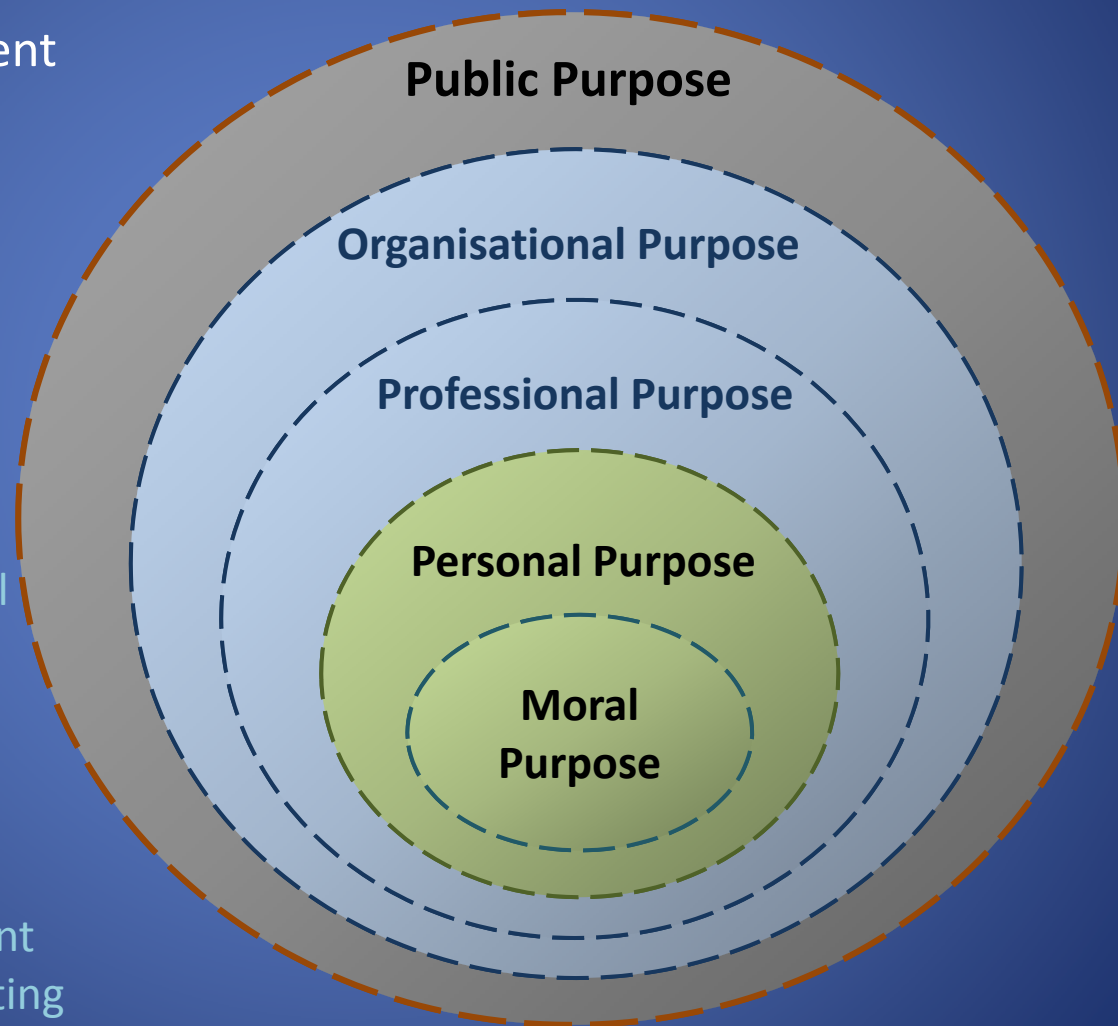
## Tensions in Purpose and Discernment

- Accountability demands by governments
- Public reporting of student performance
- 'high stakes' testing → perceptions of school worth

Tensions involving educational purpose of schools vs public accountability for results

