What constitutes success in classroom religious education? A study of secondary religion teachers' understandings of the nature and purposes of religious education in Catholic schools.

Submitted by

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Statement of Authorship and Sources

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Abstract

The Australian Catholic Religious Educational landscape has seen much change in theory and practice since the 1960s as theorists, researchers, church and education authorities, and religion teachers all sought to make Religious Education more appropriate and meaningful for students.   While this change has led to a greater consensus about the nature and purposes of Religious Education, there still remains a diversity of expectations and a degree of ambiguity specifically about what classroom Religious Education should achieve.   In the ongoing discussion of this question, what was often lacking was the voice of teachers.   Hence, this study sought to explore and report the views of a sample of secondary school religion teachers.   It made innovative use of the notion of 'what constitutes *successful* religion teaching' as a way of investigating teachers' understandings of Religious Education.

The earlier part of the study, a systematic literature review, examined a range of research, theories, normative documents and religious/educational constructs that together constituted the background thinking that could have influenced teachers' views of what counted as 'successful' Religious Education.   It included the following areas:- key religious/ecclesiastical constructs that informed Religious Education, particularly through Catholic Church documents at international, national and diocesan levels;   historical typologies describing how approaches to Catholic Religious Education changed since the 1950s; constructs related to the spiritual and moral development of young people; a range of ideas such as: teacher satisfaction, efficacy, and the influence of professional development programs.   Special attention was given to reviewing research on contemporary youth spirituality.   As well as the concern to hand on the Catholic faith tradition to the next generation, if the purposes of religion teachers were also to help make Religious Education relevant to the lives of their students and to help them find meaning and purpose in life, then an estimate of the spirituality of young people would be likely to be prominent in determining what constituted 'relevance' for the students.

The lattter part of the study surveyed the views of the total population of secondary religion teachers in one regional Catholic diocese.   A questionnaire that collected both quantitative and qualitative data was distributed;   123 out of a total of 210 teachers completed and returned the questionnaire.   Participant feedback groups were also used as a complementary method of collecting data on teachers' views of what constituted success in Religious

Education and of what they considered militated against success;   this helped confirm and extend the findings from the questionnaire.

Some of the key findings were:

Religious constructs: All the key religious/ecclesiastical constructs used in the Catholic sector for articulating the purposes of school Religious Education were well supported;   but there remained some ambiguity about how appropriate they were for charting a Religious Education that was considered 'relevant' to the needs of contemporary youth.

Relevance to young people's needs and to their spirituality: Prominent in the thinking of the teachers about successful Religious Education were a cluster of ideas that were 'student centred'.   These included the notion of meeting the personal and spiritual needs of young people;   and this was applied both to those who were religious and church going as well as to those who had more tenuous links with Catholicism.   In addition, the student body included increasing numbers who were not Catholic.   A key descriptive term for this cluster of ideas was a 'relevant' Religious Education;   this meant having a Religious Education that had evident links with young people's life experience;   also, it needed to be meaningful in helping them make sense of life and negotiate personal and social problems.

Enhancing youth spirituality: There was some polarisation in views about the relative importance of aims concerned with promoting mass attendance and a traditional religious spirituality;   prominent in teacher thinking was the need to resource and enhance young people's spirituality no matter what their level of religiosity or engagement with the Church. Addressing the needs of contemporary youth spirituality was a key element in thinking about a relevant Religious Education.

Academic subject approach: There was a strong endorsement of the principle that Religious Education should be considered as a serious academic pursuit.   There was however, a minority who did not share this view;   and it seemed that this group favoured an approach which was more 'personal', even if what this entailed in practice (apart from group discussion) was not clear.

Critical inquiry: The teachers considered that sponsoring a spirit of critical inquiry was particularly important for the students of today.   Critical thinking by students – identifiable in group work, discussions and in written work – was regarded as a good indicator of successful teaching.

Personal dimension: Some participants considered that both 'relevant content' and 'relevant pedagogy' could be combined in an academic subject approach to Religious Education; others felt that an academic approach could compromise the personal learning that was possible in Religious Education.   The findings indicated that issues related to a personal dimension in Religious Education (Rossiter, 1999) still remained influential in the thinking of current religion teachers.

Teachers' personal views: While the sharing of teachers' personal views in classroom Religious Education was considered important (and was related to ideas about 'witnessing' and 'ministry'), there was a polarisation of opinion about the extent to which this should or should not be prominent in religion lessons.

Structural and staffing issues: The status of Religious Education in the school and how it was staffed and timetabled were regarded as important questions that had a significant influence on how successful Religious Education could be.   Also of significance were the professional background and professional development of the teachers in theology and Religious Education.

Conclusions:

In the light of the research findings and taking into account the interpretation of issues in the literature review, the researcher proposed his own view of Religious Education as one that should inform Catholic secondary school Religious Education theory and practice.   This view does not go beyond existing theory and practice;   but it proposes a combination of key contemporary ideas within a conceptual formula that tries to eliminate the polarity about whether or not secondary school Religious Education should be approached as an academic subject.

The researcher proposed that the following key ideas need to be related to highlight their linkage and complementarity in thinking about the nature and purposes of Religious Education:

1.   Religion needs to be taught as an academic subject with the same sort of intellectual demands and academic credibility that are accepted for other subjects in the curriculum.

2.   At the same time, and without compromising academic processes, the personal dimension to Religious Education can be accommodated and enhanced through a combination

of both 'content relevance' and 'pedagogical relevance' – in other words, a challenging, information rich, open, critical inquiry into content selected because it has some likely connection with young people's personal and spiritual needs;   similarly, formal religious content (e.g. theology, scripture, liturgy, church history, morality etc.) can be taught in ways that seek to highlight links with the contemporary search for meaning and purpose in life.

3.   Taking into account trends in contemporary youth spirituality is a key element in planning a 'relevant' Religious Education in both content and method.   This helps identify the 'spiritual starting points' of many students;   it takes into account that there are a significant proportion of youth who do not have a traditional, religious spirituality – but one that is relatively secular, individualistic, eclectic and self-reliant.

Estimating what content and pedagogy in Religious Education are 'relevant' to young people involves theorising and it is not ever likely to provide a solution that is self-evident or that will achieve full teacher consensus;   neither is it a simplistic matter of asking students what they would like to learn;   content related to the communication of the religious tradition will always have a secure, central place in Catholic school Religious Education.   Nevertheless, the researcher concludes that a specific effort to estimate potential relevance is one key element that should be prominent in thinking about the nature and purposes of Religious Education at both diocesan and school levels.

While there still remains in the minds of some religion teachers a low level of doubt about whether an academic subject oriented Religious Education can be personally relevant to students, and whether it is too biased towards the cognitive to give adequate attention to the affective dimension, it is considered that this thesis is a step in the direction of addressing this hesitation.   It proposes that a study of religion can be both relevant in content and relevant in pedagogy;   and that within such a framework, the personal dimension to Religious Education can be naturally accommodated without compromising students' freedom by focusing too much on personal disclosure as a principal means of judging relevance and success.   It also proposes that better criteria for appraising relevance in Religious Education can be derived from attention to contemporary youth spirituality.

Recommendations:

In the light of the study, a number of recommendations for the enhancement of Catholic secondary Religious Education were proposed.   Firstly, these have to do with the continued clarification of the purposes of Religious Education that will help address the lingering

ambiguity in teachers' understandings and work towards a greater consensus about the value of a subject-oriented approach. A stronger place was recommended for the critical study of spiritual and moral issues, alongside the content related to the religious tradition. Other recommendations were related to the structural place of Religious Education in the school curriculum, to the content and resourcing of the diocesan religion curriculum, and to teacher professional development.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: SCOPE AND PURPOSES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1.1   INTRODUCTION: AMBIGUITY ABOUT THE PURPOSES OF CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Since the 1960s, there has been considerable change and development in the theory and practice of classroom Religious Education in Catholic schools in Australia, with parallels in other English speaking countries (Rossiter, 1981, 1999;   Buchanan, 2003;   Crawford & Rossiter, 2006).   In the main, these changes have been interpreted as progress because they were considered to be advances in making Religious Education more appropriate and more effective for young people both as regards the purpose of handing on the religious tradition and the purpose of promoting their personal spirituality.   Nevertheless, while responding to new needs, insights and developments in socio-cultural context and in education, these changes, particularly in their extent and frequency, have caused difficulties for teachers as regards clarity in purposes and pedagogy.   These difficulties included ambiguity in the expectations of what classroom Religious Education should achieve.   For example, in 1980, North American scholar Boys considered that there was a widespread uncertainty about the purposes of Religious Education that:

> accounts in some measure for its image as an endeavour prone to bandwagons, band aids and gimmicks, a field without much historical sense, self definition or reputation as a scholarly discipline.   In short, it reflects the lack of consensus about the very nature of Religious Education (Boys, 1980, p. 278)

In 1984, another United States scholar, Di Giacomo, summarised the situation of Religious Education in Australian Catholic secondary schools as follows:

> In Australia, as elsewhere in the world, religious educators labour under a crisis of identity which afflicts even those who do not advert to it.   Some confusion is inevitable when administrators and instructors operate from different philosophies and with different methodologies.   To some extent, this diversity can be enriching, as long as it reflects a healthy pluralism within a school department.   But sometimes it results in people working at cross purposes, to the confusion of students, the loss of academic respectability in the eyes of the school community and reduced effectiveness in sharing the message of Christ (1984, p. 396).

Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 371) considered that educators in Catholic schools were now in a better position to look back on the past 50 years of rapid change in approaches with wise perspective and to judge what were appropriate expectations for classroom Religious Education.   However, they noted that despite this progress leading to greater consensus, there

still remained a diversity of expectations, sometimes in conflict, that showed ambiguity about the nature and purposes of Religious Education. Part of their explanation for this problem was a claim that teaching to promote the development of personal beliefs, values and attitudes still remains, and perhaps will always remain, problematic as regards what educators hope to achieve; this is because of the great natural complexity that exists between teaching interventions and actual personal change in young people. In their view, personal change, to be authentic, needed to come from within – with freedom and personal choice (pp. 255-295).

In the ongoing academic discussion of the purposes of Religious Education, what has often been missing has been the voice of teachers themselves. Hence, this study sought to explore and report the views of secondary school religion teachers about the nature and purposes of classroom Religious Education. Because there was the possibility that such a study might reflect more on teachers' views of normative purposes (the official diocesan expectations), this research took the innovative approach of investigating what religion teachers thought about what constitutes success in Religious Education. Their views of successful teaching could show what they felt were the fundamental purposes of Religious Education and what they considered to be factors that enhanced or inhibited successful teaching.

1.2 ISSUES AND FACTORS AFFECTING EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SHOULD ACHIEVE: LEADING TO CHANGES IN WHAT TEACHERS WOULD COUNT AS SUCCESS IN THE TEACHING OF RELIGION

Ideas about what classroom Religious Education should achieve, and hence about what teachers would regard as successful teaching, will depend to some extent on their understanding of the nature and purposes of Religious Education.

1.2.1 Diversity of understandings of the nature and purposes of Religious Education

Many of the formulations of the nature and purposes of Catholic Religious Education, both in normative, official documents and in the writings of theorists, can be located in two main groups according to: religious constructs and historical approach typology.

1.2.1.1 Religious constructs

The nature and purposes of Catholic Religious Education are often articulated in normative documents through a mix of ecclesiastical, religious, and spiritual constructs such as the following:

According to religious processes
- Education in faith;
- Catechesis;
- Evangelisation (and new evangelisation);
- Pre-evangelisation;
- Ministry;
- Witness;

According to religious development
- Faith development;
- Spirituality;

According to processes of religious, spiritual, and personal development
- Personal transformation;
- Liberation.

As well as including the purpose of acquisition of religious knowledge, these constructs are concerned with promoting personal change as well as spiritual and moral development. And, as noted above, there is likely to be a natural ambiguity about how and to what extent such personal change purposes can be achieved by the work of teachers in classrooms. Hence, these religious constructs, no matter how valuable they may be in directing the purposes of Religious Education, are likely to be a cause of some ambivalence about what teachers regard as success in the teaching of religion. For example, Finn (2009) showed that while a sample of both parents and teachers acknowledged the importance of these religious constructs, they also found them confusing and problematic as regards their expectations of Religious Education.

1.2.1.2 Historical approach typologies

A number of Australian scholars have written about the historical evolution of different approaches to Religious Education in Catholic schools (Buchanan, 2003; Crawford & Rossiter, 1985, 1988, 2006; Flynn, 1979; Hill, 2004; Lovat, 2002; McGrath, 2005; Moore, 1981, 1991; Rossiter, 1981, 1999; Ryan, 1997a, 2001a, 2006). The interpretation and classification of Religious Education according to these historical typologies tended to use the word approach to mean the description of a way of teaching religion (involving theory and practice) that is based on a combination of theological and educational principles, together with presumed suitable content and pedagogy. These historical typologies identified and classified the ways educators understood the nature and purposes of Religious Education. A typical list of approaches since the 1950s includes the following:

- Catechism or Doctrinal approach;

- Kerygmatic or Bible Salvation History approach;
- Experiential and Life-Centred approach;
- Liberational and/or social justice emphasis, including Shared Christian Praxis (Groome, 1980, 1991) which was adapted for use in the number of Australian Catholic dioceses, especially the diocese of Parramatta;
- Educational approach (as described by Ryan, 1997a; Buchanan, 2003. Rossiter, 2008a, considered that "Subject-Oriented" would be a more appropriate term because educational tends to presume pejoratively that other approaches were not educational);
- Phenomenological approaches, including the Typological approach developed by Moore and Habel (1981) (prominent in state-based religion studies courses).

While useful in helping give perspective to the historical development of Catholic school Religious Education, the historical typologies can be problematic by oversimplifying what actually happened in practice. For example: At times in these writings (for example in Buchanan, 2003), the use of a historical typology gave the impression that the different approaches were not only relatively well-defined, but that teachers in various times and places embraced these approaches with a good understanding of what was entailed in their favoured approach, and that this was implemented with content and pedagogy that were appropriate – and that there was a consensus amongst teachers about the desirability of the approach. Such an assumption is questionable and has not yet been tested systematically in research, even though use of the historical typologies for classifying Australian Catholic Religious Education figures prominently in research studies and in the literature reviews of doctoral theses on Australian Catholic Religious Education: for example - Rummery (1975), Rossiter (1981), and in the theses of Rossiter (1984), de Souza (1999), Fleming (2002), Grace (2003), and Buchanan (2007).

While until recently there has been little systematic research on teachers' understandings of the nature and purposes of Catholic Religious Education in Australia (Finn, 2009; Wanden, 2009; Whitelaw, 2008), it is likely that the reality is more complex than could be described by classifying a teacher's work within one of the relatively distinct approaches or models in a historical typology. For example, an individual's idiosyncratic approach to teaching may have been coloured by emphases that were evident in more than one of the different models. In addition, the way teachers understand their own work in Religious Education may lack clarity as regards an awareness of the theoretical roots that were implied in their choice of particular content and pedagogy. Teachers may well have been influenced, either positively or negatively, by their own experience of Religious Education when they were at school; they would have had different experiences across the spectrum of approaches listed above depending on their age.

It is appropriate that empirical research investigating teachers' understandings of the nature and purposes of Religious Education would want to make use of both the religious constructs and the historical typologies– but with caution.   Information about the extent to which various constructs and historical approaches were evident in (or absent from) their thinking would give useful insights into their conceptualisation of Religious Education – and hence insights into what they would count as success in their teaching.   However, both schemes have inherent problems that could affect the interpretation of results.   If there is a measure of natural ambiguity in the ways different religious constructs and approaches to Religious Education are understood and applied by teachers, then this could affect their expectations of what they should be doing, and of what they considered successful.   This research will try to take account of the potential problem in the interpretation of results.

1.2.2   Change in the religious profile of the student population in Catholic schools

The foundational aims for Catholic schools in Australia presumed that the purposes of Religious Education were to instruct young Catholics in their own faith tradition and to nurture them in Catholic religious practice;   up until the end of the 1950s, it could also be presumed that most children in Catholic schools were part of regular Catholic church-going families.   The religious profile of students in Catholic schools is now very different: most Catholic students are not church-going;   and there are significant numbers of students who are not Catholic (National Catholic Education Commission, 2006).

While enrolments in Catholic schools in Australia have increased over the past thirty years, there has been a marked increase in the number of students who are not Catholic.   The National Catholic Education Commission's (NCEC) record of school statistics in 2006 showed that the percentage of non Catholic students attending Catholic Schools ranged from 22% of total enrolments in New South Wales to 44 % in Tasmania.   Of significance for this study has been the rise in the enrolment of non Catholic students in the diocese where the research was conducted from 19% in 1988 to 33% in 2005.

Research is needed to determine the extent to which a Catholic Religious Education should take account of increasing numbers of pupils who are not Catholic – and the extent to which this figures in the thinking of religion teachers indicating a need to adjust expectations and practice.   This research may need to consider the proportion of young people who have a very secular non-religious spirituality as they may be more significant than the numbers who are not Catholic.

Another relevant issue here is the spirituality of the Catholic pupils in Catholic schools. Increased secularisation and individualism in society are evident in the changed attitudes to religion on the part of both students and their parents (Hughes, 2007). Their spirituality is in a sense more secular (Crawford & Rossiter, 1996, pp. 207-209). This calls for a revision of expectations for the outcomes of Religious Education, which can no longer presume that the majority of pupils will ever become practising Catholics. Hence it will be informative to see whether religion teachers are adjusting the scope of their thinking about successful Religious Education beyond the notion of socialising young people into the religious practice of Catholicism.

