

Title

**Implementing Curriculum Change in Religious Education: A Study of the
Perceptions of Primary School Religious Educators in the Archdiocese of Hobart**

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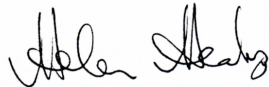
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Abstract

The purpose of the research reported in this thesis was to study the perceptions of school-based primary religious educators in Tasmania, Australia, as they engaged in the implementation phase of the curriculum framework at the centre of the study, *Good News for Living: A Curriculum Framework in Religious Education for Students in the Archdiocese of Hobart* (CEOH, 2005). The effectiveness of educational change is often judged by the impact an innovation has on the professional beliefs and practices of teachers and consequently the learning of students. The inability of implementation to link the broad concept of the change with the day-to-day practice of teachers contributes to the failure of educational change (Elmore, 2007). The study aimed to investigate the implementation of a new curriculum framework in order to generate theory about successful curriculum change.

Research in education builds knowledge to improve practice. This research was located within a qualitative paradigm. It drew on the principles of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyse the data from in-depth interviews carried out with school-based religious educators: principals; assistant principals responsible for the religious education program within the school (AP:REs) and classroom teachers. The emerging insights and theory were then further analysed in relation to the current literature, the views of experts in the field and the researcher's expertise to consolidate the theory.

Theory was generated in three key areas. These related to factors that stimulated change; factors that supported the change and factors that indicated the significant signs of change. Six categories of findings emerged from these key areas. These contributed to the theories that emerged pertaining to the implementation of this curriculum change. These concerned: (1) the readiness of religious educators to engage in change; (2) the connection between the teacher and the innovation; (3) the support of a collaborative culture; (4) the dynamics of leadership in a collaborative structure; (5) challenges to the change process and (6) the effects of change for teachers.

The study assisted in the articulation of key recommendations for the effective implementation of large-scale curriculum change that includes both schools and their centralised administrative body. This research makes a significant contribution to research in religious education in the primary school sector.

Dedication

For my parents, Eddie and Maisie Graham

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Abbreviations

AP:L&T	Assistant Principal: Learning and Teaching
AP:RE	Assistant Principal: Religious Education
ACEL	Australian Council for Educational Leadership
CC	Congregation for the Clergy
CCE	Congregation for Catholic Education
CECV	Catholic Education Commission of Victoria
CEO C-G	Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn
CEOH	Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Hobart
CEOM	Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Melbourne
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, State of Victoria
DET	Department of Education, Tasmania
ELF	Essential Learnings Framework
GNFL	<i>Good News for Living</i>
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
RECs	Religious Education Coordinators
SBCD	School Based Curriculum Development
SCCE	Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education
TCEC	Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission

Those who do not have power over the story
that dominates their lives,
the power to retell it,
to rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it,
and change it as times change,
truly are powerless,
because they cannot think new thoughts.

Salman Rushdie

A Rationale for the Study

Implementing Curriculum in Religious Education: From Curriculum as a Concept to Classroom Practice

Introduction

This thesis aims to study the implementation of curriculum in religious education in the primary school context. The challenge of curriculum implementation is bridging the gap between curriculum as a concept and curriculum as enacted within the classroom. In the light of this, the study further aims to make recommendations to those responsible for change and improvement of religious education within Tasmanian Catholic education and to contribute to the existing body of knowledge within the wider education community.

A review of the development of religious education curriculum documents over the past fifty years indicates that there have been a number of forces for change within society that have resulted in different approaches to religious education. These change forces can be identified in theology, Church teaching and in education.

In the past, religious education in Australian Catholic schools reflected a predominantly “enfaithing” (Lovat, 2009, p. 1) approach that was oriented towards the initiation of young people into the Catholic faith tradition. This purpose was embedded within the curriculum resources that were introduced to guide teachers in the teaching of religious education. More recently curriculum documents have placed greater emphasis on student learning, aligning the religious education curriculum with the educational goals articulated in other curriculum areas (Smart, 1989). Later approaches to religious education also use a variety of classroom strategies drawn from current pedagogy (Ryan, 2007; White, 2004). Within this paradigm the acquisition of knowledge has taken central place (Buchanan, 2005a). This emphasis in faith-based curriculum documents has been identified as an important vehicle to enable students to learn about a religious tradition and also to initiate them into the faith community (Buchanan 2005a, 2007, 2010; Healy & Hyde, 2002).

The evolution of different approaches to religious education was the result of the search for improved ways to teach religious education (Buchanan, 2003, 2005a; Ryan, 2007). However, a review of the approaches within Australian religious education indicates that the failure of some approaches has been due to the lack of teachers’ knowledge and skill and the lack of understanding about the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum change (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009; Malone, 2002; Ryan, 2001).

This suggests that despite the professional learning program that has usually accompanied the introduction of a new curriculum, models of professional learning for religious educators have been largely ineffective. The introduction of curriculum documents or new approaches does not mean that they will have a direct effect on the practice of teachers (Crockett, 2007). Teacher learning in religious education has failed to keep pace with curriculum changes (Nolen, 2008; Welbourne, 2004a). The interdependence of curriculum innovation and teacher learning in religious education is an area where there is little focused research, especially in Australia.

Strategies for professional learning of religious educators have failed to develop classroom practitioners who have a sound understanding of the purpose of religious education and knowledge of the content. They have also failed to build the confidence of teachers to make effective curriculum choices within religious education. Religious educators have tended to use curriculum materials in prescriptive ways rather than exercise professional choice (Malone, 2002). Recent developments in religious education that have incorporated educational elements such as brain-based learning have been less effective because teachers do not have a clear rationale for the curriculum choices they make in the religious education classroom (White, 2004).

Curriculum change is a complex process involving several phases that have been identified as “introduction”, “implementation” and “institutionalisation” (Fullan, 2001a, p. 51). The implementation phase is understood as the first three years in the life of a new curriculum. The curriculum document at the centre of this research reported in this thesis was *Good News for Living: A curriculum framework for religious education of students in the Archdiocese of Hobart* (Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Hobart, 2005) [hereafter *GNFL*]. In other jurisdictions this document may have been identified as a syllabus document to enable educators to make curriculum choices (Smith & Lovat, 2003). *GNFL* was launched and mandated for use in Tasmanian Catholic schools by Archbishop Adrian Doyle on 13 May 2005, and it was the first curriculum framework produced in the Archdiocese of Hobart in 175 years of Catholic education in Tasmania. Prior to 2005, curriculum documents were produced in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and mandated for use in Tasmania by the Archbishop of Hobart.

This research was concerned with the experiences, perceptions and issues of primary school religious educators – principals, assistant principals: religious education (AP:REs), and classroom teachers of religious education as they participated in the implementation phase of *GNFL*. The study was also concerned with the relationship between religious educators within the school with personnel from the Catholic

Education Office, Hobart (CEOH). This was the centralised body responsible for leading the production of the curriculum and its implementation.

Recent research into the leadership and management of religious education in schools has studied the role of the Religious Education Coordinator (REC) (Fleming, 2002). The study undertaken by Crotty (2002) investigated the role in both secondary and primary sectors. Other studies in this area have focused solely on the secondary context (Buchanan, 2007, 2010). Buchanan's (2007) study investigated the management of a "top-down" (p. 2) approach to curriculum change in religious education from the perspective of RECs. These studies have highlighted changes and increasing complexities within the role of leading the religious education program within the school and the increasing need for effective curriculum leadership in religious education. They have revealed the tension between the ministerial and educational functions of the role. They have also identified the potential for the role in the leadership of curriculum implementation. This study explored the dynamic relationships between those appointed to leadership roles, their effect on curriculum change and support of teacher learning and leadership.

The Problem that was Investigated

How to implement a new curriculum effectively so that the changes to teacher practice have consequent benefits for student learning is of principal concern to those who are responsible for implementation of curriculum on a large scale (Elmore, 2007). Large-scale change is defined as change that affects the whole educational system consisting of the centralised body and the schools within a particular jurisdiction.

In the past, large-scale educational reform has failed because it had not been recognised that change is a complex social process affected by relationships between the centralised body and the schools (Fullan, 2001a). For change to succeed, it must succeed at the school site (Elmore, 2007). Curriculum changes at the policy level impact upon the life of the school but they are also changed by constraints at the school site. Reciprocally, factors within the school contribute to change at the policy level.

The research question.

This research sought to understand the experience of change within the school during the implementation of curriculum in religious education in order to determine what factors contribute to successful large-scale change. The overarching research

question was therefore: *What does the implementation of a new curriculum framework in religious education reveal about successful curriculum change?*

The Significance of This Study

This study builds on the existing research in religious education: the effective implementation of a new curriculum framework. It opens up a new area of research in the primary context and fills a gap in the existing literature. It draws on literature from education and religious education to understand the phenomenon of change for religious educators as experienced by practitioners. This research gives insight into a Catholic education system at a time of change. The study contributes to knowledge in the areas of moral purpose in relation to educational change, critical and developmental processes within change, appointed leadership and teacher leadership within a collaborative culture, and meaningful professional learning for religious educators.

This study explores the concept of religious educators as practitioners who act out of their understanding of “moral purpose” (Fullan, 2001b, p. 3) in religious education. It draws on literature pertaining to moral purpose in education and in change (Elmore, 2007; Fullan, 2001a, 2001b, 2003b, 2005; Fullan, Hill, & Crévola, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Mulford, 2005) and generates theory around the significance of meaning and moral purpose for religious educators. The study explores the concepts of critical adult learning theory (Brookfield, 2005; Mezirow, 1990) and developmentalism (Shirley, 2010) in strategies for teacher learning and curriculum change.

Literature pertaining to leadership within collaborative cultures (Belmonte & Cranston, 2007; Cranston & Ehrich, 2009; Diugnan, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c; Gronn, 2007; Harris, 2003; Lambert, 2003; Mulford, 2005) provides a context for discussion about effective leadership in religious education. Studies into leadership of religious education have focused on the role of the REC (Crotty, 2002; Fleming, 2002; Rymarz, 2006). Overall there is a need for a more distributed understanding of religious leadership involving a synthesis of ministerial and educational functions (Crotty, 2005; Engebretson, 2006). The role of the REC is complementary to the role of the principal (Crotty, 2002). The present study further explores interdependent relationships amongst those appointed to religious leadership. It investigates the relationship between teacher confidence and competence in religious education and their ability to exercise religious leadership.

The effectiveness of a professional learning community as a means of connecting an innovation in curriculum with teacher practice in religious education is explored (Harvey, 2010; Shirley 2010; Stoll, 2010; Timperley, 2010). This study suggests that a

collegial learning environment for teacher learning promotes understanding and meaning for teachers and that this has a direct effect on the learning opportunities for students.

This research is a vital workplace learning opportunity, given the researcher's level of responsibility to lead religious education in the Archdiocese of Hobart. It is anticipated that the new theory generated by the current study will inform practice in implementing effective curriculum change and teacher learning. It is intended that this study into curriculum change in religious education within the primary sector will therefore make a significant contribution to the growing body of knowledge concerning leadership and curriculum change in religious education.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is presented in seven chapters. Chapter One indicates the background and context of the study. Approaches to curriculum in religious education in Australia must be seen in relation to one another and to trends in society, theology and education (Buchanan, 2005a). In this chapter the approaches to religious education that informed the production of *GNFL* are presented. Reflecting upon the development of a succession of approaches to religious education, this chapter reveals the major societal, theological and educational forces that influenced religious education in the past. The development of different approaches to religious education had significant implications for religious educators. An understanding of these approaches provides the contextual background to the development of *GNFL*, the innovation at the centre of this study.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature. The existing body of knowledge provides a framework in which theory generated from this study may be contextualised and analysed. The review includes literature that examines four major areas pertaining to this study: differing approaches to curriculum change; the concept of a learning organisation for change within education; the development of the concept of a learning school with an emphasis on workplace learning for teachers; and curriculum leadership and change in religious education.

Chapter Three describes the research design. It outlines the epistemology, theoretical perspective and methodology for this study, which sits within a qualitative approach to educational research. The study comes from a constructivist paradigm and an interpretivist approach underpinned by symbolic interactionism. The methodology of grounded theory and the strategy of unstructured interviews is put forward. The research design is presented and the procedure for carrying out the study described, including the strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness of the research findings.

Chapters Four to Six present the research findings. Six categories emerged from the data and these six are organised under three broad concepts. Chapter Four presents the findings from the first two categories, which give insight into stimulating change. Chapter Five will present the insights from categories three and four around supporting change. Chapter Six presents the insights from the final two categories, which pertain to signs of significant change. Moreover, within Chapters Four to Six, the categories and their sub-categories are discussed. The findings from the unstructured interviews are supported by quotations from the participants. Through the process of constant comparison the insights and emerging theory are identified. Consistent with grounded theory the researcher is silent, allowing the perceptions of the participants to arise.

The emerging theory is analysed further in relation to the researcher's expertise, the existing literature and the views of experts in the field. This further analysis additionally forms part of the process of constant comparison taking the findings of the study beyond thick description and contributing towards establishing trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Goulding, 2002). The analysis of each category concludes with a statement of consolidated theory that emerged from the analysis. Chapter Six concludes with an overview of the insights, emerging theory and consolidated theory from the study.

In the final chapter, Chapter Seven, the theory generated by the research is summarised, conclusions drawn, recommendations made, and further research suggested.

Definitions and Assumptions

The following are key terms that have been used in this research and the assumptions present that underpin them. These are listed alphabetically here:

- *Assistant Principal: Religious Education (AP:RE)*: Since 2006 in Tasmania, a role of appointed leadership within the primary school. The role generally has responsibilities for the development and expression of the Catholic ethos within the school and the explicit religious education program as a key area of learning. It is used synonymously with the term Religious Education Coordinator (REC) that is used in other jurisdictions.
- *Educational Organisation*: a system of schools within a jurisdiction, such as the Archdiocese of Hobart, and the centralised body that directs, administers and supports the schools. There is need to attend to the tri-level organisation of educational systems – school, district or local centralised body, and state – when dealing with educational change (Fullan et al., 2006). The term educational

organisation is used in describing the context of this study to reflect a less hierarchical and more collaborative concept of organisation.

- *Education Officer (Religious Education)*: a person employed by the Catholic Education Office, Hobart, to offer professional services to schools in the field of religious education. In Tasmania this role has a focus on curriculum development, resource production and professional learning. With the implementation of *GNFL*, school-based professional learning became the focus for the work of education officers.
- *Religious Education*: Within the Catholic school there is an overarching religious dimension that expresses a Catholic culture and ethos. Religious education as an area within the curriculum sits within this culture and ethos. It is an activity carried out in an educational context that is concerned with the development of the person from within (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education [SCCE], 1977). It is also a ministry of the Word, complementing other programs within the Church for handing on the faith tradition (Congregation for the Clergy [CC], 1997). There is also an explicit religious education program that is made up of the classroom program. In this thesis, religious education refers principally to this explicit religious education program within the primary school.
- *Religious Leadership*: In the past this term has been restricted to the role of the REC within the school to the neglect of other school leadership roles (Bezzina & Wilson, 1999). Crotty (2005) has identified the need for a more distributed understanding of the term. In this thesis, the understanding of religious leadership is broad and not confined to roles of appointed leadership. Religious leadership is exercised by a person through their personal integrity, their ability to respond to a particular community, their love for the religious tradition, and by their use of knowledge and technical skills to fulfill their role (Sharkey, 2007).

Conclusion

The introduction has presented a broad rationale for this study into the implementation of *GNFL* in the Archdiocese of Hobart. The lack of major research in the area of implementation of curriculum in religious education as it pertains particularly to Catholic primary schools has been identified. The research has been situated within the existing body of knowledge in curriculum change, leadership and religious education. It is necessary to draw on this body of knowledge to investigate the experiences, perceptions and issues of primary-school-based religious educators with a view to

improving practice.

The following chapters give the background and context of the research, including the pertinent literature, and the theoretical rationale and methodology for the research. Following the presentation of the findings, recommendations and conclusions are presented.

Chapter One The Study in Context: Influences on Curriculum in Religious Education

Introduction

The succession of curriculum guidelines, frameworks and resources published in the last fifty years within Australia shows the importance that Church leadership has placed on the religious education of young people within Catholic schools. The impetus for curriculum change in religious education has generally been driven by the search for authentic ways to improve student learning (Buchanan, 2005a). The significance of the implementation of a new curriculum in religious education can be understood through an examination of the factors that have informed religious education and influenced the production of curriculum materials.

There are two purposes within this chapter. First, to explore approaches to religious education and curriculum development in Australia, with a view to identifying particular influences on the development of *GNFL*. Secondly, the production and implementation of *GNFL* will be situated within religious education in Tasmania.

Approaches to Religious Education in Australia

Introduction.

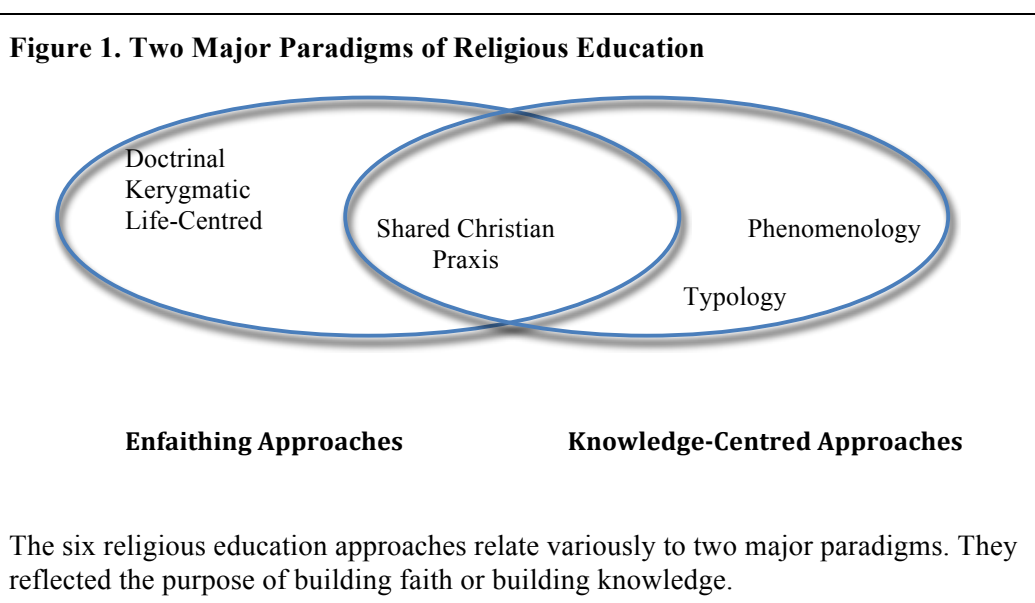
The foundations of the approach to religious education in *GNFL* can be identified within a number of preceding approaches to religious education. These approaches are presented here to provide insight into the prevailing understandings of religious educators within the context of Tasmanian Catholic education. There is interplay between previous approaches, which has been described as “pedagogical drift” (Buchanan, 2003, 2005a, pp. 20-25). This is a phenomenon that occurs when aspects of the rationale or purpose, and the pedagogy associated with, a particular approach surface in a different but related approach.

Whilst approaches sit in relation to one another, they also have distinct elements that have evolved in response to changes in society, developments in theology and changes within Church teaching on religious education. Change in educational perspectives of what constitutes knowledge and pedagogical practice have also directly influenced curriculum development in religious education (Ryan, 2006; Pollefeyt, 2008). These differences present challenges to teacher learning. The following section will present an overview of two major paradigms within Australian religious education. Within the overview, factors that have influenced the evolution of different approaches are discussed.

Identifying factors that have shaped various approaches can assist in understanding the context in which new curriculum innovations are developed (Buchanan 2005a; Grimmitt, 2000). In identifying doctrinal, catechetical, curricular and pedagogical elements within religious education as approaches have evolved, it is possible to identify similar elements within the dimensions of *GNFL*.

Two major paradigms in religious education.

Approaches that have informed religious education in the Australian context can be perceived as sitting within two paradigms, reflecting an *enfaithing* approaches or *knowledge-centred* approaches to religious education. Enfaithing approaches evolved from a theological perspective, their purpose was principally concerned with the initiation of young people into the Catholic faith community. Such approaches were designed to “convince, convert or strengthen commitment to a particular faith tradition” (Lovat, 2009, p. 1). They include the *Doctrinal Approach*, the *Kerygmatic Approach* and the *Experiential* or *Life-Centred Approach*. *Shared Christian Praxis* is referred to as an enfaithing or a catechetical approach (Ryan 2006, 2007). However, it also sits within a knowledge-centred paradigm because it is based on educational theory (Engebretson, 1998; cf. Buchanan, 2010). Figure 1 draws on a model presented in Buchanan (2010, p. 31) and identifies where these approaches sit in relation to one another and in relation to the major paradigms.



The purpose of a knowledge-centred approach is to enable young people to become more knowledgeable about the faith tradition and about religion as a cultural phenomenon through educational strategies. In a knowledge-centred approach the focus is on the learning of students, notwithstanding the potential of the learning to support the faith response of the young person (Buchanan 2005a, 2007; Healy & Hyde, 2002). *Phenomenology* and *Typology* sit within a knowledge-centred paradigm. Each of these approaches is discussed in turn.

The key features of each approach and how each came to be used are described and the strengths and limitations of each will be critiqued. Although there are consistent elements across the different approaches, because of theological or educational factors each approach has also been distinct and this has presented a challenge for teacher learning (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009; Engebretson, 1998; Malone, 2002; Ryan, 2001).

Enfaithing approaches to religious education.

Three approaches to religious education will be discussed in this section: the Doctrinal Approach; the Kerygmatic Approach and the Life-Centred Approach.

The Doctrinal Approach.

At the centre of an enfaithing approach to religious education is *catechetics* or *catechesis*. The term catechesis refers to the Word of God resonating or echoing in the heart of the hearer (Holohan, 2010). Traditionally it has been used to describe teaching that is intended for initiation into Christianity. Since the Middle Ages catechetics has been supported by the production of catechisms. The invention of printing, the revival of learning and the Protestant Reformation all influenced the development and production of Catholic catechisms. Saint Peter Canisius produced the first Catholic catechism in 1555. Canisius' catechism was translated into every European language. Publications were intended for popular use, and were produced inexpensively. Laurence Vaux produced the first Catholic catechism in English after the Reformation in 1567 entitled, *A Catechisme or Christian Doctrine necessarie for Children and Ignorante People* (Scannell, 1909).

Key features of the approach.

Prior to the 1960s, religious education was predominately concerned with learning the doctrines of the Catholic Church (Buchanan, 2005a; Pollefeyt, 2008). Catechetics chiefly employed word of mouth strategies such as question and answer

(Rymarz, 2003). This was supported by question-and-answer style catechisms. These teaching resources reflected a simple, didactic style that was based on memorization, similar to the methodology used in other learning areas within the curriculum during that era (Lawlor, 2000; Ryan, 2006).

The First Plenary Council of Australasian bishops in 1885 adopted the Irish question and answer style *Maynooth Catechism* for use in Catholic education classrooms throughout Australia (Ryan, 2007). This catechism was commonly referred to as the *Green Catechism*. This remained in use until 1937, when a catechism was produced locally (Rymarz, 2003). The cover was red and it cost a penny to buy. It therefore became known as the *Red Catechism* or the *Penny Catechism* (Lawlor, 2000). In the 1950s *The Catholic Catechism*, Books One and Two was produced. This publication incorporated the didactic style of the question-and-answer, with additional background information for teachers, and revision notes (Rymarz, 2003).

Theological perspective.

The catechism clearly identified what Catholics believed and how they lived (Healy, Hyde, & Rymarz, 2004). This approach to religious education reflected an ecclesiology of church as an institution with a “siege mentality” (Lovat, 2009, p. 5). The Church had a body of truth and a responsibility to pass it on to followers (Lawlor, 2000). Students memorised and recalled the basic doctrines, prayers and practices of the Catholic tradition.

The teachings of the First Vatican Council (1869–70) argued against the modern positions of rationalism, liberalism and materialism (Tackett, 2011). The prevailing theological perspective reflected in the catechism placed Catholicism against the world, defending the faith against other forms of Christianity or other faiths. This was an attempt to arrest the decline in the status and power of the Church during the 400 years following the Reformation but it did not withstand the test of credibility and authority that the twentieth century demanded of the Church (Lovat, 2009).

Educational developments.

Pressure on the Doctrinal Approach also came from educational changes during the first half of the twentieth century. Teachers, influenced by developments in Great Britain and Europe, had begun using the *Munich Method*, which was devised by the editor of the *Katechetische Blätter*, Dr A. Webber, in 1898 and adopted by the Catechetical Congress of Vienna in 1912. This was a five-step process of *preparation*,

presentation, explanation, combination and application. The process aimed to create interest for the student, to develop understanding of religious concepts and to apply them to life (Scannell, 1909).

Broader educational perspectives were developing about knowledge and curriculum that highlighted the educational deficiencies of the method. The research of developmental psychologists such as Piaget and the progressive educational theories of Montessori and Dewey added to the negative perception and critique of the didactic question-and-answer catechism (Ryan, 2007). It was judged to lack the capacity to inspire faith or to encourage free and rational thought. These criticisms ensured its demise in Australian Catholic schools (Ryan, 2006).

In the wake of significant societal change in the post-war period, people began to question traditional sources of authority. Sociologists contributed to the evolution of new understandings (Pollefeyt, 2008). The Church as an organisation began to re-assess Church teaching and practice (Ryan, 2006). These led up to and influenced the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), which brought about significant change to Church life.

Limitations of the approach.

The Church's concern to catechise the young effectively was evident from the eighteenth century (Scannell, 1909). It then began to draw on the pedagogical movements of the time. By the late nineteenth century the question-and-answer style catechism was being challenged. With the advent of more scientific and psychological perspectives influencing pedagogy, it was criticised for the limitations it placed on the learning process (Buchanan, 2005a, 2010).

Pope Pius X's concern for the best methods led to a series of catechetical congresses at Munich (1905, 1907), Vienna (1905, 1908), Salzburg (1906), Lucerne (1907) and Paris (1908). These resulted in the establishment of two publications: *Katechetische Blätter* (Munich) and *Christlich-pädagogische Blätter* (Vienna). By the 1930s other materials were being produced by religious congregations for use in their own schools to support the catechism with more expansive information and learning activities (Rymarz, 2003).

Critics of the approach claimed that the pedagogy was prescriptive, passive and teacher centred. It reflected the prevailing narrow perspective of knowledge and curriculum of Ayer (1936) and Tyler (1949). The teacher held the knowledge and gave it as needed to the student, with little dialogue or student inquiry. It was assumed that students were living a devotional life of attending sacramental rituals, especially Mass

(Lovat, 2009). The approach of the catechism therefore reflected the approach to learning students were experiencing in other areas of the curriculum. The approach was also supported by a perceived strong spiritual and social Catholic culture outside school life.

The Doctrinal Approach, characterised by the question-and-answer catechism, was practised for a very long period. It reflected the separatist theology that prevailed in the Church and was perceived as effective, sharing a similar pedagogy to that found in other areas of the curriculum. The Doctrinal Approach was taught in a Catholic culture that had a strong social and devotional life (Buchanan, 2005a; Lawlor, 2000; Lovat, 2009; Ryan, 2006, 2007; Rymarz, 2003). However, as educational changes began to occur pressure for change was also experienced in religious education. The changes in society, in theology and in education influenced the development of a new approach that came out of the kerygmatic renewal movement.

The Kerygmatic Approach.

The *Kerygmatic Approach* grew out of the kerygmatic renewal in liturgy and catechesis in the early twentieth century. The German Jesuit theologian, Joseph Jungmann, is most associated with the movement. His published work, *The Good News and Our Proclamation of Faith* (Jungmann, 1936), influenced the catechetical movement in Europe during the 1940s and 1950s (Engebretson, Fleming, & Rymarz, 2002). His student, Johannes Hofinger S.J., was instrumental in furthering the cause of the movement and influencing religious educators in many parts of Europe and in Australia.

Catholic scholarship had begun to use modern and scientific methods to understand biblical texts and more emphasis on Bible study began in schools. With the changes to Church life, a new theology was necessary to proclaim the good news of Christianity and to inspire young people intellectually and spiritually.

The kerygmatic renewal saw a re-emphasis on sacrament, liturgy and Scripture in the Church. Melbourne's Archbishop James Cardinal Knox and Father John F. Kelly visited international catechetical centres. In Australia, visits by Hofinger in the 1950s and 1960s inspired the development of the text series *My Way To God*, produced by Kelly and mandated by the Australian bishops in 1962 for use in all Catholic schools and parishes in Australia (Buchanan, 2005a; Ryan, 2007; Rymarz, 2003).

Key features of the approach.

Teachers had held on to long outdated methods of analysing and explaining the text of the catechism. Other areas of the curriculum were using insights from psychology

to develop more visual and concrete learning strategies. Religious educators were challenged to consider why they used such outmoded, boring and abstract methods that “went over the heads of children and past their hearts” (Hofinger, 1962, p. 2). The Kerygmatic Approach was perceived to be more closely related to everyday life and used more visually stimulating aids.

The Kerygmatic Approach literally meant heralding the Good News (Ryan, 2007). The texts were bright and colourful and the teaching strategies reflected the move towards more active learning in the classroom and a call to faith. Students were invited to learn about God through bible stories, songs, prayers, dances and other activities (Ryan, 2001). These texts contained things the students had to think about, to learn and know and a call to action through suggestions “for my life” (Rymarz, 2003, p. 53).

Theological perspective.

The underpinning principle of the Kerygmatic Approach was that the joyful message of the Scriptures would evoke just the same joyful response in young children as it had in the early Church (Buchanan, 2005a, 2010; Ryan, 2007). It was believed that children needed to come to know the person of Jesus in the Scriptures before learning about the doctrines of the Church. The biblical-historical approach would be effective alongside teaching strategies that would not only give religious knowledge or instruction but serve a broader aim of education, to nurture students’ religious “dispositions and convictions” (Hofinger, 1962, p. 3).

Educational developments.

Within the prevailing educational context there was a proliferation of research into curriculum organisation and pedagogy. Perspectives on knowledge and curriculum were being influenced by the work of Taba (1962), who advocated using broad concepts to organise curriculum. In addition, Wheeler (1967), explored the relationship between content and learning experiences. Walker (1971), conceived curriculum as a jigsaw, emphasising the complexity of the elements within it. Another influential figure on curriculum theory at this point was Stenhouse (1975), who argued that the curriculum would always be an ideal. His work placed the emphasis on the learner within a process planned through broad goals and flexible processes of assessment. He argued that behaviours of students could not be predicted or planned for. Negotiation, translation and interpretation of meaning were all essential in his approach to curriculum as a learning process.

The Kerygmatic Approach shared an enfaithing purpose with the preceding Doctrinal Approach; however, its pedagogy was quite different. It aimed to inspire faith in the young by creatively proclaiming the Word of God. However, any support for religious education given to teachers through the curriculum resources was outweighed by the religious educators' lack of knowledge and skill. This left the problem of engaging students in religious education unsolved.

The production of *My Way to God* spanned a decade from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s; however, the Kerygmatic Approach was short-lived and was quickly overtaken by the events of Vatican II, particularly the teaching within the document, *Dei Verbum* (1965), the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Ryan, 2001).

The link between the Kerygmatic Approach and the preceding era of the catechism was strong and identifiable as there was still an emphasis on knowing Church teaching. However, the Kerygmatic Approach also emphasised that the Good News must be proclaimed and lived with joy, and in this it departed from the experience of previous generations. This resulted in a generational gap between the religious education experience of parents and that of their children, leaving parents behind in their understandings and expectations (Ryan, 2001, 2007).

Limitations of the approach.

The Kerygmatic Approach used a rudimentary structure to develop and sequence topics and to unfold the story of salvation. This sequence however was repeated year after year and students perceived this as repetitious and boringly predictable. Critics of the approach argued that the message proclaimed did not meet the experience of the students (Lawlor, 2000).

A possible explanation for lack of student engagement was that teachers themselves had little understanding of matters of faith or their "catechetical task" (Hofinger, 1962, p. 2). It was also believed that teachers too were ill prepared to present teaching on Scripture and Church history (Ryan, 2001). These were two of the challenges that a change in approach had sought unsuccessfully to overcome.

Vatican II also called for the skilled preparation of teachers in secular and religious knowledge and pedagogical skill "in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world" (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (SCCE), 1965, par. 8). Ecclesial directives therefore embraced advances in the psychological, pedagogical and intellectual sciences that were impacting upon education. This gave rise to a more experiential approach to religious education.

The Life-Centred Approach.

The theological impact of *Dei Verbum* (1965) was immense, building on the groundbreaking teaching of the encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943). This earlier document recognised new approaches to interpreting the Bible and encouraged Catholic scholars to encounter the Scriptures (Byrne, 2003). Religious education needed to respond to these significant changes. Church teaching on the theology of revelation heralded what was arguably the most contentious approach to religious education, the experiential or Life-Centred Approach.

In Australia the growth of the Life-Centred Approach for faith education was boosted by the publication of the *Renewal of the Education of Faith* (1970) from the Italian Episcopal Conference, and endorsed by the Australian Bishops (Lovat, 2009). This document reflected the themes articulated at Vatican II, aligning itself with “God’s pedagogy” (Italian Episcopal Conference, 1970, p. 6) of revealing love and presence in the events of life.

The catechetical process for the teaching of religious education was based on the work of Indian Jesuit, Father Amalorpavadass (1973), who had been active at Vatican II and who had visited Melbourne to promote his perspective on theology and catechesis. The central theological teaching was the importance of encountering the living God through faith.

The decline of the Kerygmatic Approach as expressed in the already existing *My Way to God* series was marked when in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the Catholic Education Office promoted the experiential approach, prescribing both the content and the method of teaching (Praetz, 1980). Throughout the late 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s a series of resources was produced in Victoria. *Move Out* and *Come Alive* were resources for senior students. *Let’s Go Together* was initially produced as a series of resources for parish religious education programs but it became the substance of primary school religious education programs in the 1970s (Lawlor, 2000; Rymarz, 2003).

Guidelines were also being produced by Australian Dioceses for the coordination and planning of religious education. In 1973 the Archbishop of Melbourne mandated a *Programme of religious education for Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne* (Lawlor, 2000). By 1977 this had grown to a four-volume document for use with primary and secondary students.

Key features of the approach.

The Life-Centred Approach reflected the belief that doctrine without human context is likely to be irrelevant. It placed much more emphasis on the life experience of the person as a departure point for teaching and learning in religious education. The approach was concerned with the life experience the subject brings to learning and the context in which the faith is lived out in relation to the doctrine (Lawlor, 2000). In this approach, the context of one's life is the pathway to relationship with God (Rymarz, 2003).

A four-fold catechetical process was designed to enable teachers and students to enter "into the drama of human life to explore it and find the meaning that God gives to it" (Catholic Education Office, Melbourne [CEOM], 1984, p. 66). However, the approach aimed to support a response to God in faith and was based on the theological principles of revelation (Engebretson, 1998).

The Life-Centred Approach emphasised the dynamic movement between the elements of experience, reflection, connection with the faith tradition and reinforcement of insights (CEOM, 1995, pp. 27–29). There were four elements within the catechetical process: *experience shared, reflection deepened, faith expressed* and *insights reinforced*. The process was designed to focus on one aspect of shared experience within the group and to reflect on that experience to identify the presence and action of God in it. The process then depended on the faith of the leader (teacher) to express some aspect of faith as professed within the tradition. These insights into faith were then to be reinforced through activities and student responses.

In the revision of the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) the elements were described as "interactive" (p. 27). Greater emphasis was placed on the constant reflection on life in the light of Scripture and the faith tradition of the Church. The role of the teacher was to draw on the students' experiences and to create relevant experiences in order to build student knowledge and skills of "reflecting, communicating, enquiry and decision-making" (p. 30).

Theological perspective.

Dei Verbum (1965) taught that God is revealed within the events of life both past and present and that Scripture and the tradition of the Church are witnesses to that revelation. It transformed the concept of revelation from a series of propositions, which the faithful were required to believe, to the act of God's self-communication. The document placed divine revelation within the Trinity: the saving God working in history,

the person of Jesus and the life of the Spirit. It emphasised the one deposit of faith as an interplay or dialogue between Scripture and Tradition and identified the teaching role of the Church as service to the Word of God (Ormerod, 2010).

New understandings of revelation placed emphasis on the methods that should be employed to ensure effective catechetical instruction (SCCE, 1965). The key document, *The Catholic School*, (SCCE, 1977), emphasised that the Catholic school curriculum was an integration of faith and culture that also gave opportunity for students to come to a “personal integration of faith and life” (n. 44).

Educational developments.

Australian religious education in the 1970s was influenced by Goldman (1965), Grimmer (1973), Hirst (1972) and Hirst and Peters (1970). Goldman’s ideas were not only moral and philosophical but also educational. Responding to developmental psychology, he rejected the notion that religious education should be taught as a body of knowledge, arguing that the expected level of student response or level of religious commitment was beyond the potential of the average school child. Religion, he believed, was bound up in all subjects and in life itself. Student needs were the starting point and focus of religious education. The important element in educating for faith was process rather than clear specific objectives (Lovat, 2009).

The *Forms of Knowledge Theory* (Hirst & Peters, 1970) taught that there were distinctly different ways of knowing within different disciplines. Building on this theory, Grimmer (1973) argued that there was a distinct way to approach the teaching of religious education. He emphasised that the religious education environment should encourage reflection, dialogue and growth. This involved reflection on life experiences leading to the revelation of God’s presence and action in life. The result was that the dominant teaching strategy in the Life-Centred Approach became discussion and reflection on life’s experiences and activity.

Forms of knowledge theory itself came under critique during the 1980s. Educational theorists argued against the concept of knowledge in distinct forms, each with different ways of teaching. The separation of learning into cognitive, affective and social domains was also being questioned. New understandings of education grew, especially from the area of critical theory. This theory viewed all learning as having technical and interpretive dimensions regardless of the subject area (Lovat, 2009).

Limitations of the approach.

Despite its popularity amongst religious educators, the underpinning philosophy of the Life-Centred Approach was quite different from the preceding approaches (Lawlor, 2000; Lovat, 2009; Ryan, 2007; Rymarz, 2003). This difference led to mistrust and misunderstanding of the approach within the Church community (Lawlor, 2000).

It was a contrast to the method of religious education experienced by parents prior to Vatican II. In the period of change and instability in the Church following the Council, experiential catechesis was seen as “watered down or wishy-washy Catholicism” (Lawlor, 2000, p. 13). The concern for both parents and bishops was the seeming lack of doctrinal content within the learning process (Pell, 2001).

The perception was that the pendulum of religious education had swung away from the prescriptive, objective emphasis on the content of the faith tradition to the interpretive experience of the student (Pollefeyt, 2008). The experiential approach was less content-oriented and had broken away from the pedagogy students were experiencing in other subject areas (Lovat, 2009). Religious education had become distinctly different and problematic for teachers (Ryan, 2007).

As a subject religious education was perceived to have lost status because of the lack of rigorous assessment practices. Assessment in religious education had become subjective compared with other areas, where the assessment was based on student learning (Barry, 1998). Although aspects of an experiential pedagogy had begun to enter mainstream curriculum areas, in the 1970s and 1980s, life-centred catechesis was ahead of its time and beyond the skill of many teachers (Lovat, 2009).

Life-centred catechesis aimed to facilitate the integration of what was known about God and what was known about life (CEOM, 1984). It encouraged students to explore how God was revealed in their lives. It encouraged students to express thoughts and feelings, and helped to present Church teaching clearly and directly. Critics of the approach argued that it set up a forced relationship between the tradition and experience and relied on the expectation that both students and teachers were able to share faith (Pollefeyt, 2008). The role of the teacher was to provide opportunity for students to experience and reflect on God at work in life. However, in practice teacher intervention was necessary in order for the connection between faith and life to be made (Engebretson, 1998).

Teachers were expected to act as a group counselor or spiritual director – roles they were not trained for and that the environment of the classroom did not allow. This was seen as an unreal expectation in the context of the religious diversity that existed within

the Catholic school (Lovat, 2009; Rossiter, 1998). With regard to content, Lovat (2009) has also identified that the learning process began with life experience but rarely moved beyond this to deal with matters of the faith tradition in any serious form.

The Life-Centred Approach was a reaction to what had gone before. However, in spite of its theological soundness and its aim to provide a more stimulating pedagogy, it came under much criticism (Lovat, 2009; Ryan, 2006, 2007). It reflected a totally different theological perspective from the preceding approaches and a different pedagogy. Both of these presented enormous challenges to religious educators, separated religious education from the rest of the curriculum, and decreased its status through a lack of clear content, expectations for student learning and rigorous assessment practices. In the Church and educational community this was a period of significant controversy, heated – and sometimes bitter – debate, and polarisation around religious education (Lawlor, 2000). Experiential approaches to religious education survived until more knowledge-oriented curriculum approaches began to emerge. One approach to religious education that was often discussed as an enfaithing approach to religious education but was based on a critical perspective of educational theory was Shared Christian Praxis (Groome, 1991).

Shared Christian Praxis.

In many dioceses around Australia, the work of Irish-American theologian, Thomas Groome (1991), was used as a basis for the approach to religious education. Although this has been described as a catechetical approach (Ryan, 2006) in that its aim was to share and nurture faith, Groome's (1991) Shared Christian Praxis came out of an educational theory (Engebretson, 1998). It drew on a concept of critical-reflective learning known since the time of the Greek philosophers; the educational theory of Habermas (1972, 1974); the processes of action research; the work of liberation theologians and educators, such as Freire (1978), whose perception of education was to liberate; and Pinar, (1975), who is recognised as the theorist behind the reconceptualisation of curriculum as a process within the learner (Slattery, 2006).

Key features of the approach.

The goal of praxis was critical reflection leading to a lived response to faith. Shared Christian Praxis (Groome, 1991) melded the goals of religious education and contemporary educational thought. The approach aimed to liberate through critical

reflection on life and self in relation to the Gospel and the teachings of the Church (Lovat, 2009).

Five interactive phases were evident within the process: *naming/expressing present action; critical reflection on present action; making accessible Christian story and vision; dialectical hermeneutics to appropriate story/vision to participant's story and vision; and decision/response for lived Christian faith*. This process was not meant to be a series of steps to be covered but a dynamic dialogue flowing between elements and led by the teacher (Groome, 1991).

Groome sought an authentic, realistic and meaningful way for nurturing faith whilst increasing knowledge of the faith tradition (Ryan, 2007). In its various forms Shared Christian Praxis has had a significant impact on religious education in Australia from the 1980s to the present day. It was theologically and educationally admirable (Liddy & Welbourne, 1999; Lovat, 2009). However, the change in the demographic of students in religious education classrooms led to a decline in the number of students who were able and willing to share faith.

Theological perspective.

Shared Christian Praxis shared the theological perspective of life-centred catechesis. It stressed the centrality of God's revelation within life. An added emphasis was placed on this in *Dignitatus Humanae* (1965), the Declaration of Religious Freedom. Shared Christian Praxis also paralleled the teachings on Catholic education in relation to religious freedom (CC, 1997; John Paul II, 1979; SCCE, 1982); these were at the foundation of the approach. Building on the work of Fowler (1981), Groome also saw faith as something that was not static but active in a person's life. The teaching of scriptural analysis was essential within the movements of Shared Christian Praxis. Teaching had to be authentic and accurate building a sound understanding of Scripture from any age.

Groome also drew on the work of liberation theologians who presented a vision for the transformation of the world according to Christian teachings. This pursuit of the kingdom or reign of God was a central purpose of Shared Christian Praxis. Reflection on experience was the stimulus to move people towards action (Ryan, 2007).

Educational developments.

An effective approach to religious education stands alongside other subjects and contributes to education as a whole (Lovat, 2009). Shared Christian Praxis developed out

of a response to educational theory. In its educational foundation, Shared Christian Praxis departed from previous approaches to religious education and gave a credible stance to the subject area within the school curriculum. Groome drew on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1978). His perspective was that education should raise the consciousness of both learner and teacher as they pursue learning together. The influence of the reconceptualists movement in curriculum led by Pinar (1975) is also evident in the approach.

The foundation of Shared Christian Praxis was principally based in the work of Habermas (1972), in his critical theory of education (Lovat, 2009). This work perceived the human person as striving for freedom to think for themselves and to express their own opinions. Critical processes of self-reflection serve to enable learners to break open the truths that are placed before them and to discover a personal truth. In this way learning does not serve the powerful or the status quo. It leads towards the construction of new knowledge and a new interpretation of truth. Critical knowing therefore is viewed as a powerful way to change the world (Lovat, 2009).

Shared Christian Praxis presented a new approach to religious education based firmly on an educational foundation of critical theory. Its intention was to educate for freedom and the reign of God. Within the process teachers and students were to learn together, to engage in critical learning to explore the truths of the faith tradition and to construct new interpretations of truth. However critics of the approach again raised the problems of faith development within a school situation. Moreover, teachers were less than able to deal with the challenges of a critical approach to learning. The full transformative potential of Shared Christian Praxis was rarely achieved within the context of the Catholic school classroom environment (Lovat, 2009; Ryan, 2007).

Limitations of the approach.

Approaches to religious education that are principally concerned with sharing a personal relationship with God are less effective when there is a lack of preparedness amongst students to share faith and where there is a wide diversity in faith and cultural experiences and backgrounds between the students (Ryan, 2006).

The success of Shared Christian Praxis depended on the teacher being a person who reflected on their faith. Students were expected to have sufficient understanding of Church teaching to make the links between faith and life (Buchanan, 2005a; Lovat, 2009; Ryan, 2006). In the reality of the classroom, however, “many teachers and students experienced the religion class as chaotic and stressful” (Ryan, 2007, p. 102).

Sole reliance on the process of Shared Christian Praxis was deemed to be unhelpful to teachers and insufficient for classroom programs (Lovat, 2009; Ryan, 2007). Lack of theological knowledge of teachers often resulted in a predictable and stilted use of the process. Consequently Groome's goals of critical reflection, free choice and active faith were very rarely achieved (Ryan, 2007). In spite of professional support for teachers, lack of teacher understanding about the theoretical foundation of the approach undermined its true intention. Curriculum materials were not well understood or used by teachers and this resulted in planning that reflected compliance to a planning model rather than the catechetical intention of the approach (Malone, 1997).

This section has explored enfaithing approaches to religious education identifying forces for change that had stimulated the development of each approach. Each one resulted in the production of substantial curriculum documents and resources in Australia from before the 1950s to 2000. The following section will present an overview of the approaches that were more knowledge-centred, and contributed to the development of *GNFL*.

Knowledge-centred approaches to religious education.

Religious educators need to be aware of what they are trying to achieve in the religious education classroom (Rossiter, 2005). In order to do this they also need to be aware of the purposes underpinning approaches to religious education. In this section a critical overview of two knowledge-centred approaches is presented. These approaches have had a significant influence on religious education in Australian Catholic schools, especially in the secondary sector but, subsequently, in the development of primary curriculum materials. These approaches are *phenomenology* and *typology*. Some features of these approaches can be identified in the content strands of *GNFL*.

The impetus for the implementation of these approaches was the inclusion of religious education within the mainstream curriculum through senior secondary religious studies programs. These programs were non-confessional in that they did not seek the enfaithing of students; instead, they emphasised young people acquiring knowledge and skill in religious education as a part of a full education.

The Phenomenological Approach.

The influence of phenomenology in Australian religious education came out of the work of English anthropologist, Ninian Smart (1968, 1974, 1977, 1979). His theory

assumed that religion could be studied from a neutral perspective (Lovat, 2009). Its main concern was to enable students to determine the effects of religion on society. The methodology promoted empathetic enquiry into religion as a social phenomenon. Each religion was to be presented with equal respect, with the aim that students develop tolerance and respect for all religions (Ryan, 2006).

Key features of the approach.

From a phenomenological perspective, students could study religion through exploration of various elements: rites of passage, myths, holy times, holy places, symbols, pilgrimages, scriptures, temples and priests. Smart's model laid the foundation for a solution to the "catechetical problem" (Lovat, 2009, p. 45). Phenomenology changed the way religious education was studied. Smart's perspective emphasised that religious studies were valuable in their own right as part of social education (Buchanan, 2010). The methods employed within the approach were judged to be educationally sound and effective for study within a discipline (Lovat, 2009).

Theological perspective.

The approach had its advantages. It offered students the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in order to inquire into different religious traditions. Lovat (2009) has argued that this was a reflection of the theological underpinning of the Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate* (1965) the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. This document promoted unity amongst all people. It encouraged the development of religious consciousness and the exploration of the deep questions of human existence. It called for dialogue and collaboration between people of faith in the search for meaning and in exploring the mystery that is God. The document argued against discrimination on religious or cultural grounds, and promoted fellowship.

Phenomenology promoted the study of religion from a pluralist position, aiming to develop learners who could explore religious concepts as lifelong learners. Whilst recognising the need for students to develop their own convictions, phenomenology sought to impart an understanding and appreciation of the religious and non-religious convictions of others (Smart, 1975).

Educational developments.

Educationally the phenomenological approach to religious education complemented the way students learned in other areas of the curriculum (Lovat, 2009). It promoted effective assessment in religious education because of the knowledge content associated with the study of religion. A phenomenological approach encouraged students to learn the skills of higher order thinking, to analyse and synthesise their knowledge and to develop insights into religion as a cultural phenomenon.

Limitations of the approach.

Critics of the Phenomenological Approach have suggested that the focus on knowledge was too narrow and that students needed to learn from religion as well as learn about religion. The practicalities of the approach meant that teachers were disadvantaged by not having extensive resources available to allow students to experience a wide range of religious traditions (Lovat, 2009). Critics of the approach argued further that the study of comparative religions would result in learning at a superficial level. Concerns were expressed too about the lack of student knowledge about Catholicism and Christianity and the perceived overemphasis on other faiths (Ryan, 2007).

As a theorist and visionary, Ninian Smart made a significant contribution to religious education internationally and at all levels of education (Shepherd, 2009). However, his phenomenological approach was not specifically developed for the day-to-day practicalities of the classroom. It was Australian educators Basil Moore and Norman Habel who developed the approach further and designed the Typological Approach specifically for the classroom environment.

The Typological Approach.

Moore and Habel (1982) built on Smart's vision and theory of phenomenology and developed a curriculum structure and methodology to teach religion as a phenomenon in secondary schools. The Typological Approach was concerned about how to teach using a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology and Typology influenced the development of state-based courses in religious education across several Australian states (Buchanan, 2010; Ryan, 2007). In Tasmania, the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority developed a religious studies course in the early 1990s as a pre-tertiary course for students. Like other courses developed from phenomenology and typology, this course was non-confessional and was taught in both faith-based and government schools.

Key features of the approach.

The Typological Approach identified eight categories through which religion might be studied: *beliefs, texts, stories, ethics, ritual, symbols, social structure and experience* (Moore & Habel, 1982, p. 71). For Moore and Habel (1982) religion was made up of discrete but integrated components. The aim of the Typological Approach was that, through learning about the religious backgrounds of others and the types of components within religion, religious education would contribute to social cohesion (Buchanan, 2010; Lovat, 2009). In order to find the meaning behind religions it was important for the student to become sensitive to their inherent language and parameters (Lovat, 2009). Moore and Habel (1982) developed an interfaith approach to religious education distinguished by the importance it attached to the study of the home tradition. Religion therefore was not generic but was to be understood through a particular tradition.

Typology recognised that religious education demanded that key skills be developed for gathering and interpreting data. This approach assisted students to be aware of the sociological implications of religion. Students were encouraged to learn about their own tradition and to study other traditions. Students were opened to fundamental types within religion and, using these as building blocks, developed deeper understandings. A six-stage method described by Moore and Habel (1982, pp. 141-153) enabled students to explore the connecting interface between the religious and non-religious world.

Theological perspective.

The approach taken by Moore and Habel (1982) was also potentially attractive from an interfaith or an enfaithing perspective. It did not intrude on the religious freedom of the student, but used the home tradition as a lens through which to gain perspectives on other faiths and traditions. Moore and Habel (1982) provided a framework for an approach to religious education that integrated religious literacy with knowledge and experience of a home tradition (Lovat, 2009).

The Church documents, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (SCCE, 1988) and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (CC, 1997), strengthened the rationale for knowledge-centred approaches to religious education emphasising that the role of the school was to build knowledge about the beliefs and practices of the faith tradition (Ryan, 1998). The concept of knowledge here was not simply the recall of facts but the knowledge, skills and dispositions that come from critical reflection and

discernment. Knowledge was something to be discovered and assimilated by the student into a coherent framework for life.

Educational developments.

Unlike Groome's (1991) Shared Christian Praxis, typology was not based on critical theory, however, the educational strength of typology was its method (Lovat, 2009). Moore and Habel (1982) extended Smart's phenomenology, making it practical for the classroom teacher at any level of the school. They drew on the theories of developmental psychologists such as Piaget and Kohlberg and on the curriculum theory of Stenhouse. The method used the students' cultural situation as a springboard to deeper and wider learning (Ryan, 2007). It drew on the educational theory prevalent in the 1980s, particularly the work of Stenhouse. Influenced by this curriculum theory, Moore and Habel (1982) built into their pedagogical process the skills of going beyond the technical elements of gathering data and also involved students in inductive reasoning and interpretation. The major contribution of typology to religious education was that it integrated knowledge about the home religious tradition with a study of religious traditions in the broader cultural and social sphere.

The two approaches to religious education presented above are reflective of a knowledge-centred paradigm. They indicate the concern amongst religious educators to engage in intellectually rigorous approaches to the study of religion to contribute to but not detract from the purposes of confessional or enfaithing approaches (Gellel, 2010a). The Phenomenological Approach made a significant contribution to religious education, showing that religion could be studied dispassionately and that religious education had an educative value beyond a narrow enfaithing approach. Moore and Habel (1982) developed a practical classroom approach from the perspective of phenomenology that built knowledge of the home tradition whilst also building knowledge of other faiths and traditions.

The major approaches to religious education in Australia to the present have been presented in order to understand the factors that have shaped religious education and the relationship between the various approaches to religious education curriculum as they have developed (Buchanan, 2005a; Grimmitt, 2000). This overview of the various approaches has revealed the complexity of curriculum change in religious education. The change from one approach to another has often been contentious as each approach has had both strengths and limitations. The anxiety of parents, has also contributed to

controversy in religious education (Lawlor, 2000); and a lack of teacher knowledge and skill in Scripture and theology had been a factor in the demise of some approaches. The professional beliefs, understandings and practices of religious educators often have not kept pace with the changes in approaches or the production of curriculum resources. In the next section, the development and implementation of *GNFL* will be situated within the context of religious education in Tasmania.

Situating *GNFL* within Religious Education in Tasmania

Introduction.

The survey of the development of approaches to religious education in Australia in the previous section provides an insight into the prevailing situation that gave rise to the development of *GNFL* in Tasmania. There, the dominant paradigm had been the enfaithing paradigm as reflected in the use of the Doctrinal, the Kerygmatic and Life-Centred Approaches. Shared Christian Praxis had not been part of the general practice of religious educators. Phenomenology and typology had, however, influenced the practice in secondary schools but their influence had been less in the primary sector.

Religious educators in Tasmania have sought to develop an approach more suited to the reality of the contemporary classroom. *GNFL* has been influenced not only by approaches prevailing in Tasmania, but by approaches prevailing in Australian Catholic education, as well as the challenge of ensuring an effective and contemporary approach to religious education for Tasmanian students. This section situates *GNFL* within the context of Tasmanian Catholic schools.

Religious education in Tasmanian Catholic schools.

Catholic education in Tasmania is responsible for the education of over 15,000 students annually. This is approximately one fifth of the annual total Tasmanian student population. It is an educational organisation consisting of thirty-seven schools and colleges educating students from the pre-school kindergarten year to year twelve.

Prior to 2002 Tasmania relied heavily on resources for religious education designed for and produced in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. In 2000 the Archdiocese of Melbourne underwent a major curriculum change in religious education, with the implementation of a mandated text-based curriculum, that reflected a knowledge-centred, outcomes-based educational approach (Buchanan, 2007). In the primary texts, the links with the preceding Life-Centred Approach were still evident but there was a move towards a more explicit learning and teaching process and an increased emphasis on the

acquisition of knowledge and understandings of the faith tradition (Buchanan, 2010; Healy & Hyde, 2002; Pell, 2001).

Religious education in Tasmania prior to 2005.

Until 2005 the Dioceses of Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale in Victoria and the Archdiocese of Hobart all based their religious education on the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1984; 1995). The respective bishop of each diocese mandated these documents for use in schools but there was no local involvement in their production. These four jurisdictions did not want to follow the text-based curriculum developed in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, deciding alternatively to join in a partnership to develop individual curriculum frameworks for religious education in their particular contexts (Inter-Diocesan Collaborative RE Project-Minutes 25–26 February, 2003).

In Tasmania in 2003, the Catholic education community identified that the improvement of religious education was a strategic goal. The central focus of this goal was the development of a curriculum framework for religious education in Catholic schools within the Archdiocese. This was to be achieved through the partnership with three Victorian country dioceses.

Influences on religious education in Tasmania.