→ narrowed curriculum

→ improving individual student outcomes vs public reporting cohort performance



# Cultural Purpose

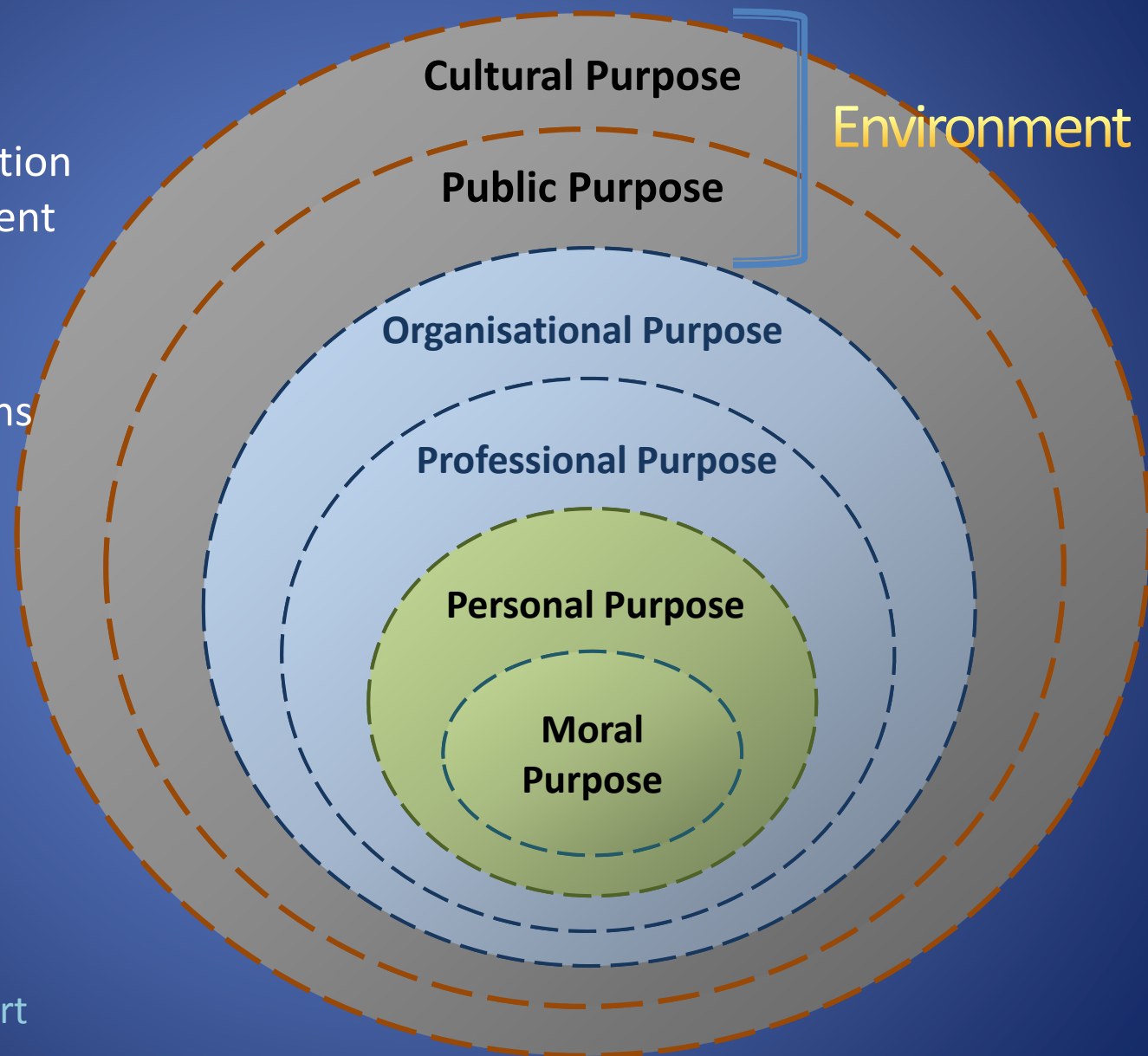
- Role of 'Catholic' school in society
- Leader's predisposition for moral discernment impacted by wider discourse
- Societal expectations of 'schooling'

Tensions involving:  
educational purpose of schools vs public  
accountability for results