1.2.3   The increasingly diverse religious and professional profiles of religion teachers in Catholic secondary schools

Up until the 1960s, practically all teachers of religion in Catholic schools were members of religious orders. Whether or not they were well trained specifically in Religious Education, they all had a substantial training in theology and scripture during their years of religious formation. At least this would have been the case for those who joined religious orders in the 1960s. In NSW in the period 1965-1970, the percentage of religious personnel in Catholic primary schools dropped from 69% to 51% and in Catholic secondary schools from 77% to 54% (Bourke, 1972, p. 14). By the 1990s the situation had reversed completely; by that time, most religion teachers were lay people; very few were members of religious orders. In the 2000s, religious personnel are a rarity in Australian Catholic schools.

After the advent of government funding for independent schools at the end of the 1960s, there was a rapid expansion of the Catholic school system in Australia. With the great increase in need for religion teachers at the very time when the numbers of religious personnel were in sharp decline, teachers were recruited to Religious Education without adequate training. A number took on the role reluctantly either because of the extreme need or because it was an employment advantage. In many instances, just being a good Catholic was regarded as sufficient qualification. Given that there was at this time a general ambiguity about the purposes of Religious Education (noted in 1.1.1), this diversity of background and theological training in religion teachers would have contributed further to problems with teacher expectations for Religious Education. For example, the problem was compounded by different expectations of teacher role in terms of witness and ministry: some would see the principal content of Religious Education as sharing the teacher's own personal version of religious faith; whereas others would see such a view as narrow, manipulative and

indoctrinatory, preferring to focus on studying the theological content of the religion curriculum much as content is studied in subject areas like English and History.

Even though Catholic dioceses have pursued extensive programs of professional development for teachers of religion since the mid 1980s, and while more teachers of religion than ever before now hold professional qualifications in the field, the historical situation of the religion teaching force in Catholic secondary schools suggests that it is likely that there still remains a degree of ambiguity of purposes related to the religious and professional backgrounds of religion teachers. This is another reason why this problem needs to be investigated through systematic research.

1.2.4 Different expectations of success for Catholic schools and Religious Education

The recommendations of the NSW and ACT Catholic Bishops in their 2007 pastoral letter *Catholic Schools at a Crossroad* show that there is still a significant level of expectation of Catholic schools to increase the Sunday Mass attendance of pupils; at least this is an expectation of Bishops and clergy. At the core the document is an implied view of the success of Catholic schools: getting young Catholics to become active members of a parish – to become regular church goers. In the light of this assumption, the document suggested that, while apparently successful as academic institutions, the schools were not arresting the evident decline in participation in the Catholic Church. There appeared to be a 'cloud' over their 'religious success', despite the financial resources supporting the schools. The document proposed that a "New Evangelisation" was needed that would engage pupils more effectively and turn Catholic children in Catholic schools back towards church participation.

However, it is likely that many religion teachers would be reluctant to measure the success of Catholic school Religious Education in terms of pupil Sunday Mass attendance – and this for two reasons:

1. the significantly changed religious profile of the students (see 1.1.2 above);
2. teachers' views that Religious Education in the Catholic tradition makes a valuable contribution to both handing on the faith and promoting student spirituality while not sufficient in itself to make young people opt to become a practising member of a parish.

Both of these reasons are tied into teachers' understandings of the nature and purposes of Religious Education, and also with their notion of what counts as successful religion teaching. Church participation is fostered by many factors, only one of which is the individual's Religious Education. In other words, a successful Religious Education will enhance young

people's grasp of Catholic beliefs, practices and spirituality, but this will not automatically affect their option to become practising Catholics.

Somewhat contrary to the Bishops' document, Rossiter (2007) suggested that currently there was no 'crisis of identity' in Australian Catholic schools.   He considered that there was great pressure on the schools' Religious Education to address the spiritual needs of the large number of non church-going pupils;   that there was competition for places in Catholic schools which were very successful in their basic educational operations;   and that there was reasonable consistency amongst teachers about the purposes of Catholic schools and of their Religious Education programs.   According to Rossiter (2007), the identity problem was not in Catholic schools but with those who shared the view in the Bishops' document that seemed to be puzzled in "trying to explain a 'booming school system' in a declining Church";   that their expectations of Catholic schools to produce Mass-going Catholics was not realistic and did not acknowledge the real value in Catholic Religious Education.   In other words, it was an ecclesiastical view of Catholic schools that was at a crossroad – and not the schools.

Research on religion teachers' expectations of success – both at the levels of empirical data and Religious Education theory – could help clarify the issues in this problem about Catholic school identity.

1.2.5   Links with other educational constructs

While this study has chosen the notion of success in religion teaching as the genre for investigation, this construct is closely related to a number of other terms that overlap with it to some extent.   Examples of these include such terms as: effectiveness;   efficiency;   outcomes and the achievement and assessment of outcomes.   Some attention will need to be given to these constructs, particularly where they affect the notion of success in teaching.

In addition, 'learning' and 'learners' have recently become buzz words in education, to some extent eclipsing the importance of teaching.   Hence, because teaching is regarded as primarily concerned with promoting student learning, the notion of success in teaching will inevitably be associated with views of student learning – particularly with what is being learnt.   As noted in 1.1.1, much of the ambiguity about what constitutes success in Religious Education may revolve around a preoccupation with personal learning and personal change as expectations of Religious Education.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate these linkages in any detail, it will often intersect with concerns about learning, effectiveness and outcomes because these notions are often tied into teachers' expectations of what they are trying to achieve, and hence to what they are likely to consider is successful teaching.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND PRINCIPAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This empirical study is primarily directed towards the ongoing clarification of the theory and practice of classroom Religious Education in Catholic secondary schools by focusing on teacher intentionality through an investigation of their views regarding the successful teaching of religion and on what they consider to have been influential on their thinking about such success. What teachers consider from their own experience to be successful Religious Education will give insights into their classroom practice; in addition, it will provide a window on their presumptions about Religious Education – that is, about their implied understanding of its nature and purposes.

The main research questions for the study are summarised as:

A. *The notion of successful religion teaching*
1. What constitutes success in secondary classroom religious education according to teachers' intentionality?

2. In relation to the first question, what do teachers perceive as militating against successful teaching?

B. *Implied understandings of the nature and purposes of classroom Religious Education*
3. What are teachers' understandings of the nature and purposes of Religious Education – as implied in their notion of successful teaching?

C. *Perceived influences on the expectations and experience of success*
4. What factors do teachers consider have affected their notion of successful teaching of religion?

This question also provides an opportunity to explore the following sub questions:
a) To what extent do professional development programs contribute to this?
b) How important has been the influence of Diocesan Religious Education Guidelines?
c) How might classroom religious education be re-conceptualised in the light of teachers' theory and practice?

As suggested in 1.1 above, focusing on teachers' notion of successful religion teaching will help avoid a potential problem where the emphasis might be perceived as evaluating their perception of normative aims and objectives. If this was the perception of participants, there

would be some likelihood that they would tend to endorse the views that they thought were important or authoritative, even if they had hesitation about their meaning and relevance. For example, as noted earlier in 1.1.1, Finn's (2009) research showed that both teachers and parents strongly endorsed the purposes of Religious Education as expressed in ecclesiastical constructs like catechesis and evangelisation while at the same time feeling that these terms were confusing and not helpful. An inductive approach focusing on success is a way around this problem by asking participants to describe their thinking about Religious Education in broader terms that included pedagogical skills, teaching strategies and ideas about young people's personal and spiritual development. It remains to be seen if this approach will give a different picture of teachers' intentionality from what emerges from more deductive research. Similarly, the inductive approach focusing on successful teaching can be used to investigate views about the factors that may have affected expectations and experience of teaching religion.

While there is little or no literature concerned directly with what teachers count as success in teaching religion, the literature on the nature and purposes of Religious Education indirectly deals with success because the notion of successful teaching implies the achievement of the relevant desired purposes. This can be understood as idealised success or theoretical success which does not necessarily tap into teachers' own first hand practical experience.

This empirical study sets out to identify the elements that teachers felt contributed to their experience of success. It will show whether or not idealised success is prominent in their thinking; other factors may be more significant. For example, there may be a differentiation of views according to different levels of involvements in Religious Education. Some chose specifically to specialise in the area; others taught religion as their second or third teaching subject because they were asked to by the school authority; while others felt they were pressured into teaching religion because it was a condition of their employment, and would happily withdraw if this was possible. For this third group, surviving with minimal stress might be their most prominent idea of success; while those in the first category may have been more explicitly concerned with achieving idealistic goals like promoting young people's spirituality. For some teachers, their principal focus may have been on what the students are learning from Religious Education. Or it may also have been associated with the more mundane notion of what works in the classroom.

Similarly, this inductive research method can accommodate some internal contradiction in teachers' thinking about Religious Education; some of their practice may be inconsistent with

their stated aims. For example they may claim to be doing catechesis; but this is not evident in their practice. Also there is the possibility that some teachers may not fully understand what is implied in normative views of Religious Education.

1.4 CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Through a questionnaire and participant feedback group interviews, this project collected data from a representative sample of the full population of secondary religion teachers in one regional Catholic diocese in NSW. The teachers that participated in this research project were teaching Religious Education to students in this regional diocese from year 7 to year 12 at the time of the data collection. There were multiple representatives from all the eleven secondary schools and colleges within the diocese.

Ten of the eleven schools and colleges were parish schools serviced by the Catholic Education Office, forming the secondary school cluster of the Diocesan Education System. The remaining college was an independent school. The Principals (Country and Regional Dioceses) (State) Award (2006, p. 31) points to the uniqueness of this arrangement.

> The Lismore Diocesan Schools System is unique in New South Wales and probably throughout Australia in its emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity and the decentralisation of decision making.

Tinsey (1998), in his investigation of the relationships between teachers and clergy in the diocese, pointed out that the parish priests of the diocese were representatives of the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church and were thus, in effect, the employers of teachers in Catholic schools. These priests therefore had a greater level of influence in the education sector of this diocese, compared with the situation in other Catholic dioceses in Australia where the administration of secondary schools was more centralised and the Catholic Education Offices exercised authority and control over educational matters. The combination of parish priest involvement within diocesan schools and the different structure of the school system could affect teachers' perceptions of success in Religious Education.

This researcher is the Religious Education Coordinator in one of the large coeducational secondary colleges in the diocese. His own extensive experience in teaching religion and in interacting with colleagues motivated and informed this study – in particular, the need to hear the voices of those who teach religion in the classroom in commenting on their expectations of what they should be trying to achieve.

1.5   GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

The literature review in chapter 2 gives a detailed consideration of the meaning of religious constructs like catechesis and evangelisation, as part of the conceptual analysis of the nature and purposes of Religious Education.   This last part of chapter 1 provides a glossary of key terms used in the study with brief accounts of the meanings of terms as used in the study.

- **Affective Dimension**:   Educational experiences where the intended emphasis is on the emotional, aesthetic, creative, and imaginative aspects of learning.

- **Cognitive Dimension**:   Educational experiences where the intended emphasis is on the acquisition of knowledge, comprehension and understanding.   It also includes the analysis of knowledge, the interpretation and evaluation of meanings – referred to as higher order cognitive activity.

- **Efficacy:**   The concern that teaching is effective, that it achieves its proposed outcomes.

- **Outcomes**:   Purposes of education framed in student activities, performance and behaviour that can be measured.

- **Effective teaching:**   Teaching that achieves its purposes and outcomes.   Where outcomes specify observable and measurable performance, efficacy can be measured and assessed in terms of the degree to which specified outcomes have been achieved. However, when it comes to personal learning – including the acquisition of beliefs, attitudes and values – the complexity of the learning is such that a relatively simple, linear relationship between teaching and the achievement of purposes does not apply. Hence it remains problematic to propose and try to appraise the effectiveness of teaching that is intended to promote personal change.

- **Catechesis:**   Is the activity of enhancing the personal faith of participants who freely meet with the purpose of sharing and informing their own beliefs.   It can include an educational input.   While the principal form of Catechesis is for adults, the term can also be applied to activities for young people.

- **Conversion**:   The individual believes that he/she has been saved by faith in Jesus Christ and that this is a turning point in their personal and spiritual life.   It expresses a commitment to be faithful to God.   The notion of ongoing conversion refers to the deepening of religious commitment.

- **Enculturation**:   The sociological process of being socialised into a culture; that is, acquiring cultural knowledge and traditions, as well as beliefs and values, with the purpose of becoming an integral part of one's culture.

- **Inculturation**:   A distinctively Catholic religious term used in normative documents to refer to acquiring the faith tradition in a way that allows for interaction between the culture and the faith tradition.   Faith challenges culture to be more human while the culture challenges the faith tradition to attend to the distinctive cultural traditions and needs of the people – a reciprocal relationship between the Christian message and culture or cultures; an insertion of the Christian life into a culture requires an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them.

- **Evangelisation**:   The process of proclaiming the Church's message of salvation through both word and active witness to gospel values, with the purpose of inviting individuals to a response in faith.   It is also concerned with challenging the culture to be more favourable to the personal and spiritual development of individuals: The Christian gospel is critically brought to bear on individual lives and group culture with a challenge to be more fully human and to respond to the potentialities suggested in the Christian message.

- **Institutional maintenance:**   A term used to describe an orientation in thinking about the purposes of Religious Education that gives special attention to the idea of handing on the religious tradition and socialising young people into the practice of the religious tradition within the context of the parish.

- **New Evangelisation**:   A second or new form of evangelisation is intended to address the situation of those who may retain nominal links with the Church and the Christian faith but who are secularised and have little or no formal engagement with the Church.   It is an attempt to re-ignite the message of the Gospel in their minds and hearts to lead to a renewed commitment to a lived witness to the Gospel and fuller participation in the life of the Church.

- **Ministry**:   A religious interpretation of one's work; an understanding that individuals share in the mission and work of the Church through their activities.   Their activities are regarded as ministry from the perspective of the Church.   There is a diversity of ministries in the Church and one of these is the ministry of teaching.   The teaching of religion and the activity of catechesis are valued parts of the ministry of teaching in the Church.   The notion of service to the community is a strong element of ministry and this is done in the name of the Church and for the good of the Church and the wider community.   Ministry refers to the exercising of one's Christian vocation through service to others.

- **Mission**:   Mission in Catholic terminology is linked with the mission of Jesus Christ and the subsequent mission of the Church and is closely connected to both the identity and purpose of Catholic schools.   Mission, (for example, of Catholic schools as closely connected with their identity and purpose), is to promote a Christian vision of life with the basis for its ethos and value system emanating from the teachings of Christ found in scripture.

- **Paradigm**:   A general conception of reality within which a given enquiry is undertaken. A paradigm is a large scale theory or generalisation – a set of beliefs or principles that guide the action of individuals, groups or social systems.

- **Pedagogy**:   The art and science of teaching.   A collection of principles and strategies that informs and operationalises teaching activities intended to promote student learning. It is the underlying rationale that informs the selection of specific teaching strategies and is able to incorporate an eclectic array of methodologies matched to the perceived particular needs of students.

- **Pedagogical Content Knowledge**:   The special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers; it is their own special form of professional understanding of their teaching role.

- **Personalism**:   This term has been used to describe the interest of Religious Education in making the teaching and learning process personal by having participants share personal insights and feelings.   In addition, it refers to the notion of making Religious Education relevant to students' lives – in other words having links with their life experience and with what is happening in the world.   Quest for personalism referred to teachers' concerns to achieve a personal atmosphere and personal interchanges in their lessons.

- **Professional Development**:   This is a process which addresses the professional and adult learning needs of teachers for the improvement of the educational enterprise.   It includes both preservice and inservice training.

- **Relevance**:   This is concerned with how 'relevant' and 'meaningful' to life particular teaching may be.   Both students and teachers have views on what is relevant.   Relevance in teaching has both content and process dimensions.
  - **Content Relevance**:   This refers to the teaching of issue-orientated topics which are thought to be relevant to young people's lives and thinking;   study of such content may assist students in their development of meaning and understanding of life issues, helping them clarify values and attitudes.
  - **Pedagogical Relevance**:   This refers to the employment of good teaching strategies that promote student investigation of the potential personal significance of content.   These teaching strategies take into account the different learning styles of students and seek to foster their engagement in a critical study of the content.
  Relevance is promoted by articulating links between a study and life experience.   Included in the quest for relevance in Religious Education are efforts to show how religion generally, and the Catholic religious tradition in particular, may be relevant to life.

- **Religious Education**:   For the purposes of this study, the term **Religious Education** will specifically refer to the systematic process of formal religious instruction that is undertaken in a classroom setting.   It is an intentional educational activity conducted by teachers to achieve sets of various outcomes classified in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and values;   and it is also intended to promote the spiritual and moral development of young people by helping give them access to their religious heritage while also helping them to learn how to identify and evaluate contemporary spiritual and moral issues.

- **Satisfaction**:   This term is an affective reaction to a teaching task that results from a teacher's comparison of those outcomes achieved against those that are considered desirable or expected.

- **Success**:   This is an evaluative term referring to the level of attainment of a specific set of either behavioural or non behavioural goals/outcomes reached by a teacher from participating in an activity related to her/his situation.

- **Theology**:   Theology is the systematic study of Christian revelation concerning God's nature and purpose.