Religious education in Tasmanian Catholic schools had been viewed as an enfaithing process, a process primarily aimed at initiating young people into the life of the Catholic Church. In the same year that *GNFL* was published the Archbishop also promulgated a document *Becoming One Body* (Archdiocese of Hobart, 2005). This document established a new policy for the initiation of young people into the Church. The document promoted the family as the first educators of their children. The responsibility for ensuring that the children were prepared for the sacraments was to be taken up by families and parishes. Preparation programs were to be placed centrally within the parish with parish leadership responsible for the organisation of programs and ceremonies. This placed the school in a supportive role, providing for long-term development of knowledge and understanding of the sacraments, and shifting the emphasis in religious education from enfaithing to a focus on the acquisition of knowledge. In religious education this would occur through sound learning and teaching processes (White, 2004). More than the simple recall of facts, knowledge was perceived to be a search for meaning and truth that enlightened and enriched the learning of students (Holohan, 1999).

In the secondary context, religious education has been strongly influenced by the work of Peter Vardy of Heythrop College, London University, who had regularly visited the state, leading seminars in philosophy. For fifteen years prior to 2004, senior secondary students had been able to study religious studies at pre-tertiary level. In 2004 the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority introduced a Religion and Philosophy course (Geeves, 2009, personal communication). In Tasmania, government secondary colleges also taught this course. It had not been intended that the subject be taught for an enfaithing purpose or from a confessional stance.

The partners within the project had access to a number of curriculum documents from different dioceses and archdioceses around Australia: Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Parramatta and Canberra-Goulburn. Through a process of discernment, the document chosen as a model for the development of new frameworks for the Archdiocese of Hobart and the Dioceses of Ballarat, Sale and Sandhurst was *Treasures New and Old* (Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn [CEOC-G], 2002).

The approach to religious education within this document was based on Shared Christian Praxis (Groome, 1991). In Tasmania, this approach was perceived to have limitations in the school situation, particularly with the decline in the number of students from families connected with the Church and the increase of religious diversity in classrooms (Lovat, 2009; Ryan, 2006; 2007). Recent studies have shown a steady increase in the number of students not connected with the Catholic faith community (CEOH, 2011). An approach that relied on a shared faith between teachers and students was considered to lack an appropriate pedagogical framework or curriculum structures to attend to the learning needs of all students (White, 2004). Therefore in GNFL the curriculum content drew heavily on the Canberra-Goulburn material but the approach to religious education was developed uniquely for Tasmania.

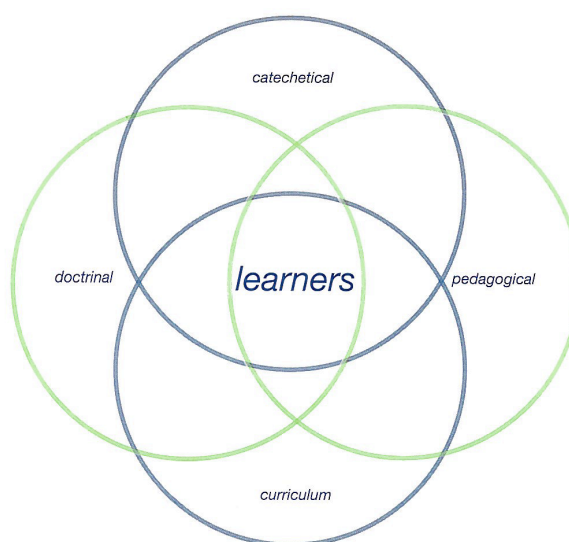
In *GNFL*, religious education is conceptualised as the intersection of doctrinal content, catechetical possibilities, curriculum structure and effective pedagogy within a comprehensive religious education framework, and is articulated as a *Four-Dimensional Approach* to religious education. The principle underpinning this approach is that all four dimensions contribute to an effective classroom program. An overview of the distinctive elements of each dimension follows.

Overview of a four-dimensional approach to religious education.

Within *GNFL*, religious education is described as involving a dynamic interplay between four interdependent dimensions. Each of these dimensions draws on

contemporary understandings in theology and in education. The dimensions are: *the doctrinal dimension*; *the catechetical dimension*; *the pedagogical dimension*; and *the curriculum dimension*. Figure 2, reproduced from *GNFL*, illustrates how the interdependent dimensions are envisaged, with learners at the intersection of the four dimensions.

Figure 2. Reproduction of Figure 4.1 in *GNFL*: Four Dimensions of Religious Education



In *GNFL* religious education is viewed as a four-dimensional process involving an interplay between doctrinal content, pedagogy and curriculum. The process is open to the possibility of a faith response in the student.

Doctrinal dimension.

Since their promulgation in the mid 1990s, two Church documents have guided the production of curriculum documents in religious education. These are the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) and *The General Directory for Catechesis* (CC, 1997). Unlike the catechisms in the past or the question-and-answer catechism, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) was to provide an authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine and, in particular, for formulating local catechisms (CCC, 1994). The *General Directory for Catechesis* (CC, 1997) was developed as a reference tool for selecting content, pedagogy and methodology. Principally this document was intended for parishes and for schools within the pastoral activity of the Church.

The doctrinal dimension of *GNFL* is a comprehensive and sequential development of key concepts for student learning informed by these two documents.

Following the Typological Approach of Moore and Habel, (1982), the content is organised into eight strands that outline the key beliefs and practices of the Catholic tradition. The strands are: *God; Jesus; Church; Scripture; Sacraments; Christian Life; Christian Prayer; Religion and Society*. The content strands are arranged from basic to more interpretive and higher-order concepts and skills, in line with the students' intellectual development.

A set of Catholic Christian values is also articulated to complement the doctrinal content. These are also drawn from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) and align with the values identified within the *Essential Learnings Framework* [hereafter, *ELs Framework*], Department of Education, Tasmania (DoET), 2002, 2003, 2004) for the Catholic education context. At the time of the introduction of *GNFL*, the *ELs Framework* was the foundation document for government schools and for some Catholic schools in Tasmania. The framework provided a conceptual approach to curriculum and pedagogy. It was learner-centred and constructivist in foundation, and it aimed to provide a rich learning environment for students.

Catechetical dimension.

The second dimension in this multi-dimensional approach to religious education is the catechetical dimension. This refers to the long-term goal of religious education as it contributes to the development of educated persons. It was recognised that students might come to the learning process as “believers”, “searchers”, “doubters” or even “non-believers” (Holohan, 1999, p. 28). The *General Directory for Catechesis* (CC, 1997) described the learning and teaching process as the means through which an “essential moment” (n. 59) of catechesis may occur. The documents proposed that the purpose of classroom religious education is to open students to the message of the Gospel and provide a positive environment for students to respond to that message even within the restrictions of the school. This is reflected in *GNFL* in the development of a pedagogical approach that engages students in exploring the faith tradition and that is open to students responding to their learning at the level of faith and action.

Curriculum dimension.

GNFL is strongly influenced by the outcomes movement in curriculum (Crotty & O’Grady, 1999) but aligns with the *ELs Framework* in the curriculum structure. Within a school religious education program there are long-term and short-term learning goals. *GNFL* draws on understandings of curriculum structure to assist religious educators to

plan effectively for learning through educational goals and indicators of learning that relate to learning for understanding. Appropriate assessment identifies what learning outcomes are to be achieved, guided by possible indicators of learning that assist teachers to judge the responses and behaviours the students demonstrate.

The *ELs Framework* influenced the way the classroom learning and teaching program was to be planned and assessed (National Catholic Education Commission [NCEC], 2009). Curriculum terminology in *GNFL* parallels that used within the *ELs Framework*. The effects of the decision to align the religious education program with the state-based curriculum framework are discussed in Chapter Four, Category Two of this research.

GNFL articulates learning goals for students and provides strategies for purposeful learning within a comprehensive curriculum structure. These are designed to assist the religious educator to provide the environment where students may explore understandings of Catholic tradition through appropriate learning goals that progress in complexity.

Pedagogical dimension.

The learning needs of students are paramount when teachers are planning for effective religious education (Elliott, 1998). Therefore *GNFL* advocates that students be offered the opportunity to engage substantially and meaningfully with the content of the faith tradition. The program does this through various suggested learning and teaching strategies. The goal of effective pedagogy in religious education is to lead students to a deep awareness of, and response to, the content of the religious education program through the higher-order thinking skills of critical reflection and discernment (White, 2004).

The research of White (2004) influenced the pedagogical dimension of the religious education framework. He had identified the growing need for the articulation of an appropriate pedagogy in religious education. The four elements of White's (2004, p. 114) "DEEP" pedagogical framework are: *discernment*, *enrichment*, *engagement* and *participation*. The DEEP Framework is based on these understandings: (1) The dominant function of the brain is to discern meaning. It does this through patterning, integrating, connecting and working with relevant concepts; (2) Learning is enriched when attention is paid to students' diverse learning needs and learning is differentiated; (3) For learning to occur, the brain must be engaged. Interest, prior knowledge and the richness of the environment for learning are vital in engaging students' interest and openness to learning; (4) Participation refers to the communal nature of learning. Essentially a communal

endeavour, quality learning in religious education occurs in a context that is rich both religiously and educationally. *GNFL* explicitly incorporates the DEEP framework as an appropriate pedagogy in religious education.

GNFL is based on the premise that effective learning involves a transformative change within the learner, resulting in a behavioural response to learning (Ryan, 2006; 2007). The pedagogical approach of *GNFL* respects the religious freedom of the student. The pedagogical framework is to assist teachers to create a stimulating learning environment where students are motivated to learn and to develop an awareness of, and openness to, the faith tradition.

The main influences on each of the dimensions outlined in detail here are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1
Summary of the Influences Contributing to a Four-Dimensional Approach to Religious Education

Dimension	Major Influences	Major Contributions
Doctrinal	Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)	The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) provided the content.
	Moore and Habel (1982)	Content was organised in strands. Typology was used to create the scope and sequence.
Catechetical	General Directory for Catechesis (CC, 1997)	The directory emphasised the distinct but complementary relationship between catechesis and religious education. The learning process was perceived as a means through which students may experience an “essential moment” of catechesis (CC, 1997, n. 59).
	Holohan (1999)	Holohan’s work recognised the differentiated needs of students as they respond to the faith tradition presented in the religious education classroom.
Curriculum	ELs Framework	This series of documents influenced the expression of core values and purposes that underpins the curriculum structure. Where possible, the curriculum structure and terminology used in the ELs Framework was used also in <i>GNFL</i> . The document influenced the way the learning and teaching process in religious education was to be planned and assessed.

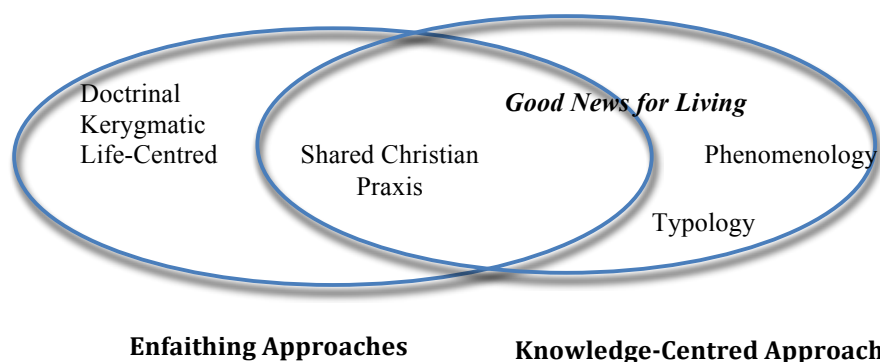
Pedagogical	White (2004, 2005)	<p>The pedagogical framework was advocated as a lens through which teachers could prepare appropriate learning and teaching strategies.</p> <p>It was drawn from the research of White, (2004, 2005) and involved discernment, engagement, enrichment, and participation within its process.</p> <p>The process encouraged teachers to move from simply engaging students in the learning process, to complex critical thinking skills and discernment of religious meaning.</p>
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Key features of the curriculum framework.

The development of *GNFL* broke with the practice of mandating religious education curricula from other dioceses. Although modeled on the existing religious education document *Treasures New and Old* (CEOC-G, 2002), *GNFL* moved away from Shared Christian Praxis. *GNFL* developed through broad collaboration with the inter-diocesan partners from Ballarat, Sale and Sandhurst Dioceses and, most importantly, with religious educators in Tasmania. Local involvement of religious educators through consultation and collaboration resulted in differences between the documents produced by each of the partner dioceses. These differences can be identified in the content strands because of the inclusion of the values aligned with the *ELs Framework*. In addition, consultation with the Archbishop and local clergy resulted in differences in the wording or inclusion of doctrinal concepts. The development of the four-dimensional approach to religious education that drew on contemporary practice in curriculum and pedagogy was also a significant difference between *GNFL* and the documents produced by the other dioceses in the partnership. There was a growing need to develop an approach to religious education, that would be more relevant to the contemporary religious education classroom. One of the intended outcomes of producing a religious education curriculum framework locally in Tasmania was an effort to address this need.

GNFL is situated within the two major paradigms discussed earlier in this chapter, and in relation to other approaches, as in Figure 3. The framework sits within an enfaithing paradigm, as its content and overarching intention is to assist students to access and find meaning in the content of a home tradition, Catholic Christianity. However, it is strongly influenced by key curriculum and pedagogical considerations, which reflect a knowledge-centred paradigm.

Figure 3. Situating *GNFL* within Two Major Paradigms of Religious Education



The dimensions of religious education within *GNFL* situate the framework between enfaithing and knowledge-centred approaches to religious education.

Implications for professional learning.

The paradigm shift in the approach to religious education brought about by the development and implementation of *GNFL* had significant implications for teacher learning. It was perceived that a comprehensive program of professional learning together with curriculum renewal would “enhance the quality of teaching and learning in religious education across the Archdiocese” (White, 2004, p. 185). Curriculum change and professional learning of teachers were understood to be interdependent processes.

In the Archdiocese of Hobart the implementation of *GNFL* included further development of the framework in collaboration with local practitioners. In preparation for this phase AP:REs took part in a conference, which focused on planning and leading curriculum change through a *Sustain and Build* (Johnson, 2005) model. Financial resources were also targeted to support the implementation of *GNFL* within schools.

Development and implementation of the framework.

At the production phase, priests from the archdiocese, principals and AP:REs were invited to participate in days of consultation and collaboration where they worked on revisions of the core document and the doctrinal content. Prior to implementation, teachers had been given the opportunity to view and also work with draft materials from *Treasures New and Old* (CEOC-G, 2002). This was to enable the AP:REs to work with teachers at the school site and to help teachers to become familiar with changes that were likely to occur. The formal introduction of the framework following its launch was achieved through a series of school-based or centrally presented workshops.

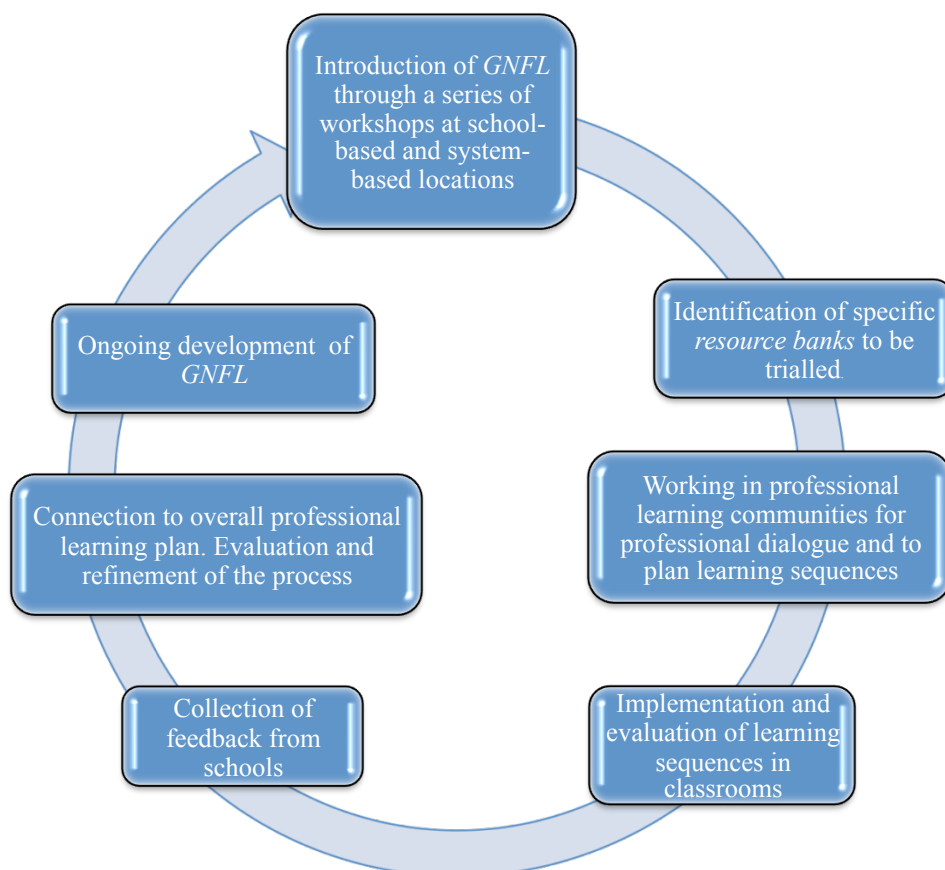
The professional learning plan within the implementation phase of *GNFL* was based on the premise that teachers' work is highly intensive, leaving only a small amount of time to engage with new learning (Johnson, 2005). By using teachers' daily learning and teaching experiences as the foundation of professional development, new learning and therefore change could be effected within the cyclical nature of planning, implementing and evaluating learning programs for students (Fullan et al., 2006; Sparks, 2002). Collaborative professional learning communities were therefore established as the key professional learning strategy.

This began an active implementation process in which teachers began to use the learning and teaching strategies in the *resource banks*¹ provided to trial the suggestions for classroom teaching. Professional learning opportunities were facilitated by CEOH staff as regionally located workshops or as school-based staff workshops. Individual teachers and school-based groups of teachers could also take advantage of professional learning programs that were offered to support various aspects of religious education. Principals could also negotiate to have workshops for their staff or cluster with other schools for workshops introducing *GNFL*. However, the focus for professional learning was the establishment of professional learning communities within schools, where teachers were released from class duties to work with the education officer from CEOH or with their AP:RE so that they could plan, teach and evaluate units of work for students and give feedback on the resource banks. Following the trialling process, and critical reflection on their experiences, teachers gave feedback that contributed towards the redevelopment of the resource banks.

The Inter-Diocesan Religious Education Project enabled the Archdiocese of Hobart to enter into a significant learning experience. Participation in this project resulted in the first independently produced religious education curriculum framework for students in the archdiocese. The project also saw the implementation of a significant professional learning strategy in religious education. It was the experience of engaging with this collaborative project that was the focus of this study. The cyclical process that was planned for the implementation of *GNFL* is illustrated in Figure 4.

¹ This name was suggested by Tasmanian religious educators to indicate that the teacher resources were not prescriptive but were a guide for teacher planning.

Figure 4. The Implementation Phase of *GNFL*



The implementation phase of *GNFL* was designed to be cyclical. Once it was introduced into schools the religious educators began to use the framework in day-to-day practice.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to situate *GNFL* within the development of approaches to religious education in Australia. It has also outlined the context for a particular curriculum change in religious education within Tasmania. An exploration of the emergence of different approaches revealed the complexity of curriculum change in religious education. Religious education approaches have an identifiable relationship with one another (Buchanan, 2005a, 2007, 2010; Grimmitt, 2000) but also distinct differences. The success of a curriculum framework relies heavily on teachers' understanding the innovation and using it in the day-to-day classroom practice (Elmore, 2007). Therefore

the provision of effective professional learning presents a challenge within a successful change process.

In an effort to improve the experiences and responses of students in religious education, religious educators have embraced new developments in Church teaching and in educational theory. Complex forces that have an impact on Catholic schools have also affected the development of new approaches to religious education. Over the past five decades there has been an identifiable shift in religious education away from approaches that have a principally enfaithing intention. However, different approaches still co-exist within the context of Catholic education (Pollefeyt, 2008).

Tasmanian religious education had paralleled the approaches to religious education in Australia and particularly in Melbourne until 2002. But with *GNFL*, Tasmanian religious education departed from them. While *GNFL* is situated within the development of approaches to religious education (cf. Figure 2), and was influenced by the developments in Church teaching and educational theory in Australia, nevertheless, in response to the needs of students, local factors determined the final production of *GNFL*, especially in the articulation of a four-dimensional approach.

Development of the new curriculum was also strongly influenced by prevailing knowledge-centred trends in Australian religious education. A focus on knowledge and learning does not preclude the catechetical or spiritual possibilities in religious education (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009; de Souza, 2006; Gellel, 2010a; Healy et al., 2004). The curriculum developers sought to articulate the interconnection between content, pedagogy and curriculum. They also recognised that religious educators have a responsibility to open students to the possibility of the transcendent in their lives and the possibility of a response in faith towards the content of the faith tradition.

The change in the approach to religious education within *GNFL* reflected a significant paradigm shift from the prevailing enfaithing approach to a more knowledge-centred approach. This implied significant new learning for teachers during the implementation phase of the innovation. The principal interest of this research is the perceptions of religious educators as they participated in the implementation phase of this significant change in religious education.

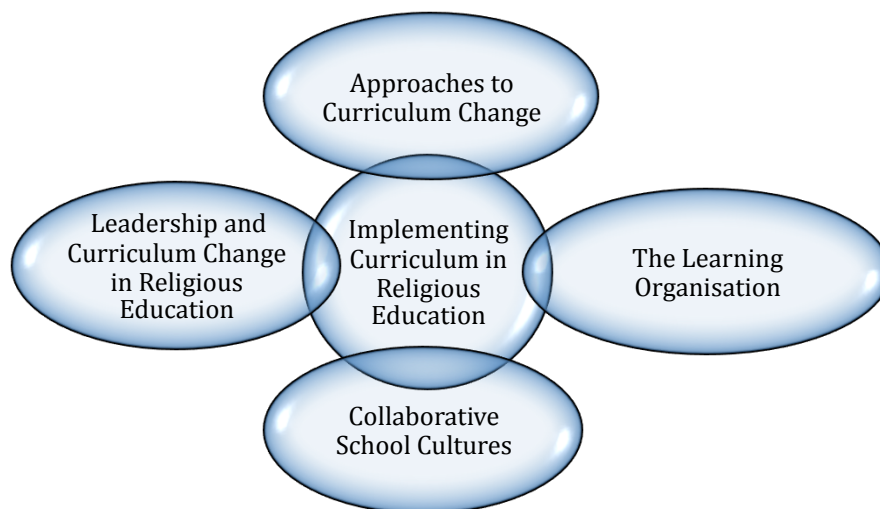
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The previous chapter of this thesis situated the development and implementation of *GNFL* within the context of approaches to religious education. This enabled the change in curriculum to be understood in terms of its interrelatedness with pre-existing curricula for religious education within Australia. In order to investigate the experiences, perspectives and issues of religious educators in the Archdiocese of Hobart as they participated in this significant curriculum change, it is also necessary to review a range of related literature from both education and religious education in Australia and internationally.

The existing body of knowledge provides a perspective from which the emergent theory arising from the data can be analysed and consolidated. An overview of literature from four key areas is presented in this chapter. These are identified in Figure 5 and pertain to: curriculum change; the learning organisation; collaborative school cultures and leadership of religious education.

Figure 5. Elements Identified in the Literature that Impact upon the Implementation of Curriculum in Religious Education.



To explore the implementation of curriculum in religious education, it is necessary to review literature from the four areas above, which reflect the complexity of change in religious education in a Catholic school context.

First, a comparison of two approaches to the management of curriculum change is presented. Secondly, a new paradigm of change based on the understanding of adult learning within a learning organisation is discussed. Thirdly, the characteristics of a collaborative school culture are investigated and, fourthly, literature pertaining to leadership and curriculum change in religious education is appraised.

Approaches to Curriculum Change

Introduction.

A review of two approaches to curriculum change is presented in this section. It provides a context for understanding the implementation of *GNFL* and its effects on teachers involved in the implementation within the school. The first approach to curriculum change is the “top-down” (Smith & Lovat, 2003, p. 197) approach associated with centrally driven curriculum innovation. This utilitarian approach was usually associated with large-scale curriculum reform initiated by centralised policymaking bodies. The second approach was associated with the Situation- or School-Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) movement of the late 1970s and the 1980s, expressed as the “bottom-up” (Brady, 1983, p. 5) approach. These two approaches to educational change are compared and contrasted to form a background to the consideration of a more contemporary approach to educational change.

Top-down approaches.

Top-down approaches to curriculum change, generally refer to innovations that were developed by an expert group or centralised body outside the school, with the expectation that the school would adopt the change (Morris, 1995). Such approaches provided a tight package of directly linked objectives, content and assessment instruments that were often perceived to “teacher-proof the curriculum” (Macdonald, 2007, p. 2). The role of the teacher was therefore relatively passive with virtually no input from teachers in the development or construction of the innovation. The goal of this approach was to achieve high levels of congruence in the planning and implementation of the curriculum as it was implemented by teachers in the field and then evaluated (Elmore, 2007; Fullan, 1993; Smith & Lovat, 2003).

The success of curriculum change in the top-down model was judged on the extent to which the curriculum had been adopted with little deviation (Buchanan, 2007, 2010; Macdonald, 2007). The primary goal in this approach was to maintain control and to increase efficiency through what have been argued to be “power/coercive” strategies

(Smith & Lovat, 2003, p. 197). In this approach, failure to deal with teacher concerns and the subsequent marginalisation of teachers within the change process contributed towards the failure of large-scale change (Cheng, 2002). Top-down approaches to curriculum development and implementation were seldom fully successful, with teachers tending to adapt the curriculum rather than adopting it (Brady & Kennedy, 2007). Policymakers also lacked understanding about implementation as a phase within the change process and about how to influence teaching practice (Elmore, 2007; Fullan, 1993).

In the 1970s, research began to focus on the experiences of large-scale reform. This research into failure of previous reform efforts revealed that change and “putting ideas into practice was a far more complex process than people realized” (Fullan, 2001a, p. 5). As curriculum innovators reflected on the failure of large-scale change, the concept of implementation began to be understood as a crucial period within the change process. Controlling strategies were found to be ineffective because of the uncontrollably complex nature of change. Studies in curriculum development during the 1980s and 1990s identified that curriculum change deals with paradoxical forces such as control and freedom, progress and conservatism. It requires careful yet flexible planning because each innovation and each context is uniquely different from all others (Fullan, 1993).

Despite the criticisms leveled against top-down approaches to curriculum change, they are still often seen as attractive in their simplicity. This was evidenced recently in the moves towards *National Curriculum* in the United Kingdom (Macdonald, 2007, p. 2) and the *No Child Left Behind* (Elmore, 2007, p. 2) project in the United States of America. Currently in Australia, the implementation of the new Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011) is a condition of government funding to non-government schools for the next quadrennium (Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations, 2009). Governing bodies have a vested interest in curriculum because of its capacity to promote social and economic development (Brady & Kennedy, 2007). This recent initiative leans towards centralised, prescriptive curriculum change and social cohesion through the exercise of power by a dominant social group. Adherence and fidelity to the initiative will be reinforced through rigorous student performance-based accountability. In relation to religious education curriculum in Australia, a top-down curriculum change has been experienced with the implementation of *To Know Worship and Love* (Elliott, 2002).

Bottom-up approach.

A contrasting approach to the management of curriculum change was “bottom-up” or “school-based” (Brady, 1983, p. 5), where curriculum was developed within individual schools. In Australia this concept of curriculum change dominated education during the late 1970s and the 1980s. The Whitlam Government (1972–75) established the School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) movement in 1975, at a time when there was increasing understanding about the difficulty of managing change through top-down, teacher-proof curriculum packages (Cheng, 2002; Smith & Lovat, 2003). The SBCD movement emphasised curriculum development at the local level based on guidelines from government ministries for education or kits from curriculum bodies.

In this approach to curriculum change, local factors were taken into account. The SBCD movement democratised curriculum change and gave control of curriculum development to those who were deemed to be the real experts, the teachers (Kemmis & MacTaggart, 1988). This movement saw the shift in curriculum decision-making to the teachers who would be implementing them and a focus on shared decision-making at the school level (Brady, 1995; Smith & Lovat, 2003).

The bottom-up approach to curriculum change, however, was limited in its effectiveness as often there was low fidelity to the innovation. The approach failed to take into account that human beings tend to act out of their own self-interest and the subjective meaning they make out of life. This “rational/empiric” (Smith & Lovat, 2003, p. 197) approach to change presumed that human beings are logical and rational and that change can occur consistently with logical argument and evidence.

In some cases, curriculum decisions made solely at the grassroots level resulted in poor decisions. There was also the potential for inactivity as innovations were rejected. Even when school-led initiatives were successful, there was often failure to connect with the central authority (Fullan, 2001a, 1999).

The strength of the SBCD movement was that it involved situational analysis and diagnosis in order to determine curriculum planning. Whilst harnessing the energy of curriculum decision-making at the school level, a number of factors hampered the SBCD movement in Australian schools. There was a lack of necessary support from outside the school by way of resources and time, and lack of internal support to allow each teacher to contribute to the decision-making process. The rise in the need for accountability in education, the movement of staff to different schools, lack of expertise in curriculum construction and lack of incentives for curriculum participation all contributed towards the difficulty of effectively participating in the SBCD movement (Brady, 1983).

The SBCD movement however made a significant change to the way curriculum development occurred in Australian schools by increasing the awareness of the positive contribution of action-research in education (Macdonald, 2007). The legacy of the SBCD movement is the concept of the teacher as curriculum designer and the value of teacher participation in and ownership of innovation. In Australia by the 1990s, a national curriculum had begun to be conceptualised and the employment-related key competencies imperative came to be embedded in curriculum development. This was driven by a series of reports from government and industry: the Dawkins (1988), Finn (1991), Carmichael (1992) and Mayer (1992) Reports. However, there could be no return to the prescriptive curriculum documents of the pre-1970s, even as the tension between decentralisation and centralisation continued (Brady, 1995) and the intervention of industry and the needs of industry began to shape education.

The failure of educational change.

A review of the literature pertaining to two contrasting approaches to curriculum change has revealed that neither approach was complete. In the 1970s the chief concern for educators was the ineffectiveness of large-scale, top-down approaches to change. This was followed in the 1980s and 1990s by a focus on those most affected by change, the teachers. There had been a growing awareness of the complexity of change that could not be satisfied by power exercised from top-down or bottom-up. Now the question is around the capacity to bring about sustainable change (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003, 2006).

Effective, sustainable curriculum change requires a new way of conceptualising learning and relationships within an educational system. Teachers benefit from developing a critical consciousness about the curriculum and how it affects teaching and learning. Concerns are awakened and an inner desire for change is kindled when teachers engage in curriculum inquiry (Joseph, 2007).

However, satisfactory implementation may not come even with the most enthusiastically welcomed innovations because curriculum change is restricted by the social, economic and political context and, paradoxically, successful change depends upon consistency with the prevailing values of society (Kennedy, 1995). Educational organisations are often resistant to change and many reforms have problems with implementation (Marsh, 2006).

The problem of educational reform lies in the incapacity to transfer what educators know about good practice into reform on a large scale. The dilemma, particularly with large-scale change, is that often the more things change the more they

stay the same (Elmore, 2007). The work of the teacher is a powerful “leverage” (Senge, 2006, p. 64) in the change process; however simply recognising this powerful relationship is inadequate. Both top-down, centralised control and bottom-up, decentralised management offer only confusing and competing solutions to the educational change question (Fullan, 1993, 2008). The solution may lie in a balance between centralised accountability and devolved power and resources (Fullan, 2008). Educational change that results in change in teacher practice is more likely to occur when there is a direct relationship between the purpose of the change and the problems teachers face in day-to-day teaching and learning (Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthy, 1996).

As government strategies for educational reform and accountability increase, policymakers and centralised authorities will continue to influence education. However the success of policy efforts is determined by conditions within schools. Schools have an important role in teaching policymakers about good policy, and change must occur “from the inside-out” (Elmore, 2007, p. 3). Both inner and outer learning for the individual, the school and the system are essential for effective change (Fullan, 1993, 2008). This involves highly collaborative cultures internally and partnerships working towards a learning community.

Change is more likely to occur when policy and practice are directly connected, where a collaborative culture is established with a learning focus, and where there is powerful and active learning for teachers (Elmore, 2007; Fullan, 1993, 2008). This new paradigm of change calls for a new understanding of the relationship between top-down and bottom-up initiatives and of the management of change for effectiveness and sustainability (Fullan, 1993, 2005). This study gives insight into an educational organisation made up of schools and their centralised body as they attempt large-scale change within this new paradigm.

A comparison between two approaches to educational change, top-down and bottom-up, has been presented in this section. The top-down approach was perceived as simplistic in style and utilitarian in purpose (Elmore, 2007). A bottom-up approach to change also lacked the capacity to bring about effective and consistent large-scale change. This approach failed to connect the various elements within the system and had the potential to result in curriculum inertia (Elmore, 2007). It however highlighted the essential role of teachers in the change process and their abilities as curriculum designers and implementers (Kemmis & MacTaggart, 1988). The concept of the learning organisation (Senge, 2006) has reconceptualised the change process predicated upon the concept of adult learning. This is the focus of the next section.

The Learning Organisation

Introduction.

A contemporary paradigm of educational change is based on adults learning within a network of relationships that interact within schools, between schools and with centralised bodies such as Catholic education offices (Fullan, 2010). In this section the review of literature discusses factors that contribute to adult learning and change. The literature suggests that the concept of an organisation moving with and stimulating change and improvement has been brought about by contemporary understandings of adults as self-fulfilling, self-directed, critical and meaning-making beings who learn both individually and collectively (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). There is the potential for learning in whatever situation or context adults find themselves (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). This section is structured to explore two areas: the foundation of the concept of the learning organisation within contemporary perspectives on adult learning and factors within the workplace as a learning context.

Adult learning and the learning organisation.

The “learning organization” (Senge, 2006, p. 5) consists of learners who are interested in both their own and collective learning within the organisation. A learning community is created when members of the organisation engage in the deep questions of purpose and meaning, and relationships of learning develop (Senge, 2006). In a learning organisation a vibrant social entity is created where individuals learn in conjunction with one another, causing a synergistic effect. The result is organisational learning that is greater than the sum of each individual’s learning (Merriam et al., 2007).

The realisation of the innate capacity to learn is vital in the workforce of today. Successful organisations capitalise on their strengths, are structured for flexibility and creativity and are able to tap into the adaptive and creative capacities of their employees (Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2007; Sheahan, 2007). The learning organisation begins when there is the capacity to consider and conceptualise the interconnectedness of individuals and groups internal and external to the organisation. This is referred to as “systems thinking” (Senge, 2006, p. 15).

Change involves new learning and learning results in change. In learning organisations, people continuously learn together, expanding their capacity for creativity, growth and change (Senge, 2006). It is therefore essential to explore how adults learn in order to understand how religious educators might engage in change and become committed to implementing a new curriculum in their day-to-day practice.

Current perspectives on adult learning.

Two major perspectives are evident in current theories of adult learning. These are the understanding that adult learning is a multidimensional phenomenon, and increased attention paid to the diverse contexts in which learning takes place (Merriam, 2008; Merriam et al., 2007). For children, learning involves the building of cell assemblies and phase sequences in the brain. For adults, learning involves making new arrangements within existing sequences. Neurologically, adults are involved in a process of unlearning and relearning, accessing higher order brain functions to generate the much needed energy and unbind the old (Conner, 2007). To make meaningful connections, however, the learning must be tied to physical, embodied experience (Merriam, 2008).

A neurobiological view of transformative learning suggests that the brain actually changes in structure during learning. Learning is evoked by engagement in opportunities for mentor-assisted inquiry that promotes higher order cognitive thinking. Mind and body are equally important, and emotive, sensory and kinesthetic experiences strengthen learning (Taylor, 2008). This suggests that strategies that promote intellectual stimulation and interaction within the day-to-day practice of teaching are more likely to produce change at the level of professional beliefs and practices. This is supported by a transformative paradigm of adult learning, which is discussed in the following section.

Adult learning theory.

Two complementary contributions to the area of adult learning are analysed in this section. These are the theory of “andragogy” (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 35) and “transformative learning” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 354). Knowles (1986) distinguished adult learning from the learning of children. Philosophically, his theory is founded on an individual-transactional model of learning. It recognises the adult as a self-directed learner who is growing in self-concept and is able to make choices and be responsible for ongoing learning and life. Andragogy involves the following principles or elements: (1) the need to know; (2) the learner’s self-concept; (3) the importance of the learner’s experience; (4) readiness to learn; (5) a task-oriented or problem-solving orientation to learning; and (6) motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2005).

Awareness of the gap between what one knows and what one needs to know creates a readiness to learn. Learning for the adult is the pursuit of self-identified, personal learning goals. Adult learners are highly pragmatic, investing time and energy into those things that are useful or important to them and which directly relate to life. The desire for knowledge and skill is a means to an end. Theories of intellectual development

in adults emphasise that, in adults, learning builds on prior knowledge and experience (Geake, 2007). Adults learn because of their prior experiences, and it is more difficult for adults to engage in new learning unrelated to any prior experience (Knowles et al., 2005).

Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1996a) is a critical theory of adult learning that has evolved out of a perspective of education as liberation (Freiere, 1978). It is also concerned with education for social change (Habermas, 1972, 1974, 1998). It aims to enable the learner to develop personal meaning. Personal meaning is a complex concept that relates to the deepest values of the individual (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Transformation theory is a synthesis of objective, rationalist perspectives of learning which view knowledge as an independent reality, and interpretive perspectives, which view learning as a social act that cannot be divorced from socio-cultural circumstances of the learner. Critical theory involves thinking deeply about the complexities of issues in order to take action (Wink, 2005). In relation to theological education, it has the potential to contribute towards the notion of transformation or conversion (D'Souza, 2010). Critical theory exposes the inherently manipulative and duplicitous elements within a dominant ideology. It is effective when it keeps alive the hope of a fairer and more compassionate world (Brookfield, 2005). Essentially, adult learning is concerned with creating and facilitating dialogical communities where adults can engage in rational discourse and action (Mezirow, 1990).

Challenging the status quo: journey to transformation.

There is a strong drive to assimilate and move towards concepts that can be integrated with one's own frames of reference; however, there is also a strong drive within the individual to make meaning from experiences that are confronting and disorienting and that challenge the status quo. The way to change frames of reference is to become critically reflective of one's assumptions. This process or praxis is necessary for adult learning and is a powerful mechanism for change. Change is identified in the decision to act or not to act upon new convictions (Mezirow, 1990). The critical reflection inherent in transformation theory is the foundation for democratic social action, the desired outcome of adult education (Brookfield, 2005; Fleming, 2007).

Critical reflection and dialogue are essential if new meanings are to be discerned (Mezirow, 1990). Rational thought and action result from deconstruction and reconstruction of meaning within the individual. Individuals analyse common problems, discover options and work interdependently with others to take social action (Mezirow, 1996b). The goal of transformation in the context of learning is the capacity to engage in

experiences “which occur with sufficient emotional intensity to be meaningful and with sufficient cognitive patterning to organise thinking and learning in deeply significant ways” (Arnold & Ryan, 2003, p. 7). This results in learning that enhances individual self-concept and identity, and builds the capacity of the individual to contribute to the common good in terms of both work and social skills.

Adults as active learners.

Andragogy and transformation theory present the adult as an active learner focused on personal growth but with a deep desire for and commitment to making a difference and bringing about an improved situation. This is a foundational concept in a contemporary paradigm of curriculum change. As knowledge about how adults learn has increased, so too has the understanding of the importance of the learning context. This has occurred simultaneously with the growth in interest in workplace learning and has resulted in a richer, more holistic view of the adult learner (Merriam, 2008). In the following section the school, as a workplace and a context for teacher learning is discussed.

The school as a context for teacher learning.

Understanding the school as a unique learning organisation has focused attention on the school’s potential for growth and improvement. The process of teachers working and learning together builds relationships and collective purpose (Hargreaves, 1997a). Improved student outcomes have been identified in schools where teachers work in professional learning communities and become involved in reflective practice (Stoll, 2010; Martin, 2008; Timperley, 2010; Zammit, et al., 2007).

The close relationship between student learning and the teacher’s desire that student learning be authentic and effective results in a sense of “passion, purpose and energy” (Fullan, 2003a, p. 6). This is an important factor in successful educational reform. The most powerful motivator for a group of educators is to remind them of why they entered the profession (Hinman, Knights, & Hubbard, 2008; Shirley, 2010). Developing a sense of purpose and support as they engage in collaborative renewal is essential for teachers (McMahon, 2003). The role of teachers in the change process, has been reconceptualised, building on a number of important professional qualities such as moral purpose and discernment, efficiency, competence, and the mastery of techniques and content knowledge. Included in this list are the emotional and ethical qualities that bring about pleasure, passion, creativity, challenge and joy (Hargreaves, 1997a, 2010;

Sheilds, 2010; Shirley, 2010).

In the change process, attention must be given to the development of the self (Day, 2004). Reflection on values, purposes, emotions and relationships is a necessary part of teacher learning. This challenges the school to provide the positive environment to support teacher learning through the establishment of collegial cultures (MacGilchrist, 2003). Teachers need the necessary collaborative and emotional skills to enable them to work within a number of collegial relationships inside and outside of the school (Day, 1999).

A learning school is where all work together to build a learning community (Hartle & Hobby, 2003). A school that is or aspires to become a learning community is involved in problem solving, continuing learning and discernment, and is vitally aware of the interrelationships within the complex social context of its work. It is a place where learning is at the centre and where planning, implementation and reflective practices are part of the total school culture (Dalin & Rolff, 1993). The learning school should aim to be an organic whole that is open to influences from outside but can adapt in a responsive yet planned and ethical way in order to give meaning and order to the forces for change that are experienced most intensively at the school site.

Barriers to the reculturing of bureaucratic institutions as communities of learning are evident. Among these are the prevailing mental models, the attraction of individualism, a lack of skills and of readiness to engage in skill development, memories of past failed efforts at reform, and the lack of a critical mass of those convinced of the importance of change (Merriam et al., 2007). Restructuring does not automatically result in reculturing. Teachers must be resourced to work together in productive, collaborative ways both within the school and within the system (Fullan, 1993, 2005).

Adult learning is a foundational principle of the learning organisation. This concept of a vibrant social entity is a collaborative, innovative network producing a synergistic effect of change and growth (West-Burnham, 2009). Adult learning theory has emphasised the need for adults to have opportunity to develop as critical thinkers and self-directed learners (Brookfield, 2005). Ideally, adult learning promotes individual and collective growth through a highly experiential process of unlearning, relearning and meaning-making (Mezirow, 1990). Critical theory in adult learning draws the learner into a process of reflective thinking about issues in order to take action towards a preferred future.

The context for learning is essential in adult learning and acknowledgement of this has brought about increased interest in the workplace as a place for adult learning

(Hartle & Hobby, 2003; Merriam, 2008). The result is a more holistic view of the adult learner, which presents new challenges for educational change and teacher professional learning. Both the adult learner and the context must work together for maximum effectiveness in the change process. In the following section the focus of literature review is the elements within this complex context for learning and change.

Collaborative School Cultures: A Complex Context for Change

Introduction.

Over the last three decades there has been increased focus on change as collaborative renewal. Fragmented and project-driven approaches to curriculum change are no longer appropriate within a contemporary educational context (Fullan, 2001a). Improving learning outcomes for students has become the deep moral purpose of education (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). However, there is still a need for both restructuring and reculturing within schools and systems for authentic learning communities based on collaboration to develop (Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002).

Collaboration is the act of working in a united way to achieve a joint, intellectual purpose (Duke Corporate Education, 2007). The act of working collaboratively ends isolation; however, it is more than merely working in groups. The group becomes a high performing collaborative community when its purpose is focused on making a difference for students (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2006). Teacher leadership and collaboration are interdependent as in a collaborative culture there is a change in the way power is exercised from hierarchical to peer control. Leadership is diffuse and authority dispersed (Harris, 2003). Leadership can therefore be exercised in distributed ways (Gronn, 2000).

However, the ideal of the collaborative learning community that is focused on transformation rather than incremental improvement is still a vision rather than a reality for all teachers. Establishing such a learning culture is extremely challenging (West-Burnham, 2009). It is easier to adopt a change and manage it from a distance than to engage in “the hard work of relationships, capacity and motivation” (Fullan, 2001a, p. 221). A review of the literature reveals three characteristics associated with effective learning communities: moral purpose, collaborative professional learning communities and leadership. These are presented in the following sections.

Moral purpose.

Quality teaching is a priority in the goal of delivering a world-class experience of schooling (Council of Australian Governments, 2008). Teachers are expected to play a central role in continuous school renewal through engaging in a learning culture (Clayton, 2005; O'Donnell, 2005). For this to become a reality teachers need to be individually and collectively empowered as critical thinkers, reflective practitioners and “moral change agents” (Fullan, 2001a, pp. 16, 17). Moral purpose is a foundational disposition within teachers and those appointed to leadership in education. In education, moral purpose is defined as having an equitable system where all students learn and are enabled to become positive and active members of the community (Fullan, 2003a). Moral purpose is borne out of the deep-seated but often, latent values within an organisational culture; these constitute the singular, most powerful element within the change process (Abrahamsons, 2004; Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010; Fullan, 2001a; Senge, 2006). It is essential to have a purpose that is worthy of people's commitment.

In making professional judgments that will bring about improved learning, teachers act as “moral change agents” (Fullan, 2001a, pp. 16, 17). They make significant professional judgments on the basis of deep moral purpose as they focus on effective learning outcomes for students; therefore making a difference in the students' lives through education (Fullan, 1993, p. 5; 1999, p. 1; 2003a, p. 29; Fullan et al., 2006, p. 12; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 27).

Schools can and do make a difference to student learning and teachers have the potential to make changes that matter. Teacher quality is a major factor in improving learning outcomes for students. Their decisions can make a difference in the lives of students, especially those who are most disadvantaged (Fullan et al, 2006; Hopkins, 2003a, 2003b). Therefore the teacher's moral purpose, focused on improving student learning, is a powerful contributing factor within school and large-scale change.

Teachers need to be energetic and continuous learners throughout their professional lives (Stoll & Earl, 2003; Phillips & Crawford, 2003). The success of a sustained curriculum change depends on the quality of teaching and learning, when teachers individually and collectively take responsibility for the planning of improved learning by students in the face of the complexity of change. As teachers develop moral purpose, personal and collective vision, and find meaning in their roles by engaging actively in the processes of purposeful change, change becomes a personal goal (Fullan, 2001a). Engaging in purposeful professional learning communities founded in a vision for a preferred future builds the skills of exercising professional judgment through critical

reflection on pedagogical practice (Elmore, 2007; Fullan et al., 2006). Teacher professional beliefs are most difficult to change because they challenge the core values and experiences of teachers; however, it is change at this level which has the potential to bring about true system reform (Fullan, 2001a).

Good leadership is second only to good teaching in its capacity to improve learning outcomes for students (Gurr, 2008). Successful leaders foster a sense of coherence and meaning within the chaos and complexity of change. They help people to feel that even the most difficult problems can be productively faced and addressed (Fullan, 2001b). At the heart of successful leadership is a strong and sustaining sense of moral purpose that makes a difference in the lives of students and staff members through meaningful, lifelong learning (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2003).

Moral purpose therefore is the central guiding principle that unites an educational organisation. It arises from individual and collective values, it is deeply meaningful and it is a powerful force for change when oriented towards decisions and actions that will benefit students. This study will offer insights into moral purpose in relation to religious education.

A collaborative professional learning community.

An examination of the literature on professional learning provides a context for understanding the implementation of a curriculum change in religious education. Professional learning for educators presents a challenge because of the perceived ineffectiveness of many models. This has caused theorists to reflect on the purpose of professional learning and to develop new, more effective models. These require purposeful leadership and effective strategies to promote the emergence of a collaborative professional learning community within schools, across schools and including the centralised body. Literature on building collaborative professional learning communities in education identifies five areas for discussion: identifying the problem; establishing purpose; new models of professional learning; organisation for professional learning and strategies.

Identifying the problem.

Experiences of professional learning are often unsatisfactory for teachers because little attention is paid to their real learning needs (McMahon, 2003). Individual and organisational needs all play a part in shaping opportunities for engagement in

professional learning. Perspectives on teacher learning however lack understanding of the internal and external influences that teachers encounter (Fessler & Ingram, 2003). Professional learning practice lacks planning, is not well monitored and lacks the support of the learning community (Day, 2004). Professional learning is also criticised as “pedagogically naïve and does not lead to an increase in knowledge, skills or commitment” (McMahon, 2003, p. 601).

Professional learning programs are often unrelated to the classroom and lack purpose and meaning. Traditional models have not empowered teachers to take an active role in their own learning or to develop the skills of teaching for understanding (Kwakman, 2003). Investing in existing models of professional learning that are unsatisfactory and ineffective is unlikely to have any significant effect on either knowledge or skill of educators or on the performance of students (Elmore, 2007).

A more differentiated concept of professional learning and support is needed for educators who come into the profession at different stages of maturity, life experience, school context or professional preparation (Fessler & Ingram, 2003). The evaluation of professional learning is essential in order to determine its effectiveness. Experiences can then be organised to target specific teacher, pupil, school and system needs. Ensuring “fit” between teacher needs in relation to curriculum change, on the one hand, and learning opportunities, on the other, will result in a more “positive impact at the school and classroom level” (Day, 2004, p. 295). Practices in schools that motivate and give satisfaction to staff by providing opportunities for learning, feedback, growth and responsibility are more likely to result in increased productivity and job satisfaction (Shepherd, Seifert, Brien & Williams, 2010). The literature highlights the need for teachers to be fully engaged in strategies for their professional learning. Professional learning is therefore more likely to be effective if it is targeted and planned to address the real needs of teachers.

Establishing purpose.

The purpose of professional learning can be described as three-fold: to develop a deep, moral purpose that desires to make a difference to the lives of students through learning (Fullan, 1999, Fullan et al., 2006); to increase the teacher’s technical skills in planning effective learning for students (Ellison, 2007) and to build the capability for making professional judgments (Smith & Lovat, 2003).

Active participation in change, pressure and support for implementation are necessary if there is to be a change in professional beliefs and practices, if the change is

to be owned and if the change is to become embedded in practice (Fullan, 1993). Ownership is a sign of, and a tangible outcome of, real change. Willingness to engage in the process is just the beginning of ownership. Ownership comes from clarity, skill and commitment and is the product of a successful change process. Deep ownership “arises from full engagement in solving problems” (Fullan, 1993, p. 31) and is stronger during, and at the end of, a successful change process than at the beginning.

Professionalism for educators is identified in the values that underpin their educational philosophy, the knowledge base they have as a teacher, their professional interactions and relationships, and their professional practice and skill. Professional learning is interdependent with “capacity building” (Harris, 2003, p. 496), which is defined as the quality within people and organisations to learn and to apply the learning to new situations. Therefore building a professional learning culture within a school and between schools and the wider educational organisation has the potential to increase the capacity of the whole to change and improve. Professional learning aims to develop self-directed critical thinkers who have, and act out of, a deep sense of personal and collective moral purpose.

Teachers have a right to quality professional learning experiences and opportunities that are integral to the task of teaching (Hargreaves, 1997b, Hargreaves & Evans, 1997). Professional learning involves continuous opportunity to benefit from consciously planned experiences and those that occur during their day-to-day work (Day, 2004). These support the development of moral purpose and active change agency through extending teachers’ critical skills and emotional intelligence which are “essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout their lives” (Day, 1999, p. 4).

For change to occur there must be an identified need, which may arise through a structured conversation about student learning (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, [DEECD], State of Victoria, 2010). For teachers to make the necessary improvement to student learning student needs must be at the centre of learning (Fullan, et al., 2006). Professional learning of teachers must also enable them to develop the skills of making professional judgments. An essential professional skill is the teacher’s capacity to make judgments about curriculum content and student learning in the light of evidence of student performance (Healy & Bush, 2010). Therefore there is a demand for informed professional judgment. Skill in collecting and analysing data to inform changes to practice is essential for all teachers and leaders in education as they move to a new position of “informed professional judgment” (Earl & Katz, 2006, p. 6).

Personalised learning requires teachers to have the necessary skills to make precise, informed judgments about what students know in order to take them to the next level. Assessment data are part of a toolkit enabling teachers to understand current performance and to guide action for the future (Timperley, 2010). The skill of professional judgment enables planned, daily, continuous improvement in programs and in classrooms (Earl & LeMahieu, 1997). The capacity to be able to design effective programs that enable focused teaching and learning is a key skill within a concept of the teacher as a highly collaborative learner and active change agent. For teachers to plan for focused learning based on the needs of their students, daily learning is necessary for teachers both individually and collectively (Fullan, et al., 2006). As teachers become actively involved in making professional judgments, the gap between the current situation and the preferred future for their students has the power to motivate them towards improvement through change.

New models of professional learning.

Professional learning is a relatively new term that has replaced outdated concepts such as in-service training and professional development; it emphasises a paradigm of more continuous teacher learning (Stoll & Earl, 2003). Commitment to continuous learning enriches a teacher's professionalism. Many kinds of formal and informal opportunities for learning can occur and be incorporated within a model of continuous professional learning (Muijs, Day, Harris, & Lindsay, 2004).

Teachers need to try new things before they really begin to change their understanding and beliefs (Fullan, 1993). Teacher learning in professional communities enables teachers to become fully engaged in the change process. A school that has a culture that supports change and improvement, promotes relationships between professionals, generates new knowledge and strives for coherence among the competing demands of a non-linear educational context (Fullan, 2001b).

Change is more likely to be successful when teachers can see that it will assist them to reach their goals for student learning and school improvement (Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010). Some teachers do not see the need to change and find it difficult to move to a continuous learning environment. Identification of problems, reflection using appropriate data, and collaborative decision-making enables groups to become highly professional collaborative learning communities. For this to occur the professional culture within the whole educational organisation must enable teachers to actively engage in reflection (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). This reflection on learning is "deep and broad

learning for all students – and for all the adults who work with them” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 33).

Collaborative cultures, where teachers are supported to learn from and work with each other can result in successful educational change and school improvement (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). The task of examining student work and interpreting student learning in a collaborative manner has provided the most direct evidence of teacher learning (DEECD, 2010). As outlined above, a contemporary paradigm of professional learning is emerging which expresses an authentic regard for the work of teachers, encouraging them to share good practice and to read and discuss educational literature and research in professional networks (Lieberman & Woods, 2003).

Within the school, an effective professional community develops “where professional learning is embedded in the school priorities and teachers’ classroom practices” (Hargreaves, 1997a, p. 118) and where the resources, the structures and the relationships within the total school culture support this professional community. Values that underpin the professional community include: appropriate risk-taking, creating a heightened sense of self-efficacy; commitment to continuous learning and improvement; collaboration and mutual support; and consistency of expectation for pupil learning and problem-solving (p. 118).

Organisation for professional learning.

Teachers need effective ways to engage in ongoing professional learning to support change and improvement in student learning (Australian Government Quality Teacher Program, 2005). New, constructivist relationships are needed between researchers, policymakers and practitioners to facilitate effective teacher learning.

Professional learning needs to be led purposefully to bring about change (Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010). The school environment should be organised for shared responsibility, critical thinking and analysis. An optimistic culture is essential for achievement as positive emotion creates positive energy (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Smylie, 1995). It involves drawing on the dimension of a teacher’s work that brings intrinsic rewards of joy and passion for learning (Hargreaves, 1997a). Within this environment, teachers are able to develop and display high-level professional behaviours, problem-solving, collaborating and working with teachers that are at various points on the career spectrum, recognising and harnessing difference and divergence of views. Focused on both student and teacher need, professional learning for teachers empowers individuals and unites organisations through a deep sense of moral purpose.

Schools are challenged to replace a reactionary, fragmented and meaningless existence with program coherence and deep meaning (Fullan, 2001a). No two contexts will respond to change in the same ways (Guskey, 1995). Support and pressure from outside provides the rationale and the necessary guidance in the development process especially when innovation proves difficult. A highly collaborative culture, where teachers are actively involved in the change process, is a necessary ingredient for success (Fullan, 1999).

A contemporary paradigm of professional learning is supported by internal opportunities for professional learning through collaborative communities, external partnerships and networks with the capacity to engage in critical reflection on learning and teaching (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Fullan et al., 2006; Elmore, 2007). Networks provide a “new construct for conceiving of educational provision and a new vehicle for achieving change” (Chapman & Aspin, 2003, p. 653), where hierarchical and bureaucratic models of understanding school-system relationships are outmoded. Networks enable links between those who have common purposes, and there is the possibility of learning and growth likened to a spider’s web. The concept of networks enables relationships between formal and informal, work-based and community-based learning.

Strategies.

Successful professional learning is not to be found in a choice between school-based and course-based modes of provision but an active integration of, and synergy between, the two. The best professional learning in teaching is embedded in what teachers do in their own schools and classrooms on a day-to-day basis. Effective professional learning focuses on student learning. The prime opportunity for learning occurs in the classroom and through involvement with the collaborative processes of school life. It enables teachers to ask specific questions about the content and pedagogy at an individual and general level (Elmore, 2007; Shirley, 2010).