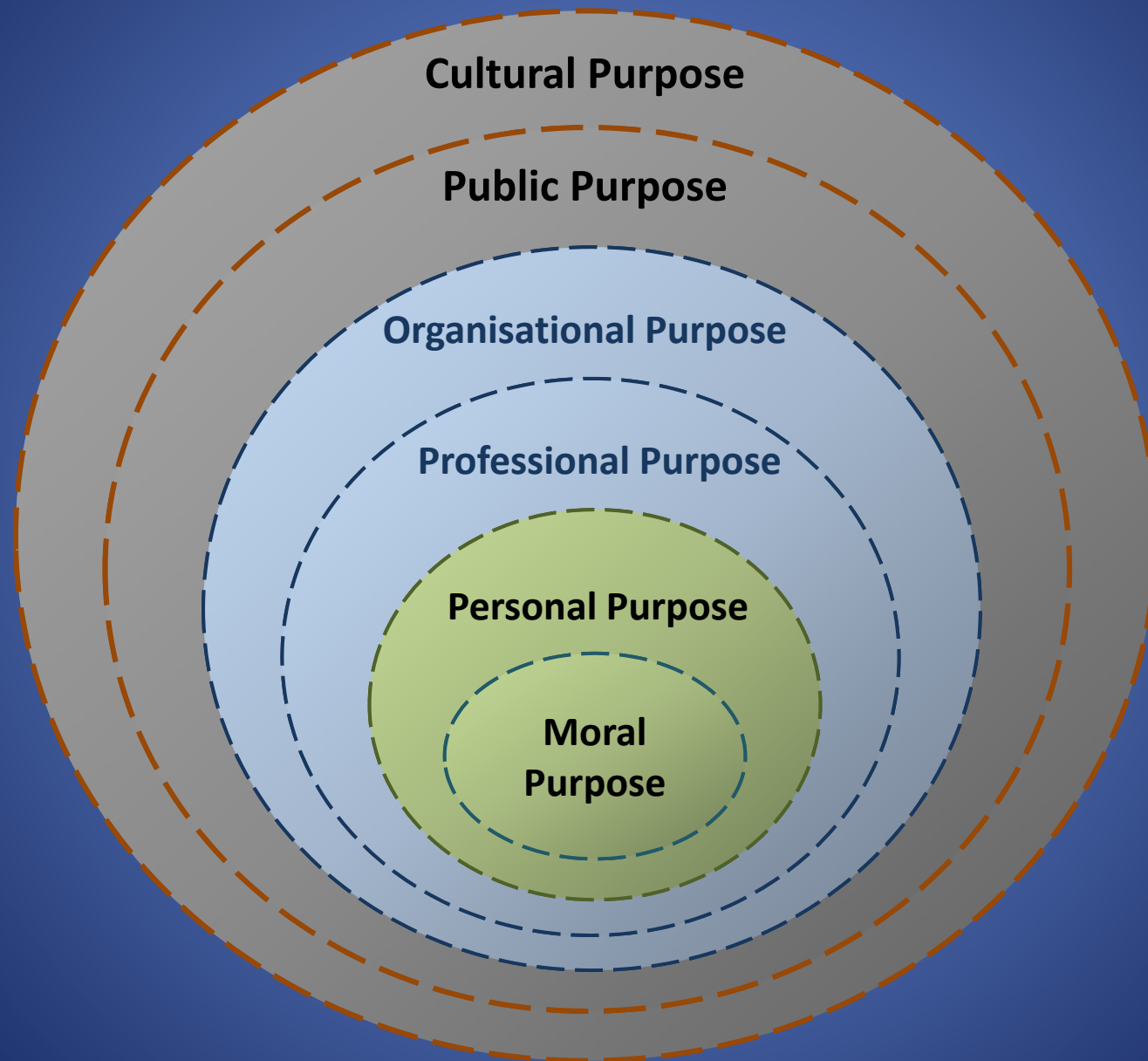
→ narrowed curriculum

→ improving individual  
student outcomes vs  
public reporting cohort  
performance

# Tensions in Purpose and Discernment



# Model for Moral Decision-making



## Authentic Catholic Leadership

Catholic School Leadership will always be complex due to the competing and contesting purposes that are natural to the role BUT ESSENTIALLY WHAT MATTERS IS ALWAYS MORAL IN PURPOSE!