- **Youth spirituality**:   Youth spirituality refers to identifiable trends in the spirituality of young people.   It ranges across a spectrum from a 'religious' spirituality to a comparatively 'non-religious' or secular spirituality.   The latter tends to be eclectic, pragmatic and individualistic.   Youth spirituality is an individualised worldview which provides young people with a filtering lens through which they establish identity, make

meaning in and give purpose to their lives. While recognition of the transcendent is a common feature in youth spirituality but it does not represent a conventional, doctrinal belief.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS OF THE THESIS

The following outlines the scope and purpose of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Chapter Two reports a review of the literature of Catholic Religious Education pertinent to the study. This will provide a background spectrum of ideas and issues related to the nature and purposes of Religious Education that will inform both the research data collection (including the development of questionnaire and interview questions) and the interpretation of the meaning and significance of the results.

In addition, the literature review will consider the relevance of what has been written about success in the literature of general education. Also, because of the importance of professional development for enhancing the work of teachers of religion, attention will be given to literature on the effectiveness of professional development programs.

Chapter Three explains the design and methodology of the empirical part of study. As well as noting the epistemology and theoretical framework underpinning the empirical inquiry, it will describe the development of the research instruments and will discuss questions about the validity and reliability of the data.

Chapter Four reports the data collected from secondary school religion teachers across the diocese from both questionnaire and participant feedback group interviews. Following the descriptive statistics, the chapter will report the results of higher order analyses.

Chapter Five discusses the meaning and significance of the data reported in the preceding chapter, in the light of issues considered in the literature review.

Chapter Six presents the summary and conclusions of the study. It proposes implications for theory and practice of Catholic Religious Education. It offers recommendations for policy development with respect to Catholic school Religious Education and it proposes possible follow up research.

1.7   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the broad parameters of the study were presented.   These included the changing religious profile of the student population in the regional diocese in which this study took place, the diverse religious and professional profiles of Religious Education teachers, and differences in the expectations relating to success in teaching religion.   In particular, it highlighted the existence of a diversity of views as well as some ambiguity among various stakeholders as to the nature and purposes of secondary Religious Education in the classroom.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of the literature that contains the theoretical and empirical knowledge base relevant to the study.   The review covers the following areas:-

- the nature and purposes of Religious Education within the context of Australian secondary Catholic schools (as this informs views of what constitutes successful Religious Education);
- different understandings of success in teaching religion in the secondary classroom;
- factors and issues that have a bearing on what is perceived as successful Religious Education.

At a number of points in the review, the conclusions drawn will be summarised in the form of indicators of success.   These indicators are identical with, or similar to, items used in the questionnaire.   The scope of the indicators is not extensive and their formulation is brief; they do not cover all of the details or issues noted in the literature review.   But they do serve as useful signals showing how the questionnaire reflects the range of questions and issues considered in this chapter.   Some of the indicators relate to more than one topic.   When participants in the study endorse particular indicators, these items will identify some linkage between teachers' views and the questions/issues identified in the literature review;   but this would not necessarily indicate a causal connection.

2.2   NATURE AND PURPOSES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

As noted in chapter 1, the notion of idealised success is implied in most of the literature on the nature and purposes of Religious Education.   Hence this literature, in both the areas of spiritual and religious constructs and the historical approach typologies, will be examined to build up a background picture of aims and purposes of Religious Education that can be used in the interpretation of the empirical data on teachers' views.

This review will give attention to normative Catholic writings about the nature and purposes of Religious Education at both the levels of official Roman documents and Australian Episcopal and local diocesan statements.   It will also look at the writings of theorists to extend the interpretative background that will be brought to bear on the empirical data.   The focus will be on aims and goals that imply expectations for successful teaching.

In constructing indicators that were consistent with different approaches, it is acknowledged that developments over time need to be taken into account. For example, the idea of learning some doctrines 'off by heart' that was prominent in the catechism and doctrinal approach to Religious Education in the 1950s, may still be affirmed as valuable by some teachers today, even though they would not be advocating a complete return to the catechism approach of that time. Similarly, teachers today could affirm the teaching of scripture and participation in liturgy, but this would not imply they were following the Kerygmatic approach of the 1960s.

The indicators that have been developed in this chapter, and which led to the questionnaire items, are primarily concerned with current teachers views of what are the most appropriate and successful ways to teach religion. But in addition, the association of these indicators with the emergence of historical approaches to Religious Education can also be used to show something of the historical roots of the thinking about Religious Education that underpins the various indicators.

The use of these indicators also acknowledges that the idiosyncratic approach to Religious Education of any particular teacher would likely to be made up of a complex mixture of different historical approaches. It is not likely that teachers would follow any one particular historical approach in pure form in an exclusive way.

2.2.1 Normative documents underpinning Catholic school Religious Education in this particular diocese

The standard formulation of the nature and purposes of school Religious Education in a particular Catholic diocese is articulated in the official diocesan guidelines (or curriculum statements) for Religious Education. In the case of the diocese where this research was conducted, the key local documents were:

- 1973 *Guidelines for Religious Education for Secondary Students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne*;
- 1977 *Guidelines for Religious Education for Secondary Students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne*;
- 1993 Understanding Faith Resource Package. While this resource was originally intended for New Zealand Catholic schools, Father Donnelly, a priest within this particular Diocese was able to negotiate for the resource to be adapted for Australian Catholic schools, and for it to be published from within the Diocese. This resource adopted an educational approach that focused on knowledge and understanding of the faith tradition. The student books were particularly popular within the secondary schools of this particular Diocese.
- 1996 *Faithful to God: Faithful to People* guidelines from the Archdiocese of Sydney.
- 1996 Catholic Education Office (C.E.O.) review into Religious Education in the diocese by Dr. Bezzina.

- 2001 Archdiocese of Sydney's revised *Faithful to God: Faithful to People* guidelines. The name was changed to *Religious Education Curriculum Statement.*

In 2003, the bishop of this particular diocese approved the use of the *To Know, Worship and Love* books for years 7, 8, 9 and 10 in diocesan Catholic schools as of 2004 and funded their purchase.[1]   The purpose of this move was threefold:

1. This purchase demonstrated the Church's resolve to offer tangible support for the adoption of the archdiocese of Sydney's revised curriculum.

2. The curriculum objective was to provide both students and teachers with a source of theologically correct material which both groups could refer to and use in the conducting of Religious Education lessons.   There was a hope among some clergy that the purchase of this book would result in a solely textbook driven curriculum.   But this was tempered by the subsequent revision of the *Faithful to God: Faithful to People* curriculum to what is now known as the *Religious Education Curriculum (Secondary),* whereby the revised units of work in the curriculum document did not neatly match those structured within the prescribed textbooks on a year to year basis.   Nevertheless, two senior *To Know, Love and Worship* textbooks were purchased in 2007 in an attempt to provide meaningful resources for both teachers and students in undertaking the study of Stage Six of the archdiocese of Sydney's curriculum.   This research project will try to see if this intervention has had some influence on the teachers' perceptions of success in teaching religion.

3. A wider objective of the bishop was to place a book on the Church's beliefs and practices in the possession of Catholic families in the hope it may foster an interest in the Church and stimulate some future dialogue between home and the Church. Anecdotal evidence indicated that students were not utilising these books on a regular basis at home, and thus the hope of the bishop that this resource might find a presence in the students' homes may not be fulfilled.

Local diocesan documents on Religious Education were preceded by, and have been informed by, universal Catholic Church documents which originated in Rome, either from the Popes or from key Church organisations (or congregations), together with some national Australian Church documents.   This section will deal firstly with the role of diocesan guidelines.   Then it will identify the range of normative documents that are relevant to Australian Catholic secondary school Religious Education.   Subsequently, the following section will consider the key religious and ecclesiastical constructs, embedded in those documents that have had a marked influence on normative understandings of the nature and purposes of school Religious Education.

[1.] The development of the books first edition was commissioned in 1997 by Archbishop Pell of Melbourne for use in Victorian schools.   On his transfer to Sydney, Cardinal Pell commissioned a revised edition to be used in Sydney diocesan schools as from 2004.   This edition was also adopted by other dioceses, including the diocese in which this research took place.

2.2.2   The place and role of diocesan guidelines for Religious Education

An examination of the extent to which Religious Education guidelines have contributed to the experiencing of success by secondary classroom teachers of Religious Education in Australia, is pertinent for the purpose of this study.   Researchers such as Barry (1997), Malone and Ryan (1994, 1996) and Rossiter (1997) have debated the significance of the contribution that diocesan Religious Education guidelines have had on the teaching of Religious Education. They pointed to some areas of concern regarding the use of diocesan Religious Education guidelines.   These theorists proposed that there was a need to investigate the extent to which teachers:

- were aware of their existence and their content;
- used these guidelines to inform their teaching;
- believed these guidelines to have been a positive influence on the teaching of religion.

This study will not address these concerns in any detail, but will sample teachers' views of the use of diocesan guidelines.

Rossiter (1997) and Barry (1998) considered that there were benefits from the use of diocesan guidelines in promoting teacher competency in teaching Religious Education. These included:

- these guidelines provided a stimulus for the provision of teacher professional development and inservice;
- the guidelines provided further study opportunities for teachers;
- the guidelines were seen as catalysts for a renewal of teacher energy and enthusiasm for Religious Education.

In considering the potential benefits from Religious Education guidelines, Rossiter (1997) argued that to maximize their impact on what transpires in the classroom, the guidelines need to be translated into sequences of lessons that were supported by resource materials.   He pointed to anecdotal evidence that suggested teacher classroom procedures may be changed if planning was based on specific teaching materials.   Malone (1997) expressed similar sentiments.   Both researchers noted that religion teachers were like teachers of other subjects in their dependence on the availability of learning materials and activities to enhance the teaching and learning.   Rossiter also considered that to achieve this may place added pressure on teachers who get "stressed by administrative and curriculum procedures that take time and energy over and above their preparation, teaching and correction" (1997, p. 30).   Sydney CEO backed the work of Bartlett (1999) who produced sequenced lessons, overhead transparencies and worksheets as support material for the Sydney Religious Education guidelines.   The diocese, in which this study was conducted, purchased a full set of these

materials for the use by all teachers of secondary Religious Education.   Further developments in resource materials by the Emmaus Foundation, situated within the Diocese, provided much needed background material for teachers, and access to enhanced digitised material and lessons based on current pedagogical trends.   The impact of these materials on how teachers perceived success in teaching classroom religion will be examined later in the study.

While some theorists acknowledged the effectiveness of diocesan Religious Education guidelines and their potential for promoting success in the teaching of secondary classroom religion, others have raised concerns.   Malone (1997, p. 15) found many teachers approached the support documents of the guidelines for two reasons:

- as sources of activities to keep students occupied
- to fulfil diocesan requirements.

This has implications as to the extent to which teachers may perceive success in their teaching of religion, as they did not make the planning decisions that gave direction to their teaching of religion.   Malone believed that they may not have understood the assumptions underpinning the curriculum.

For the diocese in which this research was conducted, Religious Education guidelines from the Archdioceses of both Melbourne and Sydney have dominated its cognitive, administrative, planning and methodological processes employed in the Religious Education offered by systemic schools affiliated with the Catholic Education Office.   Currently this diocese has joined with a number of other dioceses within Australia in agreeing to adopt the Sydney archdiocese's guidelines as the basis for Religious Education.   The magnitude of the level of support from the institutional Church was best demonstrated with the bishop of the diocese heavily subsidising the purchase of the accompanying textbooks to the guidelines.

2.2.3   Summary of key Catholic Church documents that have informed the nature and purposes of Catholic secondary school Religious Education

There are a number of key Catholic Church documents that relate to Religious Education since the Second Vatican Council.   The Second Vatican Council challenged those responsible for Religious Education to develop a more contemporary approach to the teaching of religion. The time, since the conclusion of this Council, has proven to be a watershed period for developments in Catholic Church ministry and Religious Education.   The extensive number and range of documents that were developed indicated the importance the Church placed on this challenge and on such constructs as catechesis, evangelisation and Religious Education. Table 2.1 lists the key documents on church ministry that have been used as the basis for local

diocesan documents on Religious Education.   While recent research by Finn (2009) and
Wanden (2009) noted, in some detail, the bearing that key Catholic Church documents had on
Catholic education, this study will not replicate this but focus on how these documents bring
an understanding of Religious Education that is going to be central to what constitutes success
in Religious Education.

The Second Vatican Councils 1965 key document relevant to Religious Education used the
term Christian Education as its focus (*Gravissium educationis: The declaration on Christian
Education*).   This was the first in a series of Roman documents that were to provide the
background thinking about Religious Education within a wider consideration of the Church's
mission and ministry to its people.   Table 2.1 also provides a summary of pertinent Catholic
Church documents that relate to Religious Education.

The term Christian education gradually lapsed and was replaced by catechesis and
evangelisation.   This development was confirmed in the *General Catechetical Directory* of
1971 which gave special attention to the construct catechesis and established it as of
fundamental importance for the Church's educational mission.   Essentially the document
regarded catechesis as a faith-sharing and faith-forming process for adults.

Two principal developments followed up the Synod of Bishops meetings in Rome in 1974
(on evangelisation) and in 1977 (on catechesis).   The synod was a type of general assembly
of bishops from around the world following up the Second Vatican Council.   The Papal
encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1976 on evangelisation by Pope Paul VI) followed the first
synod;   and the encyclical *Catechesis Tradendae* (1979) on catechesis in our time by Pope
John Paul II, followed the second synod.   The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
was promoted as the principal model for catechesis.

Table 2.1
Summary of Catholic Church documents related to Religious Education

Document Titles	Acronym	Date	Author or Authority	Notes
ROMAN DOCUMENTS FROM THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL				
Gravissium Educationis: The declaration on Christian education.	GE	1965	Vatican II	The ideals of Vatican II applied to Church's educational ministries. Use of the ecumenical term Christian education (the term lapsed in subsequent documents). First official document on Religious Education after the Vatican Council.
Gaudium et Spes: The Church in the modern world	GS	1965	Vatican II	Challenge to the Church to address the situation of contemporary culture. Significant change in mentality from defensive position to one of critical dialogue with modernity.

Roman Documents - Papal Encyclicals				
Evangelii Nuntiandi: Evangelisation in the modern world	EN	1976	Pope Paul VI	Established evangelisation as a central purpose of the Church; evangelisation was not just a process for missionary situations – all believes needed ongoing evangelisation – that is renewal and ongoing conversion; call for critical challenge to culture.
Catechesi Tradendae: Catechesis in our time.	CT	1979	Pope John Paul II	Restated the aims and content of catechesis. Followed up the 1977 Synod on catechesis with amendments to its recommendations; also additions from Pope John Paul II. Called for follow up definitions of various aspects of catechesis.
Fides et ratio: Faith and reason	FR	1998	Pope John Paul II	Emphasised the complementarity of faith and reason. While not directly concerned with catechesis and Religious Education, the key principles in the encyclical strengthened the perceived importance of the cognitive dimension in these processes.
Roman Documents from Roman Church Congregations				
General Catechetical Directory	GCD	1971	Congregation for The Clergy	Main Church document intended to guide national churches in the development of their own directories for informing all pastoral ministries; Christ centred theological content; established catechesis as a key pastoral role; catechesis was primarily for adults and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) was its principal model.
Message to the people of God (Statement from the synod of Bishops on "Catechesis in our time, with special reference to the catechesis of children and young people")	MPG	1977	Synod of Bishops (Rome)	First document to establish distinctions and relationships between evangelisation and catechesis. Evangelisation is the initial challenge to believe in Christ while catechesis promotes continued "growth and maturation in faith". Importance of inculturation – critical interaction between faith tradition and culture.
The Catholic School	CS	1977	Congregation for Catholic Education	Concerned with the ministry of the Church within the Catholic school. Examined various aspects of the school – the clientele, the culture, the curriculum and the ethos. More educational language and ideas than in major Roman documents.
Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to faith	LC	1982	Congregation For Catholic Education	Developed the notion of what it means for educators to be Christian witnesses in schools.
The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School	RD	1988	Congregation for Catholic Education	Explored the religious dimensions to Catholic school (culture, informal and formal curriculum). Acknowledged difficulty in handing on the faith to a relatively secularised youth. Emphasised a distinction between catechesis and Religious Education.
General Directory for Catechesis	GDC	1997	Congregation for the Clergy	Revision of the *General Catechetical Directory* in accord with the *Catechism of the Church*. Emphasised different formats and contexts for catechesis – making the idea of catechesis more complicated.
The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium	TM	1997	Congregation for Catholic Education	A challenging diagnosis of the problems in contemporary culture and post modernity that create difficulties for catechesis and Religious Education. Recommendations for action were limited.
Consecrated persons and their mission in schools.	CP	2002	Congregation for Catholic Education	Reflections on the "presence and educational mission of consecrated (religious) persons in schools." Proposes a role of "cultural mediation of faith". To encourage the religious personnel who remain working in Catholic schools. Notes the task of helping youth in the "search for meaning"
Educating together in Catholic schools: A shared mission between consecrated persons and the lay faithful.	SM	2007	Congregation for Catholic Education	Begins with a challenging diagnosis of the problematic cultural situation of youth today (cf. TM) and reflects on the need for partnership between lay and religious personnel in the mission of Catholic schools. Stress on community and witnessing.

