ECOLOGICAL AND COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES OF CATHOLIC PASTORS: A GROUNDED THEORY

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Abstract: This study assessed the ecological and collaborative leadership (ECL) competencies of pastors (parish priests) in the Catholic Church. This study sought to expand on ECL concepts situated within the substantive context of Catholic parishes by using the constructivist grounded theory approach. Given the hierarchical style of parish leadership with the ordained ministers wielding position, power, and authority, the ECL model was ideal for assessing pastors' competencies in pastoral governance. A sample of twenty-five pastors from different parishes within the six dioceses of Kumasi ecclesiastical province were purposely selected as study participants. A semi-structured interview was conducted to collect data. Data were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim by an independent body. Then, the data were analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding resulting in categories or themes. The study's constructivist grounded theory resulted in themes such as shared problem solving, development of others, improvement of professional expertise, shared vision and goals, transparency with parishioners, effective communication and consensus-building, strengthening cooperation, shared decision-making process, and utilizing the knowledge and expertise of parishioners. The study provided a preliminary impetus for further research and practical steps for human capital development, such as training pastors and pastoral agents in the ECL approach.

Keywords: Pastors, ecological, collaborative, leadership, competencies, grounded theory

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a complex phenomenon that emphasizes many critical organizational, social, and personal processes since, for instance, one of the main issues that face leaders today is how to motivate the workforce to actively participate in the efforts leading to accomplishing organizational goals (Jimoh, Olayide, & Saheed, 2012; Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011). According to Hallinger and Heck (2010), three leadership areas are vision, governance, and resource allocation. Similarly, there is a need for a relational and collaborative process to leverage these three facets for optimum performance. Even though a multifactor leadership theory (Hsin-Kuang, Chun-Hsiung, & Dorjgotov, 2012) encompasses a range of leadership behaviour and traits, two facets of contemporary leadership theory, ecological leadership and collaborative leadership, call for additional study.

Ecological leadership underscores a more adaptive and diverse input into decision-making processes and an emergent human interaction process that ensures effective organization (Wielkiewicz & Stelzner, 2005). On the other hand, collaborative leadership highlights participatory partnership, relationship, alliance and shared purpose in a leadership process (Archer & Cameron, 2009; Rubin 2002). In this sense, leadership is about collaborations and relationships since it emerges from the interactions and actions of diverse groups within an organisation's ecological system. Therefore, a basic assumption of ecological and collaborative leadership is that leadership underpins floating processes that involve the leader and stakeholders or followers in a collaborative relationship within the organisation's ecosystem (Harm & Leise, 2011; Marin, 2013). Ecological and collaborative leadership are essential for cross-functionality and developing a new cultural ethos (Avery, 1999). The traditional leadership model that focuses on leading within a bounded hierarchy and through command-and-control must be moderated with an additional focus on collaborative problem-solving and working in a flattened structure (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013). Ecological and collaborative leadership concepts serve as new forms for leadership that highlight the leaders' role in leveraging the human capital to help and support the organization and participate actively in attaining organizational goals (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011).
Even though many leadership concepts have been developed and applied in varied organizations and phenomena, ecological and collaborative theories have not been applied to religious organizations where the "ecosystem" is more diverse and relational (Marin, 2013). As a non-profit organization, the Catholic parish community depends on the leadership of the pastor. The pastor provides threefold pastoral responsibility (teaching, sanctification, and governance) with the collaboration of other ordained ministers and the support of lay members of the parish community (Canon 519). The pastor acts as a spiritual father and shepherd of the community (Papademetriou, 2003). Hence, within the parish community, a collaborative leader's central character will be stewardship, mediation, and a catalyst for transformation (Ansell & Gash, 2012). These will help moderate the bureaucratic, hierarchical, and clergy-centred periphery of leadership within the parish in order to build the administrative capacity of parishes. The question is this: do pastoral leaders (pastors) possess and show ECL competencies within the parish communities?