Collaborative professional cultures facilitate teacher learning, break down the professional isolation experienced by teachers and encourage teacher empowerment (Marsh, 2006). The creation of professional learning communities supports effective teacher learning and effective change, the development of the skills of rational discourse and critical reflection, and alignment of learning goals within the school and within wider educational networks (Hargreaves, 1997b; Moonen & Voogt, 1998; Stoll, 2010). Professional learning communities can be transformed in a context where territorial

concerns are low and where there is high capacity for interdependence and networking (West-Burnham, 2009).

The quality of what goes on inside the classroom depends upon the quality of time spent with colleagues outside it. Teacher isolation is a barrier to effective professional learning and change (Hargreaves, 1997a). Teachers need more than knowledge about an innovation: they need practical examples and ideas, and coaching and mentoring as they try new techniques in the classroom (Moonen & Voot, 1998). The theoretical foundation of learning and teaching needs to be supported by research, modelling, practice and feedback in real settings (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2003). Teachers also gain valuable learning from opportunities to analyse student work in relation to standards collaboratively (Timperley, 2010).

Teachers benefit from access to trustworthy experts such as school-based leaders and education officers to whom they can turn as the need arises, for help as they experiment with the new curriculum in the classroom. These accessible experts should be within the immediate network of colleagues (Stoll, 2010). Professional learning needs to increase teachers' understanding of curriculum content, of how students learn, of effective communication of the content and of effective models for meaningful learning. Active engagement by teachers in their own learning is crucial. This active engagement is expressed in opportunity for professional feedback and time to put new learning into practice. A critical component of teacher learning is collaborative examination of student learning. In implementing change, "follow-up" and ongoing support "at the elbow" is most important (Ingvarson et al., 2003, pp. 30–31).

The success of professional learning initiatives should be judged by determining how effective they are in moving teachers' practices towards improving student learning. Professional practices that are shown to result in positive outcomes for students are more likely to be adopted by colleagues (Guskey, 1995). Data-gathering and professional dialogue around appropriately gathered evidence is to be emphasised (Hargreaves, & Evans, 1997). This builds strong professional communities, where teachers can "engage in professional dialogue, talk about practice, practice new initiatives and get moral support and feedback from colleagues as they engage in the uncertainties of change together" (p. 11).

Reflection on practice and self-efficacy developed through experimentation are inherent skills and attributes of teachers as they try new things and plan for the challenges they face (Goodson, 1997). Teachers need to take into account the full context of their work and incorporate it within their day-to-day work (Huberman, 1992). Four essential

outcomes for successful professional learning are identified: the building of teacher knowledge, improved practice, enhanced student outcomes and increased teacher confidence or efficacy (Ingvarson et al., 2003).

The collaborative perspective of teacher learning places the central locus of change and learning within the context of the school as a collaborative learning community, networking and partnering with and supported by external bodies such as professional learning providers, consultants and higher education institutes (Day, 2004; Lieberman & Woods, 2003).

Collaborative teams within the school, and networking and partnership relationships within the system and the wider educational community are effective means for sharing teacher skills and practice (Day, 1999). Effective professional learning supports teacher learning in a highly collaborative culture within the school and in the extended professional network in the wider educational community. The de-privatisation of teachers' work, deeper understanding of student learning outcomes and greater capacity in teachers to determine effective indicators of student learning towards those outcomes are the result (Ingvarson & Meiers, 2005; Ingvarson et al., 2003; Sparks, 2002).

Teacher learning networks between groups of teachers and teacher educators have the capacity to foster significant professional learning, which changes teacher practice and positively influences student learning (Lieberman & Woods, 2003). Through collaboration, teachers engage in dialogue and teach each other, share expertise, and read and discuss relevant research literature.

In the past, initiatives for change have, in the main, been generated outside the school imposing change from external forces. However, the teacher can control the effects of change more easily by becoming an "extended professional" (Goodson, 1997, p. 41). This means becoming more research-focused, and working with the support and partnership of outside agencies. In this way the teacher's voice is more likely to be heard. Initiatives and capacity for change can be driven from inside the learning and teaching relationship.

Partnerships between universities and other system teacher learning providers are vital to link the work of schools with teacher education. In a partner relationship, each party has distinct collaborative or complementary roles and responsibilities. Partnerships are formed out of mutual need and ideally are based on equality and a desire for improved student learning (Day, 2004).

The learning of the teacher is at the centre of effective curriculum change. The possibility of a new model of professional learning for teachers has evolved through the

advent of systems thinking, the concept of the school as a learning organisation, and an understanding of the day-to-day work of the teacher as an opportunity for continuous learning. This new model is focused on bringing about improved learning outcomes for students. It emphasises the importance of the teacher as a highly skilled professional within a highly complex network of relationships within and the school and within the wider educational community.

This study aimed to contribute to this body of literature by examining the effectiveness of a collaborative model of professional learning as a strategy for the implementation of *GNFL*. Much of the literature emphasises collaboration within the school and this study also examines the interrelationship between school and the centralised body.

Literature on professional learning highlights that effective professional learning leads to highly professional collaborative cultures within educational organisations. Such a collaborative culture is characterised by professional learning that is focused on the goals of the organisation. It is also differentiated, and targeted towards the real needs of teachers in relation to the challenges they face in improving student learning. Professional learning should aim to build moral purpose, increase the teacher's technical skills and increase their capacity to make professional judgments. The literature emphasises the importance of interdependent relationships of learning between teachers, and between teachers and experts, for increased teacher learning. In order to establish a collaborative learning environment that is connected within and outside the school, effective leadership is essential. Literature on leadership models suitable for a collaborative culture is the focus of the following section.

Leadership.

Concepts of educational leadership are challenged by the complexity of the educational context today as it moves from traditional, hierarchical models of leadership. Definitions of leadership throughout the 1990s emphasised the democratic, participative nature of educational change for improving learning. Concepts of the interrelationship between leadership and learning were explored and leadership began to be defined in terms of the processes leaders use to mobilise the members of their communities. However these definitions still viewed leadership as an activity involving leaders and followers. Gronn (2002, 2003) argued against this outdated notion in favour of collegial and peer-oriented relationships of influence.

The literature on educational leadership argues strongly that hierarchical notions

of leadership that are based on imbalances of power are no longer effective for educational organisations. Leadership for successful educational change is directly influenced by the quality of positional and distributed leadership within the school (Gronn, 2000, 2003, 2007). The “great man” (Lambert, 2003, p. 10; Senge, 2006, p. 320) view of leadership, where all leadership is invested in the charismatic individual, is a relic of the past. Charismatic leadership has been questioned as a myth, suggesting that investing in charismatic leadership actually has a negative impact upon building sustainable leadership (Fullan, 2005).

Leadership therefore becomes a function that is stretched over a group. The leadership exercised by the group is more important than the leadership exercised by the individual within the group. This model implies that there is a division of labour. This refers to the capability to achieve goals and complete tasks. These configurations change as new tasks and requirements emerge (Gronn, 2002).

The contemporary challenge of leadership is to move towards the leadership of people and the reclamation of educational purposes (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009). Therefore, leadership is more than principalship. Collaborative leadership teams whose members have joint responsibilities for student learning, provide a model more suited to the complexity of change and school management. Leadership can no longer be concentrated only on those with formal leadership roles (Leithwood, 2004). The concept of leadership is ready to be considered, puzzled over and reconceptualised to suit the new context in which it is exercised (Cranston, Ehrich & Morton, 2007; Lambert, 2003).

Leadership involves embracing a “complex set of relationships” (Mulford, 2007, p. 16). It is exercised through both positional and personal influence (Duignan, 2010a). “Leadership throughout the school ensures that the maintenance of culture is not invested in a small powerful group” (Roffey, 2007, p. 26). In effective schools, leadership encompasses all members of the entire education community (Neuman & Simmons, 2000). Distributed educational leadership is characterised by moral purpose, healthy relationships, creativity and teacher leadership.

Leadership with moral purpose.

Leadership that is exercised with moral purpose is able to link a vision that is grounded in reality with everyday practice to create workplaces that are more meaningful and inspiring. Critical to good leadership are the capacity to be honest about the reality of challenges to be faced, and never to lose faith, the capacity to be engaged in the right activity, the capacity to promote a culture and ethic of entrepreneurship, and a desire to

improve performance (Fullan, 2003b).

Effective change is purposefully led (Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010). Rules can be enforced through compliance and regulations; however, real leadership exists in an interrelational web of individual and shared meaning and vision. A critical mass for change and sustained improvement must be developed; this occurs through effective leadership operating throughout an organisation (Fullan, 2005).

There is a need for leadership to be seen in ideas and in the skills of sustainability (Sergiovanni, 2003). In an educational context, where there are no easy solutions, leadership responds with hard work and commitment to community to bring vision into reality (Fullan, 2001a, 2001b; Lieberman & Miller, 1999).

Building social capital.

Leadership development is necessary throughout the organisation in “ever-widening circles” (Barber, Fullan, Mackay & Zbar, 2009, p. 8; Fullan, 2003b; Fullan et al., 2006). Leadership involves building social capital, enhancing the capacity of others within a particular context (Gurr, 2008). The traditional, charismatic view of leadership invested at the top of the organisational hierarchy is replaced by a vision for teacher leadership and an emphasis on building the social capital within the whole organisation (Harris, 2003; Lambert, 2003). Leadership “involves the identification, acquisition, allocation and coordination and use of social material and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning” (Lambert, 2003, p. 9). Most importantly, leadership is organic and interrelated, a network of relationships between people, structures and cultures (Fullan, 2001b; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002).

Stability and continuity are essential for sustainable educational change to occur (Fullan, 2003a; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). There is a strong argument for sustainable change, which implies a long-term and widely distributed view of leadership. The strength of distributed leadership is the culture of shared responsibility for learning (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Dinham, 2007). Leadership is a collective enterprise and developing and enabling learning and leadership in others is its moral imperative (Fullan, 2003b; Leithwood & Steinbach, 2003).

Leaders in collaborative cultures invest in the development of learning and leadership within the organisation. Thinking of leadership as positional leaders or top management implies that change occurs through the top layer of the hierarchy and denies the leadership capacity of others in the organisation. “[It] oversimplifies a much more

complex and important subject, how to understand the diverse roles of leaders at many levels and how to develop networks of leaders capable of sustaining deep change” (Senge, 2006, p. 319).

Leadership is an act rather than a role (Lambert, 2003). It is more important in the change process to focus on the reculturing of people rather than on systems or structures (Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010). In a collaborative context of educational change, leadership must be constructivist, collaborative and democratic, enabling teachers and learners to engage in learning that is meaningful. Adult learning takes place most effectively in contexts of reflective dialogue. “Personal and professional learning require an interactive professional culture if adults are to engage with one another in the processes of growth and development” (Lambert, 2003, p. 10). In an educational community, participation by all is key. All members of the educating community can become consciously aware of their capacity for leadership. Full and meaningful participation results in leadership through self-direction, self-renewal, interdependence and a heightened sense of responsibility to self and others (Lambert, 2003).

Leadership should now be expressed in transformation and empowerment and be concerned with the growth and change within those led (Harris, 2003; Lambert, 2003). Leaders are intentionally relational, drawing on the best of human resources expressing leadership in relation to the organisation and the context in which it operates (Mulford, Cranston & Ehrich, 2009). They can address poor performance and bring out the best in people. They deal creatively with change and promote teacher learning for all career stages (Duignan, 2006).

Leadership as creativity.

An important aspect of leadership, which separates it from management, is a capacity for creativity (Puccio et al., 2007). Leadership is having the capacity not only to accomplish things successfully but also to be able to guide and influence so that the right things are done. Leaders are motivated by effectiveness and can communicate ideas enthusiastically to others (Duignan, 2010a). They are interested in transformation. Their goal is to have a positive influence on others and on the challenges they face. The creativity of effective leadership inspires others to be innovative and to try new approaches and to create new knowledge (Puccio et al., 2007).

The myth of charismatic leadership relies on the assumption that all others are powerless. Leadership involves recognising what abilities, skills, and attributes individuals bring to the organisation (Senge, 2006). Leadership for educational

reinvention and transformation involves deep self-knowing and the capacity for “reflective learning and creative innovation” (Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010, p. 179). Change involves innovation in response to a need and for a purpose. In this it is a creative act.

Distributed understandings of leadership reveal that leadership is exercised within an interdependent set of participants and conditions focused on a shared goal and common purpose (Spillane, 2009; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). In distributed leadership power relationships are changed. The concept of teacher leadership is understood not in terms of role or function but in terms of agency, relationship and process. Leadership is distributed amongst organisational members. Successful leadership for change creates the optimal collaborative conditions for teachers to exercise agency. In this context structures are less an element of control and more a “vehicle for empowerment” (Harris, 2003, p. 45). There is increased likelihood that organisational growth will occur when increasing teacher leadership is at the centre of the change process.

The concept of leadership for educational change has been explored in this section. In the context of learning organisations there is a growing awareness that capacity for leadership is already distributed (Spillane, 2009; Spillane et al., 2001; Harris 2003). The role of formal or positional leadership is to enable and support the development of the deep moral purpose of an organisation and its shared vision. This empowers each person to fulfil their role towards the collective vision of making a difference in the lives of students through learning.

In order to take advantage of a reconceptualised relationship between the members of the educational community within the school and system, a new, highly relational model of leadership must be expressed. Much of the literature on leadership concentrates on the leadership expressed by the principal, and to a lesser degree, on those with appointed roles of responsibility within the school. There is a rising interest in teacher leadership. However this may be an aspiration rather than a reality in schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Teachers are in a prime position within the classroom to make the necessary changes for student learning. There is a need for formal leadership to be concerned with building the capacity of teachers to take on the responsibility for conscious, deliberate, leadership activity within schools. It is through identifying how leadership actually is expressed that its potential can be harnessed.

Within this study, changing expressions of leadership between school and system-

based personnel are explored, and factors that increase teacher leadership. It contributes to the body of knowledge pertaining to distributed leadership in relation to religious education.

This overview of the literature pertaining to moral purpose, collaborative professional learning communities and educational leadership has highlighted that large-scale change is more likely to be effective within a re-cultured, collaborative community. The foundation of this community is its moral purpose, as understood by teachers and appointed leaders. The literature identified the importance of professional learning that is vitally linked with organisational goals but that is also differentiated and targeted towards the real needs of teachers. This model engages teachers fully in their learning whilst they in turn focus on the learning needs of their students. It builds a deep sense of moral purpose in teachers and builds technical and personal skills in a collaborative and collegial environment.

The literature highlighted the distributed nature of leadership within a collaborative culture that is focused on learning. Leadership is about leading learning for others. It is a personal attribute, not one attached only to positions of authority. This study aims to contribute to this body of literature by exploring moral purpose, collaborative cultures, professional learning and leadership as they relate to the implementation of a curriculum for religious education. The final section of this literature review presents an overview of the literature concerning curriculum change in religious education. It is evident from this literature that curriculum leadership in religious education is challenged by the contemporary paradigm of educational change.

Leadership and Curriculum in Religious Education

Introduction.

A review of the literature pertaining to educational change has been presented to strengthen the underpinning theory of educational change within the context of Catholic education. The reason for the existence of Catholic schools, and the genuine work within them, is founded on provision of quality education (Congregation for Catholic Education [CCE], 1997). The context for this study is religious education; therefore it is also necessary to examine literature from this field of learning. This situates the current investigation within the already established body of knowledge.

A major challenge to Catholic education is presented in relation to the prevailing tendency within education for economic and social considerations to take precedence over the integral formation and personal fulfillment objectives of Catholic education

(Gellel, 2010b). There is a need to ensure effective leadership of the religious dimension of education in a Catholic school (NCEC, 2005). Effective curriculum development is a major component of this leadership. Curriculum leadership in religious education is a growing field of study, with recent major studies examining the role of the REC in leading and managing curriculum change. The changing paradigm of religious education discussed in Chapter One and the changing culture of schools identified earlier in this chapter suggests that changes in the educational context of schools will impact upon the way religious leadership is expressed, especially in the area of curriculum leadership in religious education. However, before exploring the possibilities for religious leadership in the future it is necessary to review past perspectives of leadership in religious education, especially in Tasmania.

This section will be presented in three parts. The first part will analyse the concept of religious leadership. The term *religious leadership* will be defined as a function exercised by all employees in Catholic education. In the second, sub-section literature pertaining to leadership in religious education will be discussed, especially with reference to the appointed role of REC or AP:RE. The third part will identify an emerging new function for the REC or AP:RE, that is, of educative leader responsible for curriculum change and teacher learning in religious education.

Religious leadership.

Literature relating to religious leadership argues that the seemingly intangible nature of the role makes the concept problematic (Bezzina & Wilson, 1999). The perception that religious leadership is problematic contributes to the ambiguity around the term. Is religious leadership a *ministry*, offering service to people and the Church as a whole? Or does it pertain to education and learning? Any attempt to define religious leadership struggles with two seemingly competing aspects (Crotty, 2002, 2005; Engebretson, 2006; Fleming 2002; Johnson, 1998). The activity of education in a Catholic context is at the same time an enterprise that is “pastoral/intellectual” (D’Souza, 2009, p. 85). Religious educators must reconceptualise their role following the *General Directory for Catechesis* (CC), 1997), to incorporate both ministry *and* education (Engebretson, 2006; Welbourne, 2001). In defining religious leadership, it is possible to focus on the integration of these functions within the personal attributes of the leader and the duties or tasks of the role (Sharkey, 2006).

Personal attributes.

Religious leadership requires an integrated spirituality and authenticity within the person exercising the role (D’Orsa, 1998). It involves the capacity to integrate the human, technical and educational aspects of the role together with the symbolic and cultural aspects of a particular religious tradition. Religious leadership also requires integrity, intelligence, courage and the ability to balance the complexity involved in dealing with aspects of religion (Sharkey, 2006). This has been described as the presence of mind to deal with the complexity of the cultural context, courage in the face of challenge and the ability to grapple with tensions between the faith tradition and the context of life (Sharkey, 2007).

Elements of religious leadership include the capacities to lead in relation to others, to embody the qualities and person of Jesus Christ, and to lead for transformation (Bezzina & Wilson, 1999). Religious leadership lifts others to a better self and works towards a better world. This is referred to as the spiritual dimension of leadership (Duignan, 2010a; Neidhart & Carlin, 2009). It requires a deep sense of the mission of the Church in education and a capacity to engage with others in “grassroots missiology” (D’Orsa & D’Orsa, 2010, p. 2). Grassroots missiology involves making meaning from everyday life. It involves people with varying theological understandings. Whilst not necessarily qualified in theology, people engaged in grassroots missiology may be very well qualified in other areas. Religious leadership therefore is concerned with connecting the vision and the mission of Catholic education at the grassroots whilst living and working with people on a day-to-day basis.

Duties and tasks of the role.

Religious leadership requires leaders to use their professional knowledge and skills to sustain and promote the religious dimension of the educational enterprise within Catholic schooling (SCCE, 1977; CCE, 1997). Religious leadership concerns itself with the integral formation of the human person (SCCE, 1977). It is also concerned with the creation of an educational environment that is animated by a Christian spirit. This includes the physical environment, the educational environment and the community (SCCE, 1988).

Religious leadership is exercised in a particular way, ensuring the development of learning and teaching in religious education as an area of learning and effective expression of the Catholic ethos within the school community. It is also focused on building social capital, by preparing others and future generations for leadership (Lavery,

2009). It is not restricted to appointed roles. It is a shared responsibility that is exercised through the integrity of the person, and through their understanding and connectedness to the community being led, their knowledge and love of the religious tradition and their acquiring the knowledge and skills to act with leadership (Sharkey, 2007).

Appointed roles of religious leadership.

Whilst appointed roles of religious leadership are perceived as essential in Tasmania, as in other dioceses, an *Accreditation Policy* (Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission [TCEC], 2001, 2006, 2008) ensures that teachers have the appropriate support to fulfill their role in Catholic schools. This role is described in *The Catholic School* (SCCE, 1977) as the capacity to witness to their faith and be able to synthesise culture and faith, and faith and life. Accreditation policies in Tasmania have consistently highlighted the importance of all staff in Catholic schools gaining the necessary credentials to enable them to carry out their work in this context. The accreditation requirements confirm the need for all employees to “have a firm grasp of their responsibilities” (TCEC, 2001, p. 5) within a Catholic education setting. The policy has continued to require a four-tiered set of qualifications: those for all staff; those for teachers of religious education; those for religious education coordinators (later AP:REs), and those for principals. Later policies (TCEC, 2006, 2008) emphasise the importance of all senior leaders in schools and the Catholic Education Office to hold the appropriate level of accreditation.

Religious leadership exercised within the school is reflected in Catholic principalship. This role has an ecclesial and theological foundation in ministry and service (Hansen, 2000). The responsibility for the effectiveness of the religious dimension of the school lies with the principal. Crotty (1998, 2005) and Liddy (1998) have both argued for clarity around role descriptions and highlighted the interdependence of the role of principal and REC or AP:RE. Crotty’s (2002) study has found that the effectiveness of the REC role was directly related to the principal’s own experience as a religious educator or REC and to the personal rapport between the REC and the principal. The following section of this review deals with the appointed role of REC or AP:RE.

Religious leadership centred on the REC or AP:RE.

Over the last thirty years in Australian Catholic schools, perceptions of religious leadership have been centred on the role of the REC (Crotty, 2002) and, in more recent times, the AP:RE. When religious leadership of the school is perceived to be the sole

responsibility of the REC or AP:RE it is detrimental to the development of understandings of religious leadership exercised in other roles across the school (Bezzina & Wilson, 1999).

The ministerial functions of the role emphasise the work of religious leadership within the mission of the Church, expressing Catholic ethos and promoting the liturgical and faith life of the community. Educational aspects of the role include the monitoring and administration of the religious education program within the school, the provision of resources, curriculum leadership and the provision of professional learning opportunities for staff (Buchanan, 2007, 2010). However, confusion about what religious leadership entails, combined with the prevailing enfaithing paradigm of religious education, tended to result in an over emphasis on the ministerial or pastoral functions of the role and a lack of understanding about the professional demands of religious leadership (Fleming, 2002).

The role of REC in Melbourne has been influenced by the publication of *The Renewal of the Education in Faith* (Italian Episcopal Conference, 1970). This document emphasised the evangelising and catechising mission of the Church (Fleming, 2001a, 2001b). Whilst maintaining this enfaithing approach in connection with the role, in line with the enfaithing approach to religious education, the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) recognised the educational responsibilities and articulated the role of REC in terms of formation, administration and curriculum.

The role of AP:RE that was developed by Catholic Education, Brisbane, in 1997, was in terms of leadership and management of the religious education curriculum with an emphasis on effective learning and teaching (Buchanan, 2007, 2010; Fleming, 2001b). At its introduction, the role was influenced by the approach to religious education that paralleled the state curriculum and emphasised the acquisition of knowledge and skills. This suggests that clarity in the articulation of the nature and purpose of religious education will also bring about a more consistent expression of the role of AP:RE or REC (Fleming 2002; cf. Buchanan, 2010; Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009; Engebretson, 2006).

In Tasmania the role of REC was introduced in 1978 but it was only in 1993 that every school had an appointed person in the role (CEOH, 1995). The ministerial functions of the role outweighed any educational functions (CEOH, 1984; cf. Buchanan, 2010). The term *ministry* in the context of the role of the REC was distinguished from the sacred ministry exercised by the clergy. Ministry is exercised by the laity as an expression of one's baptism and through the mandate of the Archbishop. A later revision of the 1984 policy reconfirmed the authority of the principal in relation to the religious

education program. The role of the REC was perceived as an important ministerial function, assisting the principal to carry out the role of religious leadership. The role also involved programming of the explicit religious education curriculum and other programs that “enrich the Catholic ethos of the school” (CEOH, 1995, p. 3). It also involved assistance to teachers, organising professional learning for staff and liaison with CEOH staff about the needs of the school and resources. Liaison was also expected between the school and the parish.

However, two major policy changes affected the expression of the role of the AP:RE in Tasmania from 2006. First, the implementation of *GNFL* involved AP:REs in curriculum development and leadership of change. Secondly, as indicated in Chapter One, the introduction of *Becoming the Body of Christ* (Archdiocese of Hobart, 2005), a new sacramental policy for the archdiocese changed the role of the school to a supportive one rather than an organisational one in connection with students’ participation in the sacraments of initiation.

With the change in nomenclature to AP:RE there was no written policy to describe how the role should be enacted. One policy document that has the potential to assist in the clear articulation of the role of AP:RE is the *Framework for Leadership in Catholic Education* (CEOH, 2006) document. This framework articulates the multi-dimensional nature of all appointed leaders in a Catholic context in terms of spiritual leadership, educational leadership, cultural leadership, pastoral leadership and administrative leadership. This study examines the role of the AP:RE in relation to other leaders in the school and to implementation of curriculum from the perspective of religious educators in primary schools. This may contribute to how a new policy will be articulated.

Studies into leadership of the religious education curriculum.

Curriculum change requires effective leadership. Recent studies into leadership of the religious education curriculum identify further tensions in the role of leading the religious education within the school, and they identify key characteristics of effective leadership of religious education.

There are tensions within role of REC (Rymarz, 1998). These are: industrial or structural issues, lack of preparation for the role, lack of clarity in the role, lack of credibility and status, and isolation. These tensions contributed to the high turnover of RECs that was identified in the primary sector by Blahut and Bezzina (1998) and in the secondary sector by Fleming (2002).

The industrial structure of the role with two- or three-year contracts for positions of responsibility, the qualifications needed for the role, the lack of status of the role and the lack of career path may each have had a bearing on the high turnover in the secondary sector (Fleming, 2004, cf. 2001a). However, further qualitative data have revealed four issues that contribute to the challenge of the role. These are, the personal cost of the role, the lack of skilled and willing religious education teachers, the challenges of teaching religious education as a subject and the symbolic demands of the role.

The competing demands of the classroom and the increasing ministerial demands of the role have contributed to the high turnover of RECs in the primary sector (Blahut & Bezzina, 1998). Often it has been the first position of leadership for teachers and their lack of knowledge, skill and experience increased the tension in the role. If RECs are to be able to support teachers in their professional learning they need to be well prepared with the necessary knowledge and values. The provision of adequate preparation for the role is therefore essential (D'Orsa, 1998; Engebretson, 1998; Rymarz, 1998).

Lack of clarity about what the role actually entails has contributed to tensions. Religious leadership is said to be highly valued within the Catholic education system; however, there is ambiguity and confusion as to whether religious education is a ministry or an educational activity. This leads to a lack of consistency in the way the role is exercised (Crotty, 2002; Engebretson, 2006; Fleming, 2001b).

A number of issues relating to credibility and status were identified in Crotty's (2002) study (cf. Rymarz, 1998). Both argued that studies in theology are undervalued in educational leadership and that ongoing professional learning has tended not to differentiate between inexperienced and experienced RECs. The role was diminished when it was unsupported by system-based education officers and advisers, when it was a shared role and when centralised authorities only gave a minor focus to the REC and the religious life of the school (Crotty, 2006).

Recruitment to and succession planning for the REC role needs careful attention. This would involve careful selection, induction and ongoing professional support (Crotty, 2006). Effective exercise of the role depends on the qualities and qualifications of the person (Rymarz, 1998, 1999). In some dioceses in recent years there has been increasing encouragement to take up post-graduate studies with support being offered to those aspiring to religious leadership in Catholic schools (Hyde, 2006).

Isolation in the role has also been identified as a tension. RECs have perceived that they have few colleagues with the qualifications and attributes to share the responsibility for the religious education and the religious dimension of the school. Lack

of shared responsibility for the religious dimension of the Catholic school affects the capacity of the REC to exercise the role (Fleming, 2001a).

Table 2 identifies the tensions within the leadership of religious education as structural, educational and ministerial. The need for organisational structures to enable the role to be fulfilled effectively, professional recognition and understanding of the educational qualities within the area of religious education and clarity of purpose within a Catholic education context are evident.

Table 2

Tensions within the Leadership of Religious Education

Structural	<p>Status for the role in relation to other roles of responsibility</p> <p>A career path to other leadership roles.</p> <p>Professional recognition</p> <p>Balance between the educational and ecclesial expectations of the role</p> <p>Clear articulation of the purpose of the role</p>
Educational	<p>Lack of recognition for increasing qualifications for the role especially in theology and religious education</p> <p>Lack of qualifications of colleagues, resulting in professional isolation</p> <p>Change in approaches to religious education</p> <p>Challenge of teaching religious education as a subject</p>
Ministerial	<p>Symbolic requirements of the role</p> <p>Working in an area where one deals with matters of faith, spirituality and Church</p>

An emerging paradigm for leading religious education.

New ways to support the complex role of REC are necessary (Hyde, 2006). However, this review of recent studies indicates that there is a need for a change in the way the role is perceived. A strong theme evident in the recent research into the role of REC is the lack of consistency in the way the role is perceived and exercised. Crotty (2002, 2005), Fleming (2002) and Buchanan, (2007, 2010) found that RECs choose to give higher emphasis to the ministerial functions of the role over the educative functions. Yet the emphasis on the ministerial functions in relation to the faith life of the community and the ambiguity around professional status can make the role unattractive or predispose towards a high turnover among those prepared to exercise the role (Fleming, 2002).

Religious educators and leaders, however, are involved with both ministry and education (Buchanan & Hyde, 2006; Collins, 2005; Engebretson, 2006; Welbourne, 2001) and since both ministry and educational functions are essential within the role (Johnson, 1998; Paxton, 1998; Welbourne, 2001) religious educators need a conscious awareness of their purpose in approaching religious education (Moran, 1991). However, this review of literature suggests that before an integrated paradigm can emerge it is essential to focus on the educative functions of the role.

The educative function of the role.

Whilst much of the literature has dealt with the significant structural, educational and ecclesial tensions within leadership of the religious education in Catholic schools, a new body of literature is emerging that focuses on the educational function of the role. It is now possible to consider the role of REC or AP:RE as a leader of curriculum change in religious education.

The role of the REC as a leader of curriculum change has been explored in a study of curriculum change in the Archdiocese of Melbourne (Buchanan, 2007, 2010). Buchanan (2008) noted that a major paradigm shift underpinned the change to a text-based curriculum. However, in the absence of forward planning for the change from an archdiocesan body and ineffective communication about the change, RECs assumed responsibility for the change at the school level, seeking out ways to understand the changes that were imminent and preparing their staff for the change. This became a significant opportunity for RECs to display high levels of curriculum leadership. In the absence of support and guidance from the centralised body the RECs displayed highly professional skills, leading curriculum change and supporting teacher development. This enhanced the credibility of religious education and changed the perception of the REC as an educational leader (Buchanan, 2006a, 2007, 2010). This was an opportunity for the REC to enact their roles in ways they had not been expected to before. The REC was shown to be a communicator, a change agent and professional learning leader.

The role of REC is significantly enhanced when there is a complementary, supportive relationship between the REC and the principal, when the REC is a member of the school executive and when the REC has the skills to be able to influence a range of factors contributing to the development of the religious dimension of the school (Crotty, 2006). In Buchanan's (2007) study, the RECs led the change, keeping religious education teachers and fellow leaders informed, working in collaboration with other religious educators and making the professional decisions necessary to carry out the task of

curriculum change. This relationship was enhanced when others in appointed leadership roles took an active interest in the changes to religious education (Buchanan, 2006a).

A particular challenge for RECs is that they do not feel confident in their abilities as curriculum leaders or professional learning leaders. They tend to prefer the ministerial duties of the role (Crotty, 2002). In this experience of a “top-down” (Buchanan, 2007, p. 48) approach to curriculum change the REC was an active change agent. A new professionalism emerged with the REC acting with “moral purpose” and “change agency” (Fullan, 1993, pp. 5-6). Despite the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the change, their leadership was not deterred. It was a significant opportunity to demonstrate professional expertise, adapting and adopting content and including updated assessment practices. This assisted in raising the credibility of religious education as a subject. In planning and organising for professional learning for staff, the opportunities were biased towards the content however, rather than the theory underpinning the change. Nevertheless the RECs increased motivation towards new learning for religious educators, using a continuous approach to learning rather than one-off workshops (Buchanan, 2007, 2010).

Involvement in leading a major curriculum change was a significant opportunity for RECs to display high levels of curriculum leadership and to enact their roles in ways they had not been expected to before. However, in the absence of leadership in curriculum change from the Archdiocesan offices the RECs lacked understanding of the underpinning theory of the change (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009), and remained biased towards the enfaithing approach that had dominated religious education. The professional development they organised also reflected their perceptions of the change. The perceptions the RECs have of their purpose and function in the role drives how they will enact the role (Buchanan, 2010, 2007; Fleming, 2002).

RECs led the change, keeping colleagues, fellow leaders and teachers informed, working with other religious educators and making the professional decisions necessary to carry out the task of curriculum change however this had the potential to set up a dependency model of leadership rather than a collaborative one. Internal agency can either impede or enhance change (Buchanan, 2006b). This demonstrates the importance of the interconnectedness between centralised authorities, school leadership and teachers.

The REC as curriculum leader is still an undeveloped concept. However, it can contribute to new ways of enacting the role of delegated religious leadership by collaboratively building religious leadership capacity across the school through leading professional learning (Healy, 2006).

The final section of this review of literature pertaining to religious leadership and curriculum leadership in religious education discusses some emerging questions that may contribute to the development of an educative paradigm for the role of AP:RE.

Leadership for curriculum change in religious education.

Literature pertaining to leadership for curriculum change in religious education leads into the current study. A question raised in the literature is the professional preparation of religious educators in relation to the implementation of new curricula in religious education (Welbourne, 2004a, 2004b). The preparation of curriculum documents for religious education suggests that religious education should be well taught and resourced. However, it is unclear as to what degree professional preparation equips religious educators to use new curriculum documents, to improve teaching and learning in this subject or to equip students with the capacity for a critical faith (Welbourne, 2001).

An important function of the REC or AP:RE role is organising for, and leading professional learning for their staff, especially in relation to curriculum change (Buchanan, 2005b, 2007, 2010; Healy, 1999, 2003, 2006). A vital issue for curriculum change is that, in all of the activity of curriculum development and the emergence of new approaches to the teaching of religious education, there are questions around the capacity of teachers to keep abreast of change (Nolen, 2008; Welbourne, 2004a, 2004b). Reform in religious education is possible when the teacher is brought into relationship with the innovation within the classroom (Ivers, 2004).

Buchanan's (2007) study identified the potential of the role of the REC to be an educative leader, leading others in professional learning for curriculum change. However, there is a need for a new paradigm of curriculum leadership in religious education. In recent years there has been an expressed priority that students should develop necessary religious literacy to enable them to participate in the faith community: see *Catholic Schools at the Crossroads* (Bishops Conference of New South Wales (NSW) and Australian Capital Territory, 2007). Students also need the knowledge and skills to enable them to understand a world that is religious, to be open to new meanings and to live in a culturally and religiously diverse world (Lombaerts, 2000; Malone, 2002). Religious educators need to adopt an appropriate pedagogy (Erricker, 2006). A hermeneutic-communicative approach to religious education is needed to enable students to dialogue with contemporary culture (D'Souza, 2008; Pollefeyt, 2008). Literature about the need for meaningful learning in religious education centres on the student (Hack, 2004a,

2004b; White, 2005). However, teachers must also be reflective and intuitive practitioners if they are to promote reflective-intuitive pedagogy in the classroom (de Souza, 2004).

There is a growing awareness in the literature about critical, reflective and transformative approaches in adult formation (D'Souza, 2009; Maddix, 2008). There are possibilities for critical and continuous models of professional learning in religious education that focus on teachers as learners and situate learning at the school site (Harvey, 2010). Bracken (2007) has argued that Catholic schools should be places of adult learning and transformation. Welbourne (2004a) advocated a critical approach to professional learning that will produce the "possibility of transformative learning for both the individual and the Church" (p. 1). Transformative learning has the capacity to allow one to struggle with dissonant and problematic tensions between experience and knowledge in order to come to a personal position. This study investigated how teachers might engage in a meaning-making strategy in professional learning and the effect of this on the learning opportunities offered to students.

Change for students involves change for teachers. Contemporary religious educators need to be aware that "systematic reform to create effective religious education curriculum for 21st century learners does not guarantee that religious education is being delivered appropriately" (Nolen, 2008, p. 49). Participation in curriculum development leads to reconceptualisation of prevailing concepts and practices (Goldburg, 2008).

These questions about the relationship between teachers and curriculum leadership led to the current study. This research studied the implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education using a participative-collaborative approach. The study identified some processes that assist teachers to feel empowered by curriculum innovation. It addressed the issues of connecting the broad ideas of curriculum with the practice of teachers, the creation of collaborative cultures of learning for religious education and the act of leadership within that culture. Whilst Buchanan's (2007) study focused on the management of change from the perspective of secondary leaders, the current study is concerned with the experience, perceptions and issues of practitioners as they participated in the implementation of *GNFL* in Tasmanian Catholic primary schools.

This overview has presented the challenge of ensuring effective religious leadership in Catholic education into the future. Three areas have been investigated: religious leadership as an overarching concept, leadership of religious education curriculum and an educative role for leaders of religious education.

Leadership in this domain has both ministerial and educational responsibilities. These require a melding of personal attributes and professional skills to fulfill the duties and tasks of leadership. However, all persons who are employed within Catholic education have a responsibility to exercise religious leadership. There are particular roles of responsibility within the school where religious leadership is an imperative. These are the roles of principal and REC or AP:RE. The literature identifies these roles as interdependent. However, the literature also reveals that the role of religious leadership is often centred on the REC or AP:RE to the detriment of the principal and other appointed leaders. The literature suggests that a focus on the educative functions of the role will contribute to redressing the imbalance between the ministerial and educational functions.

The review of the educative functions of leading the religious education curriculum points to an exploration of leading teachers in professional learning in religious education. The challenge raised in the literature is the need for professional learning that enables change in teacher practice in line with curriculum change. In the wake of changing pedagogy in religious education, there is a need also for teachers to be engaged in the transformative andragogy of critical-reflective learning. The need to investigate this further has motivated, in part, the current study.

Conclusion

Four areas have been highlighted: approaches to curriculum change; the learning organisation; collaborative school cultures; leadership and curriculum change in religious education. This current study will contribute to the body of knowledge by investigating the perceptions of religious educators who have engaged in a particular model of curriculum implementation. Table 3 presents an overview of the main concepts that have emerged from this review of the literature. This body of knowledge informs the current study. Following this review of the literature, the next chapter will present the research design that guided the study.

Table 3
Summary of the Major Concepts Emerging from the Literature

Section within the Literature Review	Summary of the Major Concepts
Approaches to Curriculum Change	Both top-down and bottom-up approaches are deficient in leading to successful curriculum change on a large scale. The top-down approach, designed for high levels of congruence fails to take into account the needs of teachers and students. The bottom-up approach

	<p>to change encourages high involvement of teachers and decision-making however it fails to make connections with the centralised body.</p> <p>Curriculum change is more likely when there is a close relationship between schools, policymakers and centralised authorities (Elmore, 2007). This is described as inner and outer learning (Fullan, 1993, 2008) connecting all sections of the educational community.</p>
The Learning Organisation	<p>This term refers to adults learning individually and collectively within an organisation. It involves dealing with the big questions of purpose and meaning. It expands the individual and collective potential for adult learning and growth (Senge, 2006).</p> <p>Critical theories promote self-directed (Knowles et al., 2005) and transformative (Mezirow, 1990) adult learning. Critical theory encourages deep thinking about issues in order to take action. Change is more likely to occur when adults engage in critical, transformative adult learning strategies.</p> <p>The development of professional learning communities, where teachers are engaged in reflective practices, are likely to result in the school becoming a learning organisation geared for continuous change and improvement (Stoll, 2010).</p>
Collaborative School Cultures	<p>Collaboration is the capacity to work with others to achieve a common goal (Duke Corporate Education, 2007). Moral purpose is a central guiding principle that unites an educational organisation (Fullan, 2001a).</p> <p>In a high-performing collaborative school culture the staff acts with moral purpose, to make a difference for students, creating the conditions for professional learning communities, and developing distributed leadership. Successful educational change is directly influenced by the quality of appointed and distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000, 2003, 2007).</p> <p>Teachers are more likely to engage in continuous professional learning in professional learning communities that target their specific needs and build collegiality. This is more likely to make a positive difference to classroom practice (Day, 2004).</p>
Leadership and Curriculum Change in Religious Education	<p>Religious leadership as a concept is problematic and ambiguous because of the lack of clarity around the ministerial and educational functions associated with the role. It must embrace both aspects and integrate the qualities of the person and their professional skill (D'Orsa, 1998; Sharkey, 2006; Welbourne, 2001).</p> <p>The role of REC or AP:RE is problematic as religious leadership is seen as tied to this role (Blahut & Bezzina, 1998; Crotty, 2005). The role itself has an inherent tension between the ministerial and educative functions. A newly emerging paradigm of religious leadership indicates the need for a more educative function for the role.</p> <p>Questions are emerging about the leadership that will encourage simultaneous change in teachers with curriculum change (Nolen, 2008).</p>

Chapter Three: The Research Design

Introduction

Educational research seeks to improve the educational process through the refinement and extension of knowledge (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010; Wiersma, 1995). This study investigated the implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education, *GNFL*, from the perspective of primary school religious educators who participated in this major educational change. The context for the study was the Catholic Archdiocese of Hobart, a jurisdiction that encompasses the entire State of Tasmania, Australia. The study took a qualitative approach to educational research. Its purpose was to generate theory about curriculum change within the field of religious education. A grounded theory approach was adopted. The logic employed within this type of qualitative research is inductive and emerging; it is shaped from the ground up rather than handed down from a theory or from the perspective of the inquirer (Creswell, 2009). Drawing on Crotty (1998), Table 4 shows the relationship between the elements within the research design of this study.

Table 4

The Relationship between Elements in the Research Design

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspective	Methodology	Method
Constructivism The belief that knowledge has personal meaning created and recreated by individuals in response to new experiences.	Interpretivism Relies on observation, description, qualitative judgments and interpretation of phenomena in a natural setting.	Grounded Theory Inductive analysis of the data results in theory generated from the ground up. The purpose of the approach is to gain insight into the perspective of another.	Unstructured In-Depth Interviews Facilitate a social interaction between researcher and informant to elicit information. Interviews are face-to-face encounters that give access to those perspectives that cannot be otherwise observed.
Constructionism Is interested in the ways through which individuals make meaning within a social context.	Seeks to generate new theory as the research proceeds. Is interested in thoughts, feelings and perceptions that indicate what gives meaning and influences actions.	New understandings are developed with dialogue as the instrument of communication between researcher and informant.	This social interaction enables the researcher to become immersed in the worldview of the informant.
Social Constructionism What appears to be natural is in reality the result of human interaction and	Symbolic interactionism perceives that	It is what the researcher finds that is valuable, not the testing of a theory.	Interviews take the form of a controlled

choices. The purpose of the approach is to understand how individuals and groups participate in and create their perceived social reality.	humans create and are shaped by their context. The researcher is an instrument through which meaning is communicated.	Significant categories emerge from the data and hypotheses are generated.	conversation focused on the area of research interest. The interview style is flexible and responsive to the participants' perspectives.
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The epistemological foundation, the theoretical perspective, the methodology and the method of collecting and analysing the empirical data worked in relationship to one another and formed the basis for the research design. A critical and conscious awareness of the theoretical and methodological position enabled the researcher to make appropriate choices about the research process and to incorporate a technique for data collection and analysis that was consistent with those choices (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 2000). The purpose of this chapter is to explain the rationale underpinning the decisions made to arrive at the research design. This chapter has six major sections, presenting in turn: epistemological foundations; theoretical perspective; methodology; method; how the research was conducted, and trustworthiness of the study.

Epistemological Foundations

The epistemology underpinning this piece of qualitative research was *constructivism*. Constructivism is concerned with developing understanding, multiple meanings, social and historical construction and the generation of theory. This world view is built on the premise that knowledge is both an individually and socially constructed phenomenon. Individuals seek to find meaning in their world and these meanings are complex and varied. This complexity of views is of interest in the research and in the analysis of the findings (Creswell, 2007; 2009).

Through qualitative inquiry, the researcher embraces the complexity of multiple realities (Ary et al., 2010; Wiersma, 1995). Evidence is sought to reveal different perspectives from the participants. In qualitative research the researcher recognises the inherent assumptions and values that shape the particular interpretation of the data, positioning themselves within the study (Creswell, 2007; 2009). Reflection on these ontological and axiological elements reveals patterns from which theory can be generated. Meaning is derived from and within the research setting. The decision to engage in a qualitative method of research enables the researcher to make a holistic interpretation of a natural setting in order to construct theory.

Constructivism.

Constructivism is a philosophy of learning as a search for meaning. Understanding of the world, how the world is perceived and subsequent meaning are constructed through critical reflection on experience (Brooks & Brooks, 2001). From a constructivist perspective, knowledge is created within the individual who freely participates in learning that is an internal process of interpretation and meaning-making (Crebbin, 2000; McMahon, 1997).

In constructivism, the human person is central to the process of learning. Learning is a complex construction of experiences and information, and there may be multiple meanings and interpretations. Opportunity for deep internal processing is necessary for new meaning to be constructed as evaluation of information is inherently linked to the emotions and previous constructs that may also be influenced by tacit forms of knowledge of which the learner is unaware (Crebbin, 2000). The process of meaning-making is a continuous reinterpretation of new experiences that transform existing understandings or frames of reference.

Constructivism is a learner-centred perspective of learning that is both individual and communal. Knowledge and meaning are developed within a cultural, historical and political context. Culture and context influence the learning. It is not simply a matter of individual and passive internalisation of experience. It is a developmental process where new learning is scaffolded between actual development and potential development (Lock & Strong, 2010; cf. Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is shaped by the social context through social dialogue. Language and communication are the key tools of learning (McMahon, 1997). Through collaboration and within a social context the learner is challenged and supported beyond their limitations (Vygotsky, 1978). In a constructivist perspective of learning, humans learn best when they are engaged in designing meaningful products, therefore situating the learning where it is relevant and applied.

Constructionism and social constructionism.

Constructionism presents a particular view of an interdependent relationship between the world and consciousness. From this perspective the world held no meaning before human consciousness created it. All meaning depends upon the conscious human experiencing it (Crotty, 1998). Human beings are essentially meaning-makers. Culture provides the lens through which people make meaning. It is the culture that gives meaning and value to some aspects and not to others.

Social constructionism is a sociological construct that refers to the development of social norms. The realities studied are the social products of the actors, relationships and institutions. Social interaction, relationships and language all contribute towards the construction of knowledge (Blumer, 1998; Flick, 2006; Lock & Strong, 2010). Social constructionism views social constructs as the result of human interaction and choice rather than of natural factors (Boghossian, 2009).

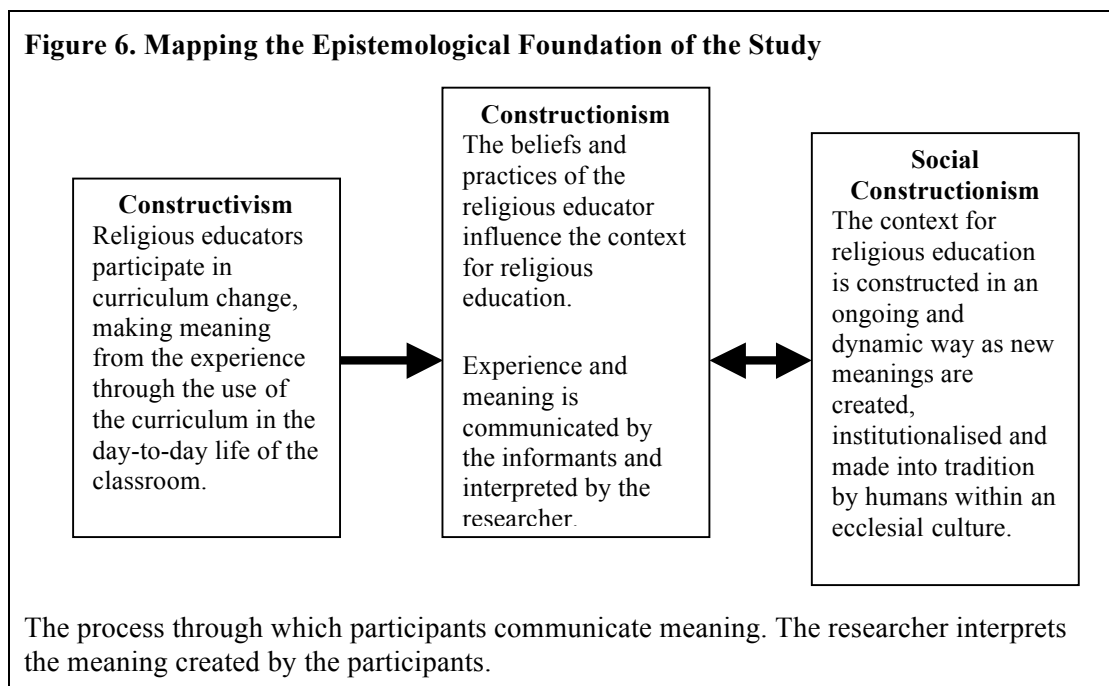
Social constructionism in research explores the dynamic process through which seemingly objective reality varies, is created and recreated through human interpretation and knowledge of it (Flick, 2006; Gephart, 1999). It seeks to understand direct, lived experience rather than making abstract generalisations. The social construction of reality can become known through interpretive methods of research (Minichiello et al., 2000). Informant interviews capture important interactions in natural settings. The researcher may also be a part of the context of the research and brings this intimate knowledge to the interpretation of data (Gephart, 1999).

A qualitative study informed by constructionism.

The aim of the current research was to generate new knowledge of the dynamic process of change within a particular context of Catholic education and, more particularly, with regard to religious education. The study was built on the premise that human beings are at the centre of learning. They are meaning-makers who construct their world and their understanding of the world through their experiences and interactions with others. This study sought to understand the world view of the participants and the direct, lived experience of religious educators as they engaged with a curriculum change. It focused on the interactions between people and the context in which they worked. It enabled the researcher to become immersed in the world of the participants and to understand their perspectives.

The study was conducted during the first year of implementing the new curriculum framework. The religious educators participated in the implementation and made meaning from their day-to-day experiences of it. Their beliefs and practices influenced the context of religious education. This experience and meaning was communicated by the informants and interpreted by the researcher. Then the experience and meaning was expanded in a dynamic way to the wider ecclesial culture through social constructionism, resulting in meanings that are created, institutionalised and made into tradition. A map of the epistemological foundation specific to this research is provided in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Mapping the Epistemological Foundation of the Study



Theoretical Perspective

Interpretivism.

The theoretical perspective of this research was *interpretivism*. Interpretivism holds that there are multiple realities in relation to a phenomenon. The implicit rules of society are known tacitly by individuals and groups who are continually restructuring social reality (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This knowledge can be accessed effectively through interpretive research. Methods employed in the research therefore seek to understand and interpret the social reality produced as a result of social interaction (Minichiello et al., 2000). Interpretations are shaped by the personal, cultural and historical experience of the researcher (Creswell, 2007). The theory generated through interpretive research is not generalisable in the same way as the results of positivist methodologies. The researcher is an instrument through which the phenomenon under study is interpreted and found meaningful. “They are most interested in studying how people attach meaning to and organise their lives, and how this in turn influences their actions” (Minichiello et al., 2000, p. 10).

Differing approaches arise from an interpretive theoretical perspective of qualitative research. Qualitative research has become varied and fragmented (Creswell, 2007). Among the varied approaches are: (1) *hermeneutics*, where the phenomenon is interpreted through the actions of the individual who has experienced it; (2) *phenomenology*, where over a prolonged period of time, the researcher endeavours to

understand the experience of a particular phenomenon as described by participants; and (3) *symbolic interactionism*, where the researcher seeks to understand social reality as a product of meaningful social interaction (Creswell, 2007; Minichiello et al., 2000). In symbolic interactionism the social world is understood as being in a state of constant change. The social world is interpreted through the definition each person brings to it and definitions may change according to human experience. Conceptions of reality are held subjectively and the most appropriate way to discover these views and perceptions is to give opportunity for these to be communicated.

Symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic interactionism is a theory of human behaviour, that has greatly influenced developments in methodological discussions since the 1970s (Flick, 2006). Symbolic interactionism comes out of the perspective of *pragmatism*. As a pragmatist philosopher and social psychologist, Mead (1934) argued that human beings give attention to the things that are meaningful to them. Symbolic interactionism is built around the view that human beings respond to one another through interpreting behaviour (Bowers, 1989; Elliott, 2009). This is mediated, interpreted or negotiated through symbols (Blumer, 1998; cf. 1962; 1969). Meaning is negotiated through social interaction, where language is the key to social discourse; and these meanings are interpreted and reinterpreted as the person deals with new encounters and imagines differing points of view (Flick, 2006). Human beings therefore are active and creative participants in the social world.

Whilst being sensitive to the phenomena under study, the researcher must also be sensitive to personal meaning formed through experience and social context. Different perspectives are constantly emerging. Symbolic interactionism therefore holds that society is not ordered or unified or evolving as a whole (Allan, 2011).

Symbolic interactionism seeks to discover the meaning within life experiences and sees life as emergent perspectives and the social world in a state of constant flux. “Human beings experience reality through their definitions of it. These definitions of the situation in turn alter in relation to their experience of it” (Minichiello et al., 2000, p. 110).

Underpinning symbolic interactionism is the theory that, in conceptualising the self, there is an *I* and a *Me*. The *I* is the unsocialised self, made up of personal desires, needs and dispositions, whilst the *Me* is the socialised self that can be identified and discussed (Allan, 2011; Elliott, 2009). There is a constant dialectic between the *Me* and

the *I* as the self is continuously reconstructed (Allan, 2011; Lock & Strong, 2010) Individuals consist of multiple expressions of *Me* depending on the context. This has been described as “which *Me* is experienced as most salient at the time” (Bowers, 1989, p. 37). In this study, the most salient *Me* of interest was the religious educators acting within the school context. Regardless of appointed role, the researcher was interested in their experience of change from their particular perspective as they engaged in the dynamic, interactive process of curriculum change in religious education within Tasmanian Catholic primary schools.

Face-to-face contact is essential to understand the meanings and actions of participants (Flick, 2006). Meaning comes from interaction and the reconstruction of the participants’ perspectives is an imperative in this methodology. The researcher enters into the world and the meaning of the informant building theory. In-depth interviewing and detailed analysis of conversation is a most effective method of data collection.

Methodology

In the previous section, the epistemological foundation, the theoretical perspective and the approach that guided this study were outlined. The research sought to understand the perspectives of religious educators as they implemented a curriculum innovation in religious education. The chief purpose was to generate theory that would assist in improving the teaching of religious education as a field of learning. *Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) has been used to achieve the aims of the study. In the following section this methodology will be outlined.

Grounded Theory.

The purpose of *grounded theory* is to discern theory from reflection on social phenomena based on data collected from the field (Ary et al., 2010). Since its introduction by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory has undergone progressive development. It is founded on symbolic interactionism, an inductive approach to research, which builds theory from the social world. It has been used in many disciplines and is viewed as a comprehensive methodology, well suited to qualitative research (Glaser, 1998; Creswell, 2009).

Since its origin, grounded theory has evolved into many forms. The originators of the theory themselves diverged on methods of data analysis (Ary et al., 2010; Glaser, 1992; Goulding, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, it is generally accepted that there are two major approaches to grounded theory.

The work of Strauss and Corbin (1990), marked a departure from grounded theory as originally developed in Glaser and Strauss (1967). Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994) advocated the use of a series of coding matrices to conceptualise beyond the immediate field of study (Goulding, 2002). However, Glaser (1992) argued strongly that the coding process advocated in the work of Strauss and Corbin (1990) forces the data and could be named merely “full conceptual description” (Glaser, 1992, p. 127). Arguing that it was a distortion and misconception of the original method, Glaser (1992) maintained that theory should remain close to the data. It should be substantive but not try to generalise beyond the field of study (Goulding, 2002). The method chosen for this study draws on the principles associated with the original concept of grounded theory as devised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and further developed by Glaser (1992; 1998). This has enabled the theory to be generated from the ground up (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The suitability of grounded theory as a method for this study.

Grounded theory detects and explains social phenomena; it begins with a research situation. It seeks to establish meaning from a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. Therefore it is uniquely suited to discovering the perspective and reality of the informant (Glaser, 1998).

The strength of grounded theory is its open-ended, discovery orientation (Glaser, 1998). It is an inductive method that involves the collection and organisation of data so that new theory can emerge from the “bottom-up” (Wiersma, 1995, p. 18). The researcher enters into the world of those under study (Goulding, 1999). In grounded theory there are few solid ideas prior to the study. “[G]rounded theory is generated from the data, and developing grounded theory requires insight and understanding, and may require repetitive review of the data” (Wiersma, 1995, p. 251).

Theory evolves through the interaction of the informant and the researcher, the systematic gathering of data and the constant interaction of data collection and analysis (Goulding, 2002). Through constant comparison, analysis and systematic conceptualisation, grounded theory enables the researcher the freedom to compare data from theoretical sampling, to generate categories and properties, and to discover main concerns or issues of the participants (Glaser, 1998). It is important for the researcher to be able to tolerate a sense of confusion or unknowing, to allow theory to emerge, and to resist forcing the data to reveal preconceived issues that are more the researcher’s, rather than the participants’, concerns.