Australian Episcopal Conference Documents; Documents Sponsored by Australian Bishops				
The renewal of the education of faith	REF	1970	Australian Episcopal Conference	Highlighted the experiential dimension; focus on faith; Christ centred content to theology; To inform diocesan guidelines in Australia.
We preach Jesus Christ as Lord: Handing on the Faith	TJC	1971	Education Committee of the Australian Episcopal Conference	Summary of Christ centred theological content for Religious Education. Emphasis on handing on the faith and on developing personal faith.
Towards a responsible renewal: Strategies for reflection on catechetics in our time, with special reference to catechetics for children and young people	RR	1976	Education Committee of the Australian Episcopal Conference	Published reflections from preparations for the Bishops Synod on Catechesis. Took account of the comments of Australian Catholic youth sent to the synod.
The word dwells among us: A summary of Catholic beliefs and practices for teachers in schools and parishes	WDA	1989	Australian Episcopal Conference	Updated summary of theological content for Religious Education. Christ centred content.
Young people and the future	YPF	1998	Australian Episcopal Conference	Summary conclusions to the research on Australian Catholic youth. Youth concerns about finding meaning and purpose, employment and drug abuse.
Australian Religious Education: Facing the Challenges	FTC	1999	G. Holohan for the National Catholic Education Commission (CEC)	Systematic account of nature and purposes of Religious Education; special emphasis on catechesis.
Catholic schools at a crossroad	CSC	2007	Bishops of NSW & ACT	Questioned the effectiveness of Catholic schools as regards getting young people to become active members of the Church; focused on measurable religious outcomes; proposed need for a new evangelisation.
Local Catholic Diocesan Guidelines or Curriculum Statements on Religious Education				
Faithful to God: Faithful to People	FTGFTP	1984	Catholic Education Office Sydney	A statement published by the CEO Sydney on Religious Education in Catholic Schools
Faithful to God: Faithful to People	FTGFTP	1996	CEO Sydney	A set of guidelines for the Religious Education Curriculum that develops the work of the 1984 statement of the same name in a systematic, coherent and co-ordinated approach: K-12.
Religious Education Curriculum	REC	2003	CEO Sydney	Current set of guidelines which were a revised edition of the 1996 guidelines
Text series: *To Know, Worship and Love.* Prescribed as a text-based Religious Education curriculum.	TKWL	2003	Archdioceses of Sydney and Melbourne produced the texts.	A school religion curriculum articulated in a series of student texts at both primary and secondary levels (K-10). A Catholic studies text was also prepared for years 11-12.
Other Influential Catholic Religious Documents				
Catechism of The Catholic Church.	CCC	1992	Congregation for the Clergy (English edition, 1994)	Authoritative account of orthodox Catholic theology. Guide for clergy, catechists and religious teachers as regards the theological content of the faith tradition.

These two documents established catechesis and evangelisation as the key religious and ecclesiastical constructs which provided a theological underpinning to Catholic Religious Education. Evangelisation was regarded as the beginning stage of engaging people in faith; it challenged individuals to a first encounter with faith and it hopefully prompted them towards a decision to embrace the faith. Catechesis was regarded as the deepening of personal faith; it included instruction and education in the teachings of the Church after a faith-decision had been made.

2.3 KEY RELIGIOUS AND ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTRUCTS INFORMING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As noted in chapter one, a range of ecclesiastical, religious, and spiritual constructs has been used to articulate the nature and purposes of Catholic school Religious Education. These constructs figured both in normative documents and in the writings of Religious Education theorists. This section will explore a number of these constructs and for each it will draw conclusions as to what ideas and indicators they would be likely to yield regarding successful Religious Education. In other words, this section will try to identify thinking about what constitutes successful Religious Education that is implied in, and could be correlated with, each of the constructs.

This section will cover five of the religious and ecclesiastical constructs. Those constructs which are more process and psychologically oriented (faith development, spirituality, personal transformation etc.) will be covered after the section on historical typologies of Religious Education. The religious constructs considered in this section have been developed primarily in normative church documents, while Religious Education theorists have also contributed to their development.

2.3.1 Education in faith

One construct used to articulate the nature and purpose of Religious Education in Catholic schools was <u>Education in Faith</u>. It was prominent in the foundational Australian Bishops document *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* (REF) (1970). Rossiter (1983) regarded this term as an umbrella term for all activities that may promote religious development. He defined it as the orientation of Religious Education which was aimed at handing-on a particular faith tradition; that is handing-on the collective beliefs, traditions and practices of a group, by which the group identified itself (or is identified) as a faith-sharing community. It "seeks to develop the personal religious faith and the commitment of the pupil in the context of his or her particular religious faith" (p. 113). Theorists Malone and Ryan (1996)

further clarified this construct, describing it as both a process that enabled the individual to grow in personal faith where it was assumed that the person belonged to the faith community and wished to enhance their faith;   and a term used in the Australian context that attempted to describe school activities which sought to enhance belief and religious practice.   Both theorists noted that this construct included liturgies and opportunities for prayer – the core of the religious life of the catholic school.

The importance of the construct Education in Faith was evident in some of the Church's normative documents.   The Congregation for Catholic Educations document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) noted religious instruction cannot help but strengthen the faith of a believing student (n 69).   This notion was made more explicit for the Australian context in the Archdiocese of Sydney's secondary Religious Education curriculum guidelines which considered that classroom Religious Education was most effective when it is grounded in a sharing of faith between teacher and student.   "When a student responds to the activity of God in her or his life and in all creation, the classroom program has become an agent of ongoing conversion and transformation" (1996, p. 18).

The guidelines, mentioned above, identified five interdependent elements of Religious Education in the Catholic secondary school which assisted students to celebrate and reflect on faith and express it in action (1996, p. 7).   These were:

- the classroom Religious Education program;
- integration of Catholic values across the curriculum;
- the liturgical and prayer life of the school;
- opportunities for retreats and reflection days;
- community service programs and voluntary groups.

One could extrapolate from these elements to propose the following as indicators of successful Religious Education:

- students indicating they have found meaning and value in their lives through their faith in God and study of scripture;
- students demonstrating a world view of relating to themselves, others, and God, centred on the person and teachings of Jesus Christ, through sharing their faith and beliefs with other students;
- students actively being a part of a reflective and worshipping community
- student participation in social justice and community service activities promoted by the school community;
- student level of knowledge of traditional prayers and active participation in the prayer life of the school community.

Teachers views of Religious Education that referred to such indicators could be presumed to highlight the principles implied in the construct Education in Faith.

2.3.2   Catechesis

Catechesis is a term often used in the literature associated with the teaching of Religious Education.   As it is an important term in the context of this study, its meaning and purpose needs further clarification;   and distinction needs to be made between this term and Religious Education.

Catechesis is associated with the ways a Christian community assists others to actively participate in the shared language, symbols, liturgy, moral codes and activities of the believing community.   Catechesis aims to "make people's faith, enlightened by teaching, a living faith, explicit and active" (Paul VI, 1965c, n 14).   The Church documents, *Catechesi Tradendae* (John Paul II, 1979) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Paul VI, 1976) fully located catechesis within the context of evangelisation.

The Second Vatican Council, in its *Declaration on Christian Education* (GE, Pope Paul VI, 1965b), emphasised the importance of education in the development of faith.   This declaration made specific reference to school education: "the school is of outstanding importance" (n 5).   It also highlighted the role of teachers in this process: "But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends on them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs" (n 8).   The Church envisaged the role of the Catholic school in providing catechesis, constructing educational programs incorporating appropriate teaching methods seen as best practice, which remain true to Christian principles and values (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997).   This indicated the level of the importance the Church attached to the Catholic school in an ever-increasing secular world.   Its importance lay in the fact that parents and students, who did not participate in parish life, would find the school as their principal point of contact with the Church.   It also highlighted the Church's catechetical challenge to religious teachers to take those who had heard the gospel to ever-deeper levels of faith.   This particular catechetical focus, although lacking in practical detail regarding methodology and education framework, gave rise to post-conciliar documents that attempted to raise the profile of what has now become the independent curriculum area of Religious Education.

The archdiocese of Sydney's guidelines (1996, p. 4) viewed the purpose of Religious Education in the school setting as participating "in the task of handing on and sharing faith

within the community of believers: this is known as catechesis".   This statement highlighted the problem for classroom religion teachers where some officially sanctioned educational literature of the Church had not offered sufficient clarity between two prominent terms Religious Education and catechesis;   and this has led to some confusion amongst classroom practitioners as to the meaning, use and intent of these terms.   Adding to this level of confusion was the lack of appropriate usage and understanding of the term catechetical amongst practitioners engaged in teaching Religious Education.   It is important to establish clarity, especially in the emergent discussion regarding catechesis and Religious Education. The term catechetical was used to describe a set of assumptions about Religious Education which presumed faith on the part of participants and which presumed that there would or ought to be faith-sharing in the Religious Education classroom.

Educationalists tended to equate the term Religious Education with the formal curriculum that has set educational objectives, methodologies and assessment processes.   This curriculum would be implemented by teachers following a set of mandated guidelines endorsed by the local bishop.   The 2005 *Awakenings* document from the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat provided a comprehensive clarifying statement about Religious Education:

> Because it articulates intentionally the connectedness of the human person with the whole of reality, human and divine, Religious Education awakens all disciplines of learning to their deep potential.   It lies at the heart of the curriculum of Catholic Schools, synthesizing, enriching and complementing the learning experiences of students.
> At its best, Religious Education sets out to inform, form and transform learners and teachers by engaging them with the intellectual, ethical and spiritual richness of the Catholic tradition.   Religious Education invites and enables a life-long journey of awakening to the deep meaning of human life and community, of the world we inhabit and sustain, and of our cultural and religious heritage, against the horizon of the Reign of God enfleshed in the mission and person of Jesus Christ, and communicated in the Church.   (Catholic Diocese of Ballarat, 2005, p. 57)

Furthermore, theorists such as Malone regarded the Religious Education curriculum to be situated within the broader catechesis of the Church (1992, p. 8).   This viewpoint was consistent with the view on the Church document *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982), which was the first Church document to clearly spell out the distinction between Religious Education and catechesis:

> Therefore, the teaching of the Catholic religion, distinct from and at the same time complementary to catechesis properly so called, ought to form a part of the curriculum of every school (n 56).

This was an explicit recognition of the individual nature of what is now known as Religious Education. This was further reinforced in *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988):

> There is a close connection, and at the same time a clear distinction, between religious instruction and catechesis, or the handing-on of the Gospel message. The close connection makes it possible for a school to remain a school and still integrate culture with the message of Christianity. The distinction comes from the fact that, unlike religious instruction, catechesis presupposes that the hearer is receiving the Christian message as a salvific reality. Moreover, catechesis takes place within a community living out its faith at a level of space and time not available to a school: a whole lifetime (n 68).

This was further elaborated in the same document where knowledge was regarded as the focus of the schools educational processes while maturity in faith as the focus of catechesis:

> The aim of catechesis, or handing on the Gospel message, is maturity: spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and apostolic; this happens most especially in a local Church community. The aim of the school however, is knowledge. While it uses the same elements of the Gospel message, it tries to convey a sense of the nature of Christianity, and of how Christians are trying to live their lives. It is evident, of course, that religious instruction cannot help but strengthen the faith of a believing student, just as catechesis cannot help but increase ones knowledge of the Christian message. (n 69)

This material indicated a Church recognition of the need to distinguish between the aims and processes of Religious Education and catechesis. The separation of Religious Education from catechesis did not remove the hope that the classroom study of the religion would support, and stimulate, the faith development of students.

A review of the current literature reports an ongoing discussion on the various current approaches to Religious Education within Catholic schools, which is pertinent to this study. Boys (1989) felt Religious Education should provide for students, ready access to, and knowledge of, the religious traditions of the community in a manner that permitted the tradition to call them to the transformation of ongoing conversion. Further, Haldane (1996) noted that some, within the Church's community, advocated a strong catechetical approach to Religious Education whereby, essential doctrines and devotions of Catholicism would be taught, and that these should only be offered to those Catholics who attended church regularly and supported it financially. Dixon (1996) labelled this approach a maintenance model which he claimed ignored the present reality of the Church where only 19% of Catholics regularly attended Sunday Mass, yet so many of the non-practising want their children to experience a Catholic education. Similar sentiments were echoed by Hackett (1996), Crawford and Rossiter (1988), and Malone and Ryan (1994).

Crawford and Rossiter (1985) proposed that if catechesis was used to refer to a faith sharing dialogue in pastoral ministry, and teaching religion referred to the Religious Education classroom processes, then catechesis and Religious Education can be viewed as complementary. "Classroom Religious Education complements and prepares for catechesis" (Crawford & Rossiter, 1985, p. 40). They argued that an open inquiring study of religion should replace the catechetical approach of the past. This approach would aim at developing the capacity for a sympathetic, objective and critical study of religion among students.

Malone and Ryan (1994) argued that Religious Education involved both the meeting of the need of students for the support and nurturing of a faith community, which taught them how to be religious; and teaching, which helped them to understand religion. They further pointed out that a catechetical approach was not appropriate for the school religion program. Ryan (1997a, p. 92) labelled these two approaches: the <u>educational approach</u> and <u>experiential catechesis</u>. He noted that the aim of the Religious Education program in the Catholic school classroom, using the educational approach, was an understanding and appreciation of religion and ways of being religious, while in the Catholic school using the experiential catechesis approach, the aim was a strengthening of faith and commitment. These theorists believed their support for an educational approach to the teaching of religion in the classroom was justified by church documents *Lay Catholics in Schools* (1982, n 56), and *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988, n 68-69).

Engebretson (1997, p. 25-29) considered that many teachers found that a theory of Religious Education which relied too heavily on catechesis simply did not stand up when practised on today's young people. She noted that while some students were in a position where catechesis may occur, many others were not. She further pointed out that if we are not to allow this latter group of students to simply drop out of the process, then theory must be modified, and other branches of Religious Education theory utilised.

Liddy and Welbourne (1999, p. 16) made the following observation, noting that classroom Religious Education was "not directly focused on creating a religious experience as much as an educational exploration of religion. That such an exploration becomes a religion faith-forming experience for many students is an important consequence but not a direct aim."

Those teachers who operated out of a catechetical framework would likely perceive the following as indicators of success in teaching Religious Education in the secondary classroom:

- the level of knowledge and understanding attained by students in the areas of theology, Catholic beliefs and practices, the catechism and scripture;
- demonstration by students that they have learnt prayers, answers to set questions, the commandments and other facts by rote;
- student experience and participation in liturgies, prayer services and meditations;
- student expressed interest in the Catholic Church's teachings and theology;
- increased participation in the life of the Church;
- use of the textbook by students in lessons.

Theorists such as Boys (1989), Bosch (1991) and Fleming (2006) saw evangelisation as the first step of the process that led to catechesis. Thus it is important to examine literature regarding the process of evangelisation as it is a term widely used in discussion linking teachers' perception of success with what they believe to be the meaning and purpose of Religious Education.

2.3.3   Evangelisation

Evangelisation is regarded as a process whereby Christians involve themselves in activities where they deliberately relate to others beyond the boundaries of their faith community, with the aim to "challenge, transform and convert" (Arthur & Gaine, 1996, p. 346). Arthur and Gaine both viewed the Catholic school as fundamentally important in the Church's evangelising mission where a critical integration between culture and religion takes place, where evangelisation is positively encouraged through the lived reality of the Catholic school community. This was often referred to as inculturation - the constant exposure to the living of the gospel message within the Christian community in such a way that it influenced those in their community. Evangelisation was seen as a call to the whole Church, and thus those involved in Catholic education, to share the Christian story with all those they came into contact with – including the non-Catholic students enrolled in the Church's schools. Treston (1997) pointed out that the Catholic school, by conducting learning within a religious vision of the world, can be viewed as an agent of evangelisation. Pope Paul VI expressed this sentiment on evangelisation in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975, n 5):

> It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is indeed necessary. It is unique. It cannot be replaced. It does not permit indifference, syncretism, or accommodation. It is a question of people's salvation. It is the beauty of the Revelation that it represents. It brings with it a wisdom that is not of this world.

In some contexts, the Catholic school may be the Church's only agent of evangelisation or the only agent of evangelisation that the unchurched laity sees as relevant (West, 1996) or credible (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 1997).

There is an increasing reality within Catholic secondary schools that there are a number of students who have yet to commit themselves to any form of belief system or philosophical basis.   The notion of pre-evangelisation has been used by theorists such as Gallagher (1996), Treston (1997) and Collins (2008) as the preliminary stage of evangelisation.   Collins (2008, p. 158) was more explicit in viewing pre-evangelisation as:

> essentially the creation of an atmosphere that says that faith and belief should be taken seriously, that God and spirituality are realities in human life and that assists in spreading human and Christian ideals and values.

The relative emphasis placed on pre-evangelisation, evangelisation and catechesis in Catholic schools is dependent on the degree of readiness of the students.   Gallagher (1996) implied that this aspect was very important for those involved in Religious Education.   They needed to understand that their students, at this point in the process, may consider classroom Religious Education as not relevant to their life, but primarily as 'institutional maintenance' or even as indoctrination (the term 'institutional maintenance' is a pejorative view of Religious Education which implies that too much attention is given to the needs for continuing and maintaining the church as an institution, while not giving adequate attention to the needs of the individual students.   The word 'indoctrination' refers to the notion of trying to get students to believe something without giving adequate information, or through concealing information;   sometimes students will use the word 'brainwashing' as the equivalent of indoctrination).   This raised the question as to what would be considered as an appropriate and authentic approach to the teaching of Religious Education.

Leahy (1990, p. 143) critiqued both evangelisation and catechesis as inappropriate and "illegitimate" educational methods of instruction for this particular reason and believed that authentic classroom Religious Education should be seen as "the critical initiation of students into the religious dimension of reality."