This study aims to assess pastors' ECL competencies within the parish communities of some particular dioceses in Ghana, West Africa. The move towards evidence-based management theory has led to several attempts to define the competencies most appropriate for organizational leaders (Stefl & Bontempo, 2008). Recently, academic and organizational programs have put great emphasis on the attainment of competencies related to workplace effectiveness (Stefl & Bontempo, 2008). This study will provide a glimpse into the on-the-edge and distinguished experiences that shape ecological leadership, collaboration character, and the vocation of pastoral leaders (McKenna & Yost, 2007). It will serve as a catalyst for pastoral leaders to form a collaborative professional community (Githens, 2009) with the view of helping parishes accumulate great value from the diversity of culture, experiences, and skills that they possess. In this sense, the study addresses contemporary pastoral challenges by examining two interconnected leadership models designed to assess leadership skills among religious leaders by moderating traditional parish leadership models (such as hierarchical leader-follower exchange) with contemporary approaches of collaborative and ecological content.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Introduction

The focus of evaluation of pastoral leadership competencies is suited for a qualitative approach to research. This is because, according to Myers and Hansen (2006, p. 82), the qualitative method was used to "study phenomena that are contextual," phenomena that cannot be fully comprehended without the contexts within which they appear. Thus, the ECL competencies' evaluation needed to be studied within a particular background and unique environment, the Catholic parish communities and among pastors. Instead of employing statistics to evaluate pastors' ECL competencies, this study used the words, personal narratives, and expression of ideas, thoughts, and experiences of study participants to extract meaningful common themes (Myers & Hansen, 2006). Moreover, as Creswell (2007) points out, the researcher wanted to derive a complex understanding of the issue of ECL, understand the real situational contexts of participants, and develop theories about ECL competencies among pastors when there is a partial or limited theory of ECL competencies within the religious organizations and among Catholic pastors.

Research Paradigm

The study was tested and analyzed within the social constructivist paradigm, which suggests that learning and understanding take place because of the interactions in a group where people can assess their ideas, synthesize the ideas of people in order to build a deeper understanding of their learning (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Yucel & Habiyakare, 2011). In this worldview, people find an understanding of the world within which they live or work (Creswell, 2007). Individuals find meaning in the world around them through interactions (hence social constructivism) through the individual and cultural norms of the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the social constructivist approach had the subjective assumption that perceives knowledge as created through the social interaction between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2012). The researcher relied on the views of participants of the situation of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2003) and recognized the impact of the research on his own background, worldview and experiences in generating and inductively developing a theory or pattern of meanings in the research process (Creswell, 2003; Yucel & Habiyakare, 2011). This study focused on specific contexts, parish community, in which pastors serve so as to understand the historical and cultural
context of parish leadership (Creswell, 2007). Following a social constructivist research frame, the researcher used more open-ended questions in the data collection procedure, addressing the processes of leadership interaction between pastors and pastoral communities.

Grounded Theory

This study used grounded theory since the literature on ECL was developed and tested on samples and population of interest to the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Ecological leadership has not been studied within the religious organisations’ context, and hence, grounded theory is appropriate for this study. Again, the grounded theory method was chosen for this study because of its ability to generate a theory regarding behaviour patterns within a given substantive situation (Gregory & Jones, 2009). Developed by two sociologists in 1967 by two renowned researchers, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, grounded theory is an inductive methodology (Charmaz, 2006).

The goal of grounded theory is to generate or discover a conceptual theory that accounts for the patterns of behaviour relevant and pertinent to the participants (Creswell, 2007; Gregory & Jones, 2009). The theory emerges from the discovery by the researcher of the main concern of the participants and is depicted in the form of the core category or concepts or basic social process which is a pattern of behaviour. The "data collection, coding, and analysis are pursued simultaneously, following a non-linear and iterative process" (Gregory & Jones, 2009, p. 774). In this light, the researcher used flexible guidelines for data collection, focused on developing a theory of parish ECL competencies gleaned from pastoral leaders' experiences within embedded networks of parish situations and relationships (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007).

Participants of the Study

The study participants were parish priests serving parishes in specific dioceses within the Kumasi ecclesiastical province of Ghana. The criteria for the selection of participants were that participants: (1) are current pastors of parish communities with appointments from their diocesan bishops, (2) have served as pastors for at least four years at their current or prior positions and (3) are in good standing with their dioceses and diocesan bishops. The researcher assumed that current pastors were in good standing with the dioceses since they have received formal appointment letters from their respective bishops. Convenience and purposeful sampling (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) was used to select participants. Convenience sampling involved "drawing samples that are both easily accessible and willing to participate in a study", and purposeful sampling involved selecting participants based on the specific criteria for participation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 201). Potential participants were identified through the websites of the particular dioceses and the current Ghana National Catholic Directory. The researcher contacted them and requested an interview after explaining the purpose and design of the study. Before their participation, all participants affirmed that they had been canonically instituted pastors for at least four years. In all, twenty-five (25) parish priests participated in the study.

Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected through an interview in 2020. A semi-structured interview guide was used. The semi-structured interview started with specific topics and introductory questions followed by interview probes (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). This approach helped develop a dialogue between interviewer and participants, ensuring creativity, flexibility, clarity, and elaboration in the interview process, leading to various ideas (Beck & Perry, 2008; Cooper & Schindler, 2011). It provided a direct report that allowed greater depth of exploration, a deeper understanding of the participants’ dynamics, and a fuller appreciation of the contexts surrounding certain events or life episodes (Beck & Perry, 2008).

Due to the surge of the Covid19 pandemic and its mandated protocols, only phone interviews were conducted. Broad, open-ended questions and prompts were used to encourage participants to reflect on all the functional areas of parish leadership and provide insight into the functional competencies of an ecological and collaborative leader. The interview guide included questions like "what steps did you take on the last occasion that you detected the cause of operating challenges?" "What steps or process do you take to make an important decision in your parish?" The duration of the interviews was between 18 and 30 minutes. The interview was
digitally audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim with some IT specialists’ assistance before data analysis to ensure research credibility. The transcribers consented to confidentiality and privacy of participants’ information.

Interview Protocol

Following the study by Hanton, Cropley, Neil, Mellaliue & Miles (2007), the interview process consisted of three sections. Section 1 was introductory comments:
- Assuring confidentiality and privacy.
- Discussing the purpose of the interview session and participants’ rights.
- Eliciting informed consent and request for honest answers.
- Discussing the duration and other logistics of the interview to facilitate the process.

Section 2 was the actual interview involving participants sharing their experiences, ideas, and thoughts in parish leadership. Section 3 (concluding session) involved a set of questions to encourage feedback from the participants on the interview process to identify any interview biases and address any concerns that participants had. The researcher thanked the participants for sharing their insights.

Ethical considerations

To protect participants and ensure the integrity of the research designs, the researcher strictly followed procedures to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. For instance, participants were assured they could quit the study at any time without any repercussion and that their interviews would remain confidential, private and anonymous. Individuals who chose to participate in the study gave verbal consent. Because participants in this study were all priests, and the researcher was a priest, this may have impacted the participants’ responses or may have contributed to the priests' willingness to speak freely. Consequently, the research objectives and the role of the priest-researcher were discussed with participants. Additionally, the IT specialist recorded and transcribed the audio recordings.

III. RESULTS

Data analysis was accomplished through an elaborate set of coding processes. In grounded theory, coding is essential in qualitative traditions (Creswell, 2007). It is what conveys research information from transcript to theory. Grounded theory provided a procedure and process of developing categories of data (open coding), interconnecting the various categories (axial coding), building stories that connect the various categories and culminating in theoretical propositions (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Data were coded to initiate the process of identifying themes to describe the ECL competencies of Catholic pastors.

An inductive approach used to guide this analysis process resulted in the development of themes that were closely linked to the data. In the first place, transcribed data were imported into "MAXQDA" software. A list of initial codes was generated based on the inductive analysis of the interview data from the sampled participant. The codes were then sorted into functional themes or categories with the aim of attaining both internal homogeneity (themes held together in a meaningful way) and external homogeneity (clear differences among themes) (Washington et al., 2012). Finally, the ECL competencies theory was derived.

Data analysis resulted in the identification of themes describing leadership skills, qualities and processes deemed by participants to be central to their functions and experience in ECL: shared problem solving, development of others, improvement of professional expertise, shared vision and goals, transparency with parishioners, effective communication and consensus-building, strengthening cooperation, shared decision-making process, and utilizing the knowledge and expertise of parishioners. The competencies described in the themes explain the ECL competencies of pastors (Figure 1). Each theme is also described in detail below.

Shared Problem Solving

The theme of problem-solving competency emerged from data provided by participants who repeatedly cited the methods of identifying problems and problem-solving approach. Segments of data comprising this theme...
were initially labelled with codes denoting the problem identification and problem solution steps in ECL. This theme was particularly clear in the ECL skills of the pastor. For them, walking through the problem-solving process and capacities brings focus to their leadership efforts.

In terms of identifying the problem, one participant said: "It depends on what the problem is something visible just from an observation...someone comes in with a complaint about something." Another said, "I try and figure out where the complaint came from and if there is any merit." In terms of problem-solution steps, participants use listening, collaboration, patience and persuasion. One participant said, "Collaborating and it takes a lot of talking and listening, collaborating and talking and listening, ...you just have to wait it out, my approach to things is to talk things, to listen, to try to come to an agreement without just saying absolutely not under any circumstance."