How theory emerges through grounded theory.

Theory emerges through the collection and analysis of data collected in the field. The terms *purposeful or theoretical sampling* within grounded theory are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature pertaining to qualitative research (Coyne, 1997). *Theoretical sampling* allows for freedom and flexibility in sampling (Glaser, 1998). Resulting from analysis of the data, patterns determine the researcher's next action, and where to seek further samples. The researcher is not seeking out the same data but seeking evidence until the theoretical category is saturated and there is no new evidence. Theoretical sampling enables the researcher to make the most of opportunities for new insights that arise from the fieldwork (Minichiello et al., 2000). The foundational premise of theoretical sampling is its openness to discovery and where the data may lead. The researcher must remain sufficiently open and flexible to explore the phenomenon under study.

All sampling is not theoretical sampling but it is purposeful. *Purposeful sampling* is guided by the focus of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The steps to data collection include: planning ahead; setting boundaries for the study; collecting information and recording the information. The participants in the study are purposefully selected to provide the best information to enable the researcher to investigate the research question (Coyne, 1997; Creswell, 2007, 2009). Purposeful sampling in this research also enabled the identification of the possible participants in advance thus fulfilling the requirements for ethical clearance from the Australian Catholic University. The general guideline to qualitative research is to focus on the in-depth and extensive detail in the data collection (Creswell, 2007).

Constant comparison between the interview data of different participants is central to the process. Through constant comparison the data is analysed and theory emerges. During the process of constant comparison, the literature is also accessed as it becomes available (Dick, 2005). This process through which theory emerges differentiates grounded theory from other forms of qualitative research. The following section outlines this process in detail.

Emergence of categories.

Grounded theory gives priority to the data (Flick, 2006). When no new data can be found, *saturation* level is said to have occurred (Dick, 2005). The process of generating theory involves interplay between data collection; data analysis through constant comparison, note taking, coding and memoing; sorting and writing. Immediate

methods of data collection and analysis assist in the emergence of early patterns. Note-taking in the field and memoing are important (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant comparison leading to saturation provides a process of internal validation.

Grounded theory seeks to find out “what is going on” (Glaser, 1998, p. 91) and it allows the lived experience to speak. Data analysis brings forth a series of approximations that work towards the emergence of theory. It is assumed that the data holds theories that can be uncovered.

The analysis of data.

Grounded theory requires the analyst to be open-minded and context-sensitive (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analysis of data involves an interactive process of reducing, organising and synthesising information (Ary et al., 2010). “The goal is the development of categories that capture the fullness of the experiences and actions studied” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 202).

Electronic means are available to assist in the data sorting process; however, this does not replace the researcher as the chief instrument of interpretation (Dick, 2005). *Theoretical sensitivity* is “the ability to generate concepts from data and to relate them according to the normal models of theory in general, and theory in sociology, in particular” (Glaser, 1978, 1992, p. 27). Theoretical sensitivity enables the researcher to conceptualise and generate theory from the data.

At the beginning of the analysis of data the researcher has no preconceived ideas and is therefore open to what they may find. This initial stage of constant comparative analysis leaves the researcher open to the emergence of patterns, which will contribute to the emergence of properties and categories through *open coding* (Glaser, 1992). *Theoretical coding* results when a conceptual relationship emerges between categories and properties. *Properties* are concepts at a lower level of abstraction; *categories* are at a higher level. Any number of categories is possible. A *core category* can be said to have emerged if one category appears with higher frequency than the others. This indicates a key issue for the participants and a prime motivator of behaviour (Glaser, 1998). Table 5 is an example from this study (cf. Chapter Four) to show the relationship between the categories and sub-categories that can emerge from data through the process of constant comparison.

Table 5
The Categories and Sub-categories that emerged from the Study

Category	Sub-categories
One: Readiness for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral Purpose • Non-Alignment Between Moral Purpose and the Contemporary Context
Two: The Connection between Religious Educators and the Curriculum Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Assessment of the Innovation • Critical Interaction with the Innovation
Three: A Collaborative Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with School-Based Leaders in a System Priority • Teacher Involvement in Change
Four: The Dynamics of Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed Leadership • Stimulating Teacher Leadership
Five: Challenges within the Change Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Accountability in Religious Education • Lack of External Accountability
Six: Effects of the Change Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Professional Learning Culture for Religious Educators • Improved Learning Opportunities for Students

The place of the literature in grounded theory.

In grounded theory a literature review has two purposes, to provide a theoretical background for a study and to enable new insights and theory generated from a study to be located in relation to the existing body of knowledge (Kumar, 2005). In qualitative studies, the researcher makes important decisions about what data is to be collected (Wiersma, 1995). However, as much as possible, the researcher suspends his/her knowledge during the data collection and initial analysis (Glaser, 1998). The researcher must resist forcing the data through preconceived ideas or a focus on the researcher's issues instead of the issues of the participants. The collection of data is given priority. Once initial analysis has been done the researcher then turns to the relevant literature in order to clarify and generate new theory (Ary et al., 2010).

The researcher must also try not to let theory found in the literature dominate the research. As much as possible the researcher must be open to discovery, which may even turn out to be at odds with current theory. The literature should be discussed in a critical, reflective way as part of the analysis of the data and consequent generation of theory

(Dick, 2005). The process of grounded theory is essentially more cyclical than linear, enabling the researcher to reflect continuously on their analysis and interpretation of the data (Flick, 2006). In this way, grounded theory generates new theory and creates new knowledge. Even if the new knowledge is similar to that discovered by someone else, the result of grounded theory is that the research will have provided an empirical base from another source and therefore will have complemented other work (Dick, 2005).

Method

Interpretivist research seeks to understand the reality and perceptions of informants. For the researcher this implies deep immersion into the world of the informants, and imagination to see things from another's perspective. In-depth interviewing is considered one of the best methods for achieving this, as the researcher tries to elicit an honest account of how the informants see themselves and their experiences (Minichiello et al., 2000).

Understanding people is dependent upon a range of interpretive skills implicit in social practice. In-depth interviewing differs from journalistic interviews or surveys because it is a purposeful conversation that aims to uncover the "beliefs, wishes, feelings, desires, fears and intentions" (Minichiello et al., 2000, p. 22) of informants and to interpret the meaning behind actions. "It is the means by which the researcher can gain access to, and subsequently understand, the private interpretations of social reality that individuals hold" (p. 61). From the interpretation of data, theory is built. In this study the unstructured, in-depth interview was chosen as the most suitable means to collect the data.

In-depth interviews.

In qualitative research, such as grounded theory, the data is collected at the site where the participants experience the event under study (Creswell, 2009; Glaser, 1998). The researcher is directly concerned with the collection of data using an appropriate protocol and face-to-face interaction. A qualitative research interview seeks to reveal both rich, factual data and deep, meaningful data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In-depth interviews are two-way, purposeful empathetic conversations between the researcher and the informant (Keats, 1998). They are crucial to getting to the centre of the issues, perceptions and realities of the participants. It is necessary to listen for the explicit and the implicit meaning. Interpreting the implicit meaning is difficult; however, the interviewer can echo the informant's responses for confirmation of the interpretation

(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Minichiello et al., 2000).

The chosen interview style must enable this in-depth interaction between researcher and participant to allow the meaning that the event under study has for the participant to emerge (Creswell, 2009). For this reason, an *unstructured interview* technique was used for this study.

Unstructured interviews.

The in-depth examination of people and topics is the focus of both semi-structured and unstructured interview techniques (Minichiello et al., 2000). The unstructured interview is close to a guided conversation around the research topic (Ary et al., 2010; Minichiello et al., 2000). Like semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews have few open-ended questions designed “to elicit views and opinions from the participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). They have a broad guiding topic of interest, a general guide or schedule that is not rigidly fixed in questions or wording. The focus of the interview is around the issues central to the research question but the interview style is more flexible than a survey style of interview.

The unstructured style of interview chosen for this study allowed the participant opportunity to communicate their perceptions of reality, allowing the researcher to engage in an in-depth examination of the research interest and to modify questions and format during the interview. Control was minimal. However, the interviewer was able to encourage participants to relate their experiences and attitudes concerning the research focus. A checklist was used to assist the interviewer to facilitate the interview.

Symbolic interactionism seeks to uncover the perceptions of the participants in the study. The unstructured interview allows the researcher to discover how the participants view the world and what meaning they place on it. Therefore the *Me* that is most salient is of interest to the researcher (Bowers, 1989). However, the use of interviews for research can be inhibited by perceptions of unequal power relationships (Keats, 1988). There is a strong tendency to act out particular roles in relationships with others and to be aware of different identities moving from the different social settings of daily life. However, there is also an awareness of an inner core or self that makes one whole (Elliott, 2009). By using an unstructured interview technique, this research aimed to allow the inner self of the religious educator to be expressed during the interview through open but guided conversation. This is consistent with the theoretical and methodological position of the research design (Minichiello et al., 2000). Figure 7 shows the researcher’s checklist from this study.

Figure 7. Researcher's Checklist for an Unstructured Interview

Opening protocols:

- thankyou for agreeing to participate in this research
- reminder about the confidentiality of the process and the presence of the audio tape-recorder

Building rapport – invitation to talk about:

- the school/the class/oneself
- experience in education/Catholic education
- background in teaching religious education

Inquiry:

- the value of religious education: for self, students, parents
- the production of *GNFL*
- the introduction of *GNFL*
- other experiences of curriculum change
- using *GNFL* in the school
- teaching of religious education with *GNFL*
- professional learning in religious education
- leadership of religious education
- professional support for religious education
- planning with *GNFL*;
- changes in the way you see religious education, its purpose, how you teach it
- changes in the way students experience religious education

Conclusion:

- suggestions for the ongoing support of religious education
 - further development of *GNFL*
 - thankyou and leave-taking
-

How The Research Was Conducted

The study design.

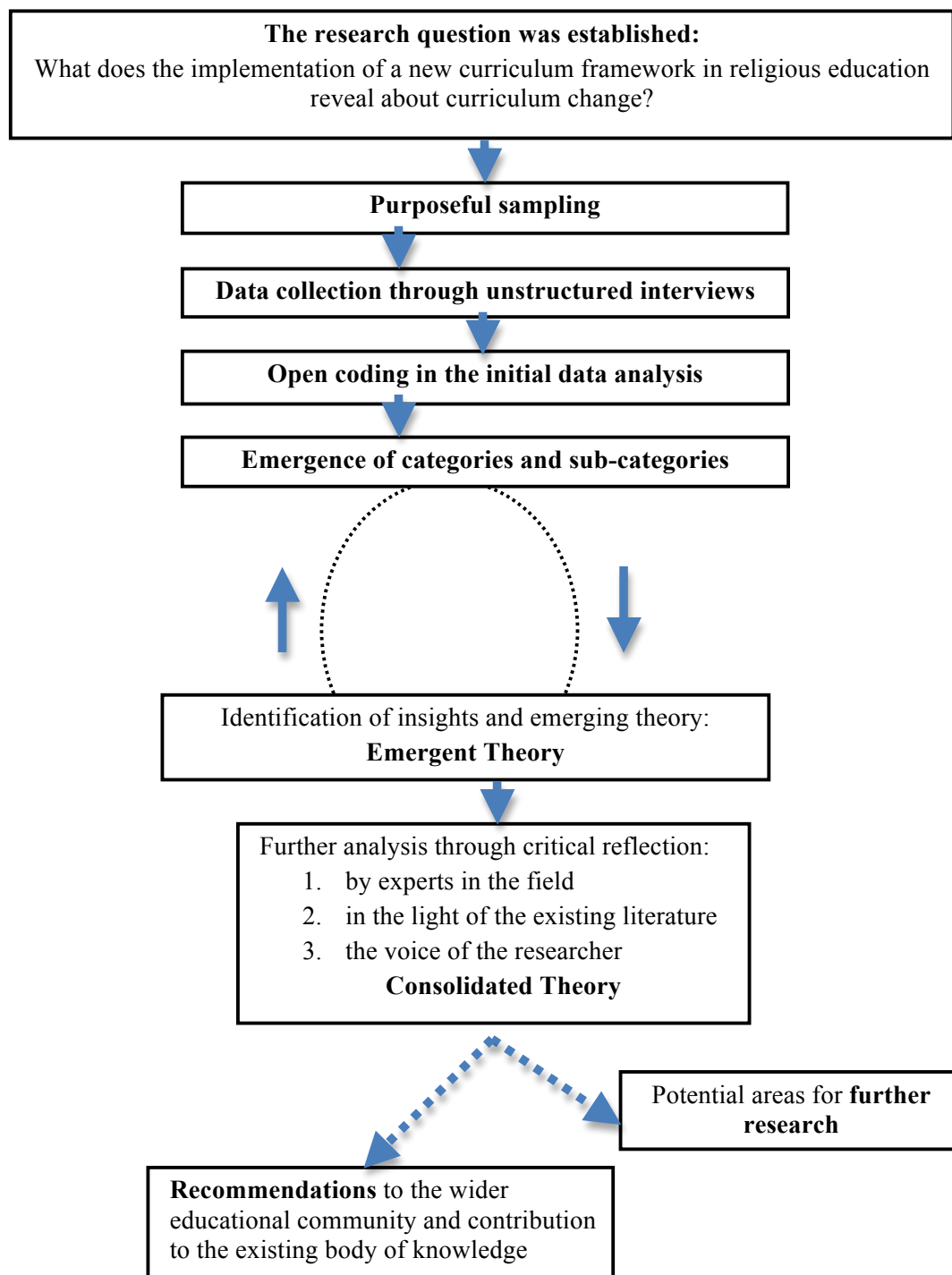
Figure 8 is a diagrammatic representation of the research design. It shows how this study sought to generate theory about curriculum change in religious education through a study of the perceptions and experiences of religious educators as they implemented a new curriculum framework. This research sought to understand what the implementation of a new curriculum framework in religious education could reveal about successful curriculum change.

This study was conducted within the context of Catholic primary schools in Tasmania. The study design drew on the principles of grounded theory as devised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and subsequently developed by Glaser, (1992, 1998). An unstructured, in-depth interview technique was used for data collection.

The data was analysed, and through constant comparative analysis, sub-categories and categories emerged. As these emerged literature assisted the researcher to identify key insights and emergent theory that was hidden within the data. The categories and sub-categories were subsequently presented at the Sixth National Symposium on Religious Education, *Perspectives on Religious Education: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (June, 2009, Australian Catholic University, Sydney).

The insights and emerging theory pertaining to each category were analysed further through a process of constant comparison in relation to three perspectives: the existing body of literature pertaining to educational change and religious education; expert religious educators brought together to consider the insights and emerging theory and the researcher's voice. Round table discussions were convened during the *Hosting and Harvesting* Conference of the Australian Council of Educational Leaders (ACEL, 2010) and with experts from the CEOH.

Figure 8. The Research Design



Drawing from grounded theory a process of constant comparison generated emergent and consolidated theory.

Establishing the research question.

This study investigated the implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education in Catholic schools in Tasmania, Australia, from the perspective of primary school religious educators. As identified in the Introduction to this study, the literature in the field of educational change is extensive and in the field of religious education recent studies have begun to consider the management of curriculum change in religious education (Buchanan, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008, 2010). In the Australian context, however, there is very little research into the experience of religious educators at the time of curriculum change. Recent studies by Fleming (2001a, 2004) and Crotty (2002) have focused on the role of the REC. A recent study of curriculum change in religious education highlighted a new role for the REC as an active curriculum leader (Buchanan, 2007). Questions about the professional learning of religious educators are beginning to be asked, especially in relation to teachers developing the skills involved with new curriculum documents and the change in approaches to religious education (Nolen, 2008; Welbourne, 2004b).

This research investigated the experience of curriculum change in religious education at the school site and explored the issues identified as important to the participants. It sought further insight into the factors that stimulated and supported curriculum change. The research aimed to contribute towards understandings about effective curriculum leadership in the field of religious education by generating theory from the perspectives of religious educators who were classroom teachers and leaders of religious education within Catholic primary schools in Tasmania.

The general research question.

This question was central to the design and determined how the research was carried out:

What does the implementation of a new curriculum framework in religious education reveal about successful curriculum change?

Contributing questions that guided the study were:

1. How, and to what extent, do religious educators engage with the change process?
2. How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education affect relationships within schools and those between schools and the centralised body, CEOH?

3. What factors indicate that the implementation of an innovation is making a change within the educational organisation?
4. What recommendations can be made to the educational community about the implementation of curriculum change in religious education?

Determining the participants.

Purposeful selection of participants provides the information necessary to enable a grounded theory researcher to develop insight into an event. Numbers are often small in qualitative research (Ary et al., 2010; Minichiello et al., 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is difficult to stipulate an exact number at the beginning of the research when using grounded theory, as the aim of this method is category saturation (Wiersma, 1995). Determining the size of the cohort is a matter of judgment as the aim is to collect deep, credible, rich information (Coyne, 1997).

All schools in this study were systemic Catholic primary schools, working under the auspices of the Archbishop of Hobart and responsible to the Director of Catholic Education in Tasmania. Each school was entitled to a grant from the systemic Catholic schools' budget to assist with the implementation of *GNFL*. All schools participated in the school-based professional learning opportunities provided by CEOH. The schools in the study were purposefully chosen to reflect a diverse range of responses to an educational change process.

The principals of possible participant schools were contacted initially and the research was explained. Once permission was granted, principals were asked to suggest possible participants who would be able to provide rich responses around the focus of the study. These participants would be able to discuss their perceptions and give insight into their reality and would not be ill at ease in an interview situation. Permission was then sought from possible participants.

It was important to the researcher that the participants be able to uncover the reality of change management within the context of the school. The participants provided a realistic insight into the tensions, issues and challenges that change presents within the day-to-day life of the school. In reporting data from this study pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality about participants' identities.

Responses from a total of eighteen participants were gathered. The principals from all four schools were included in the sample. In qualitative research a sample can never be exhaustive or complete (Minichiello et al., 2000). However it can generate rich and deep data. It is important for researchers to develop a research plan that is flexible yet

sets boundaries to guide what is possible and manageable (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Saturation can be said to have occurred when no new insights are being added from the participants. The focus for the data collection was the effect of the change in that particular context during the implementation phase. Only current staff members were included in the sample. Further criteria for establishing possible samples are outlined below.

Criteria for participation in the study.

The participants in the study were all religious educators though they had varying responsibilities within the school. They were either classroom teachers of religious education, AP:REs or principals. In one school, the principal was exercising a dual role as there was no REC or AP:RE appointed to the role. The participants from this school particular school were: the principal, who was also fulfilling the role of REC following the transfer of the REC who had led the implementation of *GNFL* the previous year, and classroom teachers of religious education.

At the second school, the principal was interviewed with the teacher who, as acting AP:RE, had led the initial implementation of *GNFL* and two teachers. At the third school, the principal, the AP:RE and two teachers were interviewed; and at the fourth school, the principal, the AP:RE and three teachers participated. Table 6 shows the categorisation of the participants according to their roles.

Table 6
An Overview of the Participants in the Study

Roles	Number of Participants
Principals (one acting in the joint role of REC)	Four: T (Principal/REC), A, G, R
AP:REs who also performed other teaching duties	Three: Y, W, C
Classroom teachers of religious education	Three not qualified to teach religious education: B, K, Z,
	Eight qualified to teach religious education: N, L, F, V, I, P, U, E

Seeking permission to interview the participants.

Consent for the study was obtained from the Director of Catholic Education, Catholic Education Office, Hobart to begin research in Catholic parish primary schools

(cf. Appendix A). The study was given ethical approval by the Australian Catholic University Ethics Committee (cf. Appendix B). Telephone conversations were held with the principals of each school to determine if they would be willing to allow the research to proceed with their school as a participant school. Letters were then sent to possible participants: principals and teachers inviting them to participate in the study (cf. Appendix C). The purpose of the research was explained together with the procedures for interviews. Samples of these permissions can be found in the appendices attached to this thesis.

The interviews.

The interview is a purposeful conversation that is designed for the exchange of knowledge through social interaction. It is important that the researcher take the stance of a learner who is interested in the world of the informant (Minichiello et al., 2000). In this study, interviews were arranged for times convenient for both participant and researcher. They were all conducted at the schools, in appropriate interview rooms, for two essential reasons: first, a productive interpersonal climate of rapport is essential in assisting the informant and the researcher to experience an effective interview and, secondly, reflecting symbolic interactionism and direct investigation of a social world, the site allows the participant to reveal their own world and the meaning they have constructed in it (Blumer, 1969). In this study, the most salient *Me* to be revealed by the participants was that of the religious educator experiencing a time of significant curriculum change in religious education.

The recording of interviews is not essential in grounded theory. Moreover, the disadvantages of recording outweigh the advantages especially if the taping and transcribing means delaying analysis of the data (Glaser, 1998). However, to enhance the effectiveness of this study the choice to audio tape-record the interviews allowed for “greater analytic depth” (Minichiello et al., 2000, p. 98) as recordings could be listened to repeatedly. This helped to confirm that what the interviewer had heard was in fact correct and reduced the potential for researcher bias.

Subsequent analysis of meaning occurs through both listening to the sound recording and reading the text provided through transcription (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Key-word notes are still important even when interviews are recorded (Dick, 2005). The researcher was able to listen more attentively and perform the many listening skills necessary within in-depth interviewing. The recordings assisted in the analysis of the data, confirming the accuracy of what was heard in the interviews. They also assisted

in initial open coding, which would lead to the emergence of categories and sub-categories from the data.

Conducting the interviews.

Each interview began with an opening protocol. In this protocol the interviewees were reminded of the confidential nature of the interviews and were informed that pseudonyms would be given in the reporting of findings, as indicated in Table 6. The use of the researcher's checklist enabled the researcher to maintain the flow of the conversation, ensuring that the participant addressed areas of the study focus.

Each interview commenced by inviting the participants to talk generally about their experiences in Catholic education and teaching religious education within Catholic schools. Designed to be broad, the initial questions enabled the informant to start "thinking about the issue in general terms" (Minichiello et al., 2000 p. 84). The opening questions then led into more specific questions about the experience of the implementation phase of *GNFL*. At the end of each interview it was important to maintain a positive relationship. The last questions were once again broad, designed to bring the interview to a conclusion.

Analysing and synthesising the data.

The interviews were undertaken over several weeks. Consistent with grounded theory, the researcher listened to and interpreted the responses from the participants and adapted the questions to encourage participants' experiences to be fully expressed. Open coding is an initial strategy within grounded theory, as espoused by Glaser (1992). As the process of analysis and synthesis of the data begins, the researcher remains entirely open to what will emerge from the data. There are no preconceived codes. To begin the process of open coding, the researcher began with the first interview, breaking the material into sections and identifying the issues of interest to the participant.

Then, taking each of the interviews in the order in which they were conducted, the researcher listened to and coded the responses from each interview using the initial codes that had been identified from the first interview. This followed the inductive method of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Codes were not identified before the data was gathered. They emerged as the data was analysed and constantly compared. This enabled the researcher to become more fully immersed in the world of the participant and to increase the possibility of authentic interpretation. Responses were coded and properties and major categories began to emerge. These responses were collected electronically using word

processing.

Following the process outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Dick (2005), the responses were printed and cut out as separate pieces of paper. Further synthesis occurred as like or differentiated responses were grouped together in sub-categories. The frequency of like responses was noted. These sub-categories were constantly compared and contrasted as categories became conceptualised. In order to maximise the involvement of the researcher, no computer software programs other than word processing were used in the analysis.

In this research, as the categories began to emerge, the literature became an integral part of the data collection by being part of the interaction between the researcher and the responses from the informants.

The voice of the researcher.

This study was conducted from the perspective of qualitative research and therefore a number of practical implications follow. In qualitative studies, typically the researcher is interested in reporting the multiple realities that exist for the participants. Therefore it is expected that the researcher provide evidence of these multiple realities from the participants' responses. The researcher becomes involved in a sustained and intensive way with the participants in order to interpret the meaning they make of their reality effectively (Creswell, 2009).

It is acknowledged that the researcher was an active part of this study. However, the researcher's voice was silent until the completion of the interviews, and preconceptions were suspended as much as possible. Consistent with symbolic interactionism and grounded theory, the researcher then became an instrument to identify valuable insights, to analyse and synthesise, and to interpret the data. Social interaction is a process of "defining and interpreting each other's actions" (Blumer, 1998, p. 53). It was through the meaning the researcher gave to the data that categories could emerge, insights and emerging theory could be generated and emerging theory could be consolidated. Within the reporting of the data and its interpretation, the researcher is responsible for describing and openly discussing the values that shape the study including personal values and interpretations in conjunction with the interpretations of participants (Creswell, 2007).

In reporting qualitative research it is important to incorporate details, to write "lushly" or "thickly" (Creswell, 2007, pp. 194, 195), in order to produce in the reader of research the feeling that they could experience the events described. Empirical *thick*

descriptions enhance understanding of the context and the interpretations that led to the emergence of theory (Wiersma, 1995). Thick descriptions also assist in establishing the plausibility of the research (Creswell, 2007).

Consistent with symbolic interactionism, the researcher becomes immersed in the world and the perceptions of the informants in order to make interpretations that are based on informed judgments. It is essential that the researcher acknowledge any subjectivity in interpreting and constructing new meaning. The researcher “is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). Unacknowledged bias may invalidate the results of a study. However, acknowledged subjectivity may enable the researcher to contribute positively to the construction of knowledge through the capacity to highlight specific aspects of the phenomenon being studied (Kvale, 2009).

The researcher must be aware of and acknowledge strategic, ethical or personal issues that may influence the process. An effective method of reducing the negative influence of researcher bias is *reflexivity* (Flick, 2006, p.16). This involves recognising possible biases and scrutinising them through self-reflection. Scrutiny of the categories as they emerged was also carried out through refereed publications, conference presentations and round table discussions with educators and experts in the field.

This research project was work-embedded learning for the researcher. As a leader of curriculum change and teacher development within the Archdiocese of Hobart, the researcher’s subjectivity is acknowledged. The researcher’s voice can be identified in the contextual background to the study and in the provision of additional information in reporting the findings. The researcher had a broad understanding of the context of the study and sought to know and understand what happens when school communities engage in a collaborative model of curriculum development and implementation.

Using the principles of grounded theory methodology, the researcher maintained the attitude of a learner, suspending preconceptions, and remaining open to discovery and sensitive to the emergence of theory. Therefore the researcher is presented in this study as a co-learner and a lead learner. Insights from the study have and will inform action for the improvement of teaching in religious education. The theory generated has and will assist in the provision of service to schools in curriculum change and innovation in the Archdiocese of Hobart and contribute to dialogue about curriculum change in religious education at a national level through the NCEC, especially through its religious education committee. Some of the initial findings from the study have been published in the professional journal of the Australian Association for Religious Education, *Religious*

Education Journal of Australia, (Healy, 2011).

Professional background of this researcher.

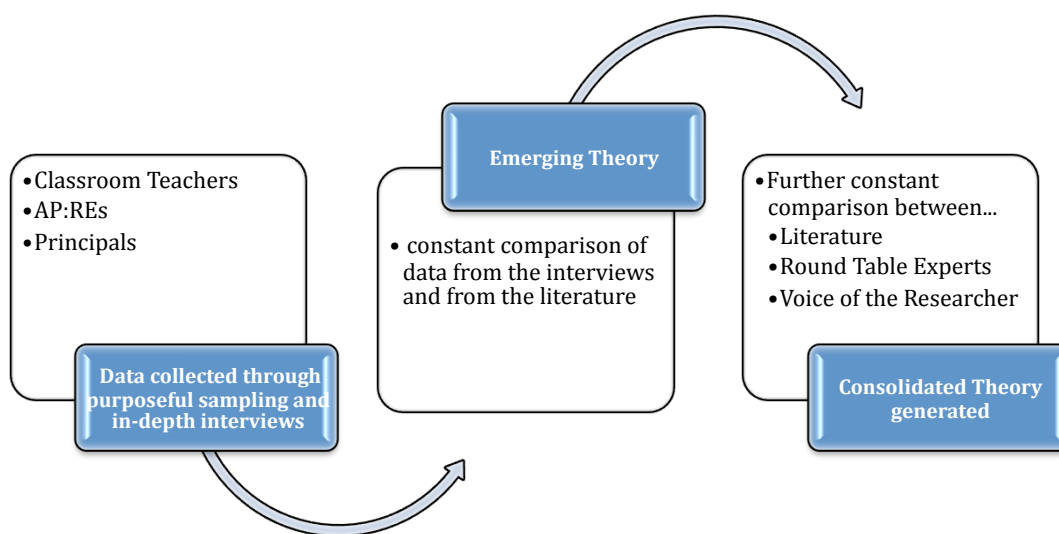
This research was situated within educational research that seeks to improve the learning of students through refined or increased knowledge (Ary et al., 2010; Wiersma, 1995). As a leader of religious education in the Archdiocese of Hobart, the researcher was interested in discovering significant effects of a curriculum change in religious education in order to guide future action.

The researcher has had significant experience in the field of religious education as a teacher of religious education, a religious education coordinator, an education officer and as Director of Mission and Religious Education. The researcher has had broad experience in curriculum design and implementation in two Archdioceses, Melbourne and Hobart, and has been involved in three major curriculum changes in religious education. The researcher has had fifteen years experience as a provider of professional learning in religious education. Therefore the researcher came to the research with a potentially rich theoretical sensitivity.

Experts in the fields of education and religious education.

The research design included further analysis of the data and consolidation of the emerging theory through a process of constant comparison involving dialogue with experts in the fields of education and religious education. The work of conceptualisation is central to the process of grounded theory. Within grounded theory there are a number of conceptual levels possible. First there is the data. Secondly, categories capture the underlying patterns within the data and, thirdly, from these, insights are integrated and sorted into a theory (Glaser, 1998). The decision to consolidate the emerging theory through constant comparison with experts in the field and current existing literature was intended to take the study beyond thick description to a fourth level: substantive theory (Goulding, 1999, 2002).

The opportunities for dialogue existed as part of a formal round table discussion at the ACEL Conference, *Hosting and Harvesting*, held in September–October 2010, and as arranged discussions with colleagues from CEOH during October 2010. The purpose of these discussions was to validate and consolidate the emerging theory. Figure 9 summarises this process.

Figure 9. The Generation of Theory from the Data

The theory emerged through the process of constant comparison of the data collected from the interviews, literature, experts in the field and the researcher.

The Round Table Experts were leaders in religious education and education in general from around Australia. The group consisted of an REC, an Education Officer: Religious Education, a principal from a large Catholic primary school, and a consultant with an educational facility in New South Wales. The discussions with personnel from CEOH included two Regional Directors for Catholic Education in Tasmania. All had responsibility for Catholic ethos and culture and leadership in the religious domain across a number of schools. In reporting the perceptions of these experts, some comments have been validated through the use of direct quotations. Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality. Participants provided their reflections on the material presented. Areas of convergence and divergence were identified and discussed. Through constant comparison these discussions contributed towards a deeper analysis of the emerging theory, taking them to a higher level of conceptualisation and generating consolidated, substantive theory.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Evaluating the worth of qualitative research has been a perennial challenge for researchers. Difficulties in attempting to replicate such research also arise because of the very nature of investigating issues in a natural setting. Qualitative researchers are “not

concerned with the broad generalisability of results” (Wiersma, 1995, p. 223). It is useful to consider how a researcher may persuade an audience that the findings of an inquiry are worthy of note. Therefore exploring the *trustworthiness* of a study may be more useful in evaluating qualitative research. In establishing trustworthiness, *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* should be considered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following Creswell (2007), Table 7 compares terms used to establish trustworthiness of quantitative or qualitative studies.

Table 7
Comparing Terms Used in Quantitative and Qualitative Studies

Validity of Quantitative Studies LeCompte & Goetz (1982)	Trustworthiness of Qualitative Studies Lincoln & Guba (1985)
Internal Validity	Credibility
External Validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Credibility.

Establishing the credibility of a study is concerned with its *internal validity*. Internal validity is established when other researchers find the results and the procedures useful in understanding the phenomenon in question. The goal of qualitative research is to discover new theory. Validity is strengthened by the appropriateness of the research method and the usefulness of the findings. Transparency of process and validation of findings are essential in qualitative research (Flick, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocated prolonged engagement in the field as a means of establishing the credibility of a study. The researcher, from an inside perspective on the context of the study, can make decisions about what is important to the study in relation to the study purpose.

Strategies that support confluence of evidence give confidence to the researcher that observations, interpretations and conclusions are credible (Creswell, 2007). Within the study, the constant comparative analysis within the grounded theory methodology also assisted in establishing credibility. This process is in itself an internal validation (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The strategy of audio tape-recording the interviews served to establish trust that the reporting of perceptions and issues of the participants would be accurate, with no misconceptions or misinterpretations. The research focused on areas of concern for the participants. Following Glaser (1998) the

preconceptions of the researcher doing the study was of lowest priority. The data were analysed, and categorised through a process of constant comparison with the responses of other participants, with the current body of knowledge and through discussion with experts. The emerging theory was then consolidated through further analysis. In reporting this research effort has been made to ensure that the procedures used have been documented and the results presented accurately.

In this study prolonged engagement in the field was provided by the work-related nature of the study for the researcher. Therefore the researcher was involved with the change process throughout the pre-production and implementation phases. A challenge presented in the research was that the researcher could have been perceived as in authority over the participants. This could have resulted in biased data being collected. In order to counterbalance this, the researcher drew on an established rapport and trust relationship with the participants because of her involvement in the broader context in which they work. Care was taken by the researcher to give accurate information about the research to the participants. It was explained that the study was for personal academic reasons and not as an accountability measure from the CEOH.

Ethical procedures were adhered to and permissions sought from the participants and the Director of Catholic Education for the Archdiocese of Hobart. Participants were kept fully informed of expectations and none showed reluctance to participate. Confidentiality was guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms in the reporting of responses. The strategy of the in-depth interview also allowed for the researcher to create an environment and a relationship with the participant that encouraged them to reveal their perceptions, experiences, and concerns honestly.

Transferability.

Transferability ensures that the research findings can be understood by others and the procedures replicated in other settings. Thick descriptions are therefore crucial. These provide detail on the participants and the setting under study. This enables the audience to transfer the information to other settings and to decide if the findings can be transferred in similar contexts (Creswell, 2007)

Rather than broad generalisation of results, transferability is more likely when a study is well organised, presenting procedures and results in a recognised and effective way (Weirsmas, 1995). This enables other researchers to understand the results. Grounded theory is trusted on the basis of its immediate effect. Glaser (1998) referred to this as “nowism” (p. 238). This refers to the extent to which others can use the research and

knowledge generated.

In this study, the researcher has provided detailed descriptions of its background and context. In reporting the findings attention has been given to detailed thick descriptions of the context surrounding the responses of the participants. Transferability suggests that similar categories would be found in other contexts. The constant comparison between the findings and the current body of literature and the round table discussions with experts from other contexts established that this was possible and assisted in establishing trustworthiness through transferability.

Dependability.

In this research dependability was established through the accurate recording and transcribing of interviews, the constant comparative analysis of grounded theory, the presenting of categories and emerging theory at conferences and in refereed journals, and through professional dialogue with colleagues. Dependability was also established through accurate reporting of the study.

Traditional concepts of *reliability* are inapplicable in qualitative research, with researchers preferring to establish *dependability*. Consistency across a number of settings assists in establishing trustworthiness through dependability. The researcher may randomly select categories and ask peers to categorise and compare the results independently. Triangulation also assists in establishing dependability (Ary et al., 2010). It is suggested that detailed field notes, good quality recording and accurate transcriptions enhance dependability. Essentially the researcher must act as a reliable research instrument in order to build trustworthiness through dependability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The voice of the participants is captured and synthesised using particular research strategies. In reporting the research, thick descriptions, the use of tables and figures, accurate coding of data, and intertwining of quotes with interpretations all contribute to reliability and dependability (Creswell, 2009).

Confirmability.

Establishing trustworthiness through confirmability or *objectivity* relates to the capacity of the researcher to ensure that the study is free from unacknowledged biases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As described above, interpretive research by its nature demands that the researcher enter into the world of those to be studied and act as a research instrument. The researcher is actively involved in interpreting the findings of the research; therefore objectivity is not a desirable feature of qualitative studies. However it

is possible to confirm the trustworthiness of the findings.

In this research, effort has been made to ensure that methods and procedures are described in detail to give a complete background picture to the audience. The sequence of data collection and reporting of findings is clearly presented. Personal assumptions, values and biases have been acknowledged. The data have been retained for possible reanalysis. In addition to these strategies, the emerging theory from this study has been scrutinised through public discussion and publication in refereed journals.

Trustworthiness is established through the four components of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Trustworthiness results when fieldwork is effectively carried out, when emerging theories are discussed with those not involved in the research, and when the appropriateness of interpretations is determined when members of the field under study validate the results (Flick, 2006). In this study, peers have established trustworthiness through periodic scrutiny of the data, the categories, the emerging theory and the consolidating of theory. Attention has been given to the detailed description of the study context and accurate reporting of the data and generation of theory. The knowledge generated by this research is already influencing the next phase of curriculum development and teacher learning in religious education in the Archdiocese of Hobart. The trustworthiness of the research will be firmly established if others involved in research or in administration of curriculum change in religious education find support and assistance in their work from the new knowledge generated by this study.

Conclusion

This research focuses on the reality and perspectives of religious educators in the Archdiocese of Hobart as they implemented a new curriculum framework, *GNFL*. In this chapter the research design was described. The epistemology of qualitative research determined how the research was to be conducted according to a set of underlying assumptions. The epistemological foundation and the theoretical perspective underpinning the research determined the methodology and method chosen for the study.

The underpinning assumption of this study is that knowledge is a constructed phenomenon. The theoretical perspective of this research is interpretivism expressed as symbolic interactionism (Minichiello et al., 2000). Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992; 1998) was chosen as a suitable methodology in order to gain access to the reality and the perspectives of the participants. Unstructured in-depth interviews were used as the most suitable strategy to achieve the aims of both the underpinning epistemology and the theoretical perspective. The new insights and subsequent generation

of theory in the study emerged through constant comparison. The trustworthiness of the study lies in the consistency between the epistemological and theoretical perspective and the methodology and methods used to carry out and report on the research.

In Chapters Four, Five and Six, which follow, the perspectives of the participants will be examined and discussed. The insights and emerging theory will be identified then a further analysis will be undertaken. The consolidated theory will then be presented. In Chapter Seven, the conclusions and recommendations will complete the research report.

Chapter Four

Categories One and Two: Stimulating Change

Introduction

This qualitative study drew on the principles of grounded theory, originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Consistent with grounded theory, the researcher conducted unstructured, in-depth interviews with the participants. The purpose of the interviews was to gather data from school-based religious educators about their experience of implementing a new curriculum framework for religious education. In grounded theory the researcher acts as the primary data-gathering instrument asking questions about an experience and what it means to the participants (Ary et al., 2010). A process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) led to the conceptualisation of emergent categories and sub-categories. Table 8 presents an overview of these categories and associated sub-categories.

Table 8

Categories and Sub-categories that emerged from the Study

Category	Sub-categories
One: Readiness for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral Purpose • The Current Context
Two: The Connection between Religious Educators and the Curriculum Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Assessment of the Curriculum Framework • Critical Interaction with the Curriculum Framework
Three: A Collaborative Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration between CEOH and School-Based Leaders in Curriculum Development • Teacher Involvement in Change
Four: The Dynamics of Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed Leadership • Stimulating Teacher Leadership
Five: Challenges within the Change Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Accountability in Religious Education • Lack of Effective Communication Between School and the CEOH
Six: Effects of the Change Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Professional Learning Culture for Religious Educators • Improved Learning Opportunities for Students

During the data collection and the conceptualisation of emerging categories the researcher's primary role was to listen to the participants actively as they shared their experiences, perceptions and concerns (Ary et al., 2010). As much as possible the researcher endeavoured to suspend any preconceived bias by focusing on the stories of the participants.

Chapters Four, Five and Six each reports the findings from two categories. Each chapter examines a major concept. Chapter Four is underpinned by the notion of Stimulating Change and reports on Categories One and Two. Chapter Five is oriented towards those factors that are described as Supporting Change and reports on Categories Three and Four. Chapter Six reports on the Signs of Significant Change identified within Categories Five and Six.

The insights from the interviews are presented in part in the form of direct quotations from the participants to confirm the plausibility of the findings within each category. Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality. Following the exploration of each finding, a further level of analysis, as described in Figure 9, presents the development of theory beyond "thick description" (Goulding, 2002, p. 43).

The theory was thus consolidated through critical reflection on testimonies from experts in the field who were participants in round table discussions relating to the emergent theory, as outlined in Chapter Three. Consistent with symbolic interactionism the researcher engaged in a process of "defining and interpreting" (Blumer, 1998, p. 53) the acts of the participants under study. Therefore a dialectic was established between existing knowledge, the perspectives of experts in the field, the insights and emerging theory. The voice of the researcher was active during this phase. The expertise of the researcher contributed to the analysis and drew on the existing body of literature to strengthen the plausibility of the analysis and the consolidation of the theory. Chapter Four proceeds to outline the emerging categories and theory associated with stimulating change.

Category One: Readiness for Change

Introduction.

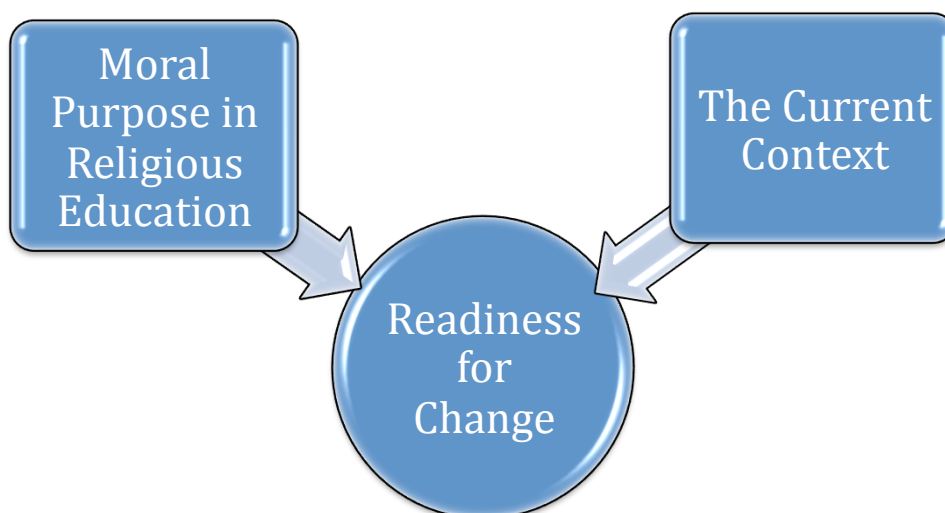
Category One revealed that curriculum change in religious education is likely to occur when teachers exhibit signs of readiness to engage with the curriculum framework. In this study the religious educators' readiness for change was stimulated by the tension between the moral purpose as they understood it and the non-alignment of that moral purpose with the contemporary context of the Catholic school.

The creative tension between vision and the current situation is a force that comes into play when the gap between the desired future and the present reality is identified. Vision is synonymous with purpose, a deep understanding of why something is worthy of commitment (Senge, 2006). “Moral purpose” (Fullan, 2001b, p. 3) is developed when individuals and groups act with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of others.

This research indicated that readiness for curriculum change in religious education occurs when teachers perceive that the moral purpose for teaching religious education is not met through their current practice. Change is likely to be more effective when teachers perceive that a new curriculum framework has the potential to re-establish coherence between moral purpose and their teaching. In this they foresee that the quality and effectiveness of their teaching may be improved through the use of the curriculum framework and that it will lead to better learning opportunities for students.

The factors that contributed to readiness for change are illustrated in Figure 10. To understand fully the creative tension that stimulated readiness for change two sub-categories are explored. First, it is necessary to discuss the meaning of moral purpose as it applies to religious education. This is discussed from the perspective of those involved in the study. Subsequently the participants’ perceptions of the current student context and the challenge it presents to the teaching of religious education are discussed.

Figure 10. Factors that Contributed towards Readiness for Change



Moral purpose in religious education and the current context are the sub-categories that emerged from the data as contributing to teachers’ readiness for change.

Moral purpose in religious education.

Establishing and articulating the moral purpose in education has emerged over the last two decades as the foundational principle for effective change (Senge, 2006) and particularly in educational change and school improvement (Duignan, 2010a, 2010b; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Moral purpose is identified when people are passionate about and committed to improvement. The articulation of moral purpose indicates a highly ethical expression of leadership of both self and others (Duignan, 2010b; Fullan, 2003a). It enables educators to make changes that matter and that will make a positive difference to the lives of students and in society (DuFour et al., 2006; Fullan, 2001a; 2001b). Therefore it is essential that an educator has a clear understanding about what they are teaching and why.

The participants in this study perceived that moral purpose for the religious educator develops out of a personal commitment to the faith tradition, a responsibility as educators to the faith community and society as a whole. Moral purpose for these religious educators was understood in terms of ministry. As outlined in Chapter Two, this understanding of their role as religious educators who exercise ministry came out of a sense of responsibility to the faith community because they were teaching in a Catholic school. There were perceived expectations that, in school life, particular Catholic values would be expressed and the faith community's beliefs and practices would be taught. Therefore the participants' approach to religious education reflected an enfaithing purpose in supporting students' growth in faith within the Catholic tradition.

Passing on the Catholic faith tradition.

All of the participants were Catholic educators who valued working within Catholic education. This value stemmed from their connection to a Catholic school and it also aligned with a personal faith commitment to the Catholic Church. All participants were lay Catholics; none of them were ordained or members of a religious congregation. This is not surprising as there is only one member of a religious congregation currently teaching in a Catholic primary school in Tasmania. Participants perceived that the moral purpose of religious education is to *pass on* the Catholic faith tradition. The following insight is typical of the educators in the study: "I have a deep sense of my own religion, and it is rather personal. I like the sense of common purpose we have in the Catholic system. We are a Catholic school and we do things in the Catholic tradition" (G).

The participants understood that religious education is implicit in the culture of a Catholic school and that religious education should be central to school life. This

understanding reflected the teaching of the Catholic Church on Catholic education, which states, “The Gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate” (SCCE, 1988, par. 25).

Church teaching on Catholic education reinforces that moral purpose has both secular and religious dimensions. The purpose of education in a Catholic context is the formation of an integrated person who has a deep faith and is able to make a positive contribution to society (CCE, 1997; SCCE, 1977; 1988). Catholic education provides for the development of the whole human person (SCCE, 1988, n. 31). Within the faith community however this broader view is sometimes translated as referring simply to the transmission of the Catholic tradition and the preservation of Catholic identity (Pell, 2007).

Although participants recognised that religious education contributes to the development of the student, they expressed this more as an ecclesial responsibility than as an essential element within the educational program of the school. The perception prevalent within the group was expressed as: “There is an expectation that we live the values and we teach the faith tradition. We teach what it means to be a Catholic or a Christian” (E).

These religious educators understood that their work was an important part of the work of the Church. It was something that they valued and that they believed the faith community expected of them. It was valuable, therefore, even in what was perceived to be an unreceptive environment. This response illustrates this perception:

It’s tough here [in this school]. Not everyone can do it [teach religious education]. It is like an alien world to some [students] ... It is important for the kids to have some kind of relationship with God. I would just like for them to think that [God] is their best friend. (N)

Participants perceived that the purpose of religious education is to make a difference in the lives of the students by fostering a relationship with God. Its purpose is also to promote a Christian way of life, including an ongoing engagement with and commitment to the life of the Church. Key elements of the religious education program were perceived to be prayer, liturgy, scripture, Catholic beliefs and social justice. Participants saw these as key elements that had to be *passed on* rather than as areas to be taught. The problem of how effectively to pass on the tradition was a major concern for them. Their perception however, was that the Catholic tradition was something that had little relevance for their students. This issue is explored further in the following section.

Moral purpose not being fulfilled.

Participants were concerned that their perceived moral purpose of passing on the faith tradition of the Catholic Church was not being fulfilled. Their experience of endeavouring to pass it on in what was perceived as an unreceptive environment led to dissatisfaction with the prevailing situation and contributed towards readiness for change. Added to their concern was what they considered to be a prevailing lack of understanding of how to teach religious education. Consequently the students experienced religious education as unengaging and irrelevant. This response illustrates the view expressed by participants:

I think there can be confusion about what we are on about in religious education. I think they [teachers] would still “dish out” information but I think it is gradually moving away from it ... that we speak in one way for maths and literacy and art and other things and we almost change our body language and our tone of voice and our way of speaking when we come to talk about religion. (C)

Although they had been using the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1984; 1995), participants were unable to articulate the principles of religious education that underpinned their approach to religious education. This indicates that teachers lacked understanding about the theory underpinning approaches to classroom religious education. Lack of understanding of the theoretical framework of a curriculum innovation has significant implications for the way a curriculum is understood and is subsequently enacted in the classroom. Failure of religious educators to understand the principles underpinning their approach is a factor that impedes effective curriculum change in religious education (Buchanan, 2006a; Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009). It also impedes effective learning and teaching within the discipline. However, this study indicates that teachers are more interested in the practical elements of a curriculum framework that influence the day-to-day teaching in the classroom than in understanding the underpinning theory of the change. This presents a challenge to the implementation of a new curriculum in balancing the practical and theoretical dimensions of the innovation. This is explored further in Category Two.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: moral purpose in religious education.

The religious educators who participated in this study experienced moral purpose as something deeply connected to their sense of value in their work as educators in

Catholic schools. It is part of their responsibility to the ecclesial community and the community as a whole. They perceived that the moral purpose of religious education is to pass on the Catholic faith tradition to young people, and their major concern was understanding how to pass on that tradition effectively.

The participants identified that there was confusion amongst religious educators about the purpose and practice of religious education. This was indicated by their lack of ability to articulate the theory behind religious educators' current practices. However, the participants revealed that religious educators were more likely to want to engage with the practical elements of a new curriculum framework. These are the areas that most influence the work of the teacher in relation to their students.

When a gap between moral purpose and the capacity to realise that moral purpose has been identified, readiness for change is more likely to be increased (Senge, 2006). The participants' concern that ineffective teaching in religious education was not assisting them to fulfil what they perceived to be the moral purpose of religious education was a powerful motivator towards change. Participants also perceived that the context of the religious education classroom had changed over the past decades. The context of the religious education classroom is the focus of the next sub-category.

The current context.

In the first sub-category, the tension due to the gap between the moral purpose and the capacity to realise that moral purpose was identified as a motivator for change in religious education. The analysis of this sub-category revealed that the non-alignment of the participants' perceived moral purpose and the contemporary context of teaching religious education in Tasmanian Catholic schools also contributed towards a readiness for change.

Participants in this study acknowledged that there were societal factors that have resulted in significant change in the population of students attending Catholic schools in Tasmania. These were perceived to be beyond the control of the religious educators; however, they significantly influenced the day-to-day teaching of religious education. Readiness for change was motivated by the realisation that the current approach to religious education, based on the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995), did not give teachers the necessary content, skills and strategies to enable them to respond favourably to the changes in the student cohort.

Three perceived major challenges emerged from the data: the perceived non-alignment between the values espoused within the school and those experienced outside

of the school context; the perception that religious education is irrelevant to students because of their lack of connectedness to the Catholic faith community and a perceived need for strategies to improve student learning opportunities.

Non-alignment between values within and outside of the school context.

Participants believed that parents send their children to Catholic schools for a range of reasons, and they are not always to do with the religious dimension of the school. They perceived that ineffective teaching in religious education was due to the non-alignment between the values espoused within and outside of the school. A major cause of this was believed to be the large number of students within Catholic schools who are not affiliated with the Catholic faith community. It was a commonly held perception among the participants that some parents send their children to a Catholic school hoping to give their children a better start to life by educating them in a Catholic school. However, many parents are not connected to the Catholic Church. Participants perceived that this influenced the students' receptivity to religious education. The perceptions of the participants are supported by other recent studies.

Catholic education in Tasmania attracts approximately fifty percent of students from religious traditions other than Catholic (*Review of Catholic Secondary Education in Tasmania*, TCEC, 2011). South Australia and Tasmania have the lowest percentage of Catholics within Australian state populations (Dixon, 2005). Research indicates that the religious education program in a Catholic school is usually not a deciding factor in the choice of schooling. Some parents may view Catholic education as a service they can purchase, a desirable commodity for their children however they do not want to be aligned with the religious tradition or way of life (Tinsey, 2010).

Research into Catholic schools in Tasmania revealed that religious education ranks twenty-sixth out of a possible thirty-four factors determining the choice of school. However, pastoral care and the teaching of sound values are important to parents. (Behrens, 2005). Often parents are not always able to articulate why they want to send their child to a Catholic school (Croke, 2007). The parents' levels of education and the family's income are among determining factors (Dixon, 2005). The perception that it is a low-cost private education contributes also to the choice of Catholic schooling, as does the perception of a higher standard of education compared with government schools (Angelico, 2008; Behrens, 2005; Croke, 2007; TCEC, 2011).

Participants in this study expressed the view that the teaching of sound values was a parental expectation. They indicated that there was a need to clearly articulate the

similarities and differences between secular and Christian values. The participants were concerned that the Christian values espoused at school were not always reinforced at home or in the wider community:

[We put] emphasis on Christian values and living mission by example; [on] Jesus as an example for living. It is always a challenge here. *GNFL* is great but sometimes we just can't apply it [the religious content and church teachings] because the families from which the kids come don't live, or have, those values themselves. (T)

A recent major study in Victoria, Australia, also concludes that there is a need to distinguish between secular understandings of values and Christian values (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria [CECV], 2007–). A point of tension for the religious educators in the study was that there were significant community expectations on the religious education program to teach Christian values which were often at odds with the values of the parents and with the students' lives outside of school. The participants articulated the need for parental role models to support the religious education of students at their stage of development in the primary years. A prevailing issue for Australian Catholic education is student' perceptions of the lack of relevance and significance of religious education (de Souza, 2009). Teaching without reference to the social reality of the lives of students is unacceptable and foolish (Shields, 2010). In the current study, participants were concerned about the non-alignment of values espoused at home and those espoused at school. They believed that the effectiveness of the religious education program is influenced by the lack of congruence between these values. However, this was perceived to be beyond the control of the religious educators and presented a major challenge to them.

Lack of connection to the Catholic faith tradition.

The second challenge perceived by participants in the current study as being beyond their control was the students' lack of connectedness to the Catholic faith tradition. Participants perceived that there was wide differentiation of knowledge about religion or the Catholic tradition between students. This presented a particular challenge when using the enfaithing approach to religious education and the pedagogy within the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995). Participants perceived this document as “not user friendly”. The content was judged as not suitable, even irrelevant, for Tasmanian students because of their lack of knowledge of the beliefs, and experience of the practices, of the faith

community. The analysis of the data indicated that there are significant issues in implementing a curriculum document written in another context.

This participant reflected: “The [religious] background of the children has changed enormously from the time that I started teaching until now. We have so few children who experience [The Catholic Church as community]” (I). Given the statistics indicating the increasing proportion of students from outside the Catholic tradition this reflection would not be unexpected. However, there was little indication in the research that the religious educators used particular strategies to gauge the prior knowledge of the students or to differentiate the program to meet the backgrounds of students. Lack of prior knowledge is not always a prerequisite for new learning yet, for participants, it was perceived as a barrier to learning in religious education.

The participants acknowledged that diversity in terms of the religious, (or non-religious) background and of the cultural background of students in contemporary religious education classroom is on the increase. In addition to the challenge of different faith traditions of students, those students who are Catholic often lack experience and understanding of the faith tradition at a personal or family level. This is often because of the decline of regular worship among Catholic parents and of the decreasing number of young people identifying as Catholics (Dixon, 2005). However, participants perceived that the Catholic faith community expected that the students should develop knowledge of the faith tradition and be able to practise in the faith community as active participants in prayer and in eucharistic celebrations. Participants identified that the religious knowledge and experience of students could not be taken for granted.

This observation was supported by Dixon (2005), who has argued that in the steady decline of Mass attendance and parish involvement since the 1950s, there would also be a subsequent decline in the Mass attendance and parish involvement of children. The religious educators in the present study believed that their teaching was less effective when students came to the learning process with little knowledge or experience of life within the Catholic community. They identified the need for explicit teaching about aspects of Catholic tradition. Religious educators, however, should not also assume a lack of religious knowledge or interest in students.

Lack of student knowledge and practice of the faith tradition was a significant challenge for religious educators. However, the participants indicated that religious education was taught to all students in the same manner, regardless of faith commitment to any religious tradition or no religious tradition. This participant stated: “I teach the

whole class [even if they are not practising Catholics]. If they don't know something, then you teach it" (W).

Two factors: non-alignment of values between home and school and lack of knowledge of the faith tradition, indicated that the moral purpose of the religious educators was out of touch with the reality of the lives of students and that the prevailing practice of teaching in religious education was disconnected from student needs. This contributed to perceived ineffectiveness of religious education and increased readiness for change.

Need for strategies to improve student learning.