Rossiter and Crawford (2006) saw the dilemma through another paradigm which embodied two principal responsibilities of Religious Education, one of which was pertinent to the present discussion.   This principal responsibility of Religious Education was lending assistance to young people in "learning how to explore spiritual-moral issues that are prominent in the culture and that have a bearing on their personal development" (p. 402). Theorists such as Purnell (1985), Lovat (1991), Engebretson (1999) and Rossiter (1999) highlighted the need for religious teachers to acknowledge the reality of the wide spectrum of faith affiliation in the everyday classroom in Catholic schools today and how this may impact

on how Religious Education was perceived. Purnell (1985) put the current situation in perspective as follows:

> The pupils range over a whole spectrum of commitment: some will come from very committed Christian Catholic families and some may be themselves committed; others, the exact opposite. When, therefore, Religious Education is presented to pupils of such wide-ranging commitment, it will be received in different ways: some will receive it as catechesis, some may be evangelised by it, while others will hear it simply as Religious Education (p. 74).

Pope John Paul II called all within the Church to participate in what he termed the new evangelisation in which the Church, and subsequently the Catholic school, was called to communicate with those within the society and/or school to proclaim the gospel anew:

> This should be done however with the respect due to the different paths of different people and with sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in which the Christian message must be planted, in such a way that the particular values of each people will not be rejected but purified and brought to their fullness.
> (John Paul II, 2000, n 40)

The call to a new evangelisation was a challenge to re-proclaim the gospel to those who had previously heard the message but had let it lie dormant; as well as to those who had not heard the Word before (John Paul II, 1990). The Church challenged its schools to find appropriate ways of proclaiming the gospel message to their students, staff, and parents who may have been baptised but who had not embraced the message fully. The non-Christian members of the school community were to be given a chance to hear the gospel in culturally relevant ways through word and witness (John Paul II, 2001).

Malone and Ryan (1996) argued that a catechetical model of Religious Education in Australian Catholic schools that presumed a commonality of faith experience was no longer the reality experienced in the classroom. White (2004) points to the increasing diversity of students, in terms of their religious and cultural backgrounds, as a major reason why not all students are ready, willing and able to share their faith experiences during Religious Education classes. Hence, it was not possible to assume all students were capable of engaging in a process of Christian faith formation within the confines of the compulsory classroom.

Teachers operating out of this particular evangelisation paradigm would be likely to consider the following as indicators of success in teaching religion:

- teachers noting that students are demonstrating critical thinking in both their oral and written work;

- students communicate their perception that the topic has relevance in their lives;
- students demonstrate to teachers that they were giving thoughtful attention to contemporary spiritual and moral issues;
- students showed an awareness of the shaping influence that culture can have on peoples beliefs and attitudes in class discussions;
- students displaying a level of interest in the lesson or in scripture where they were responsive to moral and/or spiritual insights from the teacher, and asked pertinent questions about matters under discussion;
- teachers view of themselves as role models of witness to the values of the school and the gospel;
- giving students guidance in exploring their own spirituality.

2.3.4 Ministry

Several studies have been undertaken in the United States examining the qualities and roles of teachers in Catholic schools.   Bryk, Lee and Holland (1993) reported that many teachers in Catholic high schools described "their work as a kind of ministry and their role as one of shaping young adults" (p. 97).   In a study of Catholic elementary school teachers, Kushner and Helbling (1995) found that a significant percentage of teachers felt they had a responsibility to foster the faith development of their students.   Crawford and Rossiter (2006) considered this as important as teachers stood at the interface between young people and the Church because for some students, this would be their only contact with the institutional Church.   Religious Education from the perspective of ministry implied that teachers of religion should acknowledge and accept they are entrusted with the handing-on of the faith tradition and that they would be contributing to the evangelising mission of the Church. Religious Education teachers could thus perceive themselves in a ministerial capacity, acting as a role model and having a responsibility to foster faith development among their students.

This sense of ministry, however, may lead to teacher disillusionment with students when they demonstrated detachment from or a lack of interest in Religious Education.   Such a lack of engagement of students could lead to teachers' perceptions of lack of success in their endeavours in Religious Education and could even affect the delivery of material in their lessons.   Religion teachers, who found their motivation in terms of ministry, could "look for ways of improving Religious Education in the hope this might result in winning more young people over in favour of the Church" (Crawford & Rossiter 2006, p. 397).   Crawford and Rossiter (2006) cautioned that, while teachers may succeed to some degree in making their lessons relevant, this would not automatically translate into students viewing the Church as relevant in their lives.

Teachers, who considered the purpose of secondary Religious Education in terms of ministry, may perceive the following as potential indicators of successful teaching in the Religious Education classroom:

- their effective sharing of personal faith insights;
- the extent to which they see themselves as a spiritual role model;
- the level of interest expressed by students in the church's teachings and in practising the Catholic faith;
- the teacher judges her or his students to be well informed about scripture, and what the Catholic Church believes and teaches;
- the level of interest and involvement in liturgy, prayer, meditation and devotion.

2.3.5 Witness

This construct is acknowledged by the Church as another significant aspect that underpins the success of the Religious Education on offer in its schools. In the document *The Catholic School* published by the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) in 1977, the teacher was clearly identified as a witness to the faith (n 43, 53, 78) which they considered important for the effective transmission of the Christian message (n 49). This perception that teachers act as important witnesses to faith for students was reinforced in the Church's document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (CCE, 1988, n 37, 96).

> Teachers must remember that it depends chiefly on them whether the catholic school achieves its purpose. They should therefore be properly prepared for their work, having the appropriate qualifications and adequate learning both religious and secular. They should be skilled in the art of education in accordance with the discoveries of modern times. Possessed by charity towards each other and towards their pupils, and inspired by an apostolic spirit, they should bear testimony by their lives and their teaching to the one teacher, who is Christ (CCE 1977, n 8).

This construct can be problematic. In seeking to staff Religious Education classes, a schools administration may call on teachers to take classes for which their only qualification is that they are Catholic. They were selected because of their perceived level of goodness rather than their pedagogical skill, prior knowledge and experience. This may lead to the situation where some teachers could use the notion of witnessing or role modelling as an excuse for not being thoroughly professional in pedagogical content. This construct is also problematic when teachers, who are interested in witnessing, feel empowered in always endeavouring to proclaim their faith and their views. This could become an obsession and could turn their views into the dominant content for Religious Education lessons. Pope John Paul II noted the Church's concern about this problem in *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979, n 6).

> [The religion teacher or catechist] will not seek to keep directed towards himself and his personal opinions and attitudes the attention and the consent of the mind and heart of the person he is catechising. Above all, he will not try to inculcate his personal opinions and options as if they expressed Christ's teaching and the lessons of his life.

Teachers, who consider witness to the message of the gospel as an important aspect of their teaching, are likely to use the following to judge what the purposes and indicators of successful Religious Education are:

- student participation and involvement in mediative and prayerful experiences;
- teacher giving witness to her or his beliefs in what she/he does or says;
- student response to spiritual/religious insights given by teacher.

2.3.6 The promotion of Catholic religious identity and participation in Catholic parishes

Of major interest to this study, was the release of the pastoral letter of the bishops of New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) entitled *Catholic Schools at a Cross Roads* on August 8, 2007. This letter was an attempt by the bishops to respond to what they perceived to be the challenges facing the Church's ministry of education in Australia. These included:

- the attendance of young people at Mass;
- fewer Vocations to the priesthood and religious life;
- a growing lack of awareness of a distinctive Catholic religious identity among young people with the parishes of the Church and religion.

The Catholic bishops of NSW and ACT sought to invite all those involved in Catholic education to dedicate themselves to ensuring that Catholic schools:

- are truly Catholic in their identity and life;
- are centres of the new evangelisation;
- enable our students to achieve high levels of Catholic religious literacy;
- are led and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals. (2007, p. 5)

The bishops strongly believed that if Catholic schools were to be judged successful in their ministry to youth, then an essential component of that success was a Religious Education (RE) curriculum that was sound, attractive and professionally taught by teachers with appropriate RE qualifications (2007, p. 10). They viewed the Religious Education classroom as the place where students would participate in addressing the core of Catholic faith and inviting a response (2007, p. 13). They believed that no student should leave Catholic schools without knowing the essentials of Catholic teaching as found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and its *Compendium*, and all catechetical programs and Religious Education

texts should build on these.   They were convinced that if Catholic schools were to succeed in passing on the Catholic faith to the next generation then:

- schools will have as their goal the formation of Christian disciples, with appropriate world view, character and behavior;
- Religious Education curriculum, methodologies, texts and other resources will be chosen to ensure that by the end of their schooling students know the core teachings of our faith, our scriptures, history and tradition (Catholic religious literacy) and how these are to be lived in the world;
- in particular, students will be brought to a knowledge and, as far as possible, love of the person, life and teachings of Christ and of the Trinitarian God of Love
- students will also be brought to a knowledge and love of the People of God, the Church, who join them in their pilgrimage through life and support them through the Word of God and the Sacraments;
- students will be prepared for the challenges to their faith that may come while still at school or after they have left school;
- Religious Education classes will therefore be given priority with regard to the school curriculum, time and space allocation and the choice and recognition of staff;
- there will be demonstrations of Catholic religious literacy through appropriate assessment and religious activities;
- our schools will also seek to involve parents and families in the process of evangelising and catechising their children, seeking in the process also to educate those families in the faith. (2007, p. 14)

This pastoral letter had put Catholic education authorities on notice that the bishops of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory expected a closer dialogue and cooperation between Catholic schools and parishes.   They see Catholic schools as centres of the new evangelisation and the use of catechesis as the predominant method of Religious Education.

The bishops' pastoral letter indicated they were judging the success of Catholic schools in terms of the religious performance of past pupils.   There are many educators in Catholic schools who consider religious performance, religiosity, and Mass going rates as not adequate and not valid measures of the success of Catholic schools.   They believe that the school's success should be better measured in how well it educates them religiously and gives them access to and familiarity with the Catholic tradition.   But whether or not they become practising members of a local community of faith will depend largely on the interplay of the many other non school factors that may influence their decision, in particular, their perception of the relevance of the Church itself.   It would be understandable that the bishops would think that there is so many resources going into Catholic schools that they should produce these types of results.   But in this sort of secularised westernised society, what needs to be understood is that there are no causal links between the experience of Religious Education and the option to make a commitment in joining a local community of faith and practising in it.   Rossiter (2009a) pointed out that the pathway between the two is more tentative.   The

school can inform the students, acquaint them, but many other factors, including their own choice, will figure in whether or not they do that. So therefore it is unrealistic to use that as a measure. A more complex account of what it means religiously to educate them in a successful way needs to be developed, which would be a more appropriate way of assessing the success of Catholic education, and this would be better in informing the teachers.

One of the difficulties faced by the bishops that have probably influenced them in wanting this document was that they were experiencing a booming school system while in a declining church. What needs to be done as part of the Catholic school's Religious Education, and indeed Catholic schools generally, is to give more attention to its civic contribution in educating Australian citizens because the schools are semi-state and are publicly funded: they have a responsibility to the Australian community to contribute in that way. It is evident that the measure of Mass-going attendance is too limited a view of the overall contribution and therefore the overall view of success.

2.3.7 Summary of key ecclesiastical, religious, and spiritual constructs

The ecclesiastical, religious, and spiritual constructs, summarised in table 2.2, are important in any deliberation about the nature and purpose of the teaching of religion in the secondary classroom and in providing one framework which religion teachers could use to interpret their level of success in teaching. As noted, these constructs have been used extensively in both the Church's normative documentation and in the writings of theorists to give meaning and direction in the debate on the nature and purposes of Catholic school Religious Education. These constructs dealt mainly with the purpose of acquisition of religious knowledge, the promotion of personal change, and spiritual and moral development. Crawford and Rossiter (1985, 1993) noted that there is likely to be ambiguity about how and to what extent the purposes of these constructs can be achieved by the efforts of religion teachers in the classroom. Hence, these constructs are open to ambiguous interpretation by teachers and could therefore be problematic with respect to expectations of Religious Education (Crawford & Rossiter, 1985). Finn's (2009) doctoral research on the views of a sample of teachers and parents illustrated this problem. Both the teachers and parents regarded the religious constructs like catechesis and evangelisation as important; but at the same time, they regarded these constructs as confusing and not helpful in their understanding of Religious Education.

Table 2.2

Summary of key ecclesiastical, religious, and spiritual constructs that underpin Religious Education in Catholic schools together with indicators of what these constructs might imply as regards what constitutes successful Religious Education

Key constructs	Key focus	Likely purposes and indicators of success in Religious Education
According to spiritual process		
Education in faith	An umbrella term covering all activities concerned with handing on the faith tradition and enhancing the personal faith of pupils.	• Students indicating they have found meaning and value in their lives through their faith in God and study of scripture. • Students demonstrating a world-view of relating to themselves, others, and God, centred on the person and teachings of Jesus Christ, through sharing their faith and beliefs with other students • Students actively being a part of a reflective and worshipping community • Student participation in social justice and community service activities promoted by the school community. • Student level of knowledge of traditional prayers and active participation in the prayer life of the school community
Catechesis	Emphasis on a faith-sharing dialogue between pupils and teachers.	• The level of knowledge and understanding attained by students in the areas of theology, Catholic beliefs and practices, the catechism and scripture. • Demonstration by students that they have learnt prayers, answers to set questions, the Commandments and other facts by rote. • Student experience and participation in liturgies, prayer services and meditations. • Student expressed interest in the Catholic Church's teachings and theology. • Increased participation in the life of the Church. • Use of the textbook by students in lessons.
Evangelisation	Challenge to renew personal faith and deepen a sense of conversion. Call to challenge culture and dialogue critically with culture.	• Teachers noting that students are demonstrating critical thinking in both their oral and written work. • Students demonstrate to teachers that they were giving thoughtful attention to contemporary spiritual and moral issues. • Students displaying a level of interest in the lesson or in scripture where they were responsive to moral and/or spiritual insights from the teacher, and asked pertinent questions about matters under discussion. • Teachers view of themselves as role models of witness to the values of the school and the Gospel. • Giving students guidance in exploring their own spirituality
Pre evangelisation	Meeting basic human needs as a prelude to a challenge to consider a response in faith.	• Students communicate their perception that the topic has relevance in their lives
Inculturation	Critical interaction between the faith tradition and the culture	• Students showed an awareness of the shaping influence that culture can have on people's beliefs and attitudes in class discussions.
Mission	The school's Religious Education sharing in the saving mission of the Church.	• Their effective sharing of personal faith insights. • The teacher judges his/her students to be well informed about Scripture, and what the Catholic Church believes and teaches
Ministry	Understanding ones work in a school from a religious perspective in terms of a distinctive role in the school	• The extent to which they see themselves as a spiritual role model. • The level of interest expressed by students in the church's teachings and in practising the Catholic

	community	faith. • The level of interest and involvement in liturgy, prayer, meditation and devotion.
Witness	Indicating ones personal faith and commitment which might be an influential role model for youth	• Student participation and involvement in mediative and prayerful experiences. • Teacher giving witness to her or his beliefs in what she or he does or says. • Student response to spiritual and religious insights given by teacher.

2.4 HISTORICAL TYPOLOGIES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THAT HAVE AFFECTED EXPECTATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As noted in chapter 1, one principal window through which an examination of the changing understandings of the nature and purposes of Catholic Religious Education can occur, were the historical approach typologies – that is, descriptions of different approaches to Religious Education that developed since the 1950s. This section will draw up a composite typology based on those developed by Rummery (1975), Rossiter (1981, 1999), Crawford and Rossiter (2006), Moore (1981, 1991), Lovat (1992, 2002), and Buchanan (2002).

For each of the main approaches, the key elements and emphases will be described. In addition, issues and potential problems will be highlighted and a summary of likely ideas or indicators of what the approaches implied for the notion of successful Religious Education will be drawn up.

2.4.1 Catechism or doctrinal approach

The catechism or doctrinal approach was prominent in the teaching of religion in the secondary classroom in Australia up to the early 1960s. It was resourced by catechisms that provided summaries of Catholic doctrine. The catechism

> contained all the necessary truths of the Roman Catholic Church, ranging from basic beliefs about God and who made the world, through moral obligations to God and the Church, and even to beliefs about one's fundamental identity as Catholics (Lovat, 1989, p. 5).

This approach served a dual purpose. It firstly ensured that Catholics learnt by rote, a succinct and complete knowledge of Church doctrine that they could publicly defend, in a somewhat hostile, Protestant dominated society. Secondly, it reinforced the socialisation of students into the Catholic faith community through participation in devotional activities such as the Rosary, Benediction, Novenas and other signs of commitment to the Church. This approach provided only a little study of the bible in terms of bible history or proof texts for the doctrine under investigation.

The dominant pedagogical method was similar to the learning methods employed elsewhere in the curriculum. The catechism provided a practical teaching strategy for teachers with limited preparation; characterised by the teacher providing doctrine and having students memorising it in a question and answer format (Fleming, 2002). The catechism was an efficient and effective tool for teachers. It enabled them to teach Catholic doctrine with a minimal amount of training. The catechism or doctrinal method provided teachers with the support of parents who had been through a very similar process of Religious Education themselves (Ryan, 1997a; Rummery, 1975). The prescriptive methodology of this approach to the teaching of religion was able to maintain the Church's control on what was taught and how its traditions were established and maintained. This catechism or doctrinal approach succeeded in imparting knowledge and understanding within the confines of a closely connected Catholic culture of home, school and parish. In the years following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the social upheaval that accompanied it, the purpose and appropriateness of the pedagogy of Religious Education in the Catholic secondary school became the focus of much debate (Dwyer, 1993, p. 13). It became increasingly apparent that the transmission model was relatively meaningless in a secular society that viewed religion as irrelevant (Rummery, 1975, p. 102)

There are some current Religious Education teachers in the Catholic school system that have experienced this approach in their formative years and may have an affinity with this approach to Religious Education. In conducting this research project, there was a need to see if this approach still exerts any influence on the way Religious Education teachers perceive the nature and purposes of Religious Education, and what constitutes successful teaching. Teachers who associated with this approach would be likely to view the following as likely purposes and indicators of success:

- the rote learning of prayers, ten Commandments, parts of the Mass and meanings of key terms used in topics relating to Church beliefs and practices;
- use of the catechism in the teaching of course material;
- communicating and subsequent assessment of students' knowledge of Church doctrine.