**Development of Others**

This theme comprised data that described or made reference to the relational aspects of using participants' experiences in building, guiding and developing associates, parishioners, and staff. Subcodes include the experiences of the participants and how they challenge their followers to accomplish their goals. In term of challenging others, one participant stated, "I try to be encouraging of them more than challenging and sometimes it's both." "Some people can challenge others better than I can, and that's something I just admire and try to learn from,...by encouraging them they want to be more involved...persuasion and encouragement are the way," another participant said.

They described their readiness to use their experiences to help the parish. One participant said, "I try to remember what I felt like if I was in their situation...I always offer to be available for questions or concerns they come across." Another said, "...always feel free to give me a call, and here are some of the things we did and some of the things that worked and some you might want to do differently. So, I sent a fairly extensive email saying, be easy on yourself because a lot of the time you start asking if I am doing everything correct." The participants use their experience to assist the parish and encourage staff and volunteers to accomplish their goals.

**Improvement of Professional Expertise**

The participants expressed their capacity to produce benefits for the organization by facilitating the application of their knowledge and skills. They showed their networks and relationship, knowledge and expertise, knowledge acquisition to lead. They expressed he attends workshops, reads journals and magazines, takes courses and peer learning. One participant said: "I've been to a number of workshops, a number of magazines, number of courses on various theological and spiritual and church matters." Another said, "Media and CDs and are pretty good material that I try to learn from and share with other people." Participants also showed networks of enhancing their leadership skills such as national directors of religious education, priests support group, personal connections, and meeting new people. Another expressed, "I have belonged to some national organizations, I subscribed to the National directors of religious ed," "to meet people, there is a priest support group I belong to...that is another connection that's kind of personal."

**Shared Vision and Goals**

The participants expressed their goals and how they collaborate with the parishioners in accomplishing goals. In this theme, they showed the opportunities and vision for the parish. He has staff, volunteers and other networks that can help him in developing and accomplishing goals. In terms of opportunities for the parish, one participant said, "...some short-term goals and long-term goals. What can we get done in the next year or two and then in five years?" Thus, they collaborate with the parish council, finance council, and school board in developing a vision for the parish by setting short- and long-term goals and providing vision for the community.
Transparency with Parishioners

The theme of transparency with parishioners emerged from data provided by participants, who repeatedly cited the openness and plainness in parish life, especially about issues of finances. One participant said, "I think in terms of financial situation that we have asked to be transparent." This theme was particularly apparent among participants who found themselves entrusted with the temporal goods of the parish. They realized that they are accountable to the parishioners and therefore needed to be open or transparent with stakeholders. They recognized that financial matters demand greater transparency and communication to the parishioners. For instance, one participant said, "I know there is one priest who for whatever reason had money hidden because they didn't want the parish to tap into it. I find that to be improper." Another one said, "If you try to hide things and keep things secret, it creates a lot of anxiety within myself and I'm and I'm not comfortable with people who are trying to hide things either."

Effective Communication and Consensus Building

Participants made a compelling case for the importance of effective communication and consensus-building in their leadership process. Regarding consensus-building, one participant responded, "Meeting with groups such as a pastoral counsellor a financial council or school board in that context you talk about what is going on within a parish community," "yea I say that usually it brought to the parish council finance council in order to make that decision collaboratively." Another participant said, “And those kinds of groups have the ability then to talk about what can be done.”

Respondents expressed various means of communicating with parishioners and staff. For instance, one respondent said, "Meeting with groups such as a pastoral counsellor, a financial council or a school board in that context, you talk about what is going on within a parish community." Another said, "We also have a quarterly newsletter that is put together with information about all sorts of things and some history of the parish and so on. I will write something there...one of our parishioners gets our bulletin and other information onto a website now as well as Facebook we've umm made some use to some degree of that technology as well." One participant also said, "I always find the best the more communication you can have with your parishioners and be open about it the better you are."

Strengthening Cooperation

Data comprising the theme of strengthening cooperation were described or made in reference to the reality that participants try to work and develop cooperation or collaboration when the need arises. All participants agreed that strengthening cooperation is important. For instance, one participant said, "We're not we're not hands-on people as much as collaborative and that is and much of that is my own personality." Another said, "I can decide what's important and I can go do it, but that doesn't mean people claim it that they have an investment in it when people together see a need and respond to it." Another also said, "I like to figure out what where people are what they're thinking and how they could be part of the solution to the problem." Another said, "I collaboratively work with the people, what do they think and what are their needs and how they can help together."