The third issue revealed by participants was the perceived need for effective strategies that would enable teachers to teach Catholic traditions, values, beliefs and practices within the religious education program whilst taking account of the different needs and backgrounds of students. Significant causes of ineffective teaching within religious education were identified as: competing expectations from various stakeholders in the broader community and in the faith community; lack of clarity among teachers about the purposes of religious education and lack of differentiation in the religious education program in response to students' prior knowledge and experience. Participants revealed that the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) had not been used as they were intended. Participants observed that, for some religious educators, religious education reflected a doctrinal approach rather than the approach of life-centred catechesis.

Participants acknowledged that their cohort of students was not a homogeneous group from families who were active members of the Catholic Church. The religious education classroom can become a more disciplined environment for inquiry into religion without expectation that students will respond by accepting a religious way of life (Pollefeyt, 2008; Ryan, 2006). The participants perceived that the relevance of religious education would increase for students when skills and strategies used in other curriculum areas were used.

Participants in this study observed that their students are now more inclined to question what they are being taught. There was a need for strategies to recognise the difference in the responses of the students and to use student inquiry to advantage in order to motivate students towards their learning in religious education. As this participant observed:

In my class – I have grade five – I have some who are not interested in religious education and some who get really involved and some who like to

question things and wonder what it is all about. I think I could have a different response from each student. Sometimes they come and ask questions the next day, saying, “I’ve been thinking about that overnight,” and they have a question or a comment. (F)

Like all educators, the work of the religious educator involves generating interest in the learning in order to take students into deeper learning (White, 2004; 2005). This demands knowledge of the content of the discipline and skill in curriculum planning. Predominantly it involves knowing the students and determining what they need to be able to enter into the learning process (Healy et al., 2004; Liddy & Welbourne, 1999; Malone & Ryan; 1994). The participants revealed that at the time of implementing *GNFL*, there was a perception that there was a readiness for change to a new curriculum framework that would enable religious educators to respond to the changes in the student cohort that would result in improved learning for students beyond the prevailing but poorly understood or practised enfaithing approach.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: the current context.

Readiness for change was stimulated by growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing inadequate moral purpose of religious education and poorly understood and practised pedagogy. The participants revealed that there was a lack of connection between their perception of moral purpose and the contemporary context of religious education in Tasmanian Catholic schools. The contemporary context was perceived as a factor beyond their control and their moral purpose therefore was unlikely to be fulfilled.

The analysis of this sub-category has revealed that readiness for change is likely to result from the belief that the innovation will realign the understanding of the moral purpose of religious education with a suitable approach to fulfill it. Religious educators are more likely to engage with change when they perceive that, in doing so, they will respond to the changing social and religious context of their work and especially student needs.

Emerging theory from category one: readiness for change.

The emerging theory arising from this category indicated that readiness for change is stimulated by the creative tension resulting from the non-alignment of moral purpose and pedagogical practice in religious education and the context of religious education. Readiness to enter into the change process is likely to increase when teachers perceive that the innovation has the potential to assist them to realign moral purpose,

pedagogy and the social context. Motivation towards adopting a new curriculum framework is stimulated when religious educators foresee that the innovation may increase the quality and effectiveness of their own teaching, resulting in improved learning outcomes for students.

In this section, Category One: Readiness for Change has been explored. Table 9 is a summary of the insights and emerging theory from the study thus far. The following section shows further conceptual analysis of the emerging theory.

Table 9

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category One: Readiness for Change

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category One: Readiness for Change	
Moral Purpose and Religious Education	<p>Moral purpose is likely to develop from religious educator commitment to the faith community and deeper sense of value in their work as educators in Catholic schools.</p> <p>The capacity to articulate the theory underpinning their current practices gives religious educators clarity of purpose. However, they are more likely to want to engage with the practical elements of a new curriculum framework that most influence their day-to-day work in the classroom.</p> <p>When the gap between moral purpose and the capacity to realise that moral purpose has been identified, readiness for change is more likely to be increased.</p>
The Current Context	<p>Readiness for change is likely to be stimulated by dissatisfaction with an inadequate moral purpose for religious education and poorly understood and practised pedagogy. Religious educators perceive that they are disempowered by factors in society beyond their control. A moral purpose based on an enfaithing model of religious education, with little reference to the social reality, is therefore unlikely to be fulfilled.</p>
<p>Emerging Theory:</p> <p>Readiness for change is stimulated by the tension that results from the non-alignment between moral purpose and practice in religious education and the present social reality. Readiness to enter into the change process is likely to increase when teachers perceive that the innovation has the potential to assist them to realign moral purpose, pedagogical practices and the social context. Motivation towards a new curriculum framework is stimulated when religious educators foresee that the innovation may increase the quality and effectiveness of their own teaching resulting in improved learning outcomes for students.</p>	

The purpose of the following section is to take the theory beyond thick description (Goulding, 2002) through critical reflection. The emerging theory will be further scrutinised and analysed, taking into account the responses from experts during round table discussions and the existing body of literature discussed in Chapter Two. It is

through this critical reflection that the researcher's experience and expertise, which had been suspended as much as possible, will be able to contribute to the consolidation of theory.

Further conceptual analysis of the emerging theory.

The emerging theory from this study suggests that readiness for change is stimulated by the tension that results from the non-alignment between moral purpose, current practice and the lives of students. This tension is the stimulus for creativity and change (Senge, 2006). In this further analysis, perceived limitations on the effectiveness of religious education are critiqued. It is argued that, for the effectiveness of religious education to be improved, there must be a rearticulation of the moral purpose of religious education that empowers religious educators to respond to the contemporary context and act for the benefit of their students.

Limitations to the effectiveness of religious education.

Category One revealed that the prevailing understanding of the moral purpose of religious education stemmed from the responsibility of religious educators to pass on the Catholic faith tradition. Therefore it reflected an enfaithing perspective. However, because of the diverse needs and backgrounds of the students, it was perceived as inadequate. It limited the effectiveness of religious education in Tasmanian Catholic schools because religious educators perceived that they had no control over prevailing social factors that were beyond the religious education classroom.

This resulted in teacher dissatisfaction with their current practices in religious education. Motivation to change was stimulated by the perception that *GNFL* had the potential to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching in religious education. The participants revealed that religious educators were ready to engage with a new approach to religious education.

Skilled leadership involves focusing on the set of limitations restricting growth and working to understand how these might be addressed and overcome (Senge, 2006). Limitations may not be able to be removed; however, leadership of change requires identifying leverage factors that assist in working through limiting situations. There is a growing awareness among educators of the power of moral purpose that is aligned with the reality of student life for improving the quality of student learning (Hargreaves, 2010; Shields, 2010). Overcoming the limitations to religious education will require a

reorientation and the articulation of a new vision for religious education in response to the reality of student lives, not one divorced from them.

Deeper awareness of moral purpose in education.

Education requires attention to social reality. We are on the cusp of a major shift in education from the industrial model of the 1800s to the knowledge society, where there is an urgent imperative that education should form deeply principled and ethical people (Gellel, 2010; Hargreaves, 2010). This shift will require a new articulation of values, identity and moral purpose across the curriculum. An earlier definition of moral purpose was to “make a positive difference” (Fullan, 2001b) in the lives of others. A more recent definition has been articulated as finding the deeper meaning at the foundation of education and educating for a better life (Shirley, 2010).

In an educational context, where the impact of demographic changes and technological speed are changing the fabric of society, a new understanding of moral purpose is necessary. Overwhelmingly, educators are challenged by the need to educate with and for moral purpose. In this way they can enable young people to bring about the change that is necessary in the world, going beyond the immediate to deeply held values concerning the dignity of the human person, identity, culture, equity and environmental sustainability (Hargreaves, 2010; Shields, 2010). This view from the general educational sector supports the rearticulation of moral purpose in religious education.

Rearticulating the moral purpose of religious education.

Religious education is primarily for the growth of the whole person, whereby it offers service to society (SCCE, 1977). However this was not the broad understanding of religious educators in this study, who expressed the narrower understanding that the moral purpose of religious education is the passing on of the Catholic tradition. A rearticulation of the moral purpose of religious education is likely to bring together the enduring relevance and meaning of religious understandings in direct relation to the challenges students face in life today.

Since the time of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, there has been a growing doubt and cynicism about Christianity in Europe and the western world (MacCulloch, 2010). Increasingly, the practice of religion has become more private, with western countries showing a decrease in religious practice whilst, overall, the world is still an overwhelmingly religious place (Kaufman, 2010).

When, arguably, in Australia, religious institutions are at a low point in popularity and credibility, this study has shown that there is an imperative for religious educators to reclaim their moral purpose, commitment, responsibility, passion and courage. In this way they can act to ensure that core values and cultural practices are embedded within a contemporary society and search for ways to make sense of a changing world (Hanon, 2010). Confronting and difficult religious challenges are more likely to be welcomed when moral purpose and moral courage are aligned (Shields, 2010).

Participation in Catholic education demands respectful acknowledgement of the faith tradition even when some young people and their families may not identify with the faith community (Rossiter, 2010). However, education within a Catholic context is more than just respectful acknowledgement of a tradition. A Catholic school is a place where through “a living encounter with a cultural heritage, an integral formation occurs” (SCCE, 1977). It is a place where young people may respond to religious inquiry in profound and personal ways (English, 2008). Effective religious education therefore will challenge young people not only to think about social issues but also to inspire them to respond to their learning at a behavioural and ethical level, influencing the way they live.

However, it cannot be assumed that students or their families will find relevance in the Christian tradition. With the growing radical plurality of the current context of religious education, religious educators who persist with experiential catechesis are destined for failure (Pollefeyt, 2008, p. 13). An evolving perspective views religious education as a process of “critical and creative dialogue” (p. 14) with religious and ideological perspectives, where teachers and students can inquire, explore and question.

Divorced from the reality of the society in which students live, the religious education program is likely to have little relevance and meaning. A contemporary and effective moral purpose for religious education is more likely to develop through a continuous dialogue between social reality and the enduring principles of a faith tradition. A more appropriate approach is one that not only allows students to question and inquire but also actively encourages them to do so.

Moral purpose for religious educators.

Moral purpose for Catholic religious educators must have its foundation in a genuine desire to improve the quality of life of students through an education that has an authentic and enduring religious dimension. There are questions prevalent in the Catholic education community about the purpose of religious education. For the clergy, there is

deep concern about the perceived lack of religious practice and lack of participation in Church life (Pell, 2007). If the moral purpose of religious education is focused solely on participation at Sunday Mass and participation in parish life then it could be deemed to be ineffective.

The Church teaches that, within Catholic education, religious education must have the same rigour as other academic subjects (CC, 1997; SCCE, 1988). The Round Table Experts said that, for religious educators, there is a concern for the academic standing and value of religious education as an area of the curriculum. The experts perceived that religious education is more than Church life or academic rigour:

There is an expressed need to think beyond what is currently done in religious education. Doing the right thing ... it's more than that. It's a need to reflect life, to what it means to live life to the fullest. Religion should help people to connect with God, self and others. It is about the whole life of the person. Moral purpose expresses why there are particular priorities and it is there to inspire action (Round Table Expert One).

This study has shown that there is a readiness amongst religious educators to articulate the value of a religious education as an integrated element within the total school curriculum, beyond a narrow purpose. Religion, no matter how it is expressed or understood, is a "powerful cultural phenomenon" (Slattery, 2006, p. 71). Religious education should aim to assist young people to understand the culturally diverse society in which they live and inspire them to realise what they, and society could become.

Moral purpose, moral courage and action.

The religious educators involved in this study were acutely aware of the changes in the contemporary context of society with regard to religious affiliation and practice. This study has shown that the tension, resulting from the non-alignment between the desired moral purpose and the effectiveness of practice within the contemporary context was a considerable driving force behind motivation to change.

In contemporary Australia, the Church faces the challenge of sustaining Catholic identity against the rise in secularism, individualism and consumerism (Croke, 2007; Pascoe, 2007). Students live in an overwhelmingly secularist world (Engebretson, 2001). There is a tendency towards development of an individual belief system and a rejection of an institution, that is perceived to lack integrity, credibility and relevance in today's world (Rossiter, 2010).

Increasingly leaders of religious education have sought responses to these issues by aligning religious education with other areas of the curriculum in rigorous outcomes-based structures, standardised testing and compliance mechanisms (Round Table Experts). There is an acute need to take account of the changed contemporary context of the Catholic school whilst being overtly committed to the religious mission to young people and to encouraging connectedness within a community (Croke, 2007; Rossiter, 2010). The inspiration that comes from knowing that religious education is more than a narrow transmission of an unrealistic and apparently irrelevant tradition, with value beyond the years of schooling and into life, is essential.

The educational imperative at the present time comes from a deeply ethical position that aims to help students to engage in deep thinking about issues concerning what it means to live a good life (Hanon, 2010). Religious education has a responsibility to assist students to go beyond this to explore ideologies, core values and cultural practices, and to help them to develop a true sense of identity in their quest for fulfilment as human persons.

Synthesising the theory.

The emerging theory from this study suggests that readiness for change came about in response to the perceived non-alignment between the moral purpose and practice of religious education and the contemporary social reality of the students' lives. Readiness for change was stimulated because teachers foresaw that the innovation had the potential to increase the effectiveness of their teaching in this challenging discipline.

Further analysis of the emerging theory revealed that moral purpose is a response to the challenges of the contemporary world, which embraces the social reality of the lives of students and their teachers. Moral purpose is established as one of the most powerful forces within educational change (Fullan, 1999). However, moral purpose alone is inadequate. It must be combined with moral courage and the determination to act in the face of difficulties and challenges.

Within the education community at this time there is an imperative towards authentic education that is deep and purposeful with an emphasis on the enduring values of culture and identity. The purposes of education go beyond the immediate limits of the classroom to influence and even transform how young people will live their lives in the present and the future.

Educators cannot ignore the prevailing social reality (Hanon, 2010; Hargreaves, 2010; Shields, 2010). The capacity to deconstruct and reconstruct understandings in

response to the challenges of a new era is essential (Shirley, 2010). Such thinking aligns well with the foundations of Catholic education: the fulfilment of the human person, the integration of faith, culture and life (SCCE, 1977) and with the direction of Vatican II in “scrutinising the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, n. 4).

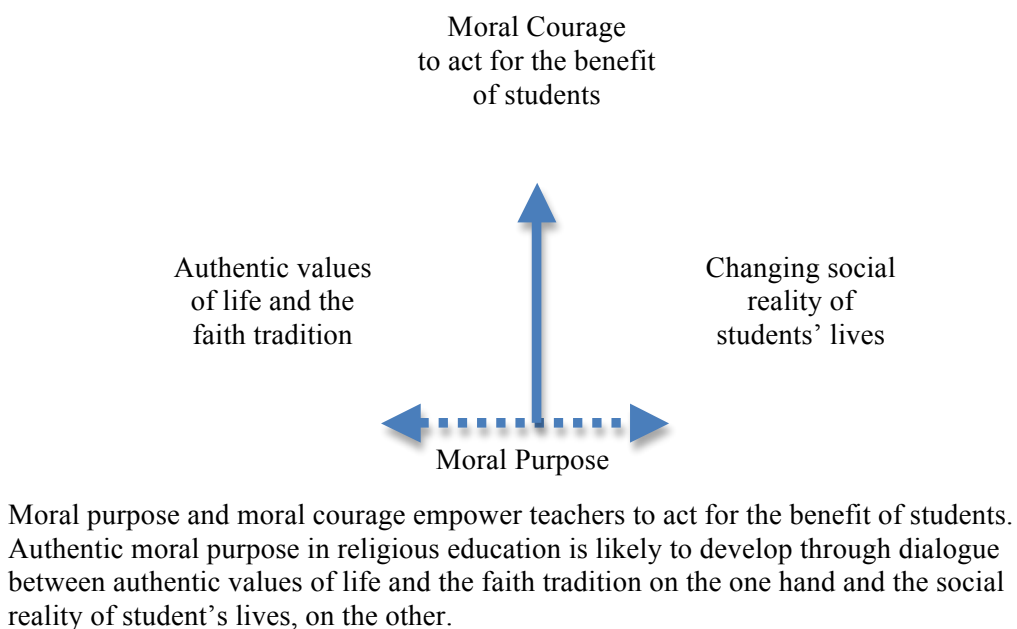
In the experience of curriculum change in this study, readiness for change that would improve the teaching of religious education facilitated the change and teachers positively anticipated the implementation of *GNFL*. Reflection on the experiences of the participants, the existing literature and the dialogue with experts and practitioners in the field has shown that the prevailing moral purpose as expressed by participants was inadequate. Religious education must go beyond the mere desire to pass on a religious tradition. Relevance and meaning are essential in religious education for both teachers and their students.

Indeed, the deeper moral purpose of religious education is to enable young people to discover what it means to live life in its fullness. Going beyond the limits of initiating young people into a faith community, a rearticulation of the moral purpose of religious education must encompass its broader educational imperatives. Moral purpose is not a static reality but a dynamic process of continuously rearticulating the long-lasting meaning of life in relation to contemporary social reality.

Alienated teaching results when teachers do not believe that their practices will work but they continue to use them anyway (Shirley, 2010). The changing landscape of religion in contemporary Australia and the changing needs of society are major factors to be considered within the learning process. This further analysis suggests that moral purpose results from the dialogue between the deeper values of life, the values and understandings of the faith tradition and the social reality of the students.

Among the participants in this study, readiness for change was stimulated through the perceived non-alignment between the moral purpose of religious education and the prevailing social reality. Religious educators are more likely to act with moral courage, for the benefit of their students, when they have an authentic moral purpose as the basis for their teaching (cf. Figure 11).

Figure 11. The Relationship between Moral Purpose and Moral Courage



The research revealed the need for a rearticulation of the purposes of religious education beyond a limiting approach. On further analysis it was revealed that the effectiveness of the religious education of students is more likely to be improved through inquiry and a critical and creative dialogue between the faith tradition, the deeper values and challenges of life and the social reality of the students. Religious educators are more likely to improve the quality of their teaching for students when they are engaged in dialogue around these important elements developing a personal and communal moral purpose, which supports them to act with moral courage and to discern the most appropriate learning pathways for their students.

Consolidated Theory

The further analysis of the emerging theory of this category has shown that teacher's readiness for change is a powerful force to consider when implementing curriculum change. The perceived limitations of current practice and the desire to act with moral purpose and moral courage to improve student learning are likely to stimulate teachers' engagement with innovation. Moral purpose in religious education is more than the transmission of a particular faith tradition. It is an active, creative force that inspires teachers to act with responsibility towards the faith community and in the interests of

their students. Moral purpose guides what teachers teach and how they teach it. It is more likely to inspire both teachers and students when it is continuously rearticulated, bringing into relationship the enduring questions, relevance and meaning of the faith tradition, the deeply held values of life and the challenges of the social reality of young people in a contemporary world.

Having reflected on the factors that contributed to Readiness for Change in relation to the implementation of *GNFL*, the challenge for those who lead change is to draw on that creative force and to connect religious educators with the curriculum framework. The following category focuses on the connection between the religious educator and the curriculum framework.

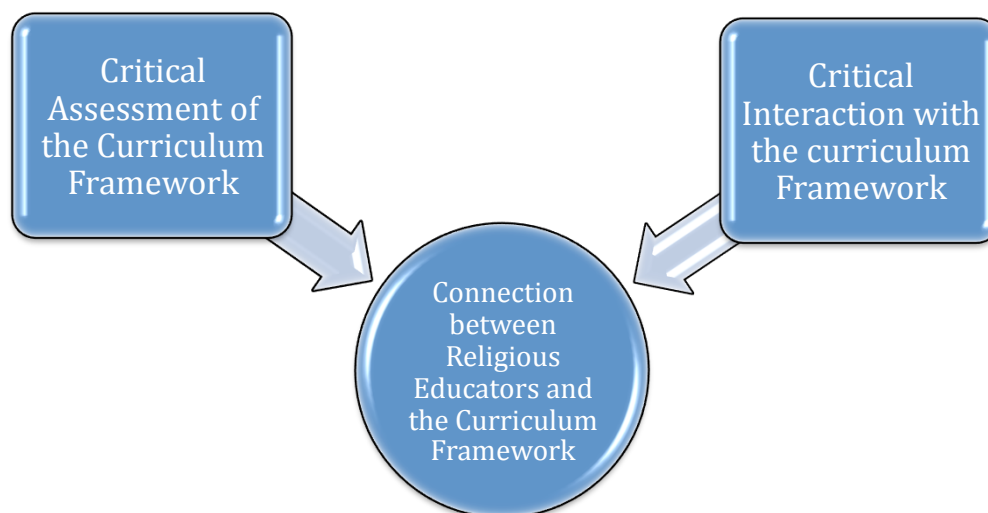
Category Two: The Connection between Religious Educators and the Curriculum Framework

Introduction.

Another category that emerged from the data (Category Two) suggests that curriculum change was stimulated through the connection between religious educators and the curriculum framework. In leading curriculum change, a key goal is bridging the gap between curriculum as an idea and curriculum enacted in the complex world of the classroom. Once the need for change is recognised, the implementation process must establish the way forward, excite and mobilise teachers to build necessary commitment to the change (Fullan, 2001b; Smith & Lovat, 2003). The analysis of the data revealed that teachers are more likely to persist with a curriculum change and enact it in their classrooms when there is a connection between them and a curriculum framework built through opportunities for critical assessment of and critical interaction with, the framework in the day-to-day work of the classroom.

As established in the discussion of Category One, religious educators are highly aware of their responsibilities towards the Church community. However, an analysis of the findings relevant to Category Two revealed that the religious educators acted predominantly from an educational rather than a ministerial perspective. They sought confidence in both the religious and the educational elements of the framework. The analysis of this Category Two focuses first on the process of critical assessment then on critical interaction. These two processes are identified in Figure 12.

Figure 12. The Connection between Religious Educators and the Curriculum Framework.



Religious educators connect with the curriculum framework when they assess and interact with it critically. Such a connection is likely to stimulate them to commit themselves to further change.

Critical theory is based on a number of different views. It is defined here in relation to adult learning. It is the facility to uncover, disengage from, break open and probe tacit assumptions. It involves making judgments. Critical theory in adult learning studies how adults learn to develop a sense of powerful agency and purposeful collective action (Brookfield, 2005).

Critical assessment of the curriculum framework.

Before exploring the responses of the participants in relation to their critical assessment of *GNFL*, it is important to identify some of the key contextual issues that faced religious educators at the beginning of implementation. When *GNFL* was introduced, there was inconsistency within curriculum and lack of curriculum support across the Catholic sector. This was due to the practice of schools using various curricula from other states. Many, but not all, Catholic schools also had become involved with the development and production of the *ELs Framework* and the associated professional development. Moreover, at the time, most schools had been involved in professional learning around curriculum and pedagogy.

For classroom religious education, the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) had been mandated for implementation by the Archbishop of Hobart prior to 2005. Whilst it was

expected that these guidelines would be followed, as was shown in the discussion of Category One, there was in general a lack of understanding about the theoretical underpinning of this document and its pedagogy. Moreover, the participants in this study perceived that the adoption of the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) was ineffective – for a number of reasons. First they had experienced the curriculum change as delivering other people’s policies and practices. Secondly, the communication of the change to the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) was perceived as ineffective because it did not take into account the fact that they were written for one educational context but were being implemented in a totally different environment. This resulted in the overall perception that the document was irrelevant for Tasmanian students. However, the implementation of *GNFL* was perceived by participants in this study to encourage teachers to be critically active in the change process. The following section examines how the religious educators acted as professional educators, critically assessing the framework for authenticity and educational rigour, and its application to classroom practice.

Authenticity and educational rigour in the religious education framework.

Change during the implementation of *GNFL* was stimulated by the first of two processes that created a connection between the religious educators and the innovation. This was the opportunity to critically assess it. The participants in the study revealed that when critically assessing a curriculum framework for religious education its educational rigour is likely to be equally as important as its religious qualities. Participants in this study revealed that religious educators are professional educators who critically assess the worth of a curriculum framework from an educational perspective and its capacity for effective application in classroom practice.

The participants understood that the purpose of religious education was drawn from their perspective of religious education as a ministry. As discussed in Category One, they valued this responsibility towards the faith community. The formal endorsement of *GNFL* by the Archbishop and the support of the Director of Catholic Education were important to the participants in this study. The religious educators were reassured, knowing that the curriculum’s content was theologically and doctrinally approved. The perception also was that the content framework had been developed with local religious educators and would therefore be more relevant to Tasmanian students. This comment illustrates that perspective:

Knowing that the document is mandatory – that it is coming from the leadership team, learning from people who have used it, people like [the

education officer, CEOH] coming in to the school and promoting it. If it has approval from the Archbishop that should help people [work with it].

(L)

The Archbishop's mandate was perceived as a support for the document. The advocacy of key leaders helped teachers to connect with the new curriculum framework. Religious educators were dealing with content of the Catholic faith tradition. However, they were equally concerned with the educational elements of the framework.

Particular educational attributes of *GNFL* contributed towards the initial engagement with the innovation. Participants perceived that the document used educational language that paralleled the *ELs Framework* and made the explicit links to other curriculum areas. Religious educators were therefore able to bring their professional knowledge and skill to their critical assessment of the framework. The following comment reflected the general view of those involved in the study:

As a resource, it has helped my teaching, so I would say that it has provided a much more modern way of looking at the curriculum ... I am finding that the suggestions and strategies given are relevant and there is a lot more of them. (V)

The religious educators in this study brought their expertise as educators to the teaching of religious education and critiqued *GNFL* from the perspective of principles and current educational trends. This suggested that successful implementation of an innovation for religious education is more likely to occur when teachers can identify characteristics within the framework for religious education that are educationally rigorous and when religious education shares a close connection with the current general curriculum.

Across Australia, religious education curriculum documents generally align closely with the prevailing state general curriculum with regard to curriculum structure and pedagogical approaches. This is perceived to have a positive impact upon religious education, maintaining the quality of rigour equal to other areas of the curriculum as teachers plan, teach, assess, evaluate and report on student learning (NCEC, 2009). This is strongly supported by the *General Directory for Catechesis* (CC, 1997), which states:

It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction [religious education] in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same richness and depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge (n. 73).

Table 10 presents the characteristics that the teachers in this study judged to be educationally rigorous. These were identified as characteristics of curriculum and pedagogy.

Table 10
Educational Rigour within GNFL

Curriculum Structure	Pedagogy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scope and sequence • a continuum of learning • a strong connection and use of the same educational terminology as the ELs Framework e.g. generative topics, throughlines • learning goals and assessment • clear layout of the resource banks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategies that promoted learning which was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ practical ○ meaningful ○ substantial ○ purposeful • inquiry approach: students encouraged to ask questions • thinking skills central the learning process • students encouraged to think about complex concepts • teaching and learning process could be personalised through teacher choices • use of information and communication technology

In their critical assessment of the curriculum framework, the religious educators made professional judgments about its educational rigour, the curriculum structure and the pedagogy embedded within it. In the initial assessment of the innovation, they wanted assurance that the innovation would assist them to deliver an effective curriculum for their students.

The participants in this study revealed that the continuum of learning and explicit learning goals and assessment indicators; the possibilities for practical, meaningful, substantial and purposeful student learning within the framework; and the pedagogy based on inquiry and higher order thinking were important features. This comment typified the view of participants:

I believe that it has [made a difference to the children's learning] because it has encouraged us to start using different pedagogy in the way we teach religious education. We have been through the *ELs Framework* and we have

been asked to focus on children's thinking. I think it is extremely important for them to see that religious education doesn't have to be a unit of work on its own ... not only can it be part of other things that you are doing within the classroom, there are ways of making it exciting. (Y)

An innovation must be accessible if teachers are to use it from the outset (Smith & Lovat, 2003). Participants described this innovation as easily accessible and easy to use. The framework resonated with the teachers' prevailing beliefs about good teaching and learning. They established a connection between themselves and the curriculum. *GNFL*, also enabled religious educators to make connections with other learning areas. The following comment exemplifies how participants perceived the curriculum and pedagogical aspects of the framework:

We started off talking about miracles and parables and the difference between the two. They could draw it or dress up but they were to do a PowerPoint of the particular story that they chose. That has been a valuable activity for the children to do because it really got them into and disseminating the meaning of the story. It is taking religion into other areas like Information and Communication Technology (ICT). (U)

The pedagogy reflected what the teachers valued with regard to conceptualised learning, for example, substantial concepts such as culture, conflict and cooperation, and diversity; and higher order thinking skills, such as discernment, meta-cognition and meaning-making. The identification of these substantial concepts was perceived as an effective way to develop an interdisciplinary approach in the classroom, including religious education. This conceptual approach to learning is supported by Ryan (2007), Healy et al., (2004) and White (2004). Religious education should complete the educational activity of the school through inter-disciplinary dialogue within the curriculum and should not be an "accessory" (CC, 1997, n. 73). The Christian message should be presented through all curricular activities. The capacity for practical application was therefore essential in establishing connection between the religious educators and the curriculum framework.

Application of the framework in classroom practice.

Participants critically assessed *GNFL* on how the innovation would be applied in the classroom. This comment illustrates the views of participants:

When you are introducing something new, a number of staff will not want to look at it unless they feel that they can own it. Exposure prior to saying,

“OK, now you need to be using this”, is a crucial thing. The staff here is fairly enthusiastic about jumping on board [with a new curriculum]. The thing that we have found valuable is if I also got them to start working with it in their planning. (R)

Two requirements for the religious educators were the inclusion of suitable strategies for the inexperienced religious educator and substantial learning activities that could be adapted by more experienced teachers. As discussed in Category One, teachers tend towards the practical elements of a curriculum innovation rather than try to understand its theoretical underpinning. However, a focus on the practical application of the curriculum framework was perceived as an appropriate way for teachers to enter into the change process. There was a perception that, from the outset, *GNFL* would make a significant impact on classroom practice. This contributed towards the impression that this was a new direction for religious education.

Even though approaches to religious education had been moving towards an emphasis on knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy from the 1990s, the overall lack of understanding about the evolving nature of religious education was evident in the participants’ responses. They perceived that in their experience, it was the first time that they were able to plan for student learning in religious education according to a developmental framework and an array of suggested teaching strategies that reflected current pedagogical trends.

The connection between the religious educators and the curriculum framework was initiated by the positive advocacy of archdiocesan leaders, the educational rigour identified by the educators themselves as they critically assessed the innovation and their perception that the framework could be applied in the classroom setting easily.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: critical assessment of the curriculum framework.

An analysis of the responses of the participants revealed that successful implementation of a curriculum framework in religious education is more likely to occur when there is a connection between the religious educator and the innovation, as it resonates with current beliefs about teaching and learning. In implementing *GNFL* the connection was initiated through critical assessment of the innovation by the religious educators. This resulted in the perception that *GNFL* was an educationally rigorous framework that had practical application in the classroom across curriculum areas.

In making a critical assessment of the curriculum framework the religious educators in this study revealed that they were predominantly professional educators. They made a critical assessment of the innovation by judging its religious authenticity, its educational rigour and its practical application in the classroom. The implementation of a curriculum change was more likely to occur when teachers had made a critical assessment of the innovation and judged that it would be of benefit to them. They made their judgments according to what they currently believed to be good learning and teaching. Connection is characterised by consistency with the prevailing professional beliefs and practices. However, once the connection between the teachers and the framework is initiated, the challenge of implementation is to stimulate commitment to the innovation through critical interaction. This will be the focus of the following section.

Critical interaction with the curriculum framework.

Once the connection between the religious educator and the curriculum framework is initiated, it is likely to become established through critical interaction with the innovation on a day-to-day basis. Critical interaction refers to a process of planning and teaching with the framework and critical reflection on practice. During the implementation phase of *GNFL* this occurred through the professional learning community strategy described in Chapter One and discussed in the literature within Chapter Two. The study suggests that teachers are likely to become committed to the implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education through critical interaction. Two distinct features of the critical interaction were identified: first that the religious educators in this study were active curriculum decision-makers, and secondly, that religious education and the general curriculum were interdependent.

Religious educators as curriculum decision-makers.

Teachers have been described as active curriculum decision-makers who are concerned about the choices that affect the day-to-day classroom teaching (Marsh, 2006). However, the religious purposes of religious education have often overshadowed the educational purposes within the discipline (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009; Malone & Ryan, 1994). Teachers have been reluctant to become curriculum decision-makers in their planning for religious education (Malone, 2002). This study suggests that reluctance to exercise professional judgment in religious education was due to fear of not teaching according to Church doctrine and lack of teacher confidence, as illustrated in this response: “In my generation of teachers, we were brought up in that timidity era where

you didn't dare to change things and you did not think that things you were doing were any good (C)". By "timidity era" this participant was referring to a past time when the prevailing model of religious education was indoctrination: when religious knowledge was transmitted through recall of doctrinal statements. It also indicated a reluctance to exercise creativity in religious education, unlike other areas of the curriculum.

However, the analysis of the data revealed that, through critical interaction with *GNFL*, religious educators were able to make choices within the religious education program, revealing that they are significant curriculum decision-makers. This response illustrates how curriculum decision-making personalised the teachers' planning for student learning:

[I] download [a resource bank], look at it, choose. I think, "Yes I could do that," or I think "That is really good". It gives me the opportunity to develop units of work and then I have my own unit of work that is personalised that I can work on. I know we are looking at putting units of work together as a staff and that will be helpful for some because some teachers still find it hard to develop their own. (E)

Planning for learning is a dynamic process involving interactive variables relating to both students and teachers (Smith & Lovat, 2003). Primary religious educators make curriculum decisions from both religious and educational perspectives. The quality of the decisions reflects the ability of the teacher to represent and formulate the subject in order to make it understandable to students and easy to learn is the teacher's "pedagogical content knowledge" (Ellison, 2007, p. 1; cf. Hargreaves, 1995; Shulman, 1987). Pedagogical content knowledge is the interaction between the teacher's content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and skill, knowledge of curriculum, knowledge of learners, knowledge of the context and knowledge of the philosophical and historical grounds of educational purposes, values and ends (Ellison, 2007).

The participants in this study revealed that programs are often planned from the teachers' own level of understanding in relation to the content they are teaching and what they believe to be good practice. Within the change process, communication of what is non-negotiable and what is optional gives teachers the support and the freedom they need to plan and implement curriculum (Johnson, 2005). It affects "the decision-making space" (Smith & Lovat, 2003, p. 142) by giving teaching options. The flexibility to make curriculum choices reinforced the connection between the religious educator and the innovation as the teachers invested their personal understanding and professional skill into the learning process. This comment from a participant illustrates this point:

I like the way it gives you a range and scope and options and the freedom to suit the class that you are dealing with. But we all need help and assistance and it's there at your fingertips. It is all there. I like it. (N)

When teachers engage in curriculum decision-making, their confidence increases and their pedagogical skills in religious education are enhanced. Teachers regularly make curriculum decisions in response to the context in which they teach. Selective perceptions are those factors which influence the teacher's judgment that a planned program is viable. The teacher's professional understandings, beliefs and practices therefore are foundational to what happens in the classroom (Smith & Lovat, 2003).

An important issue for religious education professional development is ensuring that teachers are formed in the appropriate understandings, professional beliefs and practices that will assist them to make the appropriate curriculum decisions in religious education. It suggests that religious educators need more than just technical skill. They need knowledge and understanding above and beyond the content they will teach in the classroom. This was illustrated in this comment:

I always envy in a way [colleague] who is a teacher, she's also a religious sister with a lot more background than I have ... She just knows how to integrate religious education into everything she does ... That's what I aspire to be like ... I'm not ever going to be a nun but I want, I need, more knowledge myself I think and more practice of how to use that not just in class situations but in any situation. (K)

Religious educators need to be able to interact with the content and processes within the religious education framework critically so that they can develop a personalised approach to the learning process and to plan an effective, creative program (Malone & Ryan, 1994; Ryan, 2006). This participant elaborated:

It has been a much better document than what was given to us prior to that [*Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995)]. It stayed on the shelf because it was too difficult to wade through ... It gives you the opportunity to develop units of work and then you have your own unit of work that is personalised that you can work on. (E)

The capacity to make curriculum choices is perceived to build teacher confidence leading to a more positive learning experience for students (Smith & Lovat, 2003). Curriculum change is more likely to be effective when it provides the opportunities and context where teachers can increase their understanding of content and pedagogy to enable them to make quality curriculum choices for student learning. The next section

will show that the participants in this study perceived that religious educators are more likely to engage further with a curriculum framework that enables them to make interdisciplinary links with the other areas of the curriculum.

The interdisciplinary dialogue between religious education and the general curriculum.

An interdisciplinary view of religious education and the general curriculum benefits both religious education and the curriculum as a whole. Religious education completes the curriculum (CC, 1997). However, the participants in this study tended to see this relationship in more practical terms of time management. Teachers perceived that they were time-poor, with many competing priorities for optimal learning time. A concern for the participants was the need to find a place for religious education within a curriculum that was perceived to be already overcrowded and fragmented. Participants reported that a curriculum framework that enabled an interdisciplinary approach with the general curriculum was perceived to be more efficient in the use of limited face-to-face teaching time. This study has revealed that, within the primary curriculum, religious education competes for planning and teaching time with other learning areas.

Whilst the position outlined in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (CC, 1997) highlights that religious education fulfils the whole curriculum this study has identified that more practical considerations may overshadow the more holistic view of the directory. The participants in this study looked favourably upon an interdisciplinary approach where religious concepts are integrated across the curriculum. However, this involves highly conscious planning and identification of substantial concepts to ensure the integrity of the learning areas and to make authentic links with religious concepts across the whole curriculum (Ryan, 2006). This participant described the process used in interdisciplinary planning:

We look and see which of those outcomes we are aiming towards and choose which ones we want to do [across the curriculum]. Then we might look at all the ideas that are generated [in *GNFL*], select a few that are appropriate and then go away and work on a few ideas ourselves ... and then come back together again and share them, list them all down and highlight the things we want to cover. (P)

GNFL incorporated the use of “backward design” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2000, p. 8) in planning that complemented the general curriculum. In backward design, key concepts are selected and learning goals established, then appropriate assessment tasks

are planned and, finally, the learning strategies are chosen to lead to the desired student outcomes. The inquiry approach encourages the selection of key concepts and generative topics that are judged to be significant, relevant and interesting to students. An array of learning and teaching strategies enable religious educators to plan an appropriate pedagogy to achieve the learning goals.

All curriculum frameworks produced for religious education in dioceses around Australia align with the structure and pedagogy of the local state curricula (NCEC, 2009). Local consistency results in national diversity because of state curriculum differences that impact on diocesan and archdiocesan religious education documents. The close alignment with state curricula is considered to assist the religious education program through the use of contemporary language in the curriculum structure and contemporary pedagogical approaches. The complementarity of the two frameworks enhances the perception of religious education as an area of learning:

It has been positive especially in this school; we used the *ELs [Framework]* a lot. The planning and the philosophy behind the planning, suits the way that we do things so, yes, that has been very beneficial ... For the first time [in Tasmania] religious education can be seen with current pedagogy and current planning, so that's really important ... it can be used in the same way as other parts of the curriculum. (W)

Participants acknowledged that, for the first time, religious educators in Tasmania had a framework for religious education that was aligned with the state curriculum. This enabled religious educators to plan their religious education as part of an interdisciplinary study and participants perceived this as highly desirable. They identified that within Catholic schools, planning for religious education adds an additional complexity to the classroom program. Religious educators critically assess a curriculum innovation according to how they perceive the innovation will assist them in the practical dimension of their work (Ryan & Malone, 1994).

This study has shown that religious educators are more likely to make a further commitment to the innovation if it also assists them to plan with the general curriculum. A challenge identified within the implementation phase was to encourage teachers to see beyond the mere advantage of time management and to identify the educational value articulated in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (CC, 1997), that religious education completes the total curriculum and does not sit apart from it.

The analysis of the data also revealed that the implementation process was assisted by an interdisciplinary approach towards *GNFL* and the general curriculum.

Teachers were able to establish a connection with the new curriculum framework because of the shared curriculum features and terminology. This will be explored in the following section.

Alignment with the general curriculum: a stimulus for change.

The close alignment of the *ELs Framework* and *GNFL* supported the implementation process because it enabled teachers to transfer knowledge and skills across areas of the curriculum. Teachers did not have to learn new curriculum terminology in order to understand the structure of *GNFL*.

Both frameworks shared a focus on values education and had thinking skills at the heart of the learning process. Terminology used in curriculum planning – such as “enduring understandings”, referring to long-term learning goals, and “generative topics”, referring to stimulating key concepts – were common to both frameworks (DoET, 2004, p. 9.; CEOH, 2005, Section Four). As this participant explained: “People were saturated with professional development on the *ELs Framework* and to hear somebody say that the components, for example, thinking, and the values are all part of religious education, I thought that was really great” (C). Close alignment was mutually beneficial, enhancing teacher understanding of both frameworks.

The religious educators in this study who had a strong connection with the *ELs Framework* quickly established a connection with *GNFL*. Teachers who were unsure about the interdisciplinary approach in the *ELs Framework* were supported through their work with *GNFL*. As participant (K) explained, she lacked confidence and understanding of the approach to curriculum until she began using *GNFL*:

I am not comfortable with the *ELs [Framework]* at all but having that language, I can understand it more in [*GNFL*]. When we rewrote our unit we restructured it the same way as in the resource banks and added what we wanted to. Then we worked out what was going to fit and it was very, very easy and it didn’t take us long to do. (K)

The change process overall was enhanced by the alignment between religious education and the general curriculum. The educational terminology within the curriculum and pedagogical elements helped teachers to strengthen the connection between the religious educators and the curriculum framework.

The analysis of the findings in this category has identified that, within the change process, the connection between teachers and the curriculum framework is established through critical interaction with the innovation. This critical interaction involves teachers

working with the framework in the day-to-day world of the classroom, making active curriculum decisions and working with it in an interdisciplinary way with other areas of the curriculum. This critical interaction stimulated change and built a connection between religious education and the other curriculum areas.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: critical interaction with the curriculum framework.

Participants in this study revealed that the connection between religious educators and the curriculum framework is established through critical interaction with the innovation. This is likely to bring about a more successful implementation of a new curriculum. Religious educators are critical curriculum decision-makers whose professional understanding of the content and pedagogy of religious education directly influences their capacity to make appropriate curriculum choices. Critical interaction with an innovation involves the teacher's capacity to make curriculum choices within the teaching and learning process. Effective curriculum choices are more likely to be made when the level of pedagogical content knowledge and teacher confidence are high. The change process is likely to be enhanced through the reciprocal benefit of a strong curriculum and pedagogical link between *GNFL* and the *ELs Framework*. However there is a need for teachers to see beyond the practical advantage of an interdisciplinary approach to discover how religious education completes or fulfils the curriculum.

Emerging theory from category two: the connection between religious educators and the curriculum framework.

Religious educators are more likely to persist with change through two key stages in the implementation phase: critical assessment and critical interaction. In these stages, religious educators are able to make judgments about the benefits of the change for their practice through use of the innovation. This initiates, and establishes, a connection between the religious educator and the curriculum framework. This connection is a vital factor during the implementation phase. Opportunities for critical assessment of the innovation and critical engagement with it during the implementation phase enable teachers to make professional judgments about the innovation and to discover how it resonates with what they already know and believe to be good teaching practice. Once a connection is initiated with the curriculum innovation, teachers are likely to be open to engaging further with the change process.

Successful implementation is more likely to occur when religious educators are seen as professional educators and critical decision-makers in the change process. They are more likely to engage in the change process when they perceive that the religious education curriculum framework is educationally rigorous and when they see that by using the framework for religious education, they will also be making connections with the general curriculum.

In this section the connection between the religious educators and the innovation has been discussed. Table 11 summarises the insights and emerging theory from Category Two. This table is followed by a further conceptual analysis of the emerging theory.

Table 11

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Two: The Connection between Teachers and the Curriculum Framework

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Two: The Connection between Teachers and the Curriculum Framework	
Critical Assessment of the Innovation	<p>Successful implementation of a curriculum framework in religious education is more likely to occur when a connection between the religious educator and the innovation is initiated through critical assessment of the innovation by the religious educators.</p> <p>Religious educators are predominantly professional educators who made a critical assessment of the innovation by judging its religious authenticity, its educational rigour and its practical application in the classroom.</p>
Critical Interaction with the Innovation	<p>The connection between religious educators and the curriculum framework is further established through critical interaction with the innovation. Religious educators are critical curriculum decision-makers whose professional understanding of the content and pedagogy of religious education directly influences their capacity to make appropriate curriculum choices. Change in religious education is more likely to occur when there is a reciprocal benefit of interdisciplinary links between religious education and the general curriculum.</p>
Emerging Theory: <p>The connection between religious educators and the new curriculum framework is a vital factor during the implementation phase. Opportunities for critical assessment and interaction with the framework during the implementation phase enables teachers to discover how the innovation resonates with what they already know and believe to be good teaching practice.</p> <p>Successful implementation is more likely to occur when religious educators are seen predominantly as educators and critical decision-makers in the change process. They are more likely to engage in the change process when they perceive that by using the framework for religious education they will also be fulfilling the educational demands of the general curriculum. Once a connection is initiated with the curriculum innovation teachers are likely to be open to engaging further with the change process.</p>	

Further conceptual analysis of the emerging theory.

In the previous section the insights and emerging theory from Category Two: The Connection between the Religious Educator and the Curriculum Framework were presented. The analysis of the data revealed that during the implementation phase, religious educators are more likely to enter into the change process through critical processes that enable them to build a connection between themselves and the innovation. This emerging theory is analysed further in this section, drawing upon current literature dealing with new understandings of professionalism for teachers and developmentalism in relation to curriculum change. The views of experts in the field and the researcher's voice also contribute towards the further analysis.

Teacher learning.

This study has shown that opportunity for teachers to engage in critical ways with a curriculum innovation is likely to stimulate change. Religious educators were shown to interact with the framework predominantly as professional educators interested in the educational benefits to the students. A growing body of literature around the critical literacy of teachers explores how teachers make sense of an innovation (Timperley, 2010). Not only are they expected to have the necessary pedagogical content knowledge, teachers are also expected to contribute towards a high performing professional community and be active in making judgments and curriculum decisions to benefit students (Timperley, Phillips, Wiseman, & Fung, 2003).

A new curriculum framework for religious education is likely to engage the interest of teachers when it resonates with current professional understandings, beliefs and practices. This is important in implementation because it initiates and establishes a connection between the religious educator and the curriculum framework. However, it is also essential that, in the implementation of a new curriculum framework, teachers be able to develop new understandings, especially if the curriculum innovation has a significantly different underpinning philosophy to the prevailing approach. In this study this was evidenced in the participants' lack of a broad understanding of the value of religious education in completing or fulfilling the total curriculum. The challenge was to move teachers from seeing the pragmatic value of time management in an interdisciplinary approach to seeing how a conceptual approach to religious education might complete the curriculum for students.

The emerging theory also identified the significance of religious educators as professional educators who judge the curriculum framework and make critical decisions

from this perspective. This has highlighted that attention to teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is essential for effective use of curriculum innovation. This supports the view that educational change and attention to teachers' professional learning and growth are interdependent (Fullan, 2001a). This presents a challenge for the implementation phase of curriculum change. The change process at this stage must simultaneously support connectedness between the religious educator and the curriculum framework and promote new learning through a critical approach based on adult learning principles.

A critical stance towards change.

This study supports the view that religious educators are at the same time teachers and learners. They are highly motivated by the opportunity to make critical assessment of the innovation and use it to make curriculum choices. The opportunity to critically assess and interact with the framework stimulates the use of the innovation. A critical stance enables the teachers to break open the assumptions underpinning the curriculum presented to them and to discover their own understandings about the change (Lovat, 2009). Engaging with the innovation from a critical stance was shown to have a direct influence on the effectiveness of the change process.

Educational change can occur at a superficial technical level. However, critical engagement with an innovation can make a difference at the level of professional beliefs and practices. This category revealed that change in professional beliefs and practices is more likely to occur when teachers engage critically with the innovation, when deep connections are made with currently held professional beliefs and practices, and when teachers are supported towards new learning.

Developmentalism and teacher learning.

Factors, which focus teachers on pressing needs, inhibit collegiality and decrease teacher confidence in change and innovation (Shirley, 2010). The change process must reduce the experience of de-skilling which occurs as an "implementation dip" (Fullan, 2001b, p. 40). The emerging theory from this category suggested that the implementation phase of a change must not only connect with currently held beliefs and practices but it must also inspire and support teachers to enter into a learning process in order to deepen their pedagogical content knowledge. This study has shown that, paradoxically their connectedness enabled them to enter into the change process more fully and with greater confidence.

The change process must aim to limit the debilitating effects of the implementation dip. A developmental approach to change can assist teachers to acquire new understandings, and professional beliefs and practices (Shirley, 2010). The passion and energy of moral purpose, collegiality and *developmentalism*, or the desire to connect the past, present and future, all contribute towards successful change and teacher learning (Shirley, 2010). Change is likely to be a more positive experience when the valuable elements of past practice are acknowledged and recombined to create something new (Abrahamsons, 2004). This study suggests that this connection between past, present and future is likely to occur as teachers engage in critical processes when they use a new curriculum framework. However, amongst the Round Table Experts, who were brought together to consider the emerging theory in this study, discussion of past experiences of curriculum change in religious education revealed a lack of enthusiasm for change.

Perceptions of curriculum change in religious education.

The Round Table Experts said that change in religious education had not been experienced as developmental. In the religious education community, past experiences were of top-down approaches to change. Expert Two said that there was little regard for the work that had gone on before or the educational skills of teachers. There was a general consensus that these negative experiences in the past had the potential to provoke resistance to further innovation. It was perceived that this increases the necessity for compliance measures through prescriptive textbooks or standardised testing (Round Table Experts). Strategies that support the professionalism of the religious educator are needed to enable them to respond to the needs of their students, to engage with the innovation critically and to exercise professional judgment.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, approaches to religious education have evolved in response to one another. The Round Table Experts perceived that the evolutionary nature of developments in religious education is not widely understood. It is necessary for religious educators to know how the innovation connects with currently held beliefs and practices as a foundation for further new learning. Knowing and having the ability to articulate the theory underpinning a curriculum change is essential in supporting an effective change process (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009). This study has shown that the articulation of the underpinning philosophy of a curriculum innovation is necessary at not only the theoretical level but also the practical level of implementation. Teacher confidence in the curriculum resulting from such an approach is likely to support further interaction with the innovation and break down resistance to change.

Synthesising the theory.

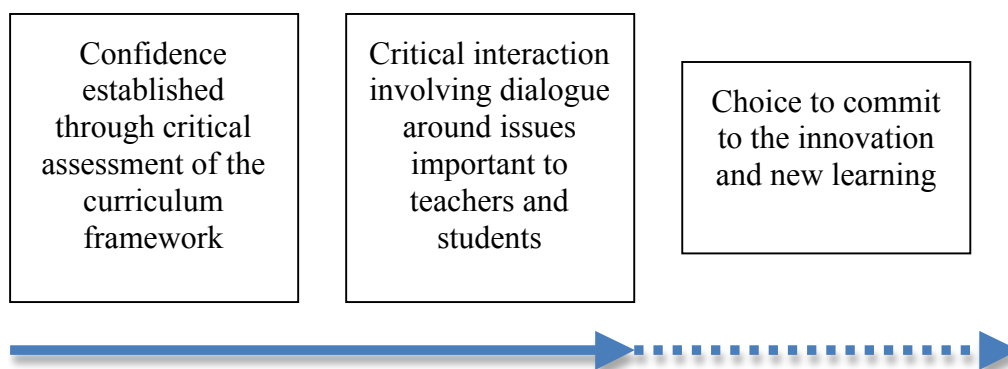
The change process is more likely to be effective when teachers are able to build a connection with the curriculum framework through critical assessment and critical interaction. Change as a developmental phenomenon is supported in current literature (Abrahamsons, 2004; Shirley, 2010). This study suggests that changes in the professional beliefs and practices of teachers are more likely to occur when their new learning is supported by connectedness with currently held professional beliefs and practices and when they are challenged through both dialogue around issues that are important to them and the dissonance they experience when faced with an innovation.

During the implementation of *GNFL* religious educators were fully engaged in the change through critical processes. They were focused on the needs of students when assessing the quality of the innovation and they were engaged within the day-to-day practice of teaching. These are essential in developing connectedness (Symington, 2010). A developmental perspective is needed in the change process to connect past, present and future, and to reconnect teachers with the passion and collective purpose of education (Shirley, 2010). This study suggests that an appropriate approach to change is a critical-developmental approach. However, the response from experts in the field suggests that this is not the approach that has been experienced in much of the educational change in religious education.

A critical-developmental approach recognises that it is the stakeholders who determine if an innovation or proposal has enough benefit to them to motivate them to take up the challenge of change (Fullan, 2001a; 2008). Unlike an experience of coercion, a critical-developmental approach to change is likely to be gradual and supportive, revealing the positive benefits to the stakeholder and allowing the stakeholder to choose to cooperate and be motivated to further change.

Religious educators within a Catholic primary school context are qualified and registered classroom educators who work towards, or have gained, the appropriate accreditation to teach religious education. This study has shown that, when critically assessing the worth of a new framework for religious education, they act predominantly as *educators*. The challenge presented to those who lead change is to ensure that a developmental approach is taken towards teacher learning and innovation. This is illustrated in Figure 13.

Figure 13. From Initial Connection to Further Commitment to the Curriculum Framework



Within a critical-developmental approach to change, commitment to change is more likely when religious educators have been able to assess and interact with the innovation critically in order to develop a connection and commitment to the curriculum framework. This forms the basis for new learning and change.

Teachers enter into the change process more fully when they are engaged through critical assessment of, and critical interaction with, the innovation: and when the approach recognises their past experiences, their present concerns and the possibilities for future learning and professional growth. Religious educators are more likely to commit to an innovation and new learning when a critical and developmental approach is taken to the change process. Connectedness is paradoxically a springboard for new learning.

The study has revealed that a critical-developmental approach to change is likely to result in teachers making a connection with an innovation, actively engaging with it and making a commitment to change and new learning. A critical-developmental approach enabled teachers to make connections with their current professional beliefs and practices and supported them to develop their pedagogical content further. Such an approach encourages teachers to exercise professional judgments about the benefit of the change for their students, to deepen their experience of the innovation while focusing on the issues of student learning and to develop their understanding of the underpinning theory at not only the theoretical level but also at the practical.

Consolidated Theory

Curriculum implementation in religious education is more likely to be effective when developing a connection between religious educators and curriculum innovation is

regarded as an integral part of the implementation phase. Further critical processes of assessing and interacting with the innovation are likely to build a sense of connectedness between the educator and the curriculum framework. This results in teachers becoming active participants in the change process, moving an innovation from an idea to curriculum enacted in the classroom.

Developmentalism is likely to bring about increased professionalism for religious educators as they work with the innovation, drawing on their expertise from both religious education and education in general, and connecting the past, present and future. A critical-developmental approach to curriculum change in religious education is likely to result in teachers becoming further committed to change and engaging in new learning.

Conclusions from Chapter Four: Stimulating Change

In Chapter Four: Stimulating Change, factors that have contributed towards teachers' motivation to change have been discussed and insights arising from the data have been categorised, enabling the insights and emerging theory to be conceptualised. A further analysis of the emerging theory has given rise to consolidated theory from the first two categories.

The consolidated theory from Category One: Readiness for Change suggests that motivation for change occurs through the tension between the religious educators' perceived moral purpose and the context in which religious education is undertaken. In the current context a moral purpose that seeks to pass on a faith tradition without reference to the lived reality of students' lives is inadequate. However, moral purpose is not a static reality: moral purpose is also influenced by, and rearticulated in relation to, the changing context in which it is enacted. Readiness to enter the change process is supported when an innovation is perceived to have the capacity to realign an authentic moral purpose with the means to fulfil it.

The consolidated theory arising from Category Two: The Connection between the Religious Educators and the Curriculum Framework suggests that a critical-developmental approach to change in religious education is likely to bring about effective implementation and support teachers towards new learning. The connection between the religious educator and the curriculum framework has been revealed as a vital factor in the change process. A critical stance towards the innovation and a developmental perspective are likely to build a sense of connectedness. This, paradoxically, can be a springboard to new learning if teachers are supported towards critical interaction with the innovation in their day-to-day work of classroom teaching.

The highly active role of teachers in the change process was highlighted within the category. This indicates that a task of the change process is to ensure that the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers is at a level where they can make effective professional curriculum choices for their students. This will be explored further in Category Six.

The study suggests that change is stimulated by readiness to engage in innovation. It is further stimulated by critical-developmental processes that actively engage religious educators in the change process. Effective leadership of curriculum change involves reflecting on current conditions that may indicate readiness for change and adopting a critically reflective stance towards initial implementation with a view to establishing a sound foundation for further engagement and teacher learning. This study suggests that, in stimulating change, professional learning must simultaneously aim to rearticulate moral purpose and build technical knowledge and skill in religious education through the critical use of new curriculum innovations.

In the following chapter (Chapter Five) the next two categories are presented. These categories highlight the participants' experiences, perceptions and issues about supporting change through teacher learning and leadership in a collaborative culture.