2.4.2   Kerygmatic or bible salvation history approach

A change in approach occurred in the mid-1960s in the teaching of religion in the classroom. The kerygmatic approach to Religious Education, based on the proclamation of the message of salvation as found in scripture became popular (Ryan & Malone, 1996, p. 40). This Kerygmatic approach not only heralded a change in the content of Religious Education but also a change in methodology.

Theorists, Ryan (1997a) and Fleming (2002), considered the publications of Josef Jungmann (1959) and Johannes Hofinger (1966) to be seminal in the development of the Kerygmatic approach. They highlighted the need to move towards a more scriptural and liturgical approach which was more closely aligned with that of the early Christian church. Hofinger believed this would bring joy back into the Religious Education process, to reinvigorate young people's faith by proclaiming the good news of the person of Jesus rather than emphasising doctrinal content (Fleming, 2002).

Accompanying the implementation of this approach in Australia was the publication of new kerygmatic catechisms for students together with substantial teacher support resources. The catechisms, *My Way to God*, (Australian Episcopal Conference, 1964) were mandated by the Australian Catholic bishops for all Australian Catholic schools. Teachers were encouraged to use a variety of teaching strategies in their use of these books. This approach changed the emphasis from the transmission of doctrine to a proclamation of the scriptures and the story of Jesus and the Church (Rummery, 1975, p. 11). The texts had a standard yearly sequence that moved from the Old Testament patriarchs, prophets and kings, to the New Testament Gospels and early Church, and finally to the story of the Church until present times. It was believed that these changes brought about by the kerygmatic approach in terms of new texts and methodology would motivate the students to respond positively to the Good News of Jesus Christ as saviour of the world. It would encourage them to explore their faith in new ways by reflecting on and studying the scriptures and participating in more contemporary liturgical experiences.

While the kerygmatic approach had less than a decade of influence in Australia, in that time, some students found this approach to Religious Education new and more engaging. Other students soon tired of the repetitive nature of the curriculum as it moved often predictably through the same structure each year, as it sought to build on the previous level.

Within the ranks of present teachers of Religious Education, there are some who either were taught or may even have taught students using this approach. The following would be indicators consistent with the Kerygmatic approach:

- student understanding of the history of salvation in the biblical stories;
- student understanding and knowledge of scripture;
- student participation in liturgy and other forms of worship.

The use of scripture in the kerygmatic approach was for proclamation of the saving Christian message. It would take another 10–20 years before the critical interpretation of scripture

would come to have a prominent place in Catholic school Religious Education (Boys, 1980; Coloe, 2001; Grace, 2003). Once a more critical interpretation of scripture entered classroom Religious Education, the following indicator became relevant:

- student biblical scholarship: The extent to which they critically interpret scripture.

However this was not part of the kerygmatic approach.

2.4.3 Experiential and life-centred approach

The life-centred approach to Religious Education developed in response to both changes in direction by the Church after the Second Vatican Council in an attempt to engage in a more meaningful dialogue with society (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965) and in pertinent developments in educational psychology, sociology and anthropology by theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg, Bloom and Fowler.

The *General Catechetical Directory's* (1971) emphasis on the theological and catechetical importance of coming to know Jesus and the traditions of the Church through an exploration of life experiences, was considered an endorsement of the life-centred approach (Buchanan, 2005). This exploration of life experiences sought to allow for better understanding of their emotional dimension and their importance in personal relationships. It was believed that through this process of exploration God and religious truth were to be found. The objective of this approach was to link the Christian story to lived experience. This implied a faith community model of catechesis (Rummery, 1975, p. 19), which was less hierarchical and less authoritative a model than previous ones which emphasised the role of the Church as the custodian of revelation.

Rossiter (1981) claimed that the writings of Moran (1966a, 1966b) entitled *Theology of Revelation* and *Catechesis of Revelation*, were particularly influential on the new experiential, life-centred approach in the Catholic sectors in Australia and the United States, even though Moran would never have endorsed the informality and lack of academic rigour that resulted. One alternative title of his first book was *God Still Speaks*, which epitomised the view that revelation was not a static deposit from New Testament times – it was continuing in the present. That is God continues to reveal himself to people through their normal experience. This theological view of revelation which became more prominent during and after the Second Vatican Council, underpinned the experiential, life-centred approach.

This approach to Religious Education adopted a methodology that was often cited as relaxed and relatively informal, and which was in stark contrast with the academic rigour predominant

in other curriculum areas. This methodology allowed for much discussion and limited the amount of formal doctrinal content. Engebretson (2002) noted this approach emphasised the sharing of life experiences between students and teacher, reflection on this life experience, and the linking of this reflection with growth in knowledge and affective understanding of faith content. The life-centred approach acknowledged the importance of context and brought "personal experience to the forefront" of pedagogy (Ryan, 2007, p. 99). Catholic secondary classroom Religious Education teachers were often expected to facilitate in the nurturing of adolescent faith and give witness to the gospel in word and deed. This led to the perception that classroom Religious Education being different from other disciplines.

The informality of the new approach with its emphasis on discussion and its lack of academic rigour as compared to other curriculum areas inevitably resulted in the downgrading of Religious Educations academic standing in Catholic schools. This was in contrast to the evident success of the retreats, which generated personal sharing and reflection due to a sense of retreat community and close student-student and student-teacher relationships (Rummery, 1975; Lovat, 1989; Fleming, 2002). Attempts to use retreat-like activities in the classroom to generate the same sort of dynamics that were evident in retreats met with limited success and even frustration. Rossiter (1999) noted that the retreat processes employed may have been valuable in their intended or voluntary group settings, but were largely unsuitable for the classroom use because they were too informal and lacked academic rigour.

The life-centred approach sought to nurture young Catholics to become actively engaged in Church life, even if students were not overtly responsive to this particular purpose. Ryan (1997a) noted that this added a Church maintenance dimension to this approach's purposes; with the assumption that students were, or could be, willing to be incorporated into the life of the Church.

The main purpose of the life-centred approach was catechetical. It aimed at the formation of a personal relationship with God, rather than doctrinal knowledge (Larkin, 2006, p. 23). The life-centred approach viewed faith not only as intellectual assent to truth, but also as a personal relationship with God.

> The specific contribution of experiential catechesis towards any model of education in faith lies in its insistence on the revelatory character of human experience together with its understanding of religious faith, not solely in terms of belief, doctrine and assent, but also as personal relationship with God (Flynn, 1979, p. 60).

This life-centred approach tended to emphasise personalism at the expense of content. De Souza (2005) believed that affective aims were seen as having priority over cognitive aims in Religious Education due to its principal focus of the enhancement of a personal faith and spirituality.

While it addressed some of the perceived shortcomings of prior approaches, the life-centred approach also had its difficulties.

> Within a few years, however, even the most ardent proponents of experiential catechesis came to realise that it was not, in itself, a panacea for educating persons in faith. Catechists became disillusioned with the seemingly endless discussion which, while always beginning with present experience, all too often tended to remain there. It was found that this approach ran the risk of locking persons into their existential present so that their present experience tended to become the normative framework of Gods revelation (Flynn, 1979, pp. 60-61).

Crawford and Rossiter (2006) believed that this approach was animated by a psychological Christian spirituality which became the most prominent expression of Catholic spirituality in Australia. Thus it is quite conceivable that as the life-centred approach influenced the way Religious Education was offered in Catholic schools in Australia, it may still assert some influence on the current thinking of current Religious Education teachers. Possible indicators of thinking about Religious Education that were consistent with the life centred approach would be:

- students understanding of contemporary issues in the light of the Gospels message;
- students' participation in discussion where there is sharing of personal and faith insights;
- teachers' perception that discussion is more important an educative tool in Religious Education than in other key learning areas of the curriculum;
- teachers' ability to share both spiritual and moral insights with students;
- students demonstrating a greater level of participation in the life of the Church;
- teachers perceiving their role as promoters of personal faith and providers of opportunities for students to explore their own spirituality.

2.4.4   The shared Christian praxis approach, liberational and/or social justice emphasis

This section has clustered a number of approaches that were concerned with the Biblical notion of liberation and with social justice. Following the significant Catholic social teachings that dated particularly from the pre World War Two and post World War Two periods (e.g. *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pope Pius XI, 1931), there were elements of social justice thinking likely to have influenced Catholic religion teachers in the 1960s and 1970s. Such thinking was also informed by the new writings in liberational theology (e.g. Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation*, 1972).

Similarly, there was a current of influence from what is identified as critical pedagogy (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p.267). This was an educational movement emerging from the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory which emphasised the role of education in promoting social change, social justice and personal emancipation (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p.55). Paulo Friere's book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971), was probably influential in Catholic circles.

The shared Christian praxis approach to the teaching of Religious Education, one Catholic social justice approach, was outlined by Groome in his book *Christian Religious Education* (1981) and in more comprehensive detail in *Sharing Faith* (1991). This approach based its theoretical framework on Habermas critical theory, to which Groome himself acknowledges a special debt to Habermas for the theoretical basis for his model (1991, p.102). The Habermasian theory, on which the Shared Christian Praxis approach is based, held that there are three ways of knowing.

- **Technical** (focusing on knowing 'what')– technical interest led to knowledge based on empirical investigation and governed by technical rules;
- **Procedural** (focusing on knowing 'how') – hermeneutical interest which resulted in an interpretative knowledge of symbols and shared meanings, developed through dialogue;
- **Critical** (focusing on knowing 'why') – emancipatory interest which was associated with knowledge gained by through personal reflection leading to a transformed consciousness or changes in perspective.

Habermas' critical theory was largely concerned with the emancipatory way of knowing which led to critique and reflection and subsequently to new knowledge, liberation and change (Lovat, 1989). Further, Smith and Lovat (1991, p. 76) considered that the framework provided by Habermas, and the critical theory in general was one of the more important to have come forward in recent times.

Groome's shared Christian praxis approach in Religious Education was based on Habermas' emancipatory way of knowing, and "translates the principles of this way of knowing into a concise Religious Education methodology. It sets out a praxis or action reflection model whose intention is action for change" (Engebretson, 1997, p. 28). In Australia, the following Catholic dioceses formally adopted Shared Christian Praxis as the mandated approach to be followed: Parramatta, Wollongong, Canberra, Sale, Sandhurst and Ballarat. The shared Christian praxis approach was much less evident in other dioceses. Although this meta-approach gained prominence in the discourse relating to the teaching of Religious Education, it must be noted that, because liberational and social justice elements have long been prominent in Australian Catholic Religious Education, it can be expected that some aspects of

shared Christian praxis could be identified in the thinking of religion teachers even if they did not associate such ideas with Groome's theory.

Groome (1981, 1991), Ryan and Malone (1996) agreed that one of the keys to success in using this praxis approach was how the teacher interpreted and then implemented it. The process of shared Christian praxis is characterised by a focusing critical self-reflection process of five interrelated dialogical movements whereby the student:

1) would express themselves around the theme;

2) critically reflected on the theme in their life;

3) related the theme to the Story and Vision of the Christian community;

4) appropriated the wisdom of the Christian community;

5) made a decision regarding Christian faith (Groome, 2006, pp. 772-774).

The conceptual and operational framework of this approach was considered liberationist as it sought to engage students in shaping their destinies through a critical self-reflection process outlined above. This provided them with opportunities to affirm what was true from their present experience and to recognise its limitations. It prompted them "to take on both personal and social responsibilities of the Christian faith by focusing on what can be changed in self and church for the sake of the future" (Hobson & Welbourne, 1997, p. 42). This was evident in the focus on social justice issues treated in the classroom. In essence, Hobson and Welbourne believed the shared Christian praxis to be a pedagogical approach that sought to promote the wholistic education of people in faith.

Groome's work is important as it marked a major epistemological shift in Religious Education and proved influential in its contribution to the academic rigour of Religious Education in Australia (Welbourne, 1999). Bezzina (1997) also considered Shared Christian Praxis as an appropriate pedagogical approach. According to Bezzina, Groome referred to shared Christian praxis as a "meta-approach" (Groome 1991, p. 2). He described this meta-approach as an "overarching perspective and mode for proceeding that can be readily adapted to a great variety of teaching/learning occasions". He also described it as a framework and style of ministry (Groome, 1991, p.296). He elaborated:

> The movements of shared praxis are dynamic activities and intentions to be consistently honoured over time, rather than steps in a procedure. The dynamic among participants often causes the movements to overlap, occur and recur, to be recast in many sequences. I use the word movements intentionally to signify a free-flowing process orchestrated and choreographed much as are the movements of a symphony of dance (1991, p. 279). And shared praxis is more an attitude, a style, a way of being with people that a teacher embodies than a fixed series of pedagogical movements.

Groome's approach, according to Lovat (1989) and Moore (1991), is a faith forming one. While this approach has attracted advocacy among some theorists such as Bezzina, Gahan, McLenaghan and Wilson (1997), it also has attracted some criticism amongst others. Ryan (1997b, p. 13) pointed out shared Christian praxis encounters irreconcilable differences with the reality of the classroom. "Many teachers have been unwilling to risk exposing their lack of knowledge by implementing the praxis approach". Ryan's criticisms of the suitability of praxis are supported by Rossiter (1998) who argued that shared Christian praxis is an authentic catechesis for adults or youth commitment groups but not fully suitable for the Religious Education classroom. Lovat (1989) noted that the appropriateness of the praxis framework for Religious Education is reliant on the Catholic school being identified as a faith community. He believed this approach has a weakness which lay in its quest for faith development, which he considered unrealistic within a selective frame of reference – the classroom.

However, shared Christian praxis did influence pedagogy, particularly the call for personal agency, critical thinking and academic rigour. It did much to assist in the re-conceptualisation of Religious Education as an academic discipline with the same status as other disciplines in the curriculum. But this occurred selectively in the dioceses that adopted shared Christian praxis.

The following indicators show evidence of thinking about the social justice and liberational motif in Religious Education. They would also serve as indicators of the shared Christian praxis approach, but not in an exclusive way:

- students critical interpretation of scripture;
- students application of what has been learnt to social justice concerns;
- demonstrations of critical thinking on issues evident in both discussions and written work; This may include demonstrations of critical interpretations of culture;
- the level of questioning by students arising from work done in class;
- student interest and participation in social justice activities and social action.

2.4.5 Subject-oriented approach

The subject-oriented approach is offered as an alternative label by Crawford and Rossiter (2006) for the educational approach. They pointed out problems with the use of the descriptor educational approach, identified by Engebretson (2000) and Buchanan (2004). The term is somewhat pejorative in that it gives the impression that other approaches were non educational. This is not consistent with evidence where those who embraced earlier approaches such as the experiential and life centred were deliberately concerned with

educating young people in the faith tradition;   they were committed to the idea that the teaching of religion be educational.   Groome (1981, 1991) certainly considered that his Shared Christian Praxis approach was thoroughly educational.   It had an emphasis on social action based on critical reflection; in this it showed an affinity with characteristics of a liberational approach.

Also, those who used the phrase <u>educational approach</u> claimed that it did not presume the pre-conditions going with a catechesis – that those participating chose freely to do so on the basis that the activity was intentionally concerned with the sharing and developing of personal aid insights.   Those who used the label educational approach often contrasted this with a <u>catechetical approach</u> which was said to presume the situation and conditions of a catechesis. However, the fundamental concern of those teaching religion in Catholic schools, even when following an educational approach, was with promoting the development of religious faith in pupils.   Hence the label <u>educational</u> was used to contrast the activity with catechesis, or to distinguish it from assumptions that were regarded as catechetical (belonging to catechesis), and could create ambiguity about the faith-oriented purposes of Catholic school Religious Education.   Faith-oriented intentions remain firmly established in local Catholic diocesan guidelines in Australia, almost without exemption.

Crawford and Rossiter (2006) considered that the term subject-oriented would be a better descriptive term for this approach because it highlighted a cluster of educational characteristics such as: the use of educational outcomes similar to those for regular subjects; the establishment of religion as a formal subject in the curriculum;   the systematic use of formal assessment;   systematic content; and student-centred teaching and learning processes. All of these subject-oriented aspects were considered as serving the larger purpose of handing on the religious faith tradition and promoting the development of personal faith in young people.

This approach could have been labelled the mixed or blended approach as it included a number of the elements from earlier approaches (e.g., the bible, and the experiential, attempts to be relevant to students' lives, and social justice) within an overall academic subject structure with curriculum statements, outcomes, assessment, examinations, and student centred pedagogy like regular subjects.   The academic subject structure gave Religious Education more credibility along with other key learning areas in the curriculum.   Hence, it was not so much a new approach per se, but it had a new overarching structural format within which elements from previous approaches would work.

Malone and Ryan (1994) argued that Religious Education involved two approaches: one meeting of the need of students for the support and nurturing of a faith community, which teaches them how to be religious; and the other - teaching, which helps them to understand religion. They further pointed out that a catechetical approach is not appropriate for the school religion program. Ryan (1997a) labelled these two approaches the educational approach and experiential catechesis. He noted that the aim of the Religious Education program in the Catholic school, using the educational approach, is an understanding and appreciation of religion and ways of being religious, while in the Catholic school using the experiential catechesis approach, the aim is a strengthening of faith and commitment (1997a, p. 92). Theorists such as Engebretson, Malone and Ryan believe their support for an educational approach to the teaching of religion in the classroom was supported by Church documents such as *Lay Catholics in Schools* (1982, n 56), and *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988, n 68-69). Liddy and Welbourne (1999, p. 16) made the following observation, noting that classroom Religious Education was "not directly focused on creating a religious experience as much as an educational exploration of religion. That such an exploration becomes a religion faith forming experience for many students is an important consequence but not a direct aim."