Shared Decision-Making Process

Participants underscore that decision making is part of their ministry and leadership role. They realized decision making is a process and not just an event. A participant said, "Things have to be done in a certain fashion because parishioners can feel very much resentful if you hold up one parish as being better." They described some of the processes as meeting with leaders, praying over issues, not being aggressive, and checking the situation before a decision is made. For instance, a respondent said, "I like to figure out what where people are what they're thinking and how they could be part of the solution to the problem." Another said, "prayer is certainly important. I do not usually do something quickly either umm if anything I might be excused for not doing anything but making decisions or not making it is not done quickly." Another said, "there are times where I do think you need to let the dust settle and sometimes things set together but when there's need to make a make a decision, consultation with others is very important" and "I just I am just the one
that has the has the authority has the power or whatever to finalize the decision but usually at least I feel more comfortable when that decision is coming from the parish or the parish leaders of the parish itself."

**Utilizing the Knowledge and Expertise of Parishioners**

According to the study participants, many parishioners have expertise and skills as admitted, "I think that's true, that people have abilities that I probably don't even know about because I'm not asking them or I'm not keeping in touch with them umm as much as I could be or should be." Another said, "sometimes I have been very lucky in getting people to help me.

That's why trusting is key." "Mostly, they are readily available." However, they recognize they have not been able to fully tap the expertise of parishioners, "I think I have not, I know I am not, good at tapping various talents and abilities of people I'm not good at asking individuals to do things for whatever reasons it's not something I felt I'm good at," a respondent said. Another also admitted, "I have to be more sensitive to reaching out to people and asking people if they can share if anyone has music abilities to help us out... I'm not really good at asking people about their abilities or talents. It's probably something I'm lacking a little bit in my own leadership."

**Figure 1: ECL Competencies Model of Pastors**

![ECL Competencies Model of Pastors](image)

**IV. DISCUSSION**

The findings from this preliminary study illustrate the various competencies of ECL at the parish. These include shared problem solving, development of others, improvement of professional expertise, shared vision and goals, transparency with parishioners, effective communication and consensus-building, strengthening cooperation, shared decision-making process, and utilizing the knowledge and expertise of parishioners. To a greater extent, these findings show that parish leadership and pastors display some ECL functional competencies.
The findings show that pastors generally possess problem-solving skills. This coincides with the counselling role of ecological leadership by Harms and Leise (2011). The pastors identify problems through personal observations and collaborative efforts of the staff, volunteers and community. When it comes to solving problems, some pastors use persuasion, listening skills, collaboration and consensus in solving parish operating problems. These skills are what Harm and Leise (2011) describe as the counselling or medical model of the ECL process. Thus, pastors display problem identification and solving skills.

The results of the data also reveal that the pastors use their experiences to build and develop others and the parish community. This depicts the mentoring skills of ecological leadership (Harms & Leise, 2011). They know some of their parishioners by name. According to Talley (2008), mentors who know their mentees are more effective. The pastors are able to use their leadership qualities to develop the parish, staff and volunteers. This concurs with the studies of Metcalf (2010) that shows that effective mentors are able to lead others by modelling professional behaviour and personal balance. The pastor is able to guide and help develop the parish and other staff. They derive professional competencies through networks relationship, knowledge and expertise and use these in developing themselves and the parish. Harms and Leise (2011) describe this as consulting or professional functions of ecological leadership. Moreover, the study also reveals that pastors recognize enormous talents and human capital in their parishes. This supports Lelon’s study (2003) that show that the parish, like many organizations, brims with educated, accomplished men and women, native and immigrants in their chosen professions and civic life involved in an array of collaborative endeavours, goodwill, talents and expertise. However, the pastors recognized or admitted their inability to fully exploit and utilize the vast array of human capital in their parish. According to Getha-Taylor and Morse, knowledge management is a core competency of collaborative leadership. Hsin-Kuang et al. (2012) posit that one of the key qualities of effective leadership is managing knowledge to create and share knowledge within an organization.

The findings of this study, therefore, reveal that some pastors lack this core competency of fully identifying, harnessing, utilizing and managing the human capital of the parish for development. The exploitation and exploration of tacit and explicit knowledge of human capital by leadership predict organizational effectiveness (Hsin-Kuang et al., 2012). Through knowledge management strategies, according to Nonaka (1994) and Grant (2000), firms can become more innovative. The pastors recognize that they need to create the opportunity to harness the human capital of the parish. This affirms what Grant (2000) asserts that within the organizational-based and resource-based models of firms, organizations exist to create conditions enabling people to integrate their knowledge leading to the knowledge strategy of the firm. By developing their competencies, pastors will be able to offer professional expertise able to develop the parish community.