Chapter Five

Categories Three and Four: Supporting Change

Introduction

In Chapter Four the analysis of the data revealed that curriculum change in religious education is likely to be stimulated by the non-alignment between the teachers' moral purpose in teaching religious education and the perceived social reality of the lives of students. Change is further stimulated when the connection between the religious educator and the curriculum framework is initiated then established through critical adult learning processes. A developmental perspective of change is also likely to result in further commitment to change and new teacher learning (Abrahamsons, 2004; Shirley, 2010). Therefore this study suggests that change is likely to be more effective when a critical-developmental approach is undertaken in the implementation phase.

Two further categories emerged from the data, revealing factors that were influential in Supporting Change. Category Three: A Collaborative Culture and Category Four: The Dynamics of Leadership are the focus of this chapter. The emergence of a collaborative culture within schools and between schools and the staff of the centralised administrative body, Catholic Education Office, Hobart (CEOH) supported the implementation of the new curriculum framework for religious education in Tasmanian Catholic primary schools. The concept of collaboration was discussed in Chapter Two. It refers to relationships of mutual benefit where both parties are working towards a shared goal.

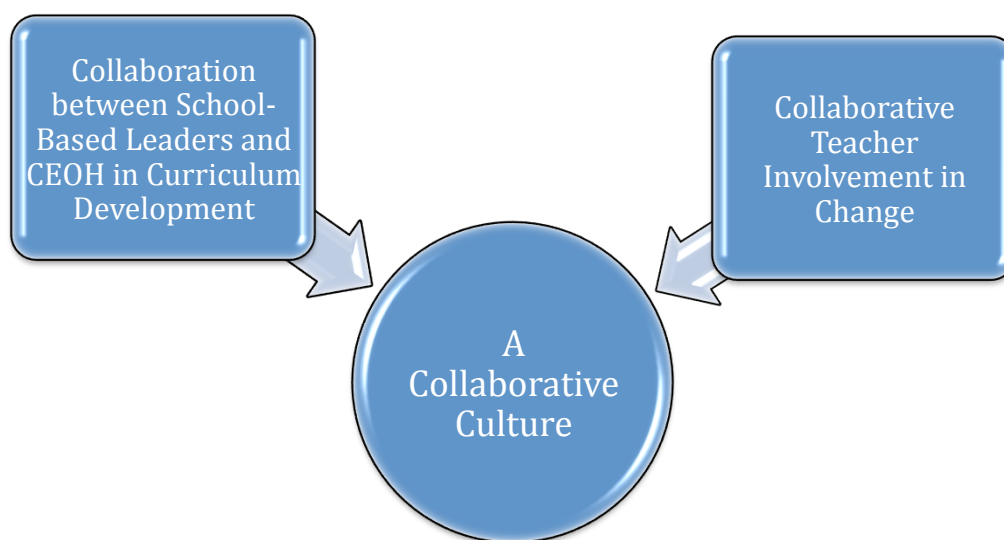
Category Three: A Collaborative Culture

Introduction.

The implementation of *GNFL* contributed towards the development of a collaborative culture in Tasmanian Catholic education. Category three involved two forms of collaboration that were evident within the culture. These were: the collaboration between school-based leaders and CEOH in curriculum development, and collaboration between teachers as they became involved in change (cf. Figure 14). Effective educational leadership builds a collaborative culture of sustainable change to support teachers and decreases the negative consequences of change (Fullan, 2001b, Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, 2003). The analysis of data relating to Category Three revealed that the inclusion of school-based leaders in the development of *GNFL* and teacher involvement in collaborative professional learning communities at the school site supported the change process.

Two sub-categories are presented in relation to this category: first, the collaboration between school-based leaders and CEOH in curriculum development, and, secondly, the effects of collaborative teacher involvement in change at the school site.

Figure 14. Factors that Contributed to Emergence of a Collaborative Culture



A summary of the factors that contributed towards the emergence of a collaborative culture between schools and CEOH personnel. These factors supported the change process.

Collaboration between school-based leaders and CEOH in curriculum development.

In past decades, organisations tended to be managed through downward communication and control. Educational organisations were also managed through hierarchical notions of leadership. Educational leadership is now perceived as involving, influencing and engaging people with a view to reducing resistance and supporting change (Duignan, 2010a). Collaboration is therefore a necessary process, where working jointly with others achieves a common goal for mutual benefit (Duke Corporate Education, 2007).

The implementation of curriculum change in Tasmanian Catholic schools both contributed to the emergence of a collaborative culture between the centralised authority driving the change, CEOH, and school leaders, and was supported by this evolving culture. This section explores the inclusion of school-based leaders in curriculum

development and examine how their inclusion affected the role of the AP:RE as a collaborative leader of curriculum change.

Inclusion of school-based leaders.

The inclusion of principals and AP:REs in the development of *GNFL* was a supportive factor within the change process. It created a sense of ownership of the curriculum framework and participation in a shared goal between schools and the CEOH. This resulted in more effective communication at the school site by school-based leaders.

Principals and AP:REs actively participated in consultation opportunities to draft the document. Participants in this study perceived that principals and AP:REs had contributed to *GNFL* and were working towards a shared goal with system-based staff. As co-contributors in the project, principals and AP:REs were able to become familiar with the content of the framework prior to its implementation. This created a sense of ownership with the innovation. Although it was understood that the responsibility for producing the final document lay with CEOH staff, there was a strong sense of participation in the collaborative process. The following insight indicates of the view that was held by participants:

I thought that [participation in the preparation of *GNFL*] was good. There were alterations. Everyone had the opportunity to have input into that and it was discussed so it was a collaborative process. I felt I was part of it. You come in as an outsider and go on one of those days and work flat out trying to get ideas down and those of other people. Ultimately decisions are going to be made at another level but it was positive to have the discussion and I think the people who actually did it [completed the preparation of the framework] are up with it and level-headed sort of people who were trying to get a document that was suitable for our schools. (R)

For principals and AP:REs, participation in the production of *GNFL* increased their capacity to communicate the change to colleagues at the school site and to engage them in the change process. From the perspective of classroom teachers, the inclusion of principals and AP:REs from Catholic schools across Tasmania contributed towards the perception of wide involvement and sectoral commitment to change. Teachers perceived that they had first-hand knowledge of the needs of students in religious education because they worked with them on a daily basis. The collaborative participation of school-based

personnel in the production of *GNFL* led to the perception that the teachers' views would be communicated, considered and respected during the consultations with CEOH.

Wide collaboration in the project communicated to teachers that the contribution of local religious educators was valued by the CEOH. The involvement of principals and AP:REs in the production of the framework led to a positive anticipation of the change. This participant expressed it this way: “[*GNFL*] was always seen as a better way and it was *our* [Tasmanian] way of teaching religious education. To me that was the general feeling. You didn’t feel that it was imposed” (B). The analysis of the data revealed that the opportunity for school leaders and CEOH staff to share responsibility for the implementation supported the change process because these leaders were more likely to communicate the change at the school site effectively.

The study raised the issue of the principal’s role in leading curriculum change in religious education on a day-to-day basis. The overall responsibility for the religious education program in the school lies with the principal. However, this responsibility is generally delegated to the AP:RE (CEOH, 1984). The participants identified that the complexity of the principal’s role meant that they had little time for the leadership of curriculum change in religious education – or any other area. They were also removed from religious education in the day-to-day work of the classroom. The following comment by a principal in the study shows this:

As a principal, because there are so many areas of responsibility you can tend to get a bit of a communication gap because you are not in the classroom. I don’t know every little detail because I leave that sort of thing to [AP:RE]. I give the responsibility to her. I am involved in some parts of it but I know that she is doing it. (R)

The principals expressed confidence in the capacity of their AP:REs to carry out the role of curriculum leadership because of their particular expertise in the discipline and their knowledge of the practical demands of the classroom. The study revealed that AP:REs were more likely to act as agents of change through collaboration in the development of curriculum and through working together with the principal to communicate the change at the school site. This relationship is explored further under Category Four. The following section will focus on the AP:RE as a leader of change.

AP:RE as a leader of change.

Chapter Two indicated that the role of the AP:RE is in relation to the principal and CEOH staff and also to their school-based colleagues. AP:REs exercised a significant

role in the change process, leading the implementation of the new curriculum framework in their respective schools. Their expertise in religious education as a discipline, their skill in classroom teaching, the trust placed in them by both teachers and principals, and their relationship with education officers from CEOH enabled AP:REs to exercise a complex leadership role, linking school and CEOH. Communication between the school and CEOH was more effective through the active agency of the AP:RE. Participants perceived that, when the AP:REs took the lead in the curriculum change, they acted as teacher-leaders. They were perceived to be both classroom practitioners and school leaders. They were able to support the principal at the school site and to assist teachers put the curriculum framework into practice.

Classroom teachers trusted the AP:REs as curriculum leaders because they were teaching and leading religious education simultaneously, expressing expertise in both teaching and active leadership. The AP:REs were perceived as change agents, “thoroughly aware of and committed to realising the change and generally possess[ing] the knowledge and skills necessary to bring about change” (Smith & Lovat, 2003, p. 200). The AP:RE motivated teachers by empathising with them, sharing their experiences of implementing and dealing with the new curriculum in their own classrooms. Participants perceived this credibility in terms of support and trust from the AP:RE, as the following comment suggests:

[AP:RE] has been really supportive. She has been sensitive in what she will suggest and [I know] that she is available to talk to. She is very approachable. It puts the onus on you too to approach her if we need to but I think that is a really good way to do it ... If you are struggling she is very happy to put in the time to explore things together. As a resource person and pastorally it has been great. I am glad she is there. (L)

Those who hold formal positions of responsibility with regard to religious education often do not recognise their potential or their responsibility as curriculum leaders (Johnson, 1998; Liddy, 1998; Crotty 2002). However, this study confirmed that the change process was more likely to be effective when the AP:RE was able to exercise curriculum leadership in religious education. This finding is consistent with recent research into the role of the Religious Education Coordinator (Crotty, 2002; Fleming, 2002) and management of curriculum change (Buchanan, 2006b).

The collaborative capacity of the AP:RE was vital in the implementation of *GNFL*. AP:REs exercised this role by supporting the principal, communicating the change at the school site and assisting in building a collaborative culture within the school and between

the CEOH and the school. This comment from an AP:RE illustrates how their leadership was exercised and experienced by colleagues:

Prior to [GNFL] going out to the staff as a complete framework they were encouraged to start using the draft units of work that I received from CEOH. I passed it on to the staff to familiarise them with the way that it was laid out, getting them to critique the particular parts of the units that they found weren't as applicable to their grade level and allowing me to give them the opportunity of including their own ideas. When you are introducing something new you will get the mentality of staff not wanting to look at it unless they feel that they can own it. Exposure prior to saying, "Ok, now you need to be using this," is a crucial thing. (Y)

In the schools where the AP:RE kept the teachers informed about the development of *GNFL* and where teachers were encouraged to begin using the draft materials, teachers perceived that they were more actively involved in change. The active involvement of teachers in the change process is the focus of the following sub-category.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: collaboration between school-based leaders and CEOH in curriculum development.

The implementation of *GNFL* was supported by the collaboration between CEOH and school-based leaders in the production of the framework. The analysis of the data within this sub-category has revealed that collaboration was understood as the CEOH and school personnel working for mutual benefit towards a single goal: the improvement of practice in religious education. This study has shown that, within the collaborative process, there was a single goal but different functions and responsibilities were exercised in pursuing it.

The CEOH had final responsibility for the production of the framework as a document but the content was shaped through the inclusion of school-based leaders in a collaborative process. The study has shown that collaboration is likely to result in wider ownership of the framework in schools and a positive anticipation of the change amongst teachers. The responsibility for leadership at the school site lay with the school-based leaders. Participation in a collaborative process of production resulted in greater capacity for the views of practitioners to be considered in the production of the framework and for school-based leaders to communicate the change to colleagues at the school site.

The involvement of AP:REs in both classroom teaching and the day-to-day curriculum leadership in religious education within the school gave them credibility

amongst teachers as they implemented *GNFL* in their classrooms. The AP:RE role in curriculum implementation is a vital connector between the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the change and teaching practice, an essential in successful reform strategies (Elmore, 2007). The AP:RE was able to understand the theory and approach to religious education underpinning the new curriculum and model its application in the classroom as they too were teaching classroom religious education. The leadership shown by the AP:RE encouraged teacher involvement in the further implementation of the change. The active involvement of teachers in the change process is discussed under the following sub-category.

Collaborative teacher involvement in change.

The first sub-category within Category Three: Collaborative Cultures examined the collaboration between CEOH staff and school leaders. Change at the school site was likely to be more successful when school-based leaders collaborated with CEOH and when the AP:RE exercised active curriculum leadership. The second sub-category examined the collaborative involvement of teachers at the locus of the school.

The urgency of need, supported by the agency of a collaborative professional culture, generates more energy for reform (Fullan, 1999). The implementation of *GNFL* supported the emergence of collaborative professional learning communities for religious educators within schools. Reciprocally this supported the change process. At the school site, religious educators were able to implement the curriculum framework because they were led by the AP:RE who had been involved in the project from the early phase of development. Teachers were more likely to implement the curriculum framework because the AP:RE was able to lead them in applying the new framework in the classroom and to respond to teachers who were more resistant or reluctant to change.

The analysis of the data revealed that in spite of collaborative efforts to prepare teachers for change, there were still diverse responses to the change. However, the establishment of collaborative professional learning communities within schools helped to identify the different responses to change and to address the diverse professional needs of religious educators.

Resistance to change.

The analysis of the data revealed that resistance to change can arise as a result of a number of negative past experiences of change, especially when teachers have been unsupported to implement the change. Change involves feelings and perceptions and often conflict (Smith & Lovat, 2003). However, the participants perceived that a lack of teacher competence and confidence in teaching religious education was the most important factor contributing to resistance to change. As discussed under Category Two, the religious educators were shown to be curriculum decision-makers. However, some teachers were more confident in making decisions than others. Less confident teachers were less able or willing to make curriculum choices for themselves. They were less willing to experiment with new resources and practices and more dependent on the AP:RE and other colleagues. This response indicated this diversity amongst teachers:

I think some teachers would like to think that it is an ongoing working document, that it can be added to, and some other people want something that they can say, “Well that is it, there you are, that is what you have to teach and in grade one we want you to do these topics and have the structure”. Steady as she goes kind of people. Tell me what to do and I will do it. (C)

Teacher confidence was perceived as a most important factor in teaching religious education. There was an expressed need to build confidence and competence in religious educators. Participants identified that whilst feeling competent and confident themselves, they were concerned when colleagues did not have a clear understanding of the content of religious education or how to go about teaching it. Religious education was seen as different from other areas of the curriculum and these teachers had little content knowledge and lacked understanding about appropriate pedagogy in religious education. Both contributed towards a lack of confidence. The participants identified that the professional understandings and skills of religious educators within a staff group could not be assumed, as this response illustrated:

You can’t just assume that they [teachers] are going to read it [the new curriculum framework] and understand it straight off ... You get to know the documents best when you get to the stage when you have to use them. That’s often where the teachers are at, they are operating in a certain way and they won’t change until they have to. (T)

Teachers critique an innovation from their current professional perspective and current practice (Smith & Lovat, 2003). The participants in this study reported that, whilst

teachers explore new curriculum resources, they still like the security of resources and practices they know. A participant explained:

I use *GNFL* as a basis and then go back [to the resources I know]. I love the old, the thick books [*Guidelines*, CEOM, 1984] ... I love the way they set things out but its good with *GNFL*. You go there and you know what you want to do and then you just lead off from it anyway. It's not like it's a set curriculum. (K)

This study supports the view that change does not progress across a system in a consistent, homogeneous way (Fullan, 2001b). The change process is not smooth or linear and not all teachers are at the same stage of readiness to wholly embrace a new curriculum framework. There is a diversity of responses to change that sometimes includes resistance. Lack of competency and confidence in religious education contributed towards teacher dependency on colleagues, the AP:RE and on their current practices, increasing the possibility that teachers would not engage with the change.

Participants identified past negative experiences of curriculum change where there was ineffective communication of the change and little ongoing support to implement it in the classroom. This suggests that implementation is more likely to be successful when teachers are perceived as learners with diverse learning needs who need support in applying the new curriculum framework in the classroom. Therefore support for the change process must be focused on the work of the teacher at the school site.

In the change process there is a need to ensure that practices that have yielded success in the past are continued and teachers are encouraged and supported to make connections with the curriculum framework (Fullan, 2001a; Elmore, 2007; Stoll & Earl, 2003). Teachers are more likely to acquire new learning within a learning environment where they are able to reveal their vulnerabilities, their professional needs are identified and they can be supported professionally (Ingvarson et. al., 2003; Shirley, 2010). The participants within this study showed that change is likely to be further supported when teachers experience success or see their colleagues having success. Success is likely to occur when their professional expertise as teachers is respected and when teachers can try the ideas suggested in the new curriculum framework.

Embracing the change.

As identified above, there were diverse responses to change and teachers who lacked competence and confidence in teaching religious education needed more support within the change process to enable them to experience success in the application of the

curriculum in the classroom. However, the participants in this study also identified that there were teachers who embraced the change and adopted it enthusiastically wanting to contribute to the new curriculum's ongoing development. This response illustrated the view of participants:

The best thing for me has been to be able to work with it [GNFL]. It has been a great idea to have a staff focus at the beginning of the year to generate the unit on Jesus. To get like a holistic view of who's doing what within the different classrooms and being able to plan with some others.

(L)

The challenge at the school site was to establish opportunities where teachers who responded in different ways to the change process could be brought together to share skill and knowledge, or to learn from others and have their needs met. The participants in this study affirmed that the strategy of establishing collaborative professional learning communities within schools supported teachers by identifying and targeting professional learning needs. This strategy increased teacher involvement in the change process.

Teacher involvement in change through collaborative professional learning communities.

In successful large-scale change, it is imperative that teacher understandings, competencies and confidence be the highest priorities (Elmore, 2007). This study has found that teacher involvement in change through participation in collaborative professional learning communities increased their understanding, competency and confidence in teaching religious education. The collaborative professional learning communities strategy was described in detail in Chapter One. It refers to a professional learning strategy that involved teachers being released from class duties to come together as level groups and also as staff groups to plan, implement and evaluate a learning sequence for religious education. These sessions were facilitated by the AP:RE or where necessary, by the education officer. Sometimes though the education officer was invited in to provide expertise and lead a dialogue around a particular content area while the AP:RE, nevertheless, led the session.

Participants perceived that the collaborative professional learning strategy enabled the teachers to explore religious concepts and develop their understanding of content and pedagogy in preparation for planning for students. This gave rise to another expression of collaboration, namely, working together within the school context with a focus on student learning. Collaboration was evident within three distinct relationships:

collaboration with colleagues, with school-based leaders and with system-based education officers. Within the collaborative professional learning community, all parties were equal although different and each person had a contribution to make to the collaborative community, learning from the others. This response indicated how teachers perceived the collaborative professional learning community:

It is absolutely fantastic. Having worked in a [small] school where I was on my own [at that year level], it is wonderful to work alongside other people. I only have my ideas, and everyone comes from their own background, so if you are working with others you have this wonderful wealth of other people's ideas and understandings, so you are growing in your faith development whether you realise it or not. But you are also being supported in what you do in the classroom so you must come out with a richer program if you are working with other people. (I)

The professional learning workshops within the strategy gave time and opportunity for teachers to become familiar with the content and pedagogy within the framework. The participants identified that they began to understand the document through use, reflection, dialogue and feedback. In collaborative professional learning communities, the religious educators could focus on the content of the faith tradition and plan the learning sequence, using a pedagogy that would result in effective student learning. This supported change by building the teachers' confidence in teaching religious education. This participant explained:

I didn't really understand how to use it [GNFL] properly until we had a session with [education officer] a couple of weeks ago and [colleague] and I planned a [learning sequence] on baptism and symbols of God and we said, "This is just so easy!" after being shown one-on-one rather than having a group session or being expected to just know how to use it. (K)

The study showed that teachers had the opportunity to experiment, to make mistakes, to have support and assistance from the collaboration of experts within and outside of the school and, most importantly, to experience success within the collaborative professional learning community. This supported the widely held view that teachers working in schools will seek out new knowledge and actively use it to change their practice when the change is scaffolded through a network of supportive conditions, leadership, and school and system structures (Elmore, 2007; Elmore, Peterson & McCarthy, 1996; Smylie, 1995; Stoll, 2010; Stoll and Earl, 2003).

Amongst the possible professional learning experiences teachers can engage in, the task-related professional learning community is one that is located within the teachers' workplace and has the capacity to move teachers from knowing *about* an innovation to moving them towards its actual classroom use (Day, 2004). The study suggests that when they perceive that they are involved in the change process and are supported within a professional learning community, teachers are more ready for and open to new learning.

In Category Two it was shown that critical interaction with a new curriculum framework stimulated change by building a connection between teachers and the curriculum framework. Category Three argues that a collaborative culture within the school enables the teacher to use the new framework in their day-to-day classroom program, thereby supporting the initial connection and commitment to change.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: collaborative teacher involvement in change.

The analysis of the data relating to the Sub-Category: Collaborative Teacher Involvement in Change has revealed that the implementation of *GNFL* was supported by collaborative professional learning communities in schools. They assisted change by providing a collaborative learning environment where teachers' varying professional needs could be met.

Change is not a linear process and teachers respond to change in a variety of ways. They enter the change process from their current understandings and perspectives on teaching religious education. Professional learning communities are likely to create the environment where teachers can be supported to learn about a new framework and to interact critically with it on a day-to-day basis.

The study has shown the diversity of teachers' professional learning needs in relation to a new curriculum framework. The opportunity to be involved in the change process through a collaborative professional learning community enabled teachers to engage actively with the framework, to experiment with new elements within it and to connect current and new practice.

Emerging theory from category three: a collaborative culture.

The implementation of *GNFL* contributed towards the development of a collaborative culture within the Catholic system of schools in Tasmania. Reciprocally, the development of this collaborative culture more effectively communicated and supported

the change process, establishing the innovation within the teachers' day-to-day classroom practice. A collaborative culture is more likely to develop through collaboration between the centralised body and school-based leaders from the outset and by involving school-based religious educators to enter into the change process by focusing on their classroom practice within a collaborative professional learning community.

Within the school, the diverse responses and needs of teachers add to the complexity of the change process. Collaborative professional learning communities are likely to bring about the effective implementation of a curriculum innovation because they enable leaders to focus on teacher learning and provide a supportive environment, where teachers can critically interact with the new curriculum framework, have professional needs met and experience success.

Table 12 summarises the insights and emerging theory from this category. A further analysis of the emerging theory will be presented next to consolidate the theory in the light of the researcher's expertise, the current literature and responses of experts in the field who participated in round table discussions.

Table 12

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Three: A Collaborative Culture

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Three: A Collaborative Culture	
Collaboration between CEOH and School-Based Leaders in Curriculum Development	Collaboration is likely to result in wider ownership of the framework across schools and a positive anticipation of the change. School-based leaders, especially AP:REs are more likely to be able to communicate the change to colleagues at the school site because of collaboration at the production phase connecting the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the change.
Collaborative Teacher Involvement in Change	A professional learning community is likely to create the environment where teachers can be involved in change, learn about the new framework and to interact critically with it on a day-to-day basis. Collaborative professional learning communities have the potential to support teachers' individual and collective needs.
Emerging Theory: The development of a collaborative culture between the CEOH and schools more effectively communicates and supports the change process, establishing the innovation within the teachers' day-to-day classroom practice. A collaborative culture is more likely to develop through collaboration between the centralised body and school-based leaders from the outset and by involving school-based religious educators to enter into the change process through critical reflection on their practice within a collaborative professional learning community. The diverse responses and needs of teachers add to the complexity of the change process.	

Further conceptual analysis of the emerging theory.

In Category Three: A Collaborative Culture, the emerging theory suggested that there was a reciprocal benefit within the collaborative culture established to support the implementation of *GNFL*. The implementation helped to develop a more collaborative culture between CEOH and schools and reciprocally, this supported the change process.

The failure of educational change in the past was often due to a lack of connectedness between top-down, centralised authorities and schools. In a bottom-up approach to educational change, school-based initiatives failed to connect with the vision of the system as a whole (Elmore, 2007; Fullan, 2001a). Participants in this study identified that the lack of communication and support for the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) resulted in an overall lack of understanding about their underpinning theory and, subsequently, a lack of understanding about the pedagogical approach. This study has shown that the inclusion of school-based leaders in the production of the curriculum framework established a collaborative relationship between the staff of the CEOH and schools. Collaborative processes within the school enabled the change to be communicated and supported at the school site as teachers used the framework in their day-to-day practice. The further analysis of the emerging theory in this category examines relationships between schools and the centralised body in the development of a collaborative culture.

Relationships between schools and the centralised body.

An analysis of the data pertaining to Category Three revealed that the change process is more likely to be successful with the inclusion of school leaders in the project from its inception and the subsequent involvement of teachers in the change process. This had the effect of crossing traditional boundaries of responsibility and changing the perceptions of relationships within the Catholic education community.

Catholic Education Offices have been established around Australia in diocesan jurisdictions. There has been a perception that these bureaucratic structures have been focused on the administration of the system using top-down approaches. The Round Table Experts expressed the view that some Catholic Education Offices place heavy emphasis on authority and compliance and many would also suffer from the perception of a *them-us* relationship with schools. The dependence on vertical perspectives of authority often results in Balkanisation, duplication and lack of horizontal responsibility and accountability. The move towards organisations and interconnected networks of learning heralds the downfall of traditional corporatism (Waite, 2010).

Raising the awareness of interrelatedness between members of an educational community is an organisational imperative. Organisations are like parts of a body held together by unseen forces (Walker, 2010). This corresponds well with the Christian concept of the body motivated and animated by one Spirit (1Corinthians 12:12, 18–20, 27).

A commitment towards devolution and school-based management does not mean leaving schools to their own devices (Latham, 2010). Paradoxically it means greater emphasis on reciprocal responsibility and accountability throughout the organisation. Relationships of power and authority within an organisation are changed from compliance to mutual responsibility.

The collaboration between CEOH staff, principals and AP:REs changed the perceptions and ways of working with the centralised body and increased the likelihood of successful change at the school site. This change in approach supported teachers in their professional learning needs and contributed to the new learning so necessary for effective change. The Round Table Experts supported this view, saying that authentic collaboration allows for ever-increasing dialogue across a system. It involves real listening to stakeholders. It depends on relational qualities of trust, courage and integrity. Participants enter into a joint enquiry where there is a possibility of something new being developed. Authentic collaboration is not about control or advocating a particular position (Round Table Experts).

Organisations are challenged to create balance between structures and effective communication to enable innovation and creativity throughout the system. Collaborative cultures can support teachers in their current practice but they must also propel the organisation forward, stimulating and supporting change, new learning and creativity.

Reciprocal relationships of responsibility.

Through a commitment to collaboration, it is possible to cross the traditional boundaries of responsibility within an organisation and build a reciprocal relationship of mutual responsibility through a focus on learning. This has been described as a two-way, “inside-out, outside-in” (Fullan, 1999, p. 43) approach to change. This study has shown that different forms of collaboration can be exercised and contribute to a collaborative culture. Between the CEOH and school-based leaders there was a shared participation in a common project; however, the responsibilities were different. The CEOH staff was responsible for the production of the framework. The responsibility at the school site lay with the school-based leaders. Different functions were exercised but the same goal

motivated the collaborating parties. At the school site the collaborative professional learning communities were more democratic in their function as colleagues worked together with equal responsibility for student learning, sharing professional expertise. Change concerns all members of an educational community and collaboration between stakeholders is likely to support the implementation of a new curriculum framework (Fullan 1999, 2001a). There was wider understanding of and engagement with *GNFL* because of the shared but wide responsibility for its implementation at the school site and within the centralised body of the CEOH.

The significance of reciprocity has been identified as “the mutual and dynamic interaction and exchange of ideas and concerns” (Lambert, 2003, p. 12). This study supports this view revealing that reciprocity increases through dynamic relationships of trust where learning is at the centre and there is shared purpose and a collective commitment to action. However, barriers to creating collaborative cultures in education have been identified in recent literature.

Often consultative and collaborative processes do not reach the sphere of the teachers or do not extend to include the centralised bodies (Latham, 2010). There is an expectation that schools will operate as professional learning communities; however, centralised bodies often do not model this collaboration. There is evidence to suggest that student outcomes are indirectly improved through a collaborative educational culture (Shepherd, et al., 2010) and that this is attributed to teachers being more satisfied with their roles (Latham, 2010). However, there is still a question around how to establish collaboration as a principle and practice at every site within a school system.

This study has revealed that it is more likely for a system to develop as a collaborative learning community when centrally employed staff are directly involved in school initiatives and when school personnel are involved in initiatives that affect the whole system. All stakeholders are more likely to be aligned with common vision, purpose and responsibility for success.

Synthesising the theory.

The establishment of a collaborative culture within the Catholic education community in Tasmania directly supported the change process. This collaborative culture evolved when school-based leaders and teachers became involved with the curriculum development project from the outset and when teachers worked in a collaborative professional learning community supported by the AP:RE or education officer from the CEOH.

The establishment of a collaborative culture across an educational organisation is likely to transform the relationship between schools and the CEOH from traditional, hierarchical corporatism to an interdependent body (Waite, 2010). Reciprocally this is likely to increase the possibility of change occurring in more effective ways across a system of schools because of a shared goal but broad responsibility within the change process.

Centralised bodies therefore will need to change the way improvement and development is supported across the system. In general, simplistic top-down models of change are likely to be ineffective. Collective vision and shared responsibility are more likely to provide the foundation for organisational change into the future.

A collaborative culture of change by its very nature recognises and responds to the diversity that exists in schools (Fullan, 1999). Change does not occur in a lock-step way across a system. As this study has shown, change is affected by factors within the school such as teacher response to change and their professional needs. This suggests that there must be a long-term vision for change but flexibility and responsiveness within schools to enable them to respond to change in relation to internal factors. This has been described as the school's internal capacity for change (Harris, 2003).

In a top-down model, change emanates from the centralised body to schools. In a bottom-up model, change may occur at the locus of the school but be ineffective in bringing about an overall change within the educational organisation of schools and centralised body. This study has shown that, in a collaborative culture the change is likely to be communicated throughout the system by leaders who are united in purpose but responsive to the needs of teachers within individual schools.

Curriculum change that aims at system-wide reform is likely to be more effective when there is a collaborative culture across a system of schools that includes both schools and centralised bodies. The establishment of a collaborative culture is assisted by wide involvement in innovation and reciprocal responsibility for the success of a change. This has been named as a highly professional collaborative culture (Eaker, 2008; Timperley, 2010). Such a culture is likely to develop when traditional perceptions of responsibility are crossed with school personnel becoming involved in system-wide initiatives and centrally based staff becoming involved in collaborative professional learning communities at the school site.

Building a collaborative culture means radical change away from the traditional ways people work together in organisations. A collaborative culture heralds new relationships between religious educators and has implications for the expressions of

leadership within that culture. The dynamics between leaders within a collaborative culture will be examined in Category Four.

Consolidated Theory

The relationship between schools and their centralised body is a highly complex one. Implementation of a curriculum innovation is significantly enhanced by a collaborative culture that effectively communicates the change and connects the centralised body and schools. The establishment of a collaborative culture is likely to have implications for the ways people work together. Traditional boundaries of responsibility are likely to be crossed, resulting in greater emphasis on common goals and reciprocal responsibilities. A collaborative culture is likely to result in the whole educational organisation being highly motivated towards change, with collective purpose. However, across the organisation, change is likely to occur in different ways within different schools as school-based leaders respond to the professional learning needs of teachers. Effective change is more likely to occur when the organisation is animated by the same goals and operates interdependently. The expression of leadership within a collaborative culture is the focus of Category Four.

Category Four: The Dynamics of Leadership

Introduction.

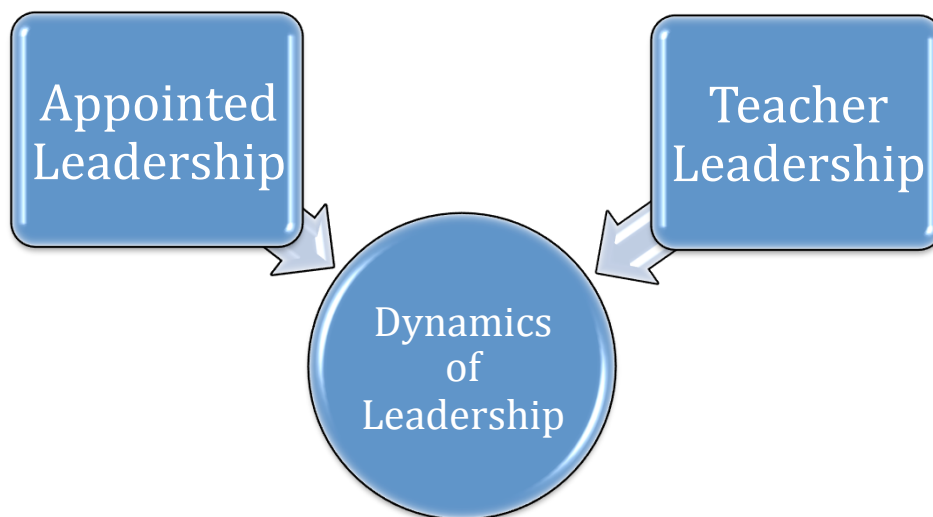
The implementation of *GNFL* was supported by and contributed to the development of a collaborative culture within Catholic education in Tasmania. As reported in the previous category, there were different expressions of collaboration within the culture. However, overall there was a perception that relationships of power and authority were changed to relationships of mutual responsibility. There was involvement of school personnel in the implementation of *GNFL* initiated by the CEOH. This transformed the dynamics of leadership operating within a collaborative culture.

Leadership takes many forms and influences the way an organisation works to achieve its goals (Duignan, 2010a). In the past two decades a significant aspect of leadership that has been re-emphasised is the concept of the principal as an educational leader who strategically organises for improved student learning within the school (Fullan et al., 2006). There has also been an expectation that principals will contribute to the educational debate and policy-making process within the wider system (Fullan, 2003b; Starr, 2009). However, educational leadership and coordination is not the sole responsibility of the principal, particularly in relation to curriculum change. Internal

leadership and connection with the wider system are key factors in change (Lewis & Andrews, 2009).

To understand how the leadership dynamic supported the change process it is necessary to analyse the leadership exercised by those in appointed leadership roles of principal, AP:RE and education officer. It is also necessary to explore teacher leadership. Category Four: The Dynamics of Leadership therefore presents participants' perspectives first, on appointed leadership roles then, secondly, on teacher leadership. The relationship of these two sub-categories is illustrated in Figure 15.

Figure 15. The Dynamics of Leadership



Leadership is exercised across an organisation in a dynamic way both by those appointed to leadership and teachers.

The analysis of the data pertaining to the dynamics of leadership in a collaborative culture indicated that the change process was supported when there was a collective responsibility for implementation of *GNFL* between principals, AP:REs, the education officer from CEOH and teachers. Leadership was an expression of shared responsibility that was exercised in different ways.

Appointed leadership.

The leadership roles that most influenced teachers in the implementation of *GNFL* were the principal, the AP:RE and the education officer from CEOH who worked with teachers in school-based professional learning communities. These leaders directly

influenced and supported teachers to be involved in the change process and in applying the curriculum in classroom practice.

The participants in the study identified several aspects of leadership that were shared between the principal, the AP:RE and the education officer. These have been synthesised and presented in Table 13. The aspects identified were: a shared responsibility for religious leadership; responsibility for teacher learning, and, supporting change in religious education curriculum. Whilst focused on these same goals and challenges each role functioned in distinct ways. These distinct functions are described in the following section.

Table 13

Participants' Perceptions of the Role of Key Appointed Leaders within the Change Process

Principal	AP:RE	Education Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a religious leader, responsible for the religious dimension of the school responsible for the learning and development of staff and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a religious leader within the school, with delegated responsibility for the coordination and monitoring of the religious education program. as part of the leadership team, had responsibility to contribute to the overall development of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a religious leader within the system contributed to the development of teachers and leaders in a number of schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulated the high priority of the religious dimension allocated curriculum and learning and teaching resources to develop the religious education program appointed an AP:RE and enabled the role to be exercised effectively liaised with the education officer to provide professional learning opportunities in religious education for teachers at the school site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supported the principal in strategic planning for religious education organised for change in religious education curriculum involved staff in the change process supported by the education officer to provide for professional learning at the school site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supported the school with professional learning in religious education according to school requests supported the principal and AP:RE at the school site assisted teachers to understand the curriculum change provided targeted and precise professional learning opportunities in response to teacher and school need

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provided strategic leadership of the curriculum change process, improvement and development of religious education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supported and mentored teachers planned and provided for professional learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provided professional learning opportunities for staff supported and mentored the AP:RE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> challenged by restrictions of time and demands of the role to lead change alone trusted in AP:RE to demonstrate delegated leadership of the development of religious education and teacher development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> restricted by the competing demands of the role and classroom or other teaching duties needed the right conditions to exercise the role effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> challenged to be flexible and adapt service to schools according to the needs of teachers and the leadership capacity within the school

The role of the principal.

The study found that the principal has a particular role, being responsible for the overall development and support of religious education across the school. Key strategies for effectively fulfilling that role are, the appointment of an AP:RE, employing qualified religious education teachers, and structuring the school for collaboration and distributed religious leadership within planning teams. The role of the principal in advocating for religious education and articulating its importance within the culture of a Catholic school was vitally important. The following comment from one of the participants reflects the view commonly expressed by other principals:

[Teachers] know that religious education is the most important thing we do and I am very strong on that ... the first thing in the report is the religious education. That is where it should be: before literacy and numeracy. (A)

It was the principal's role to provide opportunity for teachers to become qualified, to engage in professional learning and to have access to adequate resources. As this principal explained: "[Religious education] is challenging for the teachers. But we need to provide that continued support. We need to make sure that our teachers are well resourced and well qualified" (T).

It was perceived that the role of the principal was to structure the school effectively to ensure that there was a distribution of confident and competent religious educators within planning teams.

In my team I am the RE person who guides them in what they are doing because they are not really all that confident in what they are doing in RE.

We talk about what we are covering and ask how did that go? If they have questions, it is all there [in *GNFL*] and I can just show them. (U)

Participants in this study perceived that the employment of a competent and qualified AP:RE to lead the teachers in religious education was vital to support them in implementing the curriculum. A lack of an effective AP:RE was a distinct disadvantage to the religious education curriculum in a school. The role of the principal therefore was to have overall responsibility for the religious education within the school. Principals who marshalled resources for this, who appointed an effective AP:RE and who structured the school so that there was a distribution of qualified and competent religious educators who could provide additional religious leadership within the teaching teams, supported the implementation of *GNFL*.

The role of the AP:RE.

In the previous section it was shown that, whilst the principal has overall responsibility for the religious dimension of the school, the responsibility for the implementation of the religious education curriculum was shared through the appointment of an effective AP:RE. The participants perceived that the role of AP:RE was in a state of transition from a chiefly ministerial function (CEOH, 1984) to a role with more potential for educational leadership (CEOH, 2006). The following comment is indicative of the awareness of this transitional phase amongst educators in Catholic schools in Hobart:

The old REC [Religious Education Coordinator] role used to be the *minister for special events*, sacramental development and preparing any liturgy we had to put together. Now we have gone away from that ... I think it is important that the AP:RE is not looked upon like the old REC. They are looked upon as at the same level [as Assistant Principal: Learning and Teaching] but with their own portfolio of responsibility for religious education. (G)

Over the past ten to fifteen years the role of the AP:RE has changed and increased in complexity (Buchanan, 2005b; Crotty, 1998; 2005). The participants in this study identified that the role of AP:RE is to exercise effective religious leadership through three key functions: involvement in the overall development of the school, leadership of the religious education curriculum, and responding to teachers' professional needs as religious educators.

All AP:REs in the study were members of their respective school leadership team. The new AP:RE role was evolving with specific duties in the area of religious education, a role of equal status as the Assistant Principal: Learning and Teaching, who has specific responsibility for curriculum development. Organising for change, supporting staff, involving staff in the change process and professional learning were all cited as activities carried out by the AP:RE.

The effectiveness of the role of AP:RE is governed by the competency of the person who exercises it (Rymarz, 1998). The context in which the role is carried out also contributes towards its effectiveness. However, the participants revealed that there were a number of restrictions on the role that limited its function as a curriculum leader. They identified that the AP:RE role was restricted by lack of time and lack of authority to carry out the curriculum leadership responsibilities effectively.

Restrictions of time.

All of the participants in this study who were AP:REs also carried out other teaching duties in their school. The AP:REs led change from within the change process. They were both leading change and implementing change in their own classes along with their colleagues in theirs. This had both positive and negative effects. Whilst teachers said that they relied on the AP:RE to assist them with the change process, it was perceived that with many other teaching demands on the time of the AP:RE, the teachers were reluctant to call on them for support. This teacher explained:

The [AP:RE] becomes involved in the planning only when we do it as a whole school. We haven't invited her in. She would be glad to do it but there are time constraints. I would be loath to ask her to do something extra. It would have to be after school. I would not put that on her. (I)

As a curriculum leader, the AP:RE needed to be available to assist teachers with their implementation of the curriculum framework. The perceived teaching demands of the AP:RE were seen as a restriction to the exercise of their leadership and the change process.

Lack of authority in the role.

Participants identified that there were new possibilities for the AP:RE role with the new curriculum leadership responsibilities. It was perceived that the new title of AP:RE meant new responsibilities as part of the leadership team within the school and liaison with the education officer. However, the perception that the AP:RE role was a

ministerial rather than an educational function restricted the perception of the role as a credible curriculum leader. The AP:RE's responsibility for change and curriculum leadership needed to be articulated as having the same curriculum responsibilities as the AP:L&T, whose role is curriculum leadership in the general curriculum. This participant explained:

With the implementation of the *ELs Framework* we had a curriculum officer and she worked with us through all of that and there was a lot of accountability. In religious education it wasn't clear it was more of a facilitator. (V)

It was perceived that the way the role was exercised lacked the same authority as the AP:L&T. Although the title of AP:RE had supplanted REC, there was still a perception that the role was more ministerial, pastoral, invitational and facilitative rather than a role with professional responsibility for curriculum leadership.

As shown in Table 13, the participants perceived that the AP:RE needs professional skill and personal attributes to operate effectively in a highly collaborative way with teachers and among other leaders. This has been described as "parallel leadership" (Lewis & Andrews, 2009, p. 142). This is exercised when principals and teacher-leaders engage in collective action to build capacity within the school. Parallel leadership involves interpersonal and professional skills and must be supported by an enabling context. Such a context includes a balance of responsibilities and duties and the delegated authority to exercise the role effectively.

The AP:RE must complement the principal's responsibility for the religious education program in the school and display competency in the role by implementing curriculum (Crotty, 2002; Rymarz, 1998). This study revealed that although the title had changed and new responsibilities of leadership were expected within the role of AP:RE, the paradigm underpinning the role however needed to change also. The responsibilities expected with regard to the overall religious dimension of the school, curriculum change in religious education and teacher development all indicated that the role of the AP:RE is more likely to be effective when it is articulated as a curriculum leader, when AP:REs begin to exercise the role as a curriculum leader and when the structure of the school enables the proper function of the role.

The education officer.

Within the implementation phase of *GNFL*, the leadership of the education officer supported the principal, the AP:RE within the school and the teachers. As clarified in the Introduction to this thesis and Chapter One, the role of the Education Officer, Religious Education within the Archdiocese of Hobart is an important supporting role in religious education. Models for this role vary around Australia and different titles, for example, consultant, curriculum adviser, are used to distinguish different responsibilities. In the Archdiocese of Hobart the role of education officer encompasses curriculum and resource development, facilitation of professional learning and spirituality opportunities, and school-based professional learning and support for professional learning communities. In the implementation process, the central role of the education officer was to offer professional learning opportunities for staff at the school site as part of the collaborative professional learning communities strategy outlined in Category Three.

Participants revealed that the education officer assisted teachers to understand the change, the theoretical underpinning and content of the framework, and the learning and teaching process in religious education. The education officer worked collaboratively with the school-appointed leaders to provide these opportunities for staff. Working closely with the school leadership, the education officer was able to adapt their response and personalise their professional learning workshops to suit the needs of individual, and groups of, teachers. The functions of the education officer changed in response to the identified needs within the school. This comment illustrates a working relationship between the education officer and the AP:RE:

The [education officer] is a support, I suppose through developing that enthusiasm for *GNFL* and exploring the different units that we haven't actually covered. We've had a look at quite a few of them but with her knowledge I think we would be foolish not to ask [the education officer] to come in and basically begin the implementation of it through particular units. She brings resources and we've worked together to encourage the staff to plan. (R)

Each school context is unique and some schools have greater need for external resources and support (Harris, 2003). The education officer responded differently in different locations. Where the internal leadership of religious education in the school was strong, the education officer functioned as a support and mentor to the principal and/or AP:RE. Where there was low internal leadership capacity within the school, the education

officer could provide more direct assistance to teachers. The participants in this study valued the expertise offered by the education officer in all situations.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: appointed leadership.

Three key leadership roles supported the implementation of *GNFL* within the diverse contexts at the locus of the school. These roles were the principal, the AP:RE and the education officer. The responsibility of the principal is to ensure the quality of the religious dimension in the school by resourcing religious education, employing a competent AP:RE and organising for curriculum and teacher development. The role of the AP:RE is in transition and is still in need of structural support to enable the role of curriculum leadership in religious education to be carried out effectively. The role of education officer is to support the internal organisation for religious education.

Teachers in this study perceived that they were more professionally supported when those in appointed leadership shared the same goals and worked interdependently. The three roles have distinct functions; however, all three roles shared responsibility for religious leadership, for curriculum development in religious education and for teacher learning. All three were exercised in relation to one another. This study suggests that leadership is more likely to be effective where there is a clear articulation of each role and where there is also flexibility to adapt and exercise leadership according to contextual needs. The appointed leaders shared the same goal of supporting religious education as religious educators but exercised it in different ways. The following sub-category will explore teacher leadership.

Teacher leadership.

In the preceding section the interdependent functioning of those in the appointed roles of principal, AP:RE was discussed. However, leadership is exercised at all levels within an organisation. It is not restricted to appointed leaders or equated with power and position, but is distributed between and among people (Duignan, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c; Gronn, 2000, 2002; Harris, 2003, 2007; Lambert 2003).

This study has revealed that the implementation of a new curriculum framework is supported when teachers take responsibility for actively applying it in their classroom. As this participant revealed:

After the introduction I just had a look at the Resource Banks and chose what I wanted to do. I think it is easy to understand. I like the background information. I think that is really beneficial. I think the program is set out

really well. It is very user-friendly and easy to use and I just select the things that I want to do. I think the ideas are really good. I can pick and choose and adapt it to my children. It fits in really well with the ELs curriculum. (U)

Teacher leadership is exercised when they are able to exercise professional judgment, collectively and collaboratively, in the interests of the students (Harris, 2003). Teacher capacity refers to the teacher's potential to learn, to apply the new learning to other situations and to continuously improve student learning (Stoll & Earl, 2003). The exercise of distributed teacher leadership, however, cannot be assumed. For teacher leadership to flourish, it must be actively planned for and supported. Teacher leadership is more likely to be expressed when teachers are competent and confident in teaching religious education. Building teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is likely to increase the capacity of teachers to exercise leadership.

A barrier to teacher leadership in religious education.

The teacher's ability to exercise leadership should not be assumed. This study has found that lack of pedagogical content knowledge in religious education was a significant barrier to the exercise of teacher leadership. As this participant stated:

Now we are getting younger teachers who are not so knowledgeable in the faith. There are teachers who are teaching in our schools who in fact don't believe in it. There are a lot of people who aren't witnesses. You've got to be able to reach the kids and for them to think there is something in this [religion]. It is one of our big challenges. (R)

Pedagogical content knowledge describes the professional knowledge necessary to enable teachers to carry out their work. It relates to seven domains of knowledge teachers draw on as they plan for student learning (Hargreaves, 1995; cf. Shulman, 1987). Participants perceived that fear of embarrassment due to lack of knowledge and skill in religious education resulted in teachers being guarded in their participation at professional learning workshops and that this lowered their confidence. This response illustrates the issue:

I think there might have been one or two who went back to the guidelines before that last ones [*Guidelines*, (CEOM, 1984)], to where they were comfortable. There could be that fear there. Teachers like to feel supported and challenged and not too much at once. (L)

The participants identified that teachers needed increased pedagogical content knowledge to build confidence and increase the likelihood of their being empowered to take responsibility for the quality of religious education thereby expressing teacher leadership.

Expressing teacher leadership.

Teacher leadership requires the right conditions to enable people to work and learn together (Harris, 2003). Participants in this study identified that teacher leadership was more likely to occur when teachers had opportunity to increase their pedagogical content knowledge. This included knowledge of how the new curriculum framework was constructed and how it could support student learning. This participant's response highlighted the need for teachers to be instructed in the use of a new curriculum innovation:

[I needed to know] what to do basically, how to use things, where to go to for references and the point of them, how to set out your lessons and things like that ... that has been exceptionally positive for me when I worked with [education officer]. (K)

Professional learning within the school assisted in building teacher knowledge through opportunity to work with either the AP:RE or the education officer to discuss the content of particular units of work and to plan learning processes. This assisted in overcoming fear due to lack of knowledge. This response illustrated the issue for participants:

I scan the theological information at the start of the resource banks. I think I have a lot of gaps in my understanding things I am not sure about. I would like to go to some professional development to deepen what I have. (Q)

Teachers valued the support of the principal and the AP:RE. The expertise of the AP:RE and education officer was also valued. The participants perceived that working in with experts who respected their professional skills as teachers gave them a sense of efficacy, as this response indicates:

With the unit on Church, [the education officer] talked to us about [the concept of] *Church*, making sure that we knew where we were going and what the unit was about ... Then we worked on it in groups over a significant period of time and then we were ready to put it into practice. (A)

It was perceived that the work in collaborative professional learning communities with the assistance of the appointed leaders, especially the AP:RE and education officer provided the secure environment for learning that enabled the teachers to ask questions about the content of the faith tradition. It gave the teachers confidence to contribute ideas and suggestions to the planning for student learning. One participant suggested: “the [education officer] was asking our opinion ... It was like a brainstorm ...”. (D)

The participants identified that teacher leadership was expressed through teachers discussing content and pedagogy and planning for student learning. It was built through a renewed sense of purpose: planning, teaching, evaluating, critiquing and getting feedback. This built confidence and enthusiasm and participants reported being more excited about teaching religious education. The capacity of teachers to implement the new curriculum in their classrooms was increased.

The responses indicated that teachers were actively engaged with the innovation, and motivated to use the materials, to critique them and to add to them from their own repertoires of practice. This comment from a teacher-participant demonstrates the interaction of teachers with the innovation in a collaborative and supportive environment:

We usually plan the RE together. We use the framework with the overarching goals. In the civics and citizenship one we had tolerance and harmony and we get our large bits of paper and we scribble and we make choices from different areas and we write it on our plan and type it up and everyone gets a copy. We have a look at the Church year and the Church calendar and keep in mind the students in the sacramental preparation. (W)

This study has shown that in relation to religious education, lack of pedagogical content knowledge interferes with teacher confidence in teaching religious education and acts as a barrier to teacher leadership. Participant responses indicated that teacher leadership is more likely to be expressed when teachers become more knowledgeable, competent and confident and have a sense of efficacy. Teachers best meet the needs of students by thinking about teaching as leadership and taking responsibility for student development (Hartle & Hobby, 2003). Teachers are more likely to take active leadership of student learning in religious education in their class, in their school and beyond the school to other colleagues when they engage in opportunities to expand their existing knowledge bases (Hargreaves, 1995; Harris, 2003).

Emerging insights from the sub-category: teacher leadership.

The implementation of a new curriculum in religious education is likely to be more effective when it influences teachers' practice. Teacher leadership involves teachers taking responsibility for student learning and using the new curriculum in their classroom programs. It involves competency and confidence. An analysis of the data has indicated that the expression of teacher leadership in religious education is directly related to teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and therefore their competency and confidence. Leadership is distributed across an organisation (Gronn, 2000, 2002). However, this study has identified that teacher leadership cannot not be assumed. It needs to be supported and developed. A collaborative learning culture within the school is likely to encourage teacher leadership because, within that structure, teachers can learn together with expert help. Teacher leadership is likely to be expressed in relation to student learning. Those in appointed leadership roles are likely to encourage teacher leadership when they focus on stimulating and supporting teacher learning.

Emerging theory from category four: the dynamics of leadership.

The analysis of the data pertaining to the dynamics of leadership indicates that leadership is likely to be more effective throughout the organisation when it is focused on the learning of others. Change is more likely to occur when leadership is viewed as a dynamic and active network of influential relationships (Duignan, 2010a, 2010b). Leadership is an exercise in connectedness (Walker, 2010).

The key appointed roles of the principal, the AP:RE and the education officer are likely to be most effective when they work interdependently to stimulate and support the learning of teachers, involving them in the change process. Teacher leadership focuses on the learning of students; however, teacher leadership is more likely to occur when teachers are engaged in professional learning that builds pedagogical content knowledge and teacher efficacy. Teacher leadership can also influence the learning of other colleagues in a collaborative culture.

The insights and emerging theory from this category are summarised in Table 14. The analysis of the data pertaining to the dynamics of leadership has highlighted that leadership in a collaborative culture is highly interdependent. The leadership of those in appointed roles is most effective when they focus on building the conditions for teacher learning. Teacher leadership development is supported by increased pedagogical content knowledge which brings with it a sense of efficacy. In the following section insights and emerging theory from this category will be analysed further.

Table 14

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Four: The Dynamics of Leadership

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Four: The Dynamics of Leadership	
Appointed Leadership	Three key leadership roles – the principal, the AP:RE and the education officer – have distinct functions. However, teachers perceive that they are more professionally supported when those in appointed leadership share the same goals and work interdependently with flexibility to adapt and exercise leadership according to contextual needs.
Teacher Leadership	The exercise of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000, 2002) across an organisation cannot be assumed. It needs to be supported and developed. Those in appointed leadership roles are likely to encourage teacher leadership when they focus on stimulating and supporting teacher learning. A collaborative learning culture within the school is likely to encourage teacher leadership because, within that structure, teachers can learn together with expert help.
Emerging Theory: Key appointed roles of the principal, the AP:RE and the education officer are likely to be most effective when they work interdependently and focus on the learning of teachers, involving them in the change process. Change is more likely to occur when leadership is viewed as a dynamic and active network of influential relationships that is focused on teacher learning. Teacher leadership focuses on the learning of students; however, teacher leadership is more likely to occur when teachers are engaged in professional learning that builds pedagogical content knowledge and teacher efficacy.	

Further conceptual analysis of the emerging theory.

The emergence of a collaborative culture in Tasmanian Catholic education changed the dynamics of leadership exercised by principals, AP:REs, religious education officers from CEOH and religious educators within the organisation. The emerging theory from this study suggests that appointed roles are exercised effectively when they are seen in relation to one another, when they are exercised in distinct ways, when they have shared responsibility for religious education and when they are focused on building teacher leadership. The following section will present a further analysis of the emerging theory from Category Four: The Dynamics of Leadership and present the consolidated theory generated from the category. It will be argued that ingrained notions of leadership in religious education present a challenge to the educative function of religious leadership. The theory emerging from this study will contribute to a broader understanding of religious leadership.

Ingrained notions of leadership in religious education.

Leadership within a collaborative culture is likely to be expressed in a different way from leadership within a traditional, hierarchical organisation. The study has shown that collaborative cultures demand a reinterpretation of leadership and how it is exercised. The emerging theory within this category challenges deeply ingrained notions of traditional styles of leadership in religious education.

Round Table Experts argued that perceptions of leadership in religious education are ingrained in a past model of organisation that emphasised the ministerial functions of religious leadership and focused on the role of REC or AP:RE. Currently the conduct of religious leadership in Catholic education is perceived to be inadequate when compared to the new perspective of a collaborative culture (Crotty, 2002; Rossiter, 2007). This study has shown that leadership of religious education is a shared responsibility exercised through a variety of different roles – principal; AP:RE and education officer and classroom teachers – as they focus on implementing curriculum change in religious education and improving student learning. As religious leadership is distributed within the whole Catholic education community, it can be reconceptualised in the light of current theory on distributed leadership.

Leadership in religious education: more than the work of the AP:RE.

In the study, key roles relating to leadership of religious education were identified as the principal, the AP:RE and the education officer. These key leaders within a school system most effectively exercise their leadership through enabling leadership in others (Duignan, 2006). School principalship is a significant leadership role that should be focused on creating middle-level leaders and teacher-leaders within professional learning communities (Gurr, 2010). This study has shown that effective leadership by the education officer was experienced in their support for both appointed leaders and teachers in the school. The principal effectively organised for the implementation of the religious education curriculum, including the appointment of a key leadership role within the school to lead the change.

The emerging theory from this study highlights that the role of the AP:RE has an educative function in leading curriculum change through leading professional learning for teachers. However, the role does not operate in isolation. The appointment of an effective AP:RE with the capacity to exercise leadership in relation to other appointed leaders within and outside the school is essential to the effectiveness of the religious education

program in the school. The role of AP:RE is inadequately structured to allow full effectiveness as a curriculum leader.