The subject-oriented approach differed from the previous approaches in that while it retained doctrinal knowledge, recognised the importance of the students life experience and the need to relate these to scripture and Church teaching, it did not assume that students and teachers were committed to the Catholic faith. Its rationale was educational rather than catechetical. It was characterised by a primary emphasis on the cognitive domain, knowledge, skills and understanding (Larkin, 2006, p. 65). In a Catholic secondary school, this will primarily involve student acquired knowledge and understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices. This approach requires Religious Education to be treated the same as other curriculum areas in the school, aligning it with current educational practice. It also requires teachers to have the same level of academic knowledge in Religious Education as in other disciplines. Articulation of the Subject-Oriented approach attempted to address problems with understandings of the place of students' personal faith in the classroom, particularly the apparent contradiction between faith as a free response to divine transcendence and the compulsory nature of classroom Religious Education particularly where students and or teachers, represented a range of formal commitment to Catholicism.

The Subject-Oriented approach also sat well with the current focus on outcomes-based attainment. This works well for the knowledge, skills and understanding dimensions of

classroom Religious Education "but has difficulties when dealing with outcomes in the personal/values areas" (Rossiter, 1998, p. 23).

Religious literacy has emerged as a "metaphor" for a subject orientated approach to Religious Education as distinct from a catechetical approach (Barry & Rush, 1998, p. 38-44;   Goldburg, 2005, p. 24).   Wright (1993, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) employed the term critical religious literacy as an alternative to phenomenological and experiential approaches to the teaching of Religious Education which concerned itself with enabling students to engage for themselves in the struggle to establish an authentic relationship with the ultimate truth (2004a, p. 225). He believed that focusing on this approach, in the study of religions, would lead to a special attention on claims of religious truth and the building up of religious literacy – "that is, a competent knowledge and understanding of religions that included awareness of distinctiveness and conflicting claims" (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p.457).   Both Wright (2004a, 2004b) and Goldburg (2005) considered the focusing on a critical religious literacy approach by classroom religion teachers as a way to successfully develop critical thinking among their students.   Goldburg (2005, p.25) called this approach "a critical pedagogy" which she believed would "encourage students to engage in the theoretical and practical task of interrogating their own theoretical and political positions".

In seeking to ascertain their level of success in the teaching of religion, teachers who are predisposed to this subject-oriented approach are likely to consider the following indicators as being consistent with this approach:

- the level of student participation in class activities;
- engagement of students in quality research;
- demonstration of critical thinking in written work by students;
- evidence of critical thinking by students in discussion;
- the level of student cooperation on group tasks;
- student attainment of knowledge and skills.

2.4.5.1 Guidelines and outcomes in Religious Education

This section will investigate the literature related to the use of Religious Education guidelines and outcomes-based education.   Both of these had potential for influencing teachers' views of Religious Education.

Marthaler (1994) noted that what constituted success in Religious Education was connected with two key aspects – effectiveness and the assessment as to what extent valued outcomes were met.   Measuring the level of success in teaching secondary Religious Education may be

linked to the teachers' perceived attainment of the stated desired outcomes of the Religious Education program or syllabus.

A Religious Education curriculum, based on statements of specific, measurable and attainable outcomes, has a number of perceived benefits over other conceptions to measure success. This curriculum will state what is to be learned (often referred to as students "learn to", and students "learn about") and what is to be assessed. A well constructed curriculum communicates the kind and depth of learning required, only if written in detail.

Rossiter (1998) believed that the significant implication of outcomes, particularly for Religious Education, was their focus on the areas of knowledge and skills, which draws attention to immediate and achievable goals, which have tended to be neglected in the past. The emphasis, according to Rossiter, was on measurable outcomes, which provided educators with measures of effectiveness and accountability. A relevant example of this are the guidelines for Religious Education published by both the Brisbane and Sydney archdioceses in the mid-1990s in which outcomes were used. These not only provided clearly stated guidelines for assessment and reporting, they provided a clearer educational direction for Religious Education teachers. Ryan (1997a, p. 119) pointed out this "specificity clarifies for teachers the kind of forms which assessment procedures might take." Ryan and Malone (1996) and Barry (1998) made similar assertions. However, Rossiter (1998, 1999) pointed to difficulties with assessing those outcomes in the personal/values area. He considered that it was not possible to develop appropriate outcomes for measuring changes in faith or values. Also, he claimed that to try to do this was not ethical as it would violate students' personal privacy. There was no guarantee that these personal and spiritual areas could be assessed objectively and therefore could not be included in any measure of success in teaching Religious Education. Teachers might, however, come to their own subjective view that their work in Religious Education had affected the faith and values of their students. But even here, teachers would have difficulty explaining possible evidence of such change, apart from noting personal comments by students who said that they felt that Religious Education had enhanced their spirituality and faith.

Any teacher, aiming to measure her or his success in an outcomes-based subject, would identify the progress achieved by each student, referenced against a set of standards that reflected an order of skills, abilities and aptitudes ranging in degree of complexity, rather than a norm referenced approach where students are ranked and scored against each other. Ryan (1997a) conceded that norm referencing is not totally eliminated in an outcomes based

curriculum. The methods of assessment chosen to measure the achievement of these is critical. Educationalists, including Crawford and Rossiter (1988); Ryan (1997a); Barry (1998); Malone and Ryan (1994); and Moore (1991) believed assessment procedures used in Religious Education should reflect best practice and be favourably comparable with other key learning areas. Any lack of assessment in Religious Education would lower its status in the eyes of both the teachers and the students. Schools make a value statement about various subjects in the curriculum through their assessment procedures. If there were no well constructed schedule of assessment in Religious Education then the curriculum area would be devalued. Barry (1998) advocated outcomes orientated approach to Religious Education rather than one that reports in terms of students' attitude and participation. He pointed out that assessment and reporting have been neglected to some extent in Religious Education, and a refocusing of assessment and reporting in a coherent fashion could only be a positive move for this area of the curriculum.

Successful teaching of secondary Religious Education could be linked to levels of satisfaction experienced by teachers. While there is no literature to be found in the aspect of teacher satisfaction in teaching religion in the classroom, there has been extensive research, mentioned earlier on classroom teacher satisfaction. Of interest, Fullan (1991) noted that Lortie indicated the following as sources of teacher satisfaction:

- 87% of respondents noted times a teacher reached a student or group of students and they learned;
- 37% of the sample mentioned respect from others.

These sources of satisfaction could be translated to the area of classroom religion teaching where an influence on a teacher feeling successful may be the satisfaction in achieving stated outcomes in terms of students' behaviour and learning as outlined earlier.

Religious Education guidelines, which have made a significant contribution to Religious Education in Australia, need to be included in any measures that may have contributed to the experiencing of success in teaching religion in the classroom. Researchers such as Barry (1997), Malone and Ryan (1994, 1996) and Rossiter (1997) have pointed to areas of concern regarding the use of diocesan Religious Education guidelines for future consideration and possible debate. In exploring the extent to which these guidelines have impacted on classroom religion teaching, these theorists indicated there was a need to establish: to what extent are teachers aware of their existence and their content; to what extent do teachers use

them to inform their teaching;   and to what extent have these guidelines had a positive influence on the teaching of classroom religion.

In surveying the literature, Rossiter (1997) and Barry (1998) commented on the stimulus the guidelines gave to the provision of teacher professional development and inservice, further study opportunities for teachers, and the renewing of teacher energy and enthusiasm for Religious Education.   Rossiter (1997) argued that to maximise the impact of Religious Education guidelines on what transpired in the religion classroom, they need to be translated into sequences of lessons that are supported by materials.   He pointed to anecdotal evidence that suggested teacher classroom procedures may be changed if planning was based on specific teaching materials.   Malone (1997, pp. 14-17) expressed similar sentiments.   Both researchers noted that religion teachers were like teachers of other subjects in their dependence on the availability of learning materials and activities.   Rossiter also acknowledged the pressure placed on teachers who could get "stressed by administrative and curriculum procedures that take time and energy over and above their preparation, teaching and correction" (1997, p. 30).

Some concerns about the use of guidelines were specifically related to the use of the shared Christian praxis method.   Malone (1997, p. 15) found many teachers simply approached the support documents of the guidelines for two reasons: as sources to keep students occupied as well as fulfilling diocesan requirements.   This could have serious implications for the extent to which teachers may have measured success in their actual teaching practice as the teachers did not make the planning decisions necessary for teaching religion in the classroom.   They may not have understood the assumptions underpinning the praxis approach and, that this approach may not have been critically analysed to determine its suitability to the needs and readiness of the students.   Devlin (1997), Rossiter (1997) and Ryan (1997a) appeared to concur with Malone on this matter.   Ryan claimed that teachers have viewed the praxis approach as the only one they could use (1997a, p. 75).   He believed that some teachers ignored the flexibility and adaptability of Groome's conception to various situations and adhered strictly to each of the five movements as outlined by Groome.   Rossiter and Devlin were concerned about the employment of the shared Christian praxis approach in the classroom as its assumptions do not account for the realities of the classroom as religion did not have relevance for many students.   The following are indicators that would show the likely influence of diocesan guidelines on teachers thinking:

- teacher use of guidelines to inform them of depth of treatment, ideas and sequencing;

- amount of professional reading to update their level of knowledge of the subject and related issues;
- teacher use of practical ideas gained from professional development.

2.4.6   Phenomenological and Typological approaches

By the 1990s, Australian state-based programs relating to the study of religion were developed for use in schools, using either a Phenomenological or Typological approach as a method for studying world religions.   However, these state-based programs were adopted by almost exclusively in the non-government sector, where the large majority of schools doing the course were Catholic schools.

The Phenomenological approach was developed by Smart for use in Britain in the 1970s.   It was primarily descriptive in nature and attended to the seven dimensions of religion which were identified by Smart (1968, 1973, 1974) in his research.   These seven dimensions were:

- practical and ritual;
- experiential and emotional;
- narrative or mythic;
- doctrinal and philosophical;
- ethical and legal;
- social and institutional;
- material.

The Typological approach was considered a subset of the phenomenological approach which was developed in Australia by Moore and Habel (1981) to identify how Smart's Phenomenological approach could be implemented in the religion classroom.   Their theory outlined eight "types" or components shared by religious traditions which students were able to study to gain insights and understandings about a religion.   The study of certain types or components originally identified by Moore and Habel were:

- Beliefs;
- Sacred Texts;
- Sacred Stories;
- Ethical Systems;
- Religious Ritual;
- Religious Symbols;
- Social Structure;
- Religious Experience (1981, p. 71)

Moore and Habel were able to offer an approach that took Smart's Phenomenological theory and applied it in a practical way for teachers and curriculum developers to implement in a classroom situation (Ryan, 1997a, pp. 13-15).   During the late 1980s state governments in

Australia responded to reviews which recommended the introduction of state accredited courses in religion in schools. "The intention was to offer courses of study that would be equivalent in intellectual rigour and standing to other curriculum areas" (Ryan, 1997a, p. 106). These state-based accredited courses in religion were required to not presume a confessional commitment from the students or teacher and did not hold one religion in favour over another (Engebretson, 1991, pp. 9-11). Such an approach to Religious Education was satisfied by the Phenomenological and Typological approaches.

Religious Education is a compulsory curriculum component in Catholic schools in Australia. While some Catholic schools offered students only the state-based course in Years 11 and 12, others offered the board endorsed course[2]. Many Catholic secondary schools took the opportunity to offer their students a choice of a Religious Education course of study for their senior years – either the state-based approved course or the government endorsed course, submitted by various church based educational bodies. In these instances, the majority of students chose the state-based course. These students realised these course were academically accredited which had set content for student studies. There was the perception that the work students engaged in was academically challenging and contributed towards the university entrance process; this raised the status of Religious Education to that of other curriculum areas undertaken by students. This increased the academic credibility of Religious Education in the eyes of some students, parents and teachers.

Crawford and Rossiter (2006) pointed out that the situation was more complex than this. Student engagement was dependent on whether or not they freely opted for participation in religion studies courses. In a number of Catholic schools where religion studies is compulsory for Year 11 and 12 students, there may have been better academic engagement than for non-accredited Catholic courses, but there was still a measure of student negativity and unwilling engagement as far as religion studies was concerned. It is likely that the states academic accreditation was more appealing to teachers and school authorities than an appreciation of the theoretical underpinnings of these approaches. These courses were also deemed to be more appropriate due to the increasingly complex cultural milieu in Catholic schools. Teachers reported improved satisfaction in teaching these state based courses, as noted by Ryan.

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2   A board endorsed course refers to any course not developed by the Board which is submitted to the Board of Studies for endorsement.

> Teachers involved in study of religion courses attest almost universally to improvement in their own levels of satisfaction in teaching, in the interest and engagement of students and in the quality of students work. (Ryan, 1999, p. 24)

Both Smart's Phenomenological and Moore and Habel's Typological approaches implied an education about religion, as opposed to an education in faith.   These approaches readily translated into knowledge and skill outcomes and were thus suitable for use in examination based religion studies courses.   The benefits of these approaches included their aptitude to assessment of student skills and their avoidance of the problematic idea of trying to assess religious commitment (Moore & Habel, 1981).

These approaches were not classified as confessional, that is professing a commitment to a particular religious tradition (Ryan, 1999) – and hence were in contrast with other confessional approaches to Religious Education.   Hence, Phenomenology and Typology were not mainstream approaches in Catholic school Religious Education, although they were used in senior classes.

In reviewing the literature on the Typological approach to Religious Education, it was evident that Moore (1981, 1991) and Lovat (1992, 2002) developed somewhat different historical typologies for Australian Religious Education.

Both of Moore's 1981 and 1991 typologies set out to give an account of Religious Education in the denominational church school setting as well as in state-based religion studies courses. One particular problem with Moore's (1991) typology was the way it classified denominational approaches as faith forming.   This label gives the problematic impression that there are both faith-forming and non faith-forming pedagogies – as if one approach will change and bring about the development of personal faith while another approach will not do this, presumably because it was concerned just with knowledge and skills and not with bringing about personal change.   This is contrary to the views of educators who considered that all education is potentially capable of promoting personal change in pupils in some form or other.   Also, the use of this descriptive label for approaches can give a false impression that there is a particular approach that is automatically effective in bringing about personal change and the development of religious faith - on cue.   This view tends to overstate the personal change efficacy in a particular pedagogy for teaching religion, while at the same time it tends to underestimate the complex and tenuous relationships between teaching interventions and actual change in pupils' beliefs and values within religion lessons.

Lovat's (1992, 2002) typology is similar to that described above in many respects.   However,

it too, following on from Moore, made use of the problematic terms faith-forming or enfaithing as labels for approaches used in religious schools. Another problem that arises with this usage by both Moore and Lovat of the faith-forming label is that the term is based on making distinctions at the level of large-scale overall purposes – to promote the development of personal faith (as in denominational church school Religious Education) by contrast with state-based religion studies courses which have no such faith-related aims, and where course aims need to be established from within general educational theory.

As shown earlier, the historical approaches to Catholic Religious Education have been differentiated according to content, method and immediate teaching purposes. The notion of faith-forming approaches is based on more ultimate purposes, making it problematic to have comparisons with approaches that share the same overall purposes but which differ in content and method. This terminology tended to create a strong division between denominational and religion studies approaches which could be problematic because it tended to mask any similarities in content and pedagogy that might apply at the classroom level. It would also create problems for those in denominational schools who made use of state-based courses for their religion curriculum in senior classes.

Teachers, who apply this approach to their teaching of religion, are likely to look to one or more of the following as indicators of how successful they have been:

- student demonstration of critical thought in both their oral and written work;
- observation of Students being challenged to think critically by stimulus material provided;
- student demonstration of research skills in religion;
- student level of awareness of the shaping influence of culture on peoples beliefs and attitudes;
- student performance in assessment tasks;
- level of knowledge and understanding demonstrated by students on world religions;
- observed increase in the religious literacy of students.

2.4.7 Conclusion to section 2.4

While the historical approaches highlighted different emphases in teaching religion, it tended to give an initial impression that the approaches were all relatively distinct and exclusive, and perceived as such by teachers who followed respective approaches with a degree of coherence and clarity of understanding of their implied nature and purposes. Thus the scheme tended to oversimplify the real situation in regards to the thinking of individual teachers, who may have complex patterns of expectations that range across parts of a number of approaches. In turn, this complexity and diversity will affect what teachers count as successful teaching.

While acknowledging the usefulness of the historical approaches for interpreting change and development to Catholic Religious Education, Crawford and Rossiter (2006) complemented and extended that analysis by identifying six key thematic influences that have cut across a number of the approaches.   Pointing towards the complexity of teachers' understandings of the nature and purposes of Religious Education, they avoided a neat classification into principal approaches and models.   They did this in two ways – firstly, by identifying an extensive range of factors that have influenced thinking about Religious Education;   and secondly, by identifying six key influential themes that affected the change and development in approach since the 1960s.   Their list of themes included:-

1. the experiential quest for personalism and relevance;
2. the centrality of the construct faith development;
3. the extensive development of Catholic diocesan guidelines for Religious Education;
4. the development of student resource materials;
5. the development of religion as an academic subject – enhancement in this status coming through the implementation of state-based religion studies programs at senior school level in most Australian states;
6. being attuned to the relatively secular and individualistic spirituality of contemporary youth.