The results of the study also revealed that pastors express their ability to help individuals and organizations to identify and accomplish desired future goals. The findings show that they collaborate with the parish council, finance council, school and foundation boards in setting short- and long-term goals. Thus, pastors and the parish council provide a sense of vision and direction for the community, a sign of transformational and collaborative leadership able to transform the community (Bass, Jung, Avolio, & Berson, 2003). In their strategic planning, the pastors, the council and the community demonstrate dependence on these talents and cycling use of resources (Wielkiewicz & Stelzner, 2005). Thus, the data shows the pastor exhibits the ability to help individuals and organizations to identify and accomplish desired future goals. This resonates with the coaching competencies model of ecological leadership purported by Harms and Leise (2011).

The study's findings show that pastors would want to be accountable and professional to their parishioners' especially financial matters. Their accountability and professionalism depict themselves in their commitment to the value of transparency and openness to their parishioners. The notion of transparency and ethical behaviour coincides with Cruess, Cruess and Johnston (2000), who state that professionalism is a commitment to accountability, transparency, and sound professional standards. Accordingly, the findings reveal that pastors show a certain degree of commitment to transparency; after all, professionalism is the commitment to certain values in a relationship. Again, this conforms to the New Testament guidelines of pastoral leaders (presbyter) must be free from the love of money (1 Timothy 3:3). To do so, one needs to be transparent in financial matters. Transparency and openness to parishioners is a sign of collaborative leadership skills (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2012). Leaders’ ability to maintain personal integrity and professional transparency is essential to sustaining collaboration among key stakeholders (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2012).
The study revealed that the decision-making process is done in a systematic and collaborative manner. The study underscores certain fashion of parish decision making through reflective prayer, listening, effective communication, consensus building, consultation and group decision with the key parish council, finance council or school board. The findings share semblance with the decision-making process of Akdere (2011), who proposed a methodical and system of making-decision like brainstorming, affinity diagramming, flowcharting, planning matrix, unilateral decision-making, consultative decision-making, voting decision-making, and consensus decision-making. Akdere (2011) shows that an effective decision-making process leads to collaboration and organizational effectiveness. The findings also correspond to the UNCG collaborative leadership of the application of analytical skills in the decision-making process (Gethar-Taylor & Morse, 2012).

Moreover, the study reveals that pastors generally demonstrate the ability of effective communication and consensus-building. According to Gethar-Taylor and Morse (2012), effective communication and negotiating agreement are key competencies of the collaborative leadership process. Thus, it demonstrates that pastors can take the due process of communication and consensus in collaborating with parishioners and staff. In this way, the findings of this study also support the research study of Schneller and Wilson (2009) in the medical organizations that the new professionalism of medical processes is shared decision making through involvement, sharing of information, consensus building and reaching agreements.

V. CONCLUSION

The Catholic Church, as a non-profit organization, relies on the leadership of its pastors who animate the parish and provide a sense of direction, vision and purpose. Parish leadership is of colossal importance to the growth and welfare of the community, especially within the context of today's complex social, cultural and technological changes affecting the community. Pastors work in collaboration with the laity to accomplish the goals of the ministry. As leaders, pastors influence others through witness, persuasion, inspiration and personal power, that is, the force of their vision, personality and situational expertise. The purpose of the preliminary study was to assess the ECL competencies of Catholic pastors. The researcher used the grounded theory method to collect data, through interviews, from selected pastors within the six dioceses of Kumasi ecclesiastical province. Findings of the preliminary study revealed that the pastors possess the ECL competencies of shared problem solving, development of others, improvement of professional expertise, shared vision and goals, transparency with parishioners, effective communication and consensus-building, strengthening cooperation, shared decision-making process, and utilizing the knowledge and expertise of parishioners. The study also revealed that even though the parish brims with talents and skills of varied parishioners, some pastors are not able to fully exploit and utilize the human capital base of the parish. They may lack the competency to cycle and recycle the talent of the parishioners. The study provides an impetus for further research and practical steps for training pastors, pastoral agents and staff in ECL and knowledge management strategies.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All thanks to the International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies and Innovative Research editorial board for proper review to increase clarity and scholar quality.

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