Leadership in religious education is likely to be more effective if a broad, distributed perspective on leadership is adopted. The duties of the AP:RE must reflect the professional capacity of the appointee and the context of the school; however, the role is more effectively exercised in relation to other appointed leaders within both the school and the wider system. This perspective acknowledges relationships throughout a system of schools, especially those at the interface between schools and the centralised body.

This study has indicated the important role those in middle-level appointed leadership exercise with regard to change management and ongoing quality of the religious education program. Leadership is already distributed throughout an organisation (Lambert, 2003). This places responsibility on those with appointed leadership roles to enable and harness the leadership capacity of others. Effective leadership is focused on the other and their professional growth.

Increased teacher leadership in religious education.

The positive influence of a collaborative professional learning culture is likely to build teacher confidence and leadership capacity through interdependent, focused leadership that aims to build teacher leadership through the identification of professional needs and organising for teacher learning. Round Table Experts agreed that leadership in religious education must be concerned with learning and empowering others to act out of a deep moral purpose, professional understanding and their pedagogical content knowledge.

Within a collaborative process of leadership for learning, five key elements have been identified: interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, high-level social skills and a supportive environment (Timperley, 2010). From this perspective, leadership is concerned with creating the structures where teachers feel confident to act. In a collaborative culture, there is widespread understanding of the capacity of all to exercise leadership within their sphere of responsibility. The dynamic relationship between appointed leaders is likely to be most effective when distinct responsibilities are articulated and shared goals are developed. This is a paradoxical relationship of fusion and fragmentation, unity and diversity, distinct but complementary (Gronn, 2002).

People in an organisation have the capacity to choose, to contribute to change, to act with moral purpose within their sphere of influence and to develop particular skills that may benefit the whole organisation (Senge, 2006). Therefore leadership is distributed

in an organisation. However, this study has shown that teachers need to have the professional skills that empower them to contribute to change and to exercise teacher leadership. The role of appointed leaders is to harness the capacities of others within the organisation. Again paradoxically, in a widely collaborative and devolved educational context, clear articulation of roles and responsibilities and a focus on teacher learning are foundational to the development of both appointed and teacher leadership. Leadership can be exercised throughout an organisation and is exercised most effectively in a collaborative culture where there is a focus on the learning of others and the creation of a learning environment.

Synthesising the theory.

Traditional, hierarchical perspectives of organisation and leadership view power, responsibility and leadership of change as a top-down process (Waite, 2010). This study has given insight into the social reality of an organisation that was moving towards a more collaborative structure between schools and the centralised body of the CEOH.

In this model of organisation, leadership can no longer be based on positional authority but must be perceived as an interdependent network of relationships bound with common purpose, where all exercise leadership but are supported by those in appointed leadership roles (Duignan, 2010a, 2010b). This is a highly complex and challenging model of leadership within a complex, collaborative and interdependent context, where positional authority is likely to be most effective when exercised as personal and professional influence.

The concept of an educational organisation as a collaborative culture requires that there be an acceptance that all within the collaborative culture have a capacity for leadership that is developed through professional learning (Gronn, 2000, 2002, 2007). Leadership is therefore focused on developing and enabling other leaders (Cranston et al., 2007; Mulford, Cranston & Ehrich, 2009).

Leadership can be seen as an exercise of influence; however, it also has a formal dimension (Duignan, 2010a). There is an imperative for roles to be articulated and communicated clearly within the school and in relationship to the centralised body. This allows the dynamic between formal leaders to be exercised effectively, when people know their roles and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of others.

Critical reflection on the emerging theory from Category Four suggests that the interdependent and dynamic expression of leadership in religious education is a reality but one that is overshadowed by the role of AP:RE. The AP:RE role is vital to the

effective leadership of the religious education program within the school. The role is more likely to be exercised effectively when its distinctive responsibilities in relation to other appointed leaders, such as the education officer and the principal, are articulated clearly and the conditions within the school structure enable its exercise. This study has shown that it is by working in a distinct but complementary way with other leaders and teachers that the role is exercised most effectively. Teacher leadership is more likely to be exercised when appointed leadership roles focus on teacher learning and building confidence and competency. This is a significant challenge for those who would lead change across a system of schools.

Perspectives and practices concerning leadership in religious education that are entrenched in outdated models of organisational structure are inadequate and limit the scope of religious leadership within the emerging organisational model of a highly professional collaborative culture. Operating within a collaborative and educative model leadership in religious education can lead professional growth and development of religious educators, ensuring the internal effectiveness of the religious education program and connecting the school to the wider system.

Consolidated Theory

Establishing a collaborative culture of change is likely to change the expression of leadership. In devolved situations and collaborative cultures leadership is diffuse but connected (Walker, 2010). Leadership of religious education is more likely to support the implementation of a new curriculum in religious education effectively when it is perceived, and exercised, as a distinct but complementary dynamic of relationships. The role of appointed leadership is more likely to be effective when it is focused on enabling teacher learning, increasing the likelihood of teacher leadership in religious education and potentially improving student learning.

In the context of Catholic education, leadership in religious education is more likely to be effective when it is perceived as interdependent with other appointed leaders and teacher-leaders but with the common educative purpose of supporting the learning and leadership of others. Effective religious leadership in the school is more likely to be achieved if the role of AP:RE is more adequately articulated and supported as a curriculum leadership role in relation to all other roles that also expresses religious leadership. Expression of the role as distinct from, but complementary to other appointed

leadership roles is likely to increase the effectiveness of religious leadership within the school and between the school and CEOH.

Conclusions from Chapter Five: Supporting Change

Categories Three and Four have given insight into supporting the change process through the complexity of relationships that exist within schools and the wider system. The insights from this chapter revealed an educational organisation in the process of reculturing as a collaborative learning community. The implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education has contributed towards the development of a more collaborative culture between schools and the CEOH. It has transformed a curriculum change from a centrally driven project into a collaborative process that has had implications for leadership of the religious education curriculum.

Category Three: Collaborative Cultures revealed that inclusion of school-based leaders in the development of an innovation increased the likelihood of change occurring at the school site. Involvement of teachers in the change process was enhanced through the collaborative participation of the school-based leaders. A collaborative culture within the school and between the school and CEOH changed relationships between members of an organisation. The collaborative principle underpinning the change process contributed to the perception of wide inclusion and involvement by educators across Catholic schools. School-based leaders were able to communicate the change at the school site actively because of their first-hand experience within the change process. Teachers were revealed to be highly interactive in their response to the innovation. Collaboration within professional learning communities assisted in identifying and responding to teachers' professional needs. This chapter also revealed that levels of confidence and competence in religious education has a direct influence on the way teachers respond to an innovation. Teacher leadership in religious education is directly related to increasing professional pedagogical content knowledge and efficacy.

In Category Four: The Dynamics of Leadership, the inter-relationships within members of the organisation made up of schools and the centralised body were explored further to reveal that there was a dynamic evident between appointed leaders that influenced effective teacher leadership. Teacher competency and confidence affected the expression of teacher leadership. Teachers' lack of pedagogical content knowledge and lack of efficacy were major barriers to teacher leadership for student learning. Teacher leadership was enhanced when appointed roles were exercised in distinct but

complementary ways and focused on the goal of improving religious education through teacher learning.

Chapters Four and Five explored factors that stimulated and supported the change process. Chapter Six investigates the signs of significant change as a result of the implementation of *GNFL*.

Chapter Six

Categories Five and Six: Signs of Significant Change

Introduction

A key challenge for leaders in implementing curriculum change is to bridge the gap between curriculum as theory and the application of curriculum within the classroom. Categories One to Four revealed the complexity of stimulating and sustaining change for religious educators at the school site. They explored experiences, perceptions and issues that exist within the change process.

Responses to change can be signs that significant change is occurring. These responses can be challenging or positive. Challenges to the change process are those factors that could limit the effects of implementation and therefore need to be overcome. Within this experience of curriculum change in religious education a challenge to the change process was identified in the need for a more professional culture within religious education. The positive effects of change identified by the participants in this study were those related to the key goal of the innovation: to improve the quality of the learning opportunities offered to students by supporting teachers to change their current practice in religious education planning and classroom teaching.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings conceptualised in the remaining two categories: Category Five: Challenges within the Change Process and Category Six: Effects of the Change Process. These categories have revealed the effects of the change process and identified signs of significant change.

Category Five: Challenges within the Change Process

Introduction.

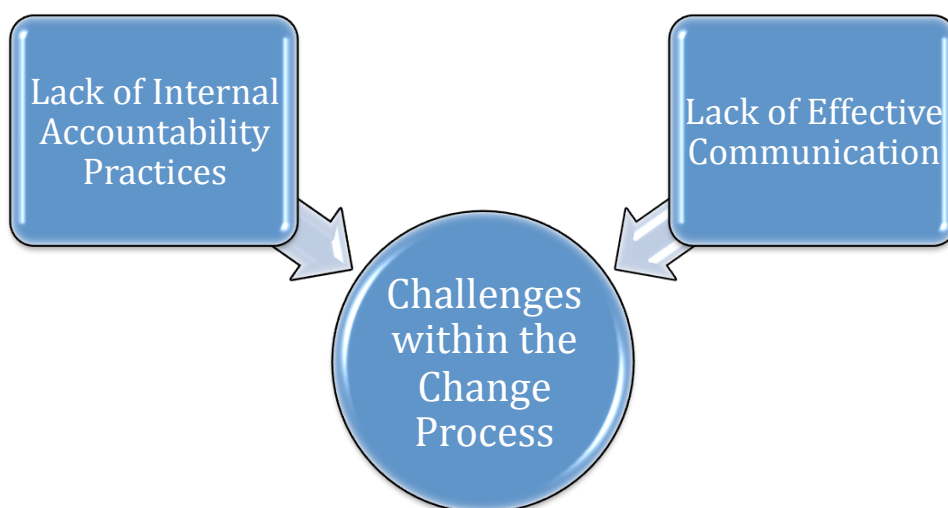
Challenges may be viewed as negative forces that limit implementation, however they can also be considered as signposts indicating areas for further development and improvement. Conflict can also be a sign that some change is actually happening and perceived challenges are often an opportunity to learn through reflection on practice (Fullan, 2001a; 2004).

In this section the findings from Category Five: Challenges within the Change Process are presented. These challenges arose chiefly because a collaborative culture was evolving in Tasmanian Catholic education as an organisation and within individual schools. This collaborative culture stimulated change through teacher engagement in critical processes to establish a connection with *GNFL*. It involved school-based and

CEOH staff in a joint purpose, with shared responsibility for implementing the new framework. It transformed the paradigm of leadership in religious education.

The collaborative culture did not develop without the necessary structural support within the educational organisation, that is between schools and CEOH. It had a significant impact upon the internal accountability practices for religious education within schools and upon communication between schools and CEOH. Figure 16 identifies the sub-categories of Category Five: Challenges within the Change Process.

Figure 16. Category and Sub-categories of Challenges within the Change Process.



Challenges arose within the change process because a collaborative culture still needed to develop within Catholic education in Tasmania. Existing accountability and communication practices were ineffective within a collaborative paradigm of organisational structure.

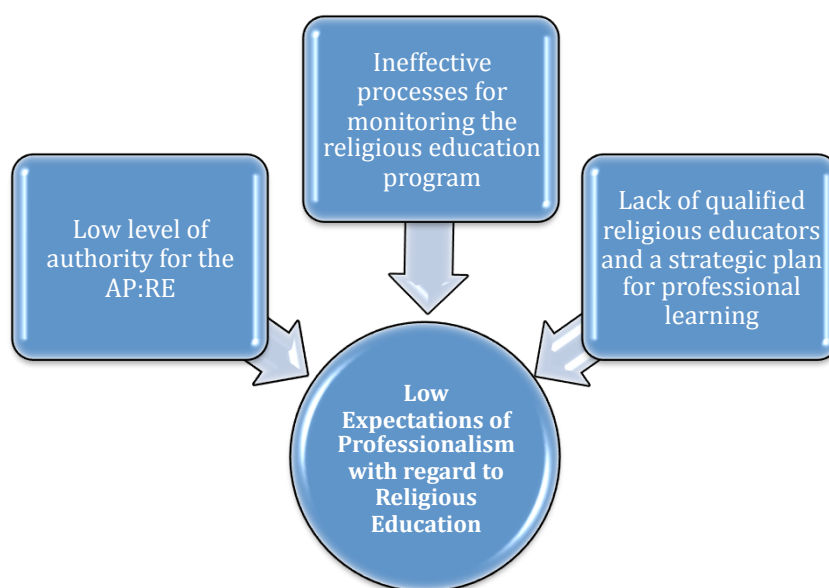
Lack of internal accountability practices.

The participants within this study identified several issues concerning lack of internal accountability practices within schools. This challenge had an impact upon how religious education was organised and monitored within the total school program. Where there was a lack of support for curriculum and teacher development, and limited internal accountability structures, the implementation of the new curriculum was likely to present a challenge to the school. The study identified that religious education was deemed to be important in the school curriculum; however, internal school infrastructures did not reflect this importance in all schools. This left religious education as a key curriculum

area vulnerable to the competing demands of other curriculum areas within Catholic schools.

The participants were concerned that there was low professional expectation with regard to religious education. There was little recognition of religious educators as educators with particular skills. There were few opportunities for religious educators to identify particular professional needs they might have in relation to teaching religious education. This was evidenced in: low levels of authority for the AP:RE; few processes for monitoring the curriculum; lack of qualifications for religious educators and lack of strategic planning for teachers to obtain qualifications or engage in ongoing professional learning. Each of these perceived factors will be explained further to show how they have the potential to weaken the infrastructure for religious education, thereby limiting the continuous improvement of the religious education curriculum or the implementation of a new curriculum. These issues are illustrated in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Factors Contributing to Low Expectations of Professionalism in Religious Education.



Low expectations of professionalism in religious education were due to three main factors: the low level of authority for the AP:RE, the lack of effective monitoring processes for religious education and the lack of qualified teachers or a plan for initial and ongoing professional learning.

Low expectations of professionalism in religious education.

Participants perceived that there were low expectations of professionalism with regard to religious education compared with other areas of the curriculum. This was evidenced in a low level of authority given to the AP:RE with regard to curriculum leadership, few processes for monitoring and coordinating the religious education program in the school, and a lack of qualified religious educators or a strategic plan for teachers to gain qualifications.

Low level of authority for the AP:RE.

As identified in Category Four, curriculum leadership in religious education was perceived as less rigorous than that expected of leadership in other areas of the curriculum. It was observed that with even the most positive experiences of change teachers are reluctant to change practice until they need to or it is demanded of them. Therefore clear expectations of teachers with regard to change in religious education needed to be communicated. The study identified that the AP:REs actively led the curriculum change. However, this was perceived as an act of helping and encouraging teachers and was not seen as an exercise of leadership or authority, which the role of a curriculum leader demands. This participant explained:

I find that with professional development [in religious education] often we're not accountable and when we are not accountable we tend to take it and go away and it has no ongoing effect. It is not until you are really obligated to [put it into practice] that people come on board [with change].

(P)

Categories Two and Four have identified the significant contribution AP:REs made to the change process. The participants revealed that, whilst the contribution of AP:REs was very positive, it was limited by a lack of delegated authority to lead the curriculum in ways that participants had witnessed in other instances of curriculum change. There was a lack of clarity around the responsibilities of the AP:RE and the expectations of the teachers.

The study revealed that, when the AP:RE role was exercised with a focus on curriculum leadership and teacher learning, teacher confidence was more likely to increase and dependency on the AP:RE to decrease. This suggests that the overall quality and improvement of teaching in religious education is more likely to be increased when the AP:RE's role is redesigned with delegated authority to lead curriculum and focus on teacher learning. An effective means of attending to teachers' learning needs on a regular

basis is effective monitoring and coordination of the religious education program at both the school level and the individual teacher or teaching team, level.

Ineffective processes for monitoring the religious education program.

The perceived lack of processes for monitoring the religious education program was a concern for participants. The level of participation by the principal and AP:RE in monitoring the religious education program varied from school to school. This revealed inconsistency of expectation with regard to monitoring processes. The participants raised three concerns: inequitable provision for religious education in relation to other areas of the curriculum, lack of coordination in religious education and lack of assistance with planning the classroom program.

Inequitable provision for religious education.

The participants identified competing demands between religious education and the general curriculum that impacted on the amount of time available for the face-to-face teaching of religious education. The time available was perceived to be inequitable. The following comment highlights the constraints that teachers work under when trying to create effective time for religious education within the school day:

Time is an issue. Numeracy, literacy ... are the most important areas and then you've got SOSE [Studies of Society and Environment] and Science in there as well ... There are time constraints really. I know I have to do it [religious education] early in the morning before our class change-over or in the afternoon I really only have small windows of time to do it. (D)

The participants perceived that the intensification of teachers' work and the competing demands of curriculum presented challenges to the effectiveness of curriculum change in religious education. Schools are busy places, with many pressures on time; other curriculum areas are more demanding on teachers' time as there are stricter, government-initiated accountability practices such as the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing, to consider. The participants perceived that the more external, government accountability demanded within a curriculum area, the higher the priority given to that curriculum area within the timetable.

Coordinating the curriculum.

The study revealed that there was added need for effective curriculum coordination of religious education with the implementation of *GNFL* because teachers

were able to use an interdisciplinary approach to their planning in religious education. It was perceived that the concept-based curriculum expressed in the *ELs Framework* complemented the content of religious education. However, participants revealed some practices where the religious education content was not authentic. This comment highlights this issue:

Although I have specific RE lessons, I have sacramental lessons and bible studies as well, where I can, I integrate it into other subjects so that it's not so crowded. Even handwriting, we may be able to hand write out a prayer and things like that. (W)

The scope to address both general curriculum goals and religious education goals through interdisciplinary planning was valued by the participants. However, they expressed some confusion around the practice of interdisciplinary or integrated planning for religious education suggesting that this was an area that needed clarification and skill development.

There was the perception that student learning goals in religious education lacked clarity: there was a need to ensure a sequential and balanced presentation of explicit teaching about the faith tradition, such as prayer or Scripture and an adequate depth of understanding when teaching religious concepts, such as justice, compassion or tolerance, across a number of curriculum areas.

Within the primary curriculum it is desirable to have the flexibility to plan across several learning areas including religious education; however, teachers can encounter difficulties when trying to incorporate too many areas (Healy et al., 2004; Ryan, 2006). Curriculum connectedness ensures that religious education does not become isolated (Ryan, 2006). However, this study has shown that the religious concepts can become overshadowed when the purpose of the teaching is unclear or the religious concepts are not authentic.

Monitoring of programs.

The implementation of *GNFL* presented a challenge in schools where there was a lack of effective strategies to monitor the religious education program. The monitoring of individual teacher or team programs was seen by participants as an effective strategy to enable AP:REs and principals to ensure effective coordination of the religious education program and to identify teachers' professional needs. However, it was revealed that this practice was also inconsistent across schools. Participation by the AP:RE in planning

teams also varied. The following insight from one of the participants indicated the lack of overall professional supervision and attested to the view held by participants:

Teachers don't plan for RE nor do they show any evidence of planning. It is obvious that little or no planning is documented or taking place. One just needs to look in their classrooms and see that their display areas of learning and teaching in RE are seldom attended to or changed. We have a display in our main hallway that has been there now for two or three years and it has never been changed. (N)

Teachers of religious education need a broad repertoire of teaching and learning strategies to enable them to plan effectively for students (Ryan, 2006). They also need internal accountability processes to ensure that religious education is well structured and coordinated. There were few processes to assist teachers to plan effectively at the school site. Participants suggested that closer supervision of class programs was necessary to ensure quality religious education provision in the school.

The participants revealed that the implementation of curriculum was challenged at the school site by the ineffectiveness of processes for monitoring religious education. In the change to a new curriculum in religious education it was evident that religious education would have to be seen in relation to, rather than in competition with, other areas of the curriculum. Whilst welcomed, an interdisciplinary approach to religious education is likely to bring challenges. The authenticity of religious concepts is likely to be ensured through effective coordination of the curriculum and monitoring of programs.

Lack of qualified religious educators.

The third factor that challenged the implementation of *GNFL* was the lack of teacher qualifications. A major study into the management of a major curriculum change in religious education in Melbourne Archdiocesan schools also highlighted a lack of teacher qualifications as an impediment to the implementation of change (Buchanan, 2006b).

In Tasmania there was a particular challenge to ensure that curriculum change and professional learning were interdependent within the change process. The lack of pedagogical content knowledge of teachers has been highlighted in previous categories. What became more evident through the analysis of this category was that lack of knowledge and ability at the classroom level was likely to present a challenge within the change process. As discussed under Category Four, teachers are less likely to be effective or display leadership when they lack competence and confidence.

The capability to make the transition to *GNFL* was directly related to whether teachers were qualified to teach religious education or not. Qualified teachers were more able to see connections between religious education and the general curriculum and to make curriculum and pedagogical choices. Teachers who were confident in their teaching of religious education tended to use the new framework as a springboard for planning, making curriculum decisions tailored to their students' learning needs, rather than following it rigidly. Such teachers were also less dependent on either the AP:RE or the education officer for support and were more willing to assist other colleagues.

Teachers who were lacking in qualifications in religious education presented a challenge to the change process because they did not understand the philosophical principles underpinning the previous approach to religious education, in the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995), and were less likely to understand the philosophical position of *GNFL*. Participants with no qualifications were distinctly disadvantaged, needing professional support from colleagues, the AP:RE and the education officer. This comment indicated that unqualified teachers also placed an additional responsibility on colleagues: "There is a great need for support when teachers come into the school, especially when they have no qualifications in RE. I am not overly confident to be able to help any new teacher" (U).

A move to a new curriculum could present a challenge to teachers who lack qualifications. However it could also stimulate a desire for more learning. This comment illustrates the general feeling that was expressed:

I always envy [colleague who has] a lot more background than I have ... she just knows how to integrate religious education and the *GNFL* into everything she does ... I want, I need more knowledge myself, I think, and more practice of how to use that not just in class situations but in any situation. (K)

The participants raised several issues about professional learning for religious educators. In particular, there was a lack of planning for and time committed to, professional learning in religious education within the school calendar. Participants reported that, often, religious education workshops were planned to be held at the end of the day when teachers were less motivated. Pupil-free days were perceived to be more beneficial; however, these were few and they were usually used for professional learning in literacy or numeracy. This comment reflects the experience of participants:

The best PD [professional development/learning] happens during the day, not after school, when people come in and they're tired and looking at the

clock. All the PD we've done has been on a pupil-free day. People are a lot more relaxed and ready to give of themselves and take in what is given, but we've never yet considered a pupil-free day for religious education. (B)

There was often a lack of access to programs for individuals and school teams and a lack of information about what programs may be offered outside the school or opportunity for teachers to attend. The overarching challenge presented to leaders of the change process was how to respond to the wide differentiation in teacher needs.

The study has indicated that there is a need for effective leadership and organisation of professional learning for religious educators. It is evident that an ad hoc approach to professional learning that has little relationship to the day-to-day world of the classroom was likely to limit the benefits of the change process.

A career-long, planned approach to professional learning of teachers has been advocated by Collarbone (2003) and Fessler and Ingram (2003). Their contention is that professional learning could be monitored through an appropriate set of teacher standards. It is imperative that professional learning opportunities in religious education are high quality, promote effective adult learning and help teachers to integrate the Catholic faith tradition (D'Souza, 2009; Bracken, 2007).

Professional learning that focuses on building classroom practice is essential for religious educators. Professional learning in religious education should build at least three levels of understanding: a foundational sense of moral purpose that has been formed in relation to the reality of students' lives, pedagogical content knowledge in relation to religious education, and collaborative planning with colleagues and experts to ensure active learning for students. The third of these areas will be discussed further in Category Six.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: lack of internal accountability practices.

This study has explored a religious education context at a time of change. Curriculum implementation is a process of change and this study is focusing on the first year of implementation. The analysis of the data pertaining to this category has revealed factors that challenged the change process. In this sub-category the first of these factors was that challenges within the change process are likely to increase where there is a lack of clear accountability structures within the school. The infrastructure for religious education in relation to other areas of the curriculum is likely to be weakened when there are low expectations of professionalism with regard to religious education. This may be

evidenced in a lack of authority in the role of the AP:RE, when there are few processes for monitoring the curriculum and when there are teachers who lack qualifications in religious education.

A major challenge to the implementation of a new curriculum is the professional learning necessary for classroom teachers. In a region such as Tasmania, where there is little opportunity for teachers to gain the appropriate qualifications in religious education and there is likely to be wide differentiation in the level of competency and confidence amongst religious educators, a planned and continuous model of professional development is more likely to take into account the needs of qualified and unqualified teachers. Professional learning is likely to be most effective when it is targeted towards both the deeper, conceptual needs and the practical needs of religious educators. The following sub-category explores the challenges within the change process presented by lack of communication between schools and the CEOH.

Lack of effective communication between school and the CEOH.

In this section the second sub-category relating to Category Five: Challenges within the Change Process is presented. As discussed under Category Three, the implementation of *GNFL* was assisted by the principles of collaboration that reciprocally helped to build a more collaborative culture within Catholic education in Tasmania. One of the positive outcomes of this was that communication of the change at the school site was increased through the participation of school-based leaders in curriculum development. However, the present sub-category has revealed that there was a need to build more effective processes of communication where previously there had been ineffective processes.

In order to understand the importance of building effective, two-way communication, it is necessary to present some background on the culture that existed prior to 2003 in Tasmanian Catholic education. Prior to 2003 schools tended to work as independent bodies with the CEOH acting as a supervisory body rather than an organisation that offered professional services to schools. The relationship was based on a traditional, hierarchical model of leadership with top-down communication. For this situation to change, a significant cultural shift had to take place. An effective infrastructure including effective and consistent means of two-way communication between the CEOH and schools had to be established.

In this sub-category the challenge of effective, two-way communication is presented from two perspectives. First the perspective of school personnel regarding

communication from CEOH to schools and, secondly, communication from schools to CEOH.

Communication from CEOH to schools.

Participants indicated that there was ineffective communication between the CEOH and schools. These were likely to inhibit collaboration and therefore to limit the effectiveness of the change process. Participants suggested that there was inconsistency in the quality of communication about the progress of the development of *GNFL* and about the overall change process.

Participants, especially the principals and AP:REs, reported that they were able to develop a deep understanding of the innovation due to their participation in the collaborative consultations. These school-based leaders actively communicated the change at the school site. It was essential that principals and AP:REs within the school be able to communicate the change effectively to teachers. However, at the production phase, teachers perceived that there was little communication about the change given from CEOH directly to teachers. The CEOH relied on information being distributed by school-based leaders.

Where the principal, and especially the AP:RE, communicated the change well, teachers were more informed and more involved in the process of change. Teachers were also more informed about possible professional learning opportunities.

From the teachers' perspective, however, communication of the change was less consistent. Where the school-based leaders did not communicate the change, appropriate communication did not take place. Teachers were less informed, less involved in the change and less confident about it. This comment illustrates the perceptions of those teachers:

It was very much kept a secret I think, not intentionally, it was just that our previous REC did a fantastic job of telling us. As soon as something came out we knew about it ... It's really hard this year because [the principal] has got ten gazillion things to do as well as having to do REC so there's a lot of stuff we miss out on, not to anyone's fault; it's just that that is what's happened. (K)

Constant communication between members of a system increases the consistency of application to reach system goals and the sharing of expertise and good practice across the system (Fullan, 2010). However, the participants revealed that communication about

change is often lost in the busy life of the school. When the innovation begins to affect classroom practice teachers begin to focus more consciously on the change.

There was a lack of clear expectations from the CEOH that leaders at the school site would ensure that all teachers were well informed about the change and therefore more included in the process of participating in the change. When the principals and AP:REs took responsibility to ensure that teachers were informed and that they were offered the opportunity to become more actively involved, the change process was more effective. Ensuring that information flowed effectively from the centralised body to teachers at the school site was a major challenge to the change process. Developing an effective means for information to flow from teachers to the CEOH proved to be an equally major challenge.

Communication from schools to CEOH.

As indicated above, prior to the implementation of *GNFL*, a significant divide was perceived to exist between schools and the CEOH. A consequence of this perceived divide was that CEOH personnel had little information about the internal needs each school had in order to implement *GNFL*. This presented a challenge within the change process. In the implementation of a curriculum innovation there is a need for schools to be able to plan strategically for change. However, participants perceived that there was little understanding at the CEOH about school priorities. This was the view expressed by participants:

We need to identify what our aims are for the year and have specific aims for professional development. What tends to happen is we plan to do one thing and the CEOH will come out with other priorities like Maths. It affects teachers who then go into defensive mode and say, “I will just do what I have to do to survive”. To do things well needs to have ongoing support and it needs to be connected with the classroom. (V)

Each school had to deal with a multitude of circumstances unique to their community. It was important that each school community work with the education officer to ensure that the support they were receiving was targeting real needs within the school. Differences in school structure, teacher needs and the capacity of schools to organise for leadership of the implementation all impacted on the way the education officer worked within the school. It was necessary for the education officers to build ongoing relationships with schools so that support could be targeted to individual school needs.

Participants perceived that communication between schools and the CEOH was ineffective as well and that therefore, their participation in ongoing curriculum implementation would also be ineffective. Some teachers were very confident and enthusiastic about making a contribution to the ongoing development of the curriculum framework through their reflective critique of the materials within *GNFL*. However some teachers believed otherwise as this response shows:

We tend to be given things to do ... but there does not seem to be a mechanism to take things back into the system. There's no feedback and I feel that with a lot of things ... I am not sure anyone is listening. I am not sure you are getting feedback from us, or if you have the time to think about what we are doing here. We are the ones actually doing it and you [the CEOH staff] really need to know whether it is working or not. (P)

Alignment between the centralised body and individual schools is vital to the change process (Turkington, 2009). The participants in this study perceived that the CEOH as a centralised body was not listening to the needs of schools. It was perceived that there was little awareness of the real capacities of leaders within the schools and of the professional needs of teachers. There was little consideration for the plans of schools with regard to ongoing development and there was a perception that the CEOH was responsible for placing competing demands on schools. This increased the likelihood of changes being perceived as having been imposed on schools and this, subsequently, increased resistance to change.

This suggested that there was a clear responsibility on the CEOH to ensure that schools were consulted about impending changes so that their impact would be anticipated and planned for strategically. There was also a need to communicate with schools that the feedback requested had been received and valued. A change process is more likely to bring about positive results when centralised bodies work closely with schools and understand the challenges of each context.

The study has indicated that there is a danger of attempting to implement curriculum changes in a vacuum when the centralised body is unaware of the context in which the change is to be implemented in schools. The establishment of effective communication between schools and the CEOH was also essential for the involvement of teachers in the ongoing critical development of *GNFL*.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: lack of effective communication.

An analysis of the data in this sub-category, Lack of Effective Communication, has shown that communication about the change between CEOH and schools was inconsistent and that this presented a challenge to the change process. While principals and AP:REs were better informed about the change, teachers depended on receiving information disseminated by school-based leaders rather than directly from CEOH. In Category Three, it was shown that the communication of the change was highly effective when the principals, and especially the AP:REs, communicated information about the change at the school. However, in schools where there was a lack of effective internal leadership, teachers were disadvantaged. The study has indicated that leaders who were able to cross the traditional boundaries between school and the centralised body were essential to bridging the communication gap between them.

The implementation of *GNFL* established more effective communication through the dynamic operating between the leaders at the interface, that is, the education officers, principals and AP:REs. In the change process, effective dissemination of information to all stakeholders, especially to teachers from the centralised body is essential. However, school-based leaders can effectively communicate information about a change and involve teachers in it. Consistency of information sent to teachers across the schools is more likely to occur when school-based leaders have a clear understanding of their role in the change process and communicate their understanding of the change to teachers.

The change was more likely to be perceived as imposed when there was a lack of genuine two-way communication processes, when teachers believed that they were not listened to and when they did not understand the changes being initiated by CEOH. Communication between the centralised body and schools is more likely to be improved when collaborative relationships are established and school- or system-based personnel work on joint projects when opportunities arise.

Emerging theory from category five: challenges within the change process.

The move towards a more collaborative culture across Catholic education in Tasmania has revealed a lack of internal infrastructure for the accountability of religious education in schools and lack of effective communication between CEOH and schools. Collaborative cultures are unlikely to arise without deliberate planning and targeted resources. The analysis of the data in this category has shown that a mutually beneficial relationship had to be forged between what had seemed to have been two separate entities. Effective links between schools and the CEOH are likely to develop through

collaborative relationships between personnel. Religious education is more likely to take its place alongside other areas of the curriculum when there is an appropriate infrastructure providing for accountability and effective communication. This infrastructure is characterised by high expectations of professionalism with regard to religious education, and mutually beneficial relationship between CEOH and schools.

This category has explored two areas that challenged the change process that were signs of significant change due to the implementation of *GNFL*. Table 15 summarises the insights and emerging theory. A further analysis of the insights and emerging theory will follow.

Table 15

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Five: Challenges Within the Change Process

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Five: Challenges within the Change Process	
Lack of Internal Accountability Practices in Religious Education	The infrastructure for religious education in relation to other areas of the curriculum is likely to be weakened when there are low expectations of professionalism with regard to religious education. Where there is a wide range of competency and confidence amongst religious educators, a planned and continuous model of professional development is more likely to take into account the needs of qualified and unqualified teachers.
Lack of Effective Communication Between School and the CEOH	Change is more likely to be perceived as imposed when there is a lack of genuine two-way communication. Communication between the centralised body and schools is more likely to be improved when collaborative relationships are established and school, system-based personnel work on joint projects, when teachers believe that they are listened to and when they understand the changes being initiated by CEOH.
Emerging Theory: Collaborative cultures are unlikely to arise without deliberate planning and targeted resources. A mutually beneficial relationship has to be forged between separate entities. Effective links between schools and the CEOH are more likely to develop through collaborative relationships between personnel. Religious education is more likely to take its place alongside other areas of the curriculum when there is an appropriate infrastructure that provides for accountability and effective communication. This infrastructure is characterised by high expectations of professionalism with regard to religious education and a mutually beneficial relationship between CEOH and schools.	

Further conceptual analysis of the emerging theory.

A significant sign of change was the challenge placed on the change process by the lack of an effective infrastructure for religious education. In understanding the significance of this sign of change, it is important to consider that the educational context in which the change was occurring was in transition from a hierarchical to a collaborative model of organisation. The study has shown that a collaborative culture is less likely to be developed when there is lack of mutual accountability and two-way communication. A collaborative culture of change requires a highly professional infrastructure, and reciprocally, it is likely to assist a highly professional infrastructure to be built.

A significant sign of change is when members of an organisation become aware that the current structures are inadequate to promote a high performing and professional, collaborative culture. There is a major challenge in maintaining cohesion through effective accountability and communication in a devolved educational context. In the further analysis of this emerging theory the following section will consider current literature, the views of experts in the field and the researcher's expertise and experience in exploring the concept of a highly professional infrastructure that encompasses both schools and the centralised body.

Effective infrastructure for religious education within the school and with the centralised body.

The insights and emerging theory within this category have reinforced that a collaborative culture has implications for the type of leadership expressed within it. They have also suggested that the infrastructure must enable collaboration to occur effectively. This study has shown that there were significant challenges to the change process brought about by a lack of a professional infrastructure of accountability and communication.

Dissemination of information is an important factor in promoting teacher involvement in curriculum development and an authentic contribution to change. Accurate dissemination of information is one of the most difficult aspects of the implementation phase. One of the most effective factors in communication is having school-based leaders who are well informed about the change and can translate that at the school site (Ramparsad, 2001). This study has shown that school-based leaders must know their responsibilities in communicating the change at the school site. Deliberate strategies for effective implementation of curriculum must include mutual accountability and communication.

Building interconnectedness.

The advent of a model of organisation that reflects a highly devolved collaborative culture heralds the downfall of the self-reference group and a silo view of organisation (Waite, 2010). It subsequently raises a broader awareness of the communal aspects of organisation. A professional, collaborative culture, where the perception of the organisation is as a network, is characterised not only by diversity of context and the need for flexibility, but also the need for interconnectedness. There needs to be a strong relationship between the parts and the whole. Members of a collaborative network need regularly to reflect on what is the connective membrane, the spirit that animates it and holds it together (Walker, 2010). Organisations need regularly to return to their roots, values and their moral purposes. The aim is to work cohesively rather than compliantly to encourage innovation and creativity. An effective infrastructure of mutual accountability and communication is essential within such a context to enable a spirit of connectedness and collaboration to prevail over compliance.

Compliance or collaboration?

Compliance relates to an unequal relationship where one party adheres to the prescriptive directions or policy of another, higher authority (Waite, 2010). Collaboration by contrast is a partnership for mutual benefit, involving parties with responsibilities within their sphere of influence that contribute to a collective purpose (DuFour et al., 2006). In religious education, compliance has been a major issue in some dioceses especially when curriculum change has been imposed through a top-down approach with little participation by teachers at the classroom site (Round Table Experts). This had a positive influence on formally documented processes of accountability: clearly articulated responsibilities of leadership; indicators of effective programming and planning; and clear understandings of the school's responsibilities to the diocesan authorities. Yet the issue of the perceived lack of importance of religious education within the curriculum and its relationship with other disciplines remains (Round Table Experts). This suggests that the value of religious education has largely not been understood within the total curriculum and the educational enterprise of the school.

The Tasmanian experience has shown that there was a lack of infrastructure, which tended to weaken the position of religious education within the school curriculum. However, increased compliance and accountability measures alone may not change the situation. This study has shown that overall improvement of religious education practices

within the school and between schools and the CEOH is more likely to occur through shared goals and attention to collaborative relationships characterised by mutual accountability, responsibility and communication.

Within the dynamic of collaborative leadership the principal has a major role in creating the internal collaborative culture within the school and in working with centrally based staff (Fullan et al., 2006; Lewis & Andrews, 2009; Lieberman & Woods, 2003). What is necessary is building collaborative accountability. This is more than just examining teachers' work programs. It is school leaders and education officers entering into professional conversations with teachers and critically reflecting on the impact of teaching on students (Round Table Experts).

Internal practices must communicate high expectations of professionalism in religious education aligned with the whole curriculum. This includes the structures that enable religious leadership, especially by the AP:RE, and clarity of professional expectations with regard to coordinating, planning, evaluation and programming of religious education within the school. Strategies can then be employed to strengthen internal monitoring. These include professional learning communities, co-planning and dialogue, lesson studies or buddy teachers. Employment of qualified teachers of religious education and a strategic plan for initial accreditation and the continuous professional learning of staff are essential to the development of a highly professional collaborative culture.

Cooperation and collegiality.

Control and authority in a professional, collaborative culture is more complex and distinctly different from that exercised in a hierarchical model of organisation. Cooperation and collegiality are essential at all sites within the network, the school and the centralised structures. All of the knowledge and power is not centred in one place but widely distributed and this is recognised within the system as a whole. Rather than decreasing authority of the education officer or other centralised staff, this is more likely to increase their influence at the school site. It also enables principals and other school-based leaders to contribute to initiatives that influence the whole system.

A structure that serves schools well sees the principal as the key educational leader. It is the principal who interacts with the wider educational community. Middle-level leaders, such as AP:REs, are responsible for leading curriculum within the school, and the establishment of a professional learning community while teachers focus on effective teaching and learning as their goal (Gurr, 2010). This perspective reflects a

hierarchical model of school organisation, which could tend to reinforce the notion that schools and centralised authorities are separate entities. This would reinforce any disconnectedness between schools and their social reality. It also reinforces the disconnectedness between researchers, policymakers and classroom practitioners. In a collaborative culture, a funnel-like concept of knowledge and expertise, where the people at the top have the knowledge and expertise, and leadership is about sharing this in a one-way, downward process, is inappropriate. In reality, expertise is not hierarchical in a school or in the educational community. In a professional, collaborative culture information is shared amongst leaders (Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2003; Lambert, 2003).

This study has shown that expertise is found throughout a system, not solely within positions of appointed leadership. Even when they lack content knowledge in religious education, teachers are still able to contribute their skills in education to the religious education program. Category Two showed that they do this readily, seeking the educational value in their teaching. Teachers want to be co-constructors in projects that affect their students and their classroom practice (Healy & Bush, 2010). It is the contention here that, in a collaborative culture, expertise is shared. Voices are equal but not the same. Each educator can contribute to the benefit of the whole organisation.

Large-scale educational change is difficult, and in the past, it often resulted in failure (Elmore, 2007). As discussed in Chapter Two, neither top-down nor bottom-up approaches have been successful in implementing change. Change in a collaborative and devolved structure is not going to occur in the same way as it did, or at least attempted to do, in the past, when educational structures were more hierarchical. In a high performing, professional, collaborative culture, influence is likely to be exercised in diverse ways by diverse members across the system. This is likely to require more relational expressions of leadership and professional infrastructure in order to build and maintain cohesion and move the whole organisation forward.

Synthesising the theory.

The further analysis of the insights and emerging theory from this category has revealed that the implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education is more likely to occur when there is an effective infrastructure of mutual accountability and when there is effective communication throughout the organisation. In a high performing, professional and collaborative culture that operates in highly devolved ways, effective change is more likely to occur when educational networks regularly reflect on

their deep-seated values and purposes to give coherence and connectedness throughout the organisation (Walker, 2010).

This study has revealed that implementation of curriculum is likely to be most effective when the organisation is conceptualised as a professional, collaborative culture focused on high performance through change and improvement. It recognises not only the capacity of members of the organisation to exercise leadership within their sphere of influence but that they are also vitally connected to the whole through a professional infrastructure. Lack of a clear structure within and extending beyond the school has the potential to block effectiveness and coherence in such a context and therefore to limit change and improvement. Blockages, inefficiencies and lack of overall improvement are likely to occur where there is disconnection between schools and centralised authorities. When an organisation is perceived as a living, interconnected entity, the role of the centralised body is likely to be most effective when it aims to influence, excite, stimulate and support creativity and innovation. An effective infrastructure supports a high performing and professional, collaborative culture and helps to facilitate change across the organisation.

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A sign of significant change was evident when members of the Tasmanian Catholic education community perceived that current infrastructure was inadequate within an educational organisation that was in transition towards becoming a collaborative culture. Whilst moving towards a diverse and devolved situation, where the locus of change was focused on the school, there was also a need for cohesion through an effective infrastructure of accountability and communication.

The successful implementation of a new curriculum is likely to be blocked when an organisation is disconnected from its core purpose and when a lack of a professional infrastructure leads to fragmentation. The change process is more likely to be effective in a high performing and professional, collaborative culture. This culture is characterised by respect for diversity, respect for the expertise and leadership capabilities of all members and mutual accountability and communication. It is most likely to be effective when there is connectedness to the deeply held understanding of the moral purpose of the whole organisation and a shared commitment to teacher learning and improvement that will benefit students.

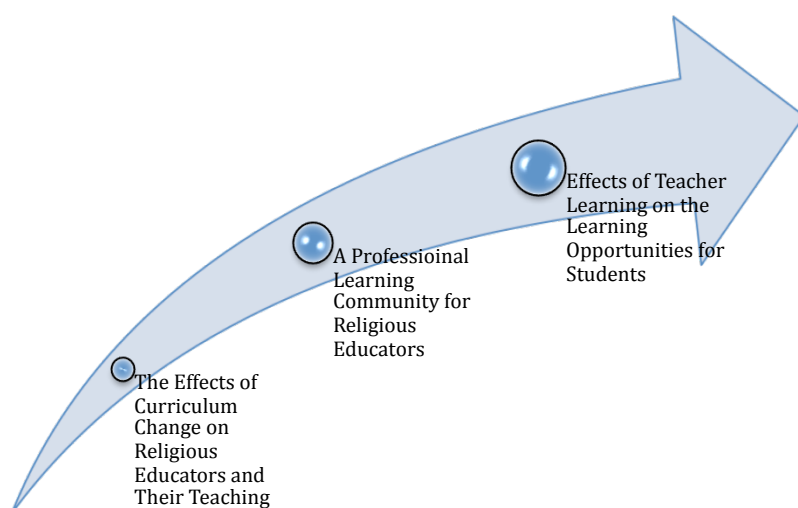
Category Six: The Effects of Curriculum Change on Religious Educators and Their Teaching

Introduction

The purpose of the present chapter is to present the findings of this study pertaining to significant signs of change. Category Five revealed that the change process brought a more professional, collaborative culture in relation to religious education. However, the weakness of the infrastructure was likely to present a challenge to the change process and block any change to teacher practice and planning for student learning. The consolidated theory from Category Five suggests that, in a collaborative culture, curriculum change is likely to be most effective when it has a supportive infrastructure of mutual accountability and communication. This will assist an educational organisation to become a high performing, professional, collaborative culture.

The final category, Category Six, reports the findings of the analysis of the data pertaining to the effects of curriculum change on religious educators and their teaching. These are illustrated in Figure 18.

Figure 18. The Effects of Curriculum Change on Religious Educators and Their Teaching



The effects of the curriculum change in religious education led to the establishment of a professional learning community for religious educators. This had a direct effect on the learning opportunities offered to students.

The investigation of student outcomes was beyond the purpose of this research. However, this study found that there was a change to the quality of teachers' planning for student learning that was brought about by the implementation of *GNFL*. These findings are elaborated in the following sections.

The analysis has revealed that there was a direct relationship between the learning of teachers within a professional learning community and the quality of the learning experiences planned for students. When religious educators engage in professional learning that enables them to find meaning in the content they are teaching, and to focus on the educational value of religious education, they can make more creative curriculum decisions and plan for meaningful student learning. The findings of the category will be presented in two sub-categories: A Professional Learning Community for Religious Educators, and Effects of Teacher Learning on the Learning Opportunities for Students.

A professional learning community for religious educators.

In previous categories, aspects of a collaborative, professional learning community have been explored. The study has revealed that having such a community was integral to the successful implementation of *GNFL* because it linked the vision of the curriculum with the day-to-day world of the classroom. This was achieved through the collaboration of leaders internal and external to the school – principals; AP:REs; education officers – with teachers, focusing on their professional needs and their work with students.

The learning of teachers and students benefits from highly collaborative cultures, where tacit knowledge can be shared (Fullan, 2001a). The work within professional learning communities changed relationships between school and central personnel within Catholic education in Tasmania. As identified in Chapter Five, the change to a collaborative culture was the catalyst for changes to the way members of the educational community worked together. Building on this finding, this sub-category explores the effects of a professional learning community within the school.

Two key findings within this sub-category will be explored in the following sections. First, it will be shown that the establishment of a professional learning community within schools contributed towards a more collegial context for religious educators professionally. Secondly, it will be argued that professional learning communities are likely to provide an effective environment for teachers to develop personal meaning in the content they are going to teach.

Collegial context for teacher learning.

The participants in this study identified that the establishment of professional learning communities across Catholic schools during the implementation of *GNFL* change the way religious educators planned for student learning. Collegiality harnesses the collective power shared within a group (Harris, 2003; MacGilchrist, 2003). The collegial relationships that resulted from working in a professional learning community enabled religious educators to enter into reflective dialogue around the content of the faith tradition and to share pedagogical knowledge and skills.

The participants recognised that the implementation of *GNFL* was achieved through a model of professional learning that was different from models they had experienced in the past. Participants valued a supportive learning environment that promoted collegiality because of the equality in the relationship between the education officer facilitating the session and the teachers and their capacity to contribute to the dialogue. This supportive environment was perceived as one where fears of change, and barriers to teacher learning, could be overcome. Vulnerabilities could be revealed and self-esteem and confidence could be increased. Participants perceived that there was a respectful relationship between the education officer and themselves as they were led in professional dialogue in the content and pedagogy of the religious education program. This comment illustrated the view of participants:

I thought my question was “dumb” but I would ask it anyway. [The education officer] was great. She didn’t make you feel that you were asking the wrong question or that you should know that. It was very relaxed ... as a conversation, it was two-way. A dialogue. It wasn’t just her, you know, lecturing to us. She was asking our opinion so to speak. (K)

Participants revealed that professional learning communities also provided for increased interaction and revitalised relationships with colleagues. Participants perceived that their professionalism was respected and increased through the collegiality they experienced in professional learning communities. This response was typical of many participants:

With all the new curriculum documentation that has come into our schools at the moment, I think developing the actual learning teams is such a valuable resource that every school should take it on board if they haven’t started doing it. It makes it easier for us, to bounce our ideas around and plan together. It’s building confidence. It’s reassuring that you are doing

the right thing. It's "How about we try things?" and you are constantly having someone to keep you enthusiastic about your work. (Y)

It was perceived that collaborative professional learning communities allowed for the sharing of ideas and open dialogue building confidence amongst the staff. Participants in this study judged it to be better quality professional learning because teachers were less afraid to reveal their individual or group professional needs. It was perceived that professional learning communities provided opportunity for teachers to work with the AP:RE or education officer, and be engaged with the new curriculum framework and learning at the locus of the school.

Instigating professional learning communities was therefore an effective strategy to build teacher knowledge, skill and confidence through collegiality. Change was more likely to be effective because it was easier to reach teachers directly, engaging them in dialogue with colleagues around the content and pedagogy of religious education. The following section explores the findings with regard to the value of a collegial environment for the development of teachers' ability to find personal meaning in the content of the religious education program.

Developing personal meaning.

The development of personal meaning is a key desired outcome of adult learning. The way we come to new knowledge is through a process of meaning making through communication and dialogue (Mezirow, 1990; Brookfield, 2005). Teaching is an exercise in making and sharing meaning where teachers make regarding the explicit goals of the curriculum are likely to affect how those goals are presented to students (Smith & Lovat, 2003). This study has revealed that, through professional learning communities religious educators were able to participate in a collegial environment that promoted the development of personal meaning in the content they were going to teach. Below, it will be argued that this impacted upon the quality of learning experiences planned for student learning.

Personal meaning is a complex concept that was described by Csikszentmihalyi (1991) as an experience where there is unity of purpose and a resolution to act. It is a conscious commitment to something that is found to be worthwhile. Personal and collective meanings are constructed (Mead, 1934). Meanings are fluid and shaped by interaction with experiences throughout life, but they also empower one to act (Lock & Strong, 2010). The analysis of the data from the participants in this study revealed that personal meaning for the religious educator is the capacity to understand the content of

the faith tradition, to find it valuable to oneself, and to integrate this with their professional skill and expertise as educators, in order to develop valuable and meaningful learning opportunities for their students. This comment illustrated the importance of meaningful learning for the participants:

Now I know what I am teaching. I know why I am teaching this and it is explicit for the children as well. So it has meaning. It is not just, “Oh we are going to look at this passage. Here, let’s talk about that”. It’s “This is the idea we’re looking at and let’s see what we can find out and where it is upheld and where it would be embedded in our lives?” It becomes meaningful ... There has to be a purpose to this teaching that has to be understood. (P)

It was perceived that the professional learning communities provided the collegial environment where meaning could be found as teachers explored the content of the faith tradition. The religious educator must have expertise and confidence to enable them to teach the discipline effectively especially when dealing with difficult topics (Rymarz, 2004). This study suggested that teachers are more likely to be supported in finding meaning from the content they teach in religious education through the supportive collegial environment of a professional learning community.

Not only were religious educators supported in their search for meaning within the content of the faith tradition, they were also supported to develop new meaning in the educational dimensions of religious education, through professional discussion about appropriate pedagogy. Working with *GNFL* in a professional learning community influenced teachers’ professional beliefs about religious education. Participants reported that the approach to religious education in the framework enabled them to draw on expertise they commonly employed in other areas of the curriculum. In the collegial environment of the professional learning community, the dialogue was focused, not only on understanding the content, but also on the best ways that content might be taught. This indicated a shift in thinking about religious education from a predominantly an enfaithing approach to an educational endeavour.

Under Category Two it was reported that awareness of the educational attributes of religious education gave teachers confidence to begin to use *GNFL* because it could be used in a way that was consistent with their professional beliefs and practices. Collegiality is a powerful force for positive change (Harris, 2003). Participants in this study showed that, within a collegial learning environment, religious educators were

motivated to try new ideas, to move towards new practices, and to see educational meaning in their teaching. A comment from participants illustrates this point:

[The content] needs to be stimulating to make me think I can use it to create this good learning sequence. You can come up with the idea and then have something that really gets the creativity going once you get the ideas; then you go to every resource you can find to build up your [student] learning experiences. (W)

This category has contributed to the understanding of religious educators as active and critical decision-makers when they create a religious education program for students. The ability and opportunity to find meaning in the content and pedagogy of religious education impacts upon the kinds of choices they make in relation to student learning. The opportunity to engage in dialogue with colleagues, the education officer, the AP:RE and other teachers created a learning culture where teachers were supported in reflecting on the content of the faith tradition, able to develop meaning and able to develop new professional beliefs and practices in their teaching of religious education.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: a professional learning community for religious educators.

Professional learning communities can create a collegial environment for teacher learning. Reciprocally this environment is likely to contribute to religious educators developing meaning in the content and pedagogy of religious education. Participants valued the collegial learning environment established by collaborative professional learning communities because they assisted religious educators to implement *GNFL* in their classroom practice. Within a supportive environment, teachers' fears due to lack of knowledge and confidence in religious education are more likely to be overcome. As they deepen their knowledge and understanding of the content of the curriculum, the professional esteem of religious educators is more likely to increase because of respect for their professionalism as teachers and the contribution they can make to religious education. Teacher needs are more likely to be addressed, and those who may be reluctant are more likely to be engaged in the change process. A collaborative professional learning environment is likely to assist religious educators to find meaning in the content and pedagogy of religious education and to change the way teachers approach religious education. Teachers are more likely to find meaning in the content they are going to teach in a collegial professional learning environment. The development of professional

learning communities is likely to have a significant impact on the way teachers approach religious education.

The effects of teacher learning on learning opportunities for students.

The analysis of the data within this sub-category revealed that there is a direct link between the personal meaning a teacher finds in the content and pedagogy of religious education and the quality of the learning opportunities planned for students. In order to understand the significance of the effect of the implementation of *GNFL* on the teaching of religious education, this section will first explore the prevailing student learning context and the change brought about by the innovation implemented through professional learning communities within the school. The section then presents reasons for this change.

The prevailing student learning context.

The participants in this study perceived that prior to the implementation of *GNFL*, the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) were mandated for use but not fully understood or used well by religious educators. Many participants perceived the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1995) as difficult to use, citing such reasons as the large size and heavy weight of the folder as disincentives. However, at a more significant level, participants indicated that there was a lack of understanding of the curriculum structure, the theory and methodology of experiential catechesis or the philosophical underpinnings of the document. Participants revealed that some teachers preferred to use the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1984) because they were familiar with them and they presented information in a format that was easy to communicate verbatim to students. Participants gave examples of what the prevailing approach to religious education had been. None of the examples reflected the approach in the *Guidelines* (CEOM, 1984, 1995). Participants gave examples of what the prevailing approach to religious education had been:

... we would give the children information on say, Ash Wednesday. Come Ash Wednesday the teachers still looked for that paragraph, that little snippet [from the *Guidelines*, (CEOM, 1984)]. They photocopied that or gave that to the children or got them to copy it down and then talk about it.
(C)

This reaffirmed the earlier finding that teachers lacked a clear understanding of the purpose and the practice of religious education. This revealed that there was a prevailing lack of understanding about experiential catechesis as neither *Guidelines*

(CEOM, 1984, 1995) had been used appropriately. Participant responses showed a didactic approach to religious education. Participants identified an emphasis on transmission of information and this was copied out by students with a picture added either coloured in or drawn. The perception was that religious education was divorced from both the issues of children's lives and the way other subject areas were taught.

More active student learning opportunities.

The participants identified that, with the implementation of *GNFL*, there was a change in the way teachers thought about religious education and this influenced their planning for student learning. This was identified as a change from a passive learning approach to active learning. Participants reported that changes to teachers' practices were resulting in more student engagement in their new learning. There was more excitement about religious education and more opportunity for learning that was higher order thinking. This comment illustrates the general perception of participants:

We did a lot of professional learning on *thinking*. I think that it is really important to teach thinking in religious education. We wanted to get children to think about things, thinking deeply and asking deep questions about their religion. (A)

Participants described the religious education classroom as active and involved due to strategies that promoted thinking and inquiry compared with the past when it had been focused on the transmission of information. Teachers perceived that the approach to religious education in *GNFL* meant that content was not imposed. In the past teachers had avoided content they believed to be irrelevant for students, suggesting that the teachers themselves did not understand the content they had to teach. They now perceived that they had the ability to make curriculum choices and to increase the relevance for students especially through a conceptual level of learning linked with the *ELs Framework*.

The more experienced and confident the teacher, the less dependent they were on resources that were provided with the framework. Experienced and confident teachers taught from their internalised understanding of content and pedagogy rather than from plans and resources. There was a strong correlation between the ability of the teachers to make informed curriculum choices and the quality of student learning opportunities. This comment exemplifies how participants viewed working with the framework:

We go to *GNFL* and see what it says. We look at the key elements the students are expected to have a notion of and then from there we might go and have a look at what suggestions they have [in the resource banks] and

if there is nothing there that we think that we can use, we will then discuss what we think would be a better approach or what do we think would be more beneficial for these children, and we will go and plan that. (I)

The participants identified that there was a change towards inquiry learning for students in religious education. Teachers were now challenging students to ask questions and to research the answers. Participants reported that they were more interested in facilitating student learning through resources such as the internet. Student questions were now viewed as a sign of student interest. Teachers' questions were more open-ended, encouraging further investigation by students. Teaching and learning pathways in religious education now included individualised learning, the use of educational theory such as multiple intelligences and whole brain learning, investigation, conversation, thinking, asking and reflecting, complementing the general curriculum as articulated in the *EL's Framework*.

The effect of the implementation of *GNFL* on the teaching of religious education was significant. The participants revealed that teachers had begun to change their approach to religious education to one involving more purposeful, relevant teaching and more active learning.

Meaningful learning for teachers influences student learning opportunities.

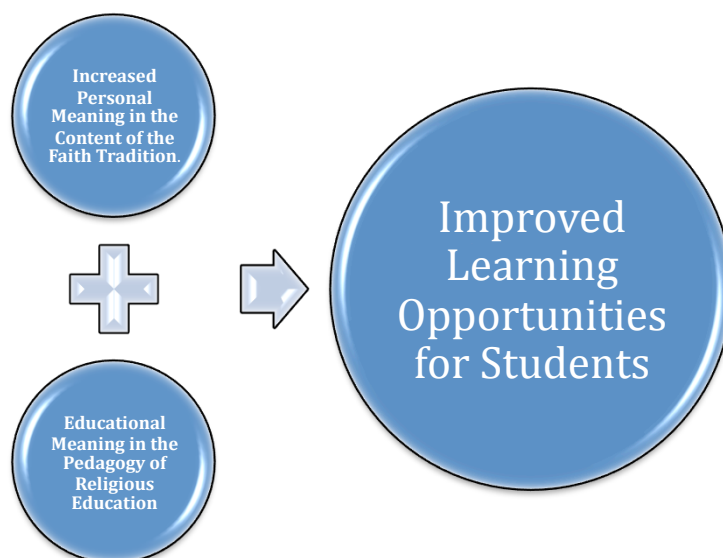
The analysis of this category has revealed that the implementation of *GNFL* through the support of the professional learning community resulted in a significant change in the way religious education was taught. The study suggests that improved opportunities for student learning are directly related to the level of meaning a teacher finds in the content and pedagogy of religious education. Teachers were able to understand and find meaning in the content they were expected to teach and were therefore able to create meaningful, purposeful and substantial learning opportunities for students. This comment from a participant summarises the experience of participants:

We knew where we were going and what we wanted the children to achieve out of it. They really understood the process from here to there and how we would get there. We were working together, sharing information and doing things with the kids that were exciting and active. (A)

As examined above, through the provision of a collegial learning environment, teachers could develop and deepen personal meaning within the content of the faith tradition and consider the educational meaning of their pedagogy, thereby transforming professional beliefs about religious education. This study suggests that this capacity in the

teacher to integrate personal and professional meaning contributes towards changes to the learning opportunities provided for students. This relationship is shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19. The Relationship between Personal and Professional Meaning and Opportunities for Student Learning



Teacher learning opportunities that enabled teachers to find increased personal meaning in the content of the faith tradition and to perceive educational meaning in the pedagogy of religious education led to improved student learning opportunities.

Students respond positively to learning processes that are academically rigorous and provide opportunity to generate their own meaning from their learning. Learning goals should aim to lead students towards learning at a level of religious meaning as students engage with, explore and reflect on religious concepts (White, 2004). Participants identified that religious educators need to be authentic in the way they approach the content they are teaching. It was perceived that, in order to do this, the teacher must be able to develop their own ability to find personal meaning in the content of the faith tradition.

There was an understanding amongst participants that religious education had to reflect the way students learned, as this comment illustrates: “Times have changed in how we work with the children and that is what I do like about using this document because

we are changing our teaching in other areas and religious education has to reflect that change too” (L).

Teachers transferred meaningful knowledge and skills from other areas of the curriculum as they engaged in professional learning communities with colleagues. Participants reported that teachers experienced excitement as they planned and created learning pathways for students. They used *GNFL* and contributed ideas that worked for them. This study has revealed that in order to organise rigorous and stimulating learning for students, teachers also need the opportunity for intellectual engagement and opportunity to find personal meaning in the content they teach and professional meaning in the pedagogy they choose to organise student learning.

Emerging insights from the sub-category: effects of teacher learning on the learning opportunities of students.

The integration of meaning that a teacher finds in the content and pedagogy of religious education is likely to have a direct influence on the learning opportunities they plan for students. The collaborative professional learning strategy assisted teachers to find meaning in the content of the faith tradition and brought about a new understanding about what constitutes appropriate pedagogy in religious education. Knowledge, understanding and personal meaning in the content they are going to teach enables teachers to organise improved learning for students.

A passive, didactic approach to religious education had come from the lack of clarity around the nature and purpose of religious education. Active student learning was now more likely to be planned using strategies similar to those in the general curriculum. This is more likely to result in substantial concepts and more meaningful learning opportunities being planned for students.

Emerging theory from category six: the effects of curriculum change on religious educators and their teaching.

A collaborative professional learning culture amongst teachers of religious education is likely to change perceptions of religious education which has a direct, positive impact upon the quality of the learning experiences teachers plan for student learning. Improved quality in student learning opportunities is more likely to occur when teachers perceive the educational qualities of religious education and when educational skills are integrated with the teachers’ deep understanding and personal meaning found in the content of the faith tradition.

Effective teacher learning in a professional learning community directly influences teachers' beliefs about religious education and changed practices. Focusing professional learning on the practical elements of religious education is likely to limit teachers' awareness of the potential of the subject for higher order thinking and substantial, conceptual learning. This study suggests that when a teacher is able to integrate their personal meaning in the content and professional meaning in the pedagogy, it increases the likelihood that the learning opportunities planned for students will be better.

A summary of the insights and emerging theory from this category is provided in Table 16. The further analysis of these insights and emerging theory will be presented in the following section.

Table 16

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Six: The Effects of Curriculum Change on Religious Educators and their Teaching

Insights and Emerging Theory from Category Six: The Effects of Curriculum Change on Religious Educators and Their Teaching	
A Professional Learning Culture for Religious Educators	<p>Professional learning communities are highly likely to engender a collegial environment for teacher learning encouraging religious educators to find personal meaning in the content and pedagogy of religious education.</p> <p>Within a supportive environment, teachers' fears due to lack of knowledge and confidence in religious education are more likely to be overcome and teachers experience respect for the contribution they can make professionally to religious education as they deepen their knowledge, and understanding of, the faith tradition.</p>
Effects of Teacher Learning on the Learning Opportunities for Students	<p>Increased teacher knowledge, understanding and personal meaning in the content they are going to teach, combined with a sense of professional meaning in the pedagogy they use for effective learning, is likely to result in improved learning opportunities for students.</p>
Emerging Theory: <p>Professional learning communities enable teachers to develop knowledge and skill in a collegial learning environment. Effective teacher learning in a professional learning community directly influences teachers' beliefs about religious education and change practices. Better student learning opportunities are more likely to result when teachers perceive the educational qualities of religious education and when educational skills are integrated with the teachers' deep understanding of and personal meaning found in the content of the faith tradition.</p>	

Further conceptual analysis of the emerging theory.

In this final category the tangible effects of the change process has been explored. The emerging theory from this category indicates that the implementation of *GNFL* contributed in an active way towards the establishment of professional learning communities, for religious education, in schools. Reciprocally this influenced the way religious education was taught. This study has highlighted that the integration of the teacher's understanding and personal meaning of the content of the faith tradition and their skill as educators directly influenced the quality of teaching and learning in religious education. In the analysis of this emerging theory, it is important to consider current literature, expert opinion and the researchers' own expertise and experience. This is done with a view to presenting a consolidated theory from the category. In this section the emerging theory will be analysed, then it will be further synthesised before presenting the consolidated theory.

Teachers and their curriculum planning.

The emerging theory from this category suggests that finding personal meaning in content and professional meaning in pedagogy combine to enable teachers to plan for more effective learning for their students. These two factors have emerged as important for the professional learning of religious educators. When the meaning is unclear in either the content or the pedagogy, teaching is highly likely to be ineffective.

However, although these two factors are important, there are many other factors that contribute to effective planning for student learning. Professional skill in planning for student learning is often referred to as pedagogical content knowledge. This is the teacher's ability to facilitate effective student learning through a combination of elements: content knowledge of the subject area, pedagogical knowledge to impart that content and the myriad of factors that affect students and their context for learning (Ellison, 2007, p. 1; Hargreaves, 1995; cf. Shulman, 1987). There is a vital role for professional learning communities in building the pedagogical content knowledge of the religious educator.

Practices that reduce collegial and collaborative professional learning to merely focus on interpreting student data must be monitored (Shirley, 2010; Waite, 2010; Walker, 2010). Much of the recent literature on professional learning communities points to the importance of teachers' becoming skilled in the interpretation of student assessment data (Elmore, 2007; Fullan et al., 2006; Timperley, 2010) The use of test results in some dioceses has developed for both compliance and teacher dialogue around

student learning (Round Table Experts). However, professional learning communities in religious education must not only focus on student learning but that this student learning will be enhanced through deeper teacher learning around the content and pedagogy of religious education.

Planning for student learning is a highly complex exercise that gives teachers a sense of purpose, direction, confidence, security and control. Most importantly it is the teacher's mental plan of what is to occur in the classroom that has most effect on their planning for student learning (Smith & Lovat, 2003). This study supports this view, confirming the importance of pedagogical content knowledge in creating these mental plans.

Curriculum planning is a highly reflective practice where teachers interpret the many forces impacting on the classroom and make their curriculum decisions. Written plans may be modified or discarded in the reality of the classroom; however, mental plans are more likely to remain. Our mindmaps or mindscapes are what we assume to be true; therefore they are powerful determinants of behaviour (West-Burnham, 2009).

Malone and Ryan (1994) have argued that teachers do not operate out of theoretical principles or procedures and that they tend to be more pragmatic in their approach to planning. The professionalism of the teacher directly affects student learning (Smith & Lovat, 2003). This current study has indicated that, when the focus is on purely pragmatic, technical aspects of curriculum planning, the potential for substantial learning outcomes for students is likely to be diminished. This study has revealed the importance of building the professional knowledge and skill of the teacher because the teacher's professional beliefs, assumptions, expectations, perceptions and practices have such a high impact on the quality of student learning opportunities. A collegial learning environment for teachers has the potential to increase effectiveness of teacher planning through the sharing of concepts about content and skills in pedagogy.

A collegial learning environment.

Planning for student learning is related to the teacher's mental plan of what should occur in the classroom. It is also possible that, when planning with colleagues, a collective mental plan can be formed. Professional learning communities are powerful in promoting active engagement in authentic and experiential learning, where teachers can put aside individual assumptions and perceptions of students and collectively identify their real needs and concerns. How educators make meaning together and jointly create new knowledge will lead to intentional change, enhance practice and lead to improved

student learning (Stoll, 2010). One of the Round Table Experts reflected on this in relation to the Tasmanian experience:

Yes, it was not just teaching facts. Because of the teachers' new understanding of why and how they will teach, there was more likelihood of them engaging the students. It is intrinsic motivation. They see the benefits to themselves and the students (Expert One).

Collegially, through professional dialogue, teachers need to be able to take risks and trust, allow real concerns to surface, and connect new ideas with commonly held ideas. Challenge will be experienced but there is also critique and possibility (Shields, 2010; Stoll, 2010).

The place of external expertise.

In an area such as religious education, teachers need to be challenged to think deeply about issues and beliefs and come to an individual and collective sense of meaning in the content they teach. The role of the external expert is essential within a collegial learning environment (Stoll, 2010) and this needs deliberately to be fostered (Kilpatrick, Jones, & Barrett, 2010).

External expertise can contribute to a collegial learning environment several ways. Teachers may attend conferences and studies and bring back the information they receive (Martin, 2008). Teachers become better teachers through active involvement with other teachers (Gellel, 2010b). They may share expertise through written materials or invite experts to come in. It is the school-based learning environment that is the core of the professional learning community. It is here that resources are targeted for professional learning and where it is most likely that significant improvement of the quality of student learning opportunities will be made.

Synthesising the theory.

In the context of Catholic education, religious education must assist students to reflect on the meaning of life and evoke an active response to their learning (SCCE, 1988). Pedagogy enables students to “grasp, appreciate and assimilate” (SCCE, 1977, n. 42) the values of the cultural heritage. Discerning the witness of Jesus Christ and engaging in dialogue with the secular world are two key capacities (Pecklers, 2008). The skills of dialogue, reflective-critical thinking and discernment are therefore crucial within a pedagogy that would be described as Catholic (SCCE, 1988) and therefore integral to religious education.

These expectations place a high value on the teachers' ability to teach these skills. Providing continuous, appropriate professional learning opportunities for teachers is as much a challenge in religious education as in other fields – even more so perhaps because of the sensitive nature of the content that goes to the very heart and spirit of teachers and students.

This study has identified the real professional needs that were made evident in Tasmanian Catholic schools through the implementation of *GNFL*. This category has revealed the direct relationship between the personal meaning teachers find in the content they will teach and the professional meaning behind the pedagogy. Through this study it is evident that teachers began to perceive the educational potential of religious education and to find that it complemented other areas of the curriculum. This gave the religious educators a new perception of professional meaning in religious education.

Further analysis of the findings highlighted the complexity of planning for student learning. The development of an effective mental map of possible learning assists teachers to identify the central purpose within their teaching and assists them to plan to achieve that purpose. The mental map enables the learning process to develop even when written plans are abandoned due to unforeseen circumstances. The concept of mindscapes, mindmaps (West-Burnham, 2009) and mental maps (Smith & Lovat, 2003) has implications for teachers' professional training and continuous professional learning. Effective adult learning is the work of forming and reforming our internal mind maps throughout life (Mezirow, 1990). The current study indicates that teacher learning must focus on building a strong, internal mental model that consists of a sound understanding of the moral purpose of religious education, content knowledge, pedagogical skill and the facility to work in a collegial environment. Such an environment enables teachers to test and broaden their mental maps to ensure that they are truly addressing the reality of the learning context.

Consolidated Theory

The personal and professional meaning a religious educator finds in the religious education curriculum directly affects the quality of the learning opportunities planned for students. Therefore, professional learning for religious educators, must involve the development of understanding and meaning in the content of the faith tradition, and build pedagogical knowledge and skill. Teachers plan according to how they interpret a myriad of factors that influence them, their students and the context in which they teach (Smith & Lovat, 2003). The quality of the learning planned for students and the teaching

subsequently carried out are likely to be directly related to the quality of the mental plan the teacher makes. Individual and collective plans can be made for student learning within a collegial teacher-learning environment such as a professional learning community. Such a collegial environment open to new learning is likely to stimulate more purposeful and effective teaching through the building of collective purpose and the sharing of pedagogical skills.

Individual and collective mental plans are more likely to evolve from consideration of all of the factors within the classroom context that will lead to higher order thinking and substantial conceptual learning in religious education. It is therefore a highly reflective process requiring the ongoing development of pedagogical content knowledge for religious educators.

Conclusions from Chapter Six: Signs of Significant Change

Categories Five and Six have revealed several factors that were signs of significant change due to the implementation of *GNFL*. The implementation process highlighted the need to build an infrastructure that would help to establish a high performing, professional collaborative learning culture with regard to religious education. In Category Six, further effects of the implementation of *GNFL* have been identified. This shift in the mental map of the religious educators gave rise to improved quality of planning for student learning. The findings of Category Six indicate that professional learning of religious educators is likely to be most effective when it engages teachers in a collegial learning environment that promotes the integration of religious and educational meaning.

Chapters Four, Five and Six have presented the findings from this study and have conveyed the factors contributing towards sustaining and supporting change as well as those that have indicated the signs of significant change. Table 17 summarises the key points from the consolidated theory generated from the six categories. In Chapter Seven the conclusions and recommendations of this study will be outlined.

Table 17

Summary of the Key Points of the Consolidated Theory from the Six Categories Presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six

Category	Consolidated Theory
One: Readiness for Change	Readiness for change results from perceived limitations of current practice and the desire to act with moral purpose and moral courage to improve student learning. Moral purpose is more likely to inspire both teachers and students when it is continuously rearticulated, bringing into relationship the enduring questions, relevance and meaning of the faith tradition, the deeply held values of life and the challenges of the social reality of young people in a contemporary world.
Two: The Connection between Religious Educators and the Curriculum Framework	Curriculum implementation in religious education is more likely to be effective when the connection between religious educators and curriculum innovation is regarded as an integral part of the implementation phase. A critical-developmental approach to curriculum change in religious education is likely to result in teachers becoming further committed to change and engaging in new learning.
Three: Collaborative Cultures	Implementation of a curriculum innovation is significantly enhanced by a collaborative culture that effectively communicates the change and connects the centralised body and schools. A collaborative culture is likely to result in the whole educational organisation being highly motivated towards change, with collective purpose. Effective change is more likely to occur when the organisation is animated by the same goals and operates interdependently.
Four: The Dynamics of Leadership	In devolved situations and collaborative cultures, leadership is both diffuse but connected (Walker, 2010). Leadership is more likely to support the implementation of a new curriculum in religious education when it is exercised as a distinct but complementary dynamic of relationships focused on enabling teacher learning, increasing the likelihood of teacher leadership in religious education and potentially improving student learning.
Five: Challenges within the Change Process	The successful implementation of a new curriculum is likely to be blocked when an organisation is disconnected from its core purpose and when the lack of a professional infrastructure leads to fragmentation. The change process is more likely to be effective in a high performing and professional, collaborative culture with connectedness to the deeply held understanding of the moral purpose of the whole organisation and a shared commitment to teacher learning.
Six: Effects of the Change Process	Teachers plan according to how they interpret a myriad of factors that influence them, their students and the context in which they teach. The personal and professional meaning a religious educator finds in the religious education curriculum directly affects the quality of the learning planned for students. Individual and collective plans can be made for student learning within a collegial teacher learning environment such as a professional learning community.

Chapter Seven Recommendations and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to study the experiences, perceptions and issues of primary-school religious educators as they participated in the implementation of *Good News for Living* (CEOH, 2005) (*GNFL*). This was a major curriculum change in religious education across Tasmania, Australia.

This qualitative study was located in an interpretive paradigm of research. It was situated within the epistemology of social constructionism and the theoretical perspective was symbolic interactionism. The study drew on the experiences of selected religious educators in primary schools in the Archdiocese of Hobart who engaged in the implementation of *GNFL*. The data were gathered through unstructured, in-depth interviews, which were audio tape-recorded, transcribed, analysed and interpreted using the principles of grounded theory. Key questions about the implementation of curriculum change in religious education have guided the study. Theory that emerged from the data has been consolidated through further analysis and critical reflection that also took into account views expressed in the literature and those expressed by experts in the field during round table discussions.

In the following sections the theory generated by the study is presented. The links between the research and the literature show how this research moves knowledge beyond the existing body of literature reviewed within this study and then the recommendations from the research are identified. A conclusion to the study is presented to bring it to a close.

The Implementation of Curriculum Change in Religious Education

This study was underpinned by the general research question: What does the implementation of a new curriculum framework in religious education reveal about successful curriculum change? The overall aim of the study, identified in Chapter Three, was to explore the experiences, perceptions and issues of primary school-based religious educators, both teachers and those in appointed school leadership positions as they participated in curriculum implementation. A further aim of the study was to make recommendations to those responsible for change and improvement of religious education within Tasmanian Catholic education. It also aimed to contribute to the existing body of theoretical research within the wider education community pertaining to curriculum change in religious education.

The four key questions that guided the study were originally stated in Chapter

Three and are recalled below:

1. How, and to what extent, do religious educators engage with the change process?
2. How, and to what extent, does the implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education affect relationships within schools, and between schools and the centralised body of CEOH?
3. What factors indicate that the implementation of an innovation is making a change within the educational organisation?
4. What recommendations can be made to the educational community about the implementation of curriculum change in religious education?

The study explored the engagement of religious educators in the change process, its effects on the organisation and the relationships within it, and the tangible indicators that the curriculum change was being effective. The theory generated through the research is presented in this section under the six categories revealed through the study. Three overarching theories that have been generated in relation to the implementation of curriculum in religious education will then be presented.

Readiness for change.

This study found that readiness for change is a powerful, creative force stimulating change in religious education. It is mediated by the tension between one's perception of moral purpose and the limitations of current practice, and it is motivated by the desire to act for the benefit of students.

Moral purpose has been described as a desire to make a difference in the lives of students (Fullan, 2001b). This study found that, for religious educators moral purpose is developed by drawing on their deepest values in response to their work within the school as part of their responsibility towards the faith community and their professional responsibility to the wider community for the learning of young people. It is therefore one purpose that is, at the same time, ministerial and educational, serving the educational needs of young people through a religious perspective, thereby fulfilling the mission of the Church in education (CCE, 1997; SCCE, 1977). Readiness for change was stimulated when the new curriculum framework was perceived as having the potential to assist teachers to overcome current limitations on the effectiveness of their current practice in religious education and to align their moral purpose with the means to achieve it.

The study found that moral purpose is linked to moral courage and is developed out of the interrelationship of the teacher's deeply held religious and educational values,

on the one hand and the challenges presented by the social reality of students' lives, on the other. As religious educators continuously re-articulate their moral purpose in response to the challenges of the changing student context, it is likely to inspire them to act with moral courage, for the benefit of students. The creative relationship between moral purpose, the current context and moral courage has the potential to improve religious education. This creative force draws on personal and professional values to motivate religious educators towards promoting the continuous improvement of student learning.

The connection between religious educators and the curriculum framework.

The study revealed that the connection between religious educators and an innovation is an integral part of its implementation. When religious educators begin to work with a new curriculum framework, approaching it critically enables them to establish a connection between the framework and what they know to be good practice. A critical-developmental stance is likely to stimulate change because it enables teachers to judge the benefit of an innovation for themselves and to enter into a learning process. A critical approach involves critical assessment of, and critical interaction with, the innovation. Paradoxically, this connection supports openness to further learning and is likely to result in new learning and change.

The teacher is both leader and learner. By building on what they already know, what Fullan (2001b) has described as the de-skilling experience of change is decreased. Teachers are then more confident to take control of the change process in their sphere of influence, thus showing leadership. Concurrently and in a collegial environment, as was revealed in Category Six, the teacher is drawn into the opportunities the new curriculum framework offers: therefore, the teacher is also a learner.

Religious educators are critical decision-makers who work with religious education documents in similar ways to other curriculum documents. They make professional judgments about how the new curriculum will benefit their teaching. The study proposes that there is a direct relationship between the teacher's personal understanding of the content and pedagogy of religious education and their ability to make appropriate choices. Critical involvement and interaction with the innovation is likely to draw teachers into new professional learning.

In the implementation of a new curriculum framework for religious education, critical processes are likely to stimulate change. First they help teachers to develop moral purpose; and secondly, they help them to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for

appropriate curriculum decisions. Once the process of change and learning has begun, it is then to be supported and sustained. The study revealed that this was more likely to be achieved through establishing a collaborative culture within schools and with the centralised body.

A collaborative culture.

The development of a collaborative culture within Catholic education in Tasmania helped to sustain the implementation of the new curriculum framework for religious education. This study revealed that, within the collaborative culture that developed in this change process, two expressions of collaboration were in operation. The first was collaboration between the staff of CEOH and school leaders, where there were different levels of responsibility though all were focused on the same goal. The second was amongst teachers, where there was a shared goal and shared responsibilities.

The study found that communication of the new curriculum and participation of religious educators in the change process within the school were more likely through the inclusion of school-based leaders while the curriculum was being developed. Principals, and especially AP:REs, facilitated the teachers' connection with the innovation. Therefore wider participation of religious educators in the change process was facilitated through the collaboration of school leaders with the CEOH staff.

The collaborative culture also brought together staff of the CEOH and schools in a joint project. This involved teachers in the change process, applying the new framework in the classroom. The potential for teachers to avoid or resist change exists within the implementation phase (Smith & Lovat, 2003), but it was found that a collaborative culture of change actively involved teachers decreasing the likelihood of avoidance or resistance.

School-based leaders, through their knowledge and understanding of the innovation, are likely to facilitate opportunities for teachers to make connections between curriculum as a concept and curriculum as enacted within the reality of the day-to-day work of the classroom. This study has shown that implementation was more likely to be successful on a broad scale and make a difference to classroom practice as a result of these collaborative processes.

Collaboration was facilitated through the strategy of professional learning communities. It continued to involve school and CEOH staff working together to implement the innovation within the school and focusing on the needs of individual schools with regard to the change. The critical processes that initiated and strengthened

the connection between the religious educators and the new curriculum framework were facilitated through the professional learning communities in schools. It is proposed therefore that educators across the organisation are more likely to be fully engaged in the change process, implementing an innovation and engaging in professional learning when they are involved in collaborative professional learning communities.

A collaborative culture contributes towards change in the relationships between CEOH staff and school staff. Implementation is more likely to be perceived as a joint responsibility when educators collaborate. Traditional boundaries and power structures are transformed and new reciprocal responsibilities take their place. The study confirmed that collaboration between CEOH staff and school staff contributed towards the whole organisation being highly engaged in implementation of *GNFL*. Therefore, through collaboration, effective large-scale change was more likely to occur.

The dynamics of leadership.

The development of a collaborative culture within schools and between schools and the centralised body had implications for leadership expressed throughout the organisation. Those in appointed leadership roles exercise those roles in a dynamic relationship with others. Implementation is not a homogeneous, one-off event (Fullan, 2001a). It is a diverse and complex process of learning requiring leaders who can respond to the diverse needs of religious educators and who can work in distinct but complementary ways with other leaders. This study proposes that the work of leadership *is* collaboration, working with others to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

Each school community is unique. The exercise of individual roles of responsibility is more likely to occur effectively where there is clarity of purpose in response to school needs and clearly communicated expectations. The effective interaction of those in appointed leadership roles is more likely to be achieved when they work towards a clearly articulated common goal. This study suggests that, in a collaborative culture, cohesion is maintained through a common educative purpose, the learning and leadership of teachers and, subsequently, the learning of students. This goal must be clearly and continuously articulated by those in appointed roles of responsibility and shared within the whole organisation.

In religious education, the appointed leadership role of the AP:RE is vital. The role of the AP:RE as a curriculum leader and a support for the professional learning of religious educators is established (Buchanan, 2007, 2010). This study has emphasised that this role is more effective when it is clearly articulated as a distinct role with curriculum

responsibilities and resourced to enable the role to be exercised fully. The study found that, in exercising curriculum leadership, the role of the AP:RE was more effective when it functioned in a distinct but complementary way with the roles exercised by the principal and the education officer. It is also a trusted role within the school staff because of its important characteristic as a teacher-leader. The study found that the AP:RE had the capacity to empathise with and support staff as they too implemented change in the classroom.

A collaborative professional learning community is likely to lead to the recognition and addressing of the professional needs of teachers. Professional learning that builds teacher pedagogical content knowledge is likely also to build the potential of teacher leadership. This study has shown that teacher leadership cannot be assumed. It is more likely to develop when there is a planned and continuous approach to professional learning.

The study found that implementation of a curriculum innovation through a collaborative professional learning community has the potential to transform an organisation. It especially has the potential to transform the exercise of leadership. A collaborative culture, however, does not arise by chance. It must be planned for and resourced well.

Challenges within the change process.

For an educational organisation to become an effective, high performing collaborative culture there must be the support of an effective infrastructure of accountability and communication within schools and between schools and the CEOH in order to facilitate the connectedness so necessary within the change process (Fullan, 2003a, 2003b). One of the signs of significant change brought about during the implementation of *GNFL* was the need for a sound infrastructure for religious education within the school and for that infrastructure to be extended beyond the school to encompass the centralised body, the CEOH. This study has shown that the implementation of a new curriculum is likely to be blocked when an organisation is disconnected from its core purpose and where there is fragmentation. By contrast, the development of a high performing and professional, collaborative culture is likely to bring about successful change.

High performing professional cultures depend on collaborative relationships. However, these relationships are more likely to develop if they are actively created through positive human interactions, such as mutual respect and trust, and suitable

structures for accountability and communication. Accountability that is perceived as a mutual responsibility within a collaborative organisation is as important in religious education as in any other area of the curriculum. The infrastructure for religious education in relation to other areas of the curriculum is likely to be weakened when there are low expectations of professionalism within the discipline compared with other areas. The lack of authority in the role of the AP:RE, the lack of effective monitoring of the curriculum and the lack of teacher qualifications and professional learning indicate a lack of infrastructure and low expectations of professionalism. In this context, implementation of a new curriculum is more likely to be problematic.

The experience of change will inevitably involve challenge. Awareness of challenges to the implementation process is also likely to indicate areas for improvement. The effective leadership of change is to identify challenges to the change process and to adapt or improve the process accordingly.

Effects of the change process.

The study found that the implementation of *GNFL* resulted in significant change in the educational culture of Catholic education in Tasmania. Collaboration in professional learning communities resulted in a collegial learning environment for teachers. Reciprocally, this influenced teacher learning to enable teachers to have the opportunity to find personal and professional meaning in religious education. This study showed that, when teachers found meaning in the content and pedagogy of religious education, the quality of their planning improved and, subsequently so did the opportunities for student learning.

Through the implementation of the curriculum framework, teachers perceived that a collegial learning environment was highly supportive for their professional learning and therefore they valued it highly. Within a collegial learning environment, barriers to engagement in curriculum change and professional learning are likely to be overcome. Collegiality is likely to assist teachers to develop individual and collective understandings, whilst collaboration assists them to work together towards a mutual goal.

This study revealed that the opportunity for teachers to find meaning in their teaching of religious education enhanced their experience of professional learning and directly influenced the quality of activities they planned for students in both the religious content and pedagogy. For religious educators, meaning is found in the integration of meaningful content knowledge of the faith tradition and skill as educators. Planning for learning is a complex skill that involves the interpretation of a myriad of factors.

Teachers plan according to their interpretations and the mental plans they have for what is to occur in the classroom. Religious educators are active curriculum decision-makers. This category adds to this perception and proposes that teachers make those curriculum decisions according to their mental plans or mindset. Professional learning therefore must build teacher understanding and meaning for the benefit of students.

Having summarised the theory generated by each of the categories in this study into the implementation of a new curriculum framework in religious education, the following section will present three overarching theories.

Overarching Theory Generated by the Study

Three overarching theories pertaining to the implementation of a new curriculum in religious education were generated by this study:

1. The implementation of curriculum in religious education is more likely to be effective when it aligns the moral purpose of religious education with the social reality of students and the contemporary context of Catholic education. Moral purpose is not a static reality but a creative force that needs continuously to be rearticulated both individually and collectively. An implementation process that promotes and organises for professional learning, which leads to teachers developing an authentic moral purpose, personal meaning and professional meaning in the teaching of religious education, is likely to result in change that will improve the learning opportunities for students.

2. Successful curriculum implementation is more likely to occur through positive human relationships and professionalism within a collaborative culture that embraces both schools and centralised authorities. Collaboration occurs in different ways according to the relationships and responsibilities within the partnership. This is likely to demand a highly professional infrastructure to enable collaboration to function well. Such infrastructure has been shown to be characterised by: clear roles with responsibilities and expectations articulated at all levels of the organisation; monitoring and accountability strategies relating to the effectiveness of religious education within the curriculum; initial training and continuous professional learning of religious educators as a planned priority within the organisation.

3. A critical-developmental approach to curriculum implementation in religious education is more likely to engage religious educators in change and subsequently to improve the quality of learning opportunities for students. Processes of critical assessment and critical interaction enable teachers to make judgments about the innovation and its benefits to their students and themselves. A developmental paradigm builds connections between current practices and a new curriculum with a view to moving towards new learning. It is more likely to facilitate real changes to teachers' professional beliefs and practices because of its focus on teacher learning concurrent with curriculum change. This approach enables teachers to construct their own understanding of the innovation and to create meaning from the change. Overall this has the potential to enhance the whole experience of change.

Links between the Research and the Literature

The theory generated from the current study was analysed against existing knowledge in the field of education and particularly in relation to religious education. The current research, which has investigated the implementation of a new curriculum and its effects on an educational organisation, is the first major study of curriculum implementation in the Catholic primary school context.

Traditional models of curriculum change present it as the introduction of individual programs to bring about incremental improvement (West-Burnham, 2009). The result of such project-driven change has often been fragmentation and disconnection. However, Elmore (2007) has argued that educational change is evolving as a process of transformation, with reculturing and reinvention of individual schools and whole systems of schools. Fullan (1999; 2001a; 2010) has argued that effective and meaningful change occurs through partnerships at the levels of school, district and state. The implementation of *GNFL* took place at a time of major organisational change in Catholic Education in Tasmania, when hierarchical notions of organisation were being transformed into more collaborative cultures. This research has shown that collaboration involves different processes that contribute to the interdependence between schools and the centralised body. Through different collaborative experiences, all members of the organisation can be included and involved in the change. This has the potential to lead to more meaningful teacher learning and leadership.

This study has revealed that the implementation of curriculum is more likely to be effective when a model of collaborative partnership is used. Reciprocity involves

enabling teachers to learn, create meaning and develop shared purpose (Lambert, 2003). As a result, a collaborative approach to a joint project can result in a change within the culture of an educational organisation.

Paradoxically, at the heart of real change is connectedness (Fullan, 2003a, 2003b). Effective leadership involves connectedness within an organisation and with its moral purpose (Walker, 2010). The current study found that connectedness is necessary between theory and practice: the moral purpose and underpinning philosophy of the change, and teaching practice. Connectedness is also necessary between those who lead and enact change across an organisation. The study proposes that this can be achieved through a highly professional infrastructure.

The literature highlights moral purpose as the key motivating and guiding factor in educational change (Elmore, 2007; Fullan, 2001a; 2003b; 2005; Fullan et al., 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The changing educational landscape currently is focusing on the deeper and more meaningful motivations for educational change and improvement (Fullan, 2010; Hargreaves, 2010; Shields, 2010; Shirley, 2010). Moral purpose is more than assisting students to reach high standards of learning (Fullan et al., 2006). This study found that moral purpose in relation to religious education is a powerful, creative force that comes out of the teacher's deepest educational and religious values. It guides religious educators in their work. The continuous re-articulation of moral purpose is essential to inspire religious educators to act for the benefit of their students.

The study supported the understanding of developmentalism in relation to curriculum implementation. It also highlighted that teachers actively make curriculum decisions that ultimately affect their students (Smith & Lovat, 2003). It supported the view proposed by Shirley (2010) that developmentalism is an effective approach to change.

Effective change involves a critical-developmental approach that involves stakeholders in critical processes: assessment of the innovation; critical use, reflection on practice to bring about change, and feedback. Consistent with adult learning theory (Mezirow, 1990), the position argued within this study is that the connections between teachers and the innovation, the connections with the innovation that are created through a critical-developmental approach, support the commitment to change and new learning.

Effective implementation of a curriculum means putting into effect those strategies that can assist teachers to be more motivated towards change, become committed to the change and creatively use it in their classrooms. Factors that assisted in bridging the gap between curriculum as an idea and curriculum as enacted in the

classroom were identified in this study. Often teachers have experienced change as alienating, painful and de-skilling (Abrahamson, 2004). The study revealed that, when dealing with curriculum change, teachers are essentially learners who need support to make the transition to new professional beliefs and practices. The key factor in engaging teachers with change was the critical stance taken towards the innovation.

Collaborative cultures contribute positively towards the change process (Fullan, 1999). Much of the literature has highlighted the need for collaborative cultures within schools to enhance the effectiveness of change (West-Burnham, 2009; Fullan, 2001a, 2005, 2010; Stoll, 2010). There is a challenge evident in the literature to extend that collaboration between schools and their centralised bodies to encompass the whole organisation (Shepherd, et al., 2010). Current literature on organisational structures indicates that the traditional, bureaucratic, hierarchical model of organisation does not reflect the collaborative, highly professional culture evolving in education today; however, there is a tendency in education to cling to hierarchical, bureaucratic perceptions of organisation (Waite, 2010).

This study found that collaboration has the potential to change notions about organisational cultures. Effective, collaborative cultures are underpinned by connectedness within the collaborative partnership. This study found that it is possible for the collaborative culture to extend between schools and the centralised body when there is inclusion and involvement in projects for mutual benefit. At a practical level this means inclusion of school-based personnel in work that affects the whole organisation and centrally-based personnel being involved with innovation at the school school site. Connectedness through shared responsibility results from this collaboration.

There is a sizable literature about educational leadership in relation to educational change. Much of that literature focuses on the leadership expressed in the role of the principal. The literature explores a wide variety of understandings about what leadership is and how it should be enacted (Lambert, 2003; Cranston & Ehrich, 2009). The interest in middle managers, such as curriculum coordinators is growing in education. Distributed leadership involves both appointed leaders and teachers (Mulford, 2005). In religious education there is a predominance of literature on the role of the REC or AP:RE.

This study supports the view that leadership of change in collaborative cultures is different to leadership of change within hierarchies. In its broadest sense, the work of leadership is to influence and empower others (Duignan, 2010a, 2010b). This exercise of leadership is not restricted to appointed leaders but can be exercised throughout the organisation and must be seen in paradoxical terms as a combination of fragmentation

and fusion (Gronn, 2002).

Leadership within the process of curriculum change is an action involving diversity and yet also profound connectedness. The work of leadership consists of collaboration with others in working towards attaining common goals within one's sphere of influence. The study suggests that diverse but connected leadership across the organisation is a characteristic of a high performing, professional, collaborative culture with a commitment to shared moral purpose.

With regard to leadership of religious education, this study revealed that traditional views of religious leadership are inadequate within the context of Catholic education today. Religious leadership must be perceived as more widely distributed across the school (Crotty, 2002). Crotty (2002) proposed that there is an ambiguity about religious education and the leadership of religious education that prevails in Catholic schools. This has been further contended by Buchanan (2007, 2010), who has argued that the coordinator of religious education is a key curriculum leadership role.

This study revealed that the AP:RE role is more effective when it is perceived as being interdependent with other appointed roles of religious leadership in schools and the centralised body. The leadership roles of principal and AP:RE are more effective when their roles are seen as complementary and also when they are exercised in relation to the education officer role in the centralised body.

The study also highlighted that an effective infrastructure of accountability and communication is essential for religious education both within schools and between schools and the CEOH. The study revealed that a lack of infrastructure places religious education in a vulnerable place within the curriculum because of competing demands from other curriculum areas. In religious leadership the diversity of responsibilities in key leadership roles needs to be articulated together with a shared purpose that brings connectedness to the dynamic between leaders.

The literature pertaining to curriculum change in religious education highlights the lack of attention to the interrelationship between professional learning for religious educators and curriculum change in religious education (Nolen, 2008; Welbourne, 2004a). This study has revealed that the implementation of a new curriculum requires an appropriate, concurrent program of professional learning for teachers for effective change to occur. Professional learning must be planned in ways that respond to the needs of teachers (Day, 2004; Guskey, 1995). This study found that a flexible model of professional learning attends to the highly diverse needs of teachers individually and collectively within schools. The study revealed the importance of the AP:RE and the

education officer role in facilitating professional learning that is personally and professionally meaningful for teachers.

The study has revealed that, in religious education, the depth of personal and professional meaning that a religious educator finds in the content and pedagogy of religious education has a direct relationship to the quality of the learning opportunities planned for their students. The professional learning opportunities offered to teachers as they implement curriculum change will be more effective and increase the likelihood of the curriculum being used in the classroom if it aims to develop meaning for teachers.

This was likely to occur when teachers engaged in the collegial environment of the professional learning community. An effective strategy for other areas of the curriculum was therefore found to be effective in religious education also. This finding takes the concept of professional learning communities beyond the view of Timperley (2010), which is that they should be predominantly concerned with the interpretation of student data as a means for student learning. Stoll (2010) and Hargreaves (2010) have both argued against a narrowing of the understanding of professional learning communities. Whilst a focus on student assessment data is important, it need not be the only purpose for establishing professional learning communities. This study has found that professional learning communities are a vehicle for teachers to develop moral purpose and personal meaning. These are two key factors in motivating teachers to change.

Having explored the links between the current research and the literature, and having identified a number of key concepts about educational change and change in religious education, the next section proposes some recommendations arising from the theory generated.

Recommendations

Moral purpose and meaning.

The moral purpose needs continuously be articulated in the light of the social reality of the students for curriculum innovation to be effective. This rearticulation must take place among all members of a Catholic educational organisation, including schools and their centralised body. When teachers are able to create meaning from the content and pedagogy of religious education, the learning opportunities for students are more likely to improve. It is recommended therefore that a continuous model of professional learning in religious education be adopted.

Programs providing initial and ongoing qualifications for religious educators have

a two-fold orientation. One is to develop teacher understanding of the moral purpose of religious education; integrating both ministerial and educational elements. The second is to connect the deeper understandings of content and pedagogy inherent within religious education with the practical learning opportunities of students. It is recommended therefore that the learning process for religious educators incorporate strategies to facilitate dialogue about the content of the faith tradition, pedagogical practice, student learning in religious education and the social reality of teachers and students.

Infrastructure that promotes collaboration.

The implementation of *GNFL* began as a particular curriculum project. However, through a collaborative model of curriculum change a more collaborative culture evolved across Catholic education in Tasmania. Collaborative models of organisation require those who exercise leadership to operate in highly skilled ways across the boundaries of school and system. Collaborative cultures require that all members of the community be actively involved in the continuous improvement of religious education within their sphere of influence. Collaboration can occur in different ways. The roles and responsibilities of members of the collaborative partnerships need to be articulated.

Religious leadership has both ministerial and educational imperatives that are shared across the Catholic education community. It is recommended that religious leadership be acknowledged and articulated more broadly across the school in appointed leadership roles and amongst teachers. Professional learning of religious educators should focus on building pedagogical content knowledge that is necessary for teacher leadership in religious education.

Within a dynamic perspective of religious leadership, a common moral purpose must be individually and collectively rearticulated to bring connectedness, and the distinctive responsibilities of the principal, AP:RE and education officer should be articulated. Complementing this, leaders should develop positive human interactions that build a high performing, collaborative culture.

There is a need for perceptions of professionalism in religious education to be strengthened through an effective infrastructure of accountability and communication within schools and between schools and the centralised body. It is recommended that the role of AP:RE be articulated in relation to other leadership roles within the school and that it be adequately resourced. It is recommended that those appointed to this role should be supported to gain the qualifications and professional attributes to exercise the role as a key leader of curriculum.

A critical-developmental approach to change in religious education.

A critical-developmental approach to change has been identified as an effective way to stimulate and sustain curriculum change in religious education. A critical stance is likely to engage educators in the change process, opening up opportunities for new learning. It is recommended that a model of critical-developmental change incorporate the following characteristics:

1. a commitment to collaboration at the outset by those responsible for driving the change, with expectations, roles and responsibilities clearly articulated;
2. the inclusion of school-based leaders and teachers with CEOH staff in the co-construction of curriculum documents to promote understanding of the underpinning theory and practice within the innovation and broad participation in change;
3. the incorporation of structures that support continuous, two-way communication and accountability between schools and the centralised body;
4. collaboration between school and centrally based staff to plan the involvement of personnel in change at the school site involving CEOH staff in change within schools;
5. internal planning for change through teacher learning within the school by principals, AP:REs and education officers;
6. a planned strategy for ongoing change and improvement in religious education within the school and across the organisation incorporating professional learning communities.

Inherent within a critical-developmental approach is the recognition that all members of an educational community have professional knowledge and skills they can contribute to the change process. Continuous judgments are made about the benefits of the innovation and the process is viewed as an opportunity for organisational learning.

Significance of the Study

This research examined the implementation of a new curriculum and its effects on an educational organisation in the context of religious education in the Catholic primary school sector. The study inquired into the experience of curriculum change from the perspective of primary religious educators in the Archdiocese of Hobart, the jurisdiction that encompasses Catholic education in the State of Tasmania, Australia.

This research generated new knowledge about curriculum change in religious education from the perspective of school-based practitioners. Drawing on existing

knowledge about educational change and curriculum management in religious education, the study has been able to make recommendations that have the potential to improve learning and teaching in religious education in Australia and internationally. With the possible development of an Australian curriculum in religious education in the next few years, this study will inform discussion about an appropriate way forward in a significant development in Australian religious education.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The findings of this research were generated through purposeful sampling and enabled the collection of deep data and consequently, it is limited in its generalisability. Furthermore it is limited to a select body of primary schools. Those being Catholic in Tasmania. The study is delimited to the perceptions of school-based educators regarding their experiences and concerns pertaining a particular curriculum change in religious education and the factors that contributed to its success.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further studies into the following issues would be desirable:

1. the role of the AP:RE in large-scale curriculum change, supporting a national curriculum in religious education;
2. the interrelationship between the AP:RE and other appointed leaders: a study of a new paradigm of religious leadership;
3. the role that the education officer or other centrally employed staff play in religious education leadership;
4. the advantages and limitations of an interdisciplinary approach to religious education and the general curriculum;
5. the various relationships and models of collaboration within collaborative cultures;
6. factors that contribute to improved student learning in religious education: the effectiveness of different models of religious education for student learning;
7. factors involved in creating a continuous approach to professional learning for religious educators throughout their teaching career.

Conclusion

This research investigated the experiences, perceptions and issues of school-based religious educators who participated in the implementation of a major curriculum change in religious education within the Archdiocese of Hobart. It has given insight and generated valuable theory, that will inform the development of religious education across Catholic education in Tasmania.

The study provided an insight into the human response to change at the locus of the school and the day-to-day practice of teachers. It has identified the importance of moral purpose and meaning for the professional learning of religious educators and the benefits of a critical-developmental approach to curriculum implementation to combat the de-skilling effects of change.

During the implementation of *GNFL* the Tasmanian Catholic education community underwent a significant cultural change, moving from a hierarchical model of organisation towards becoming a more collaborative professional learning community. Religious education was part of that change. The study gives insight into the development of a collaborative culture and the implications for leadership in such a context. It has identified challenges in relation to infrastructure within the change process. It has revealed the importance of teachers' personal and professional meaning in religious education for the planning of student learning.

The insights from this study will contribute to the further development of a high performing, professional, collaborative culture with a focus on the improved learning of students through the support of religious educators, both teachers and appointed leaders across the educational organisation. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the ongoing improvement of religious education in Tasmania and be of interest to both the wider Catholic education community and the education community in general.

Appendix A**Permission from the Director of Catholic Education**

ARCHDIOCESE OF HOBART

**CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE**

ABN 55 210 770 582

THE D'ARCY CENTRE
5 EMMETT PLACE, NEW TOWN, TAS 7008
PO BOX 102
NORTH HOBART 7002
TEL: (03) 6210 8888
FAX: (03) 6210 8844
Email: office@ceo.hobart.catholic.edu.au

16 December 2004

Mrs Helen Healy
8 Earlwood Court
Taroona 7053

Dear Helen

I am writing in response to your letter of 13 December 2004 seeking permission to conduct research in Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Hobart.

I have read the information provided by you and, subsequently, I am happy to provide in principle approval. Please note, however, that it is up to the individual school to determine whether they wish to participate.

Please accept my best wishes and personal support for the project.

Yours sincerely

Dan White
Director

Appendix B

Ethics Approval



Human Research Ethics Committee
 (PROGRESS/FINAL/EXTENSION) REPORT FORM

The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*, Chapter 5.5, requires Human Research Ethics Committees to monitor compliance with the conditions, both standard and special, under which research protocols have been approved.

The AVCC and NHMRC jointly require Universities to retain research data for five (5) years from the date of publication. If publication is not intended, data should be retained for five (5) years from the conclusion of the project. For Australian Catholic University requirements in relation to the security and disposal of data, see *Guidelines for Applicants to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)*, Part B, Section 8.

The HREC must report annually on these matters to the Australian Health Ethics Committee.

There is also a requirement that annual progress reports and a final report be provided on all projects. Such reports may be audited by the NHMRC at any time.

1. This form is available upon request via email res.ethics@acu.edu.au or on the Internet at: <http://www.acu.edu.au/research>
2. All questions must be answered. If a question does not apply, indicate N/A.

Within thirty [30] days of receipt of this notice, please return the completed Progress / Final / Extension Report form to your nearest Research Services Officer:

VICTORIA
 Research Services
 Australian Catholic
 University
 Melbourne Campus
 Locked Bag 4115
 FITZROY VIC 3065
 Tel: 03 9953 3158
 Fax: 03 9953 3315

NEW SOUTH WALES, ACT and QUEENSLAND
 Research Services
 Australian Catholic University
 Brisbane Campus
 PO Box 456
 VIRGINIA QLD 4014
 Tel: 07 3623 7429
 Fax: 07 3623 7328

Section 1:

- 1.1 HREC Register No: V200304 11
 - 1.2 Approval End Date: 31/12/2003
 - 1.3 Name of Principal Investigator / Supervisor: Dr. Michael Buchanan
 Name of Student Researcher(s): Helen Graham Healy
 - 1.4 School: Religious Education
 - 1.5 Project Title: Leading curriculum change: A study of a school-centred model of a professional development for religious educators in Catholic Primary Schools
- Signature of Research Services Officer: J Sym Date: 06.07.2010



Human Research Ethics Committee
PROGRESS / FINAL / EXTENSION REPORT FORM

2.4 Participant Withdrawal

- 2.4.1 Did any of the participants withdraw their participation and/or consent at any stage? YES NO
☐ ☒
- 2.4.2 If "YES", how many withdrew?
[If known, briefly list the reasons for their withdrawal and attach a copy of any relevant correspondence.]

2.5 Incidents

- 2.5.1 Did any incidents with participants arise during or after the conduct of the research? YES NO
☐ ☒
If "YES", please describe the incident, the manner in which it was dealt with, and the final result.
- 2.5.2 Did any of the participants complain or express concerns about the project? YES NO
☐ ☒
If "YES", please indicate the nature of the complaint/s or concern/s and attach copies of any relevant documentation.
- 2.5.3 Did any of the participants complain or express concerns about the way they had been treated? YES NO
☐ ☒
If "YES", please indicate the nature of the complaint(s) or concern(s) and attach copies of any relevant documentation.
- 2.5.4 Have the incidents / complaints / concerns described above been reported to the HREC? YES NO
☐ ☒
Please indicate what other action has been taken in response to these incidents / complaints / concerns.

2.6 Publication of Research Results

- 2.6.1 Are you intending at this stage to disseminate the results of your research in any way (e.g., seminar or conference presentation, publication in a journal, dissemination to other researchers in the area of research interest)? YES NO
☐ ☒ ☐
- 2.6.2 If "YES", please give details.

Publication in Religious Education Journal of Australia (In Press)

Presentation at Conference: Australian Council of Educational Leaders, 2010



Human Research Ethics Committee
~~PROGRESS~~ **FINAL** EXTENSION REPORT FORM

The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*, Chapter 5.5, requires Human Research Ethics Committees to monitor compliance with the conditions, both standard and special, under which research protocols have been approved.

The AVCC and NHMRC jointly require Universities to retain research data for five (5) years from the date of publication. If publication is not intended, data should be retained for five (5) years from the conclusion of the project. For Australian Catholic University requirements in relation to the security and disposal of data, see *Guidelines for Applicants to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)*, Part B, Section 8.

The HREC must report annually on these matters to the Australian Health Ethics Committee.

There is also a requirement that annual progress reports and a final report be provided on all projects. Such reports may be audited by the NHMRC at any time.

1. This form is available upon request via email res.ethics@acu.edu.au or on the Internet at: <http://www.acu.edu.au/research>
2. All questions must be answered. If a question does not apply, indicate N/A.

Within thirty (30) days of receipt of this notice, please return the completed Progress / Final / Extension Report form to your nearest Research Services Officer:

VICTORIA
 Research Services
 Australian Catholic
 University
 Melbourne Campus
 Locked Bag 4115
 FITZROY VIC 3065
 Tel: 03 9953 3158
 Fax: 03 9953 3315

NEW SOUTH WALES, ACT and QUEENSLAND
 Research Services
 Australian Catholic University
 Brisbane Campus
 PO Box 456
 VIRGINIA QLD 4014
 Tel: 07 3623 7429
 Fax: 07 3623 7328

Section 1:

- 1.1 HREC Register No: V200304 11
 - 1.2 Approval End Date: 31/12/2003
 - 1.3 Name of Principal Investigator / Supervisor: Dr. Michael Buchanan
 Name of Student Researcher(s): Helen Graham Healy
 - 1.4 School: Religious Education
 - 1.5 Project Title: Leading curriculum change: A study of a school-centred model of a professional development for religious educators in Catholic Primary Schools
- Signature of Research Services Officer: J Sym Date: 06.07.2010



Human Research Ethics Committee
PROGRESS / FINAL / EXTENSION REPORT FORM

TO BE COMPLETED BY PANEL CHAIR OF HREC

- ☐ Project extension is approved to ____ / ____ / ____.
- ☐ Renewal approved to ____ / ____ / ____.
- ☐ Data collection appears to have been conducted in accordance with the approved protocols. A Final Report is due at completion of the Project.
- ☒ Project appears to have been conducted in accordance with the approved protocols and this is the Final Report.
- ☐ Project abandoned/never commenced (please circle)
- ☐ The following concerns/comments should be referred to the Principal Investigator or Supervisor:

Signed: _____

Date 11/9/10

PRIVACY STATEMENT:

Australian Catholic University is committed to ensuring the privacy of all information it collects. Personal information supplied to the University will only be used for administrative and educational purposes of the institution. Personal information collected by the University will only be disclosed to third parties with the written consent of the person concerned, unless otherwise prescribed by law. For further information, please see the University's Statement on Privacy http://www.acu.edu.au/privacy_policy.cfm.

Appendix C

Information and Permission Forms for Participants

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Australian Catholic University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
Melbourne Campus (St Patrick's)
115 Victoria Parade Fitzroy VIC 3065
Locked Bag 4115 Fitzroy MDC VIC 3065
Telephone 613 9953 3000
Facsimile 613 9953 3005
www.acu.edu.au

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Title Of Project: Leading curriculum change in religious education for Catholic schools in Tasmania: A study of professional learning for primary religious educators

Supervisors: Dr Richard Rymarz & Dr Kathleen Engebretson

Name Of Student Researcher: Helen Graham-Healy

Degree: Doctor Of Philosophy, Australian Catholic University

12 June 2006

Dear Participant,

I am currently enrolled as a Doctor of Philosophy student at Australian Catholic University. The focus of my research is on the professional learning of primary religious educators and I write to invite your participation in this research project.

The aim of the study is to investigate and analyse the effects of professional learning opportunities for religious educators as they introduce and begin implementation of a new curriculum in Religious Education.

The intended outcomes of the study are to generate theoretical perspectives about teacher development and student learning in religious education and to provide recommendations to the wider educational community. These recommendations are intended principally for leadership teams in schools and to Catholic Education Offices and other professional learning providers who wish to develop an effective to professional learning for teachers of religious education. The results of the research may also be published in a suitable forum or used in professional presentations.

Participants for this research have been drawn from primary schools in the Archdiocese of Hobart. The participant cohort will include: the Principal, the Assistant to the Principal, Religious Education and three classroom teachers who teach religious education.

Involvement in the research project will mean participating in individual interviews of approximately one hour duration. These interviews will be scheduled during terms two and three 2006. With your permission, these interviews will be held on the school premises at a time that is convenient to the participants and the researcher. The interviews will be audio-tape recorded for the purposes of data collection. The data will be published in a form which does not identify the school or the individual participant.

Potential participants are free to decline the invitation to participate and may withdraw from the project at any time. Any questions concerning the project may be addressed to the Supervisor Dr Richard Rymarz on telephone 99533259 in the school of Religious Education, St Patrick's Campus, Australian Catholic University.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Investigator or Supervisor and Student Researcher has (have) not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Victorian branch of the Research Services Unit.

VIC: Chair, HREC
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY VIC 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3157
Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to your school's participation in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Investigator or Student Researcher using the return envelope enclosed.

We look forward to your participation in this research and hope it will benefit the religious education community in the Archdiocese of Hobart and the general educational community. On completion of the project participants may request feedback from the findings.

With sincere regards,

Helen Graham-Healy
(Student Researcher)

Dr Richard Rymarz
(Research Supervisor)

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Australian Catholic University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
Melbourne Campus (St Patrick's)
115 Victoria Parade Fitzroy VIC 3065
Locked Bag 4115 Fitzroy MDC VIC 3065
Telephone 613 9953 3000
Facsimile 613 9953 3005
www.acu.edu.au

CONSENT FORM

Title Of Project: Leading curriculum change in religious education for Catholic schools in Tasmania: A study of professional learning for primary religious educators.

Supervisors: Dr Richard Rymarz & Dr Kathleen Engebretson

Name Of Student Researcher: Helen Graham-Healy

Degree: Doctor Of Philosophy, Australian Catholic University

I (*the participant*) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time. I agree to be interviewed for the purposes of data collection and for any interviews to be audio-taped. I understand that any interviews will take place on the school premises at a time that is convenient to both the researcher and myself. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:
(block letters)

SIGNATUREDATE

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:.....

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:.....

DATE:.....

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