Through the interplay between these themes, they sought to interpret how and why the changes in approach occurred, and how in turn this affected the expectations of Religious Education.   In tune with their analysis of approaches, Crawford and Rossiter (2006) proposed a view of Religious Education as an open, inquiring, content rich, informative and critical study.   In doing so, they emphasised students' critical thinking and the evaluation of spiritual and moral issues which they believed needed to be more extensive in content which is currently documented by more traditional religious material.   They considered that the state-based religion studies courses also erred by having too much descriptive (phenomenological) content, and not enough on the contemporary issues.

The following indicators would be consistent with this view of Religious Education:

- demonstration of student engagement in lessons and planned learning activities such as research, discussion and critical appraisal of material;
- demonstration of student ability to engage with the material presented through their written and oral presentations.

Table 2.3

Summary of ideas about successful Religious Education related to different approaches to Religious Education represented in the historical approaches of Religious Education

Approach to Religious Education	Focus and emphases	Likely ideas and indicators of what constitutes successful Religious Education
Catechism and doctrinal approach	Catholics learnt by rote, a succinct and complete knowledge of Church doctrine. This approach reinforced the socialisation of students into the Catholic faith community through participation in devotional activities.	• The rote learning of prayers, ten commandments, parts of the Mass and meanings of key terms used in topics relating to Church beliefs and practices. • Use of the catechism in the teaching of course material. • Communicating and subsequent assessment of students' knowledge of Church doctrine.
Kerygmatic or bible salvation history approach	This was a more scriptural and liturgical approach emphasising the proclamation of the scriptures; and the story of Jesus and the Church.	• Student understanding and knowledge of scripture. • Student participation and level of involvement in liturgy and other forms of worship.
Experiential and life-centred approach	Its purpose was to provide the church with the means to engage in a more meaningful dialogue with youth through adopting a more relevant and personal approach. It stressed the importance of coming to know Jesus and the traditions of the Church through an exploration of life experiences.	• Students' understanding of contemporary issues in the light of the Gospels message. • Students' participation in discussion where there is sharing of personal and faith insights • Teachers' perception that discussion is more important an educative tool in Religious Education than in other key learning areas of the curriculum. • Teachers' ability to share both spiritual and moral insights with students. • Students demonstrating a greater level of participation in the life of the Church. • Teachers perceiving their role as promoters of personal faith and providers of opportunities for students to explore their own spirituality.
Liberational and/or social justice emphasis, including Shared Christian Praxis	This was an emancipatory approach to the teaching of religion. It emphasised critical reflection on what can be changed about self and the Church to construct meaning and purpose in one's life. It had a strong focus on social justice and social action.	• Students' critical interpretation of scripture • Students' application of what has been learnt to social justice concerns. • Demonstrations of critical thinking on issues evident in both discussions and written work. This may include demonstrations of critical interpretations of culture. • The level of questioning by students arising from work done in class. • Student interest and participation in social justice activities and social action.
Subject-oriented approach	This approach promoted the handing-on of the faith tradition and the faith of students through attainment of measurable educational outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills, and use of sound pedagogical practice	• Teacher use of guidelines to inform them of depth of treatment, ideas and sequencing. • Student biblical scholarship: The extent to which they critically interpret scripture. • Amount of professional reading to update their level of knowledge of the subject and related issues. • Teacher use of practical ideas gained from professional development. • Student appropriate use of technology and stimulus material to enhance their learning. • Student engagement in research, assignment work, class tasks and homework. • Level of academic rigour used in the classroom learning activities. Demonstration of student engagement in lessons and planned learning activities such as research, discussion and critical

		appraisal of material. • Student achievement in set assessment tasks. • Demonstration of student ability to engage with the material presented through their written and oral presentations.
Phenomenological and Typological approaches	These approaches were descriptive in nature and attended to the study of the characteristics of religions. These approaches looked to academic rigour to promote the study of religion as a worthwhile academic pursuit.	• Students acquire knowledge of world religions. • Students understand how religion influences culture and how culture can influence religion.

In Table 2.3 above, the key ideas that emerged from this major section on historical approaches are summarised.   The development of these approaches in the teaching of Religious Education in Australia post-1945 highlighted the dilemma faced by the Church, educationalists, theorists and practitioners in seeking to come to terms with the nature and purposes of Religious Education in an educational environment marked by technological and theoretical advancement;   and by a changing cultural and religious landscape in society.   In examining these various approaches to the teaching of Religious Education in this time frame, the dialogue generated has highlighted an apparent complexity and diversity of teachers understanding of the nature and purposes of Religious Education that exists among the current classroom teachers of religion.   This may prove to be an important and influential aspect to be considered when exploring teacher perceptions of success in their teaching of Religious Education in the classroom.

2.5   SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS THAT HAVE A BEARING ON UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The constructs considered in the previous section were specifically religious and ecclesiastical.   The constructs covered in this section, while often primarily religious, also include strong elements from developmental psychology and sociology;   also, they take into account more views from Religious Education theorists – even though these constructs are not absent from normative Church documents.   The last two constructs will be examined in a later section that draws more significantly from the work of Religious Education theorists.

2.5.1   Faith development

The fundamental aim of the Catholic school is considered to be the development of a student's religious faith within a Catholic faith tradition context.   Rossiter (1998), while acknowledging this, considered the use of faith development language inappropriate as many

educationalists were vague about what the construct faith development meant, and that interpretation of this aim was problematic, particularly in judging success in teaching Religious Education.   Rossiter considered Religious Education to be an intentional educational activity, which was open to scrutiny.   Faith development, on the other hand, implied change in the type of believing activity of the individual or change in other aspects of spiritual related development, which is very personal and considered to be a complicated activity not open to scrutiny.   Rossiter (1998, p. 21) noted:

> How faith development is understood will colour the aims and objectives of Religious Education, and will have a bearing on the activities, teaching procedures and student materials used in teaching religion.

The attention given to faith development has seemingly obscured the importance of the development of students' knowledge and understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices within the classroom.   This knowledge and understanding provides the means by which both Religious Education teachers and the school may judge the success of their efforts in Religious Education.   There is a need to keep in perspective the effect the school might have on the faith development of students, considering the time these students spend at school participating in Religious Education, compared to the totality of their whole faith journey.

As for any key learning area of a school's curriculum, classroom Religious Education needs to focus on achievable outcomes towards which religion teachers can direct their endeavours. Any outcomes that are expressed in terms of faith development would be problematic as they highlight personal changes which are not open to observable scrutiny.   This would prove difficult for teachers in their day to day planning because faith development objectives are long distant goals and not tangible enough to provide short term assistance.   Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 413) explained this as follows:

> Faith development is too distant from classroom activities to serve as a useful, immediate, functional goal; and because it is so strongly influenced by personal and social factors, teachers would be unrealistic if they thought that their lessons were the principal means of fostering it.   Teachers caught up in this thinking can neglect the sorts of purposes and learning opportunities that are most appropriate for the classroom.

Hence it would be more appropriate to regard faith development as a hope than as an aim or measurable outcome, as the overall development of faith occurs over a length of time within a whole community.   This development cannot be adequately covered by just the subject of religion that is taught in schools.   Religious Education teachers should note that there are more immediate, even measurable goals and outcomes, which can be used to gauge the

success of the teaching or learning strategy they have used. While this may be the case, teachers would hold to the hope that the various classroom experiences will, over time, enhance the development of their students' faith. It is important to have such hopes, because they give a valuable orientation to the process; but a preoccupation with these hopes at the expense of shorter term, realisable goals can confuse teachers' purposes and create unrealistic expectations.

If the faith development was to be considered as the building of a more profound knowledge and understanding relating to ones beliefs and religious tradition, to the more general spiritual dimension of life and to contemporary moral issues, then this interpretation would have much to recommend it, especially for school Religious Education. According to Rossiter (1998), considering faith development in this manner would suggest that one of the major ways of deepening faith is through a knowledge and understanding of the faith tradition. This point is crucial as it proposes the study of religion to be very relevant to the development of faith. Its significance lies in the conviction that the attainment of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith would provide the major channel through which Religious Education and the Catholic school actually may affect the faith development of its students.

This research seeks to determine the importance staff place on this construct and its influence on their notions of success in teaching Religious Education in the secondary classroom. In doing so, it will investigate the following as likely purposes and indicators of successful Religious Education in the hope these may provide important contributions to the research.

Teachers motivated by this construct in their teaching of religion in the classroom, may judge their success in their teaching through:

- the level of acquired knowledge and understanding about the Christian story, Catholic faith, scripture, Catholic beliefs and practices;
- the imparting of one's knowledge of Catholicism;
- demonstration by students of their familiarity with Catholic practices.

2.5.2 Youth spirituality

Youth spirituality is regarded by religious teachers as important; hence research on youth spirituality is an area that will have a bearing on this study's concern with success in Religious Education. While what follows is not a comprehensive, in depth treatment of this construct, it does highlight relevant information that provides for a better understanding of

how youth view spiritual matters to gain some meaning and purpose in their lives;   and what are possible consequences for secondary religion teachers.

Spirituality is a personal and communal construct that theorists Wright (2000), Alexander (2000), De Ruyter (2002), Hanvey (2005), Rossiter (2005), Parsons (2005), Crawford & Rossiter (2006), and Hughes (2007) considered to be a quest for meaning and purpose. Erikson (1994) believed a person's experience of spirituality was an enhanced connection of self with something that is defining.   The focus on this search for this defining or significant meaning in one's experience of life is a key element in youth spirituality.   De Ruyter (2002, p. 35) proposed a set of criteria to describe a person who has "meaning in life".   These attributes were:

- life goals;
- the feeling that his or her life makes a difference;
- possessing a framework of values to make this purpose intelligible.

De Ruyter pointed out that children have a right to an education that assists them in finding meaning.   De Ruyter's work on spirituality is supportive of the value that Religious Education has in the development of all students whether or not they decide to become an active member of a religious tradition.   Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 202), in commenting on youth spirituality, described spirituality as the "diverse ways in which people identify a spiritual and moral dimension to life."   They contended that youth spirituality has justice issues and identification with the marginalised in society as its important motivators.   They asserted that people may also have a religious dimension to their spirituality that ranges from strong to marginal.   It is presumed that in these perspectives, all people possess an innate spirituality and that its expression "has to be guided by a lifelong and life wide education in religious living" (2006, p. 107).

According to Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 206), youth of today acquire and form their spirituality differently from what happened for earlier generations.   They pointed out that young people have only experienced a culture where rapid change is the norm.   Hence young people can have a natural, taken-for-grantedness about change and styles of living that are experienced differently from other generations, resulting in different perceptions, understandings and values – and specially, different ways in which religion will contribute to their spirituality, if at all.   This has influenced the way youth respond to efforts by the Church, teachers and parents in handing on historical traditions.

Handing on a religious tradition and identity to youth is now problematic as they commonly show a detached interest in organised religion and structured traditions. This is commonly evident to teachers in the Religious Education classroom. Many young people seem to believe they can get by without the formal connections of doctrines and belief systems. They do not feel drawn to corporate worship and ritual prayer (Hughes, 2007, p. 71). If a spiritual means of expression is felt to be relevant, sustaining, and enjoyable, then students will try it out, or participate in it. The only constant appears to be that it must be personally pragmatic. This type of attitude to spirituality means that the Catholic communitarian consciousness of the past, with all its inherent layers of tradition and dogmatic practice is no longer as relevant to young people as it was formerly (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 207).

Hill (2004), Tacey (2003), Hanvey (2005), and Crawford and Rossiter (2006) pointed out that a significant proportion of youth are religious, having a spirituality that is associated more or less strongly with the Christian faith community and religious practice. Any commitment by youth today to religion is more by intention than convention as tended to be more the case in the past. It appears that youth either consider their religious faith as central to their spirituality, or they retain their belief in God but do not draw much on the theology and spiritual practices of their religious tradition. For many youth, the spiritual and the religious are not always identical or even closely related as they often tended to be formerly. They tend to consider the spiritual as often the more important, all inclusive construct while they regard religion as instrumental to spirituality and not the reverse.

According to Tacey (2003), Maroney (2008) and Crawford and Rossiter (2006), youth tend to view what the Church offers as one of a number of spiritual contributions available to them from different religious or non-religious sources within the overall context of an influential media-promoted popular culture where the important emphasis is on lifestyle. They feel they have a choice as to what elements of religion they will believe and include in their spirituality, and consequently in their sense of religious identity. Bridger (2001) and Crawford and Rossiter (2006) considered that youth are more selective than previous generations who tended to accept the traditions religious identity in a packaged form. Harris and Moran (1998, p. 106) noted that many of the young these days "place their hope in the spiritual to provide the benefits but not the narrowness of religion." Given these trends, many young people will continue to develop a spirituality that is more individualistic, eclectic and personal and less communal and formally religious in expression. This suggests that youth seeking religious affiliation will seek out a community that supports their spirituality and makes room for their freedom and individuality. This has important ramifications for how the nature and

purpose of Australian Catholic schools are perceived and to what extent Religious Education is considered successful. Teachers who acknowledge these trends in spirituality are likely to consider that a Religious Education concerned relatively exclusively with the notion of handing-on the tradition, while still important, is not sufficient; it also needs to help young people identify and address the spiritual dimension in their own experience and in the world; it needs to help them learn how to identify and evaluate contemporary spiritual and moral issues. This is consistent with what Wright (2000. p. 176) considered to be an effective spiritual education.

> An effective spiritual education will combine a hermeneutic of nurture with a hermeneutic of criticism. A good school will unashamedly induct children into the spiritual values and worldview which it considers to be of the greatest worth, as well as insisting that children explore alternative possibilities.

Catholic Church authorities have pointed to the mission of the Catholic school in terms of a synthesis of faith and culture (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) which is projected through witness to Gospel values and the traditions of the Catholic Church (Pope John Paul II, 1997). The Catholic school is considered as an ecclesial educational arm of the Church in implementing its evangelistic mission, especially in the area of Religious Education. But what counts as success and effectiveness in Catholic schooling regarding Religious Education will be dependent on how this is interpreted – as suggested above. There are some in the Church community, including bishops, priests, religious and some of the laity, who tend to measure success in Religious Education in terms of students reproduction of traditional Catholic piety and religious practice, where the key criterion was young people's regular Mass attendance on Sundays. These people appear to judge Catholic schools as failing in their mission because they regard them as partly responsible for not halting the steady but marked decline in Catholic religious practice since the 1960s. Evidence of this thinking is present in the recent document on Catholic schools issued by the Catholic bishops of NSW and the ACT in 2007 (Bishops of NSW & ACT, 2007).

If the decline in the religiosity of youth (as well as for adults) was interpreted as culturally motivated and linked with a range of factors, including the image and functioning of the Church, this would point to a decline in the practice of Catholicism, but not necessarily to a decline in the Religious Education practice of Catholic schools. It is possible that Religious Education in Catholic schools may be both relevant and effective in its role of educating young people in the Catholic faith tradition; but such an education is not in itself enough to persuade people to become practising members of a local parish. In other words, despite

being ultimately successful in its appropriate educational contribution to youth spirituality and linkage with the Church, Catholic school Religious Education may not be able to counter the pervasive cultural change that has resulted in continual decline in Catholics active engagement in and affiliation with their local faith communities or parishes.   This is a topic that warrants further attention through research.

The next point to be considered is the potential role for Religious Education in enhancing the spirituality of youth even where their spirituality is not church-related.   Religious teachers need to help young people learn how to deal with an increasingly complicated spiritual world, using their interest in what affects them in the here and now, where they are more likely to be more concerned with lifestyle issues rather than spiritual needs, as a prominent starting point, as well as giving them healthy access to their own religious heritage (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006).   It is thus important for the teachers to have a good understanding of youth spirituality, so that content and selected pedagogy take into account how students forge meaning and purpose in their lives.   This may entail a re-appraisal of various stakeholders expectations of the nature and purpose of Religious Education in coming to grips with the construct of youth spirituality, and what teachers may then consider being successful in the teaching of religion.

In line with this thinking, the following could be regarded as indicators of successful religion teaching that engages with student spirituality:

- students' demonstration of their critical understanding of contemporary personal and social issues through the sharing of insights, their reaction to various stimulus material on these questions, and how informed students are in relation to the influence of culture on peoples beliefs and actions;
- students' demonstration of their passion for social justice issues in their discussions, written work and actions;
- teacher's perception of content as being relevant to the students search for meaning and purpose in life.

2.5.2.1   Youth spirituality and the needs of core Catholic youth

Rymarz is a contemporary author who has given special attention to the needs of religious youth - those who identify with a parish.   His research included a longitudinal study into the religious participation and spiritual development of young people in the Catholic schools within the diocese in which this research project was undertaken.   His research both in this diocese and elsewhere has provided valuable insights into the spirituality needs of committed Catholic youth.

In their research, Rymarz and Tuohy noted that parents were "the most powerful formative influence, even more so than friends" (2008, p. 51). However, they found that the role of core Catholic parents as religious nurturers and mentors was under threat. In prior research, Rymarz (2007a) indicated that these parents did not have a clear sense of what was needed for their children in the transitional stage to an adult commitment and that they found it difficult to express what they considered as religiously important to their children due to a lack of confidence "to speak about their own religious beliefs and values, especially if they are of a personal and metaphysical dimension" (2007a, p. 45).

While Rymarz (2007b, p. 55) noted that highly religious and committed teenagers appeared to handle life's challenges better than the less religious, largely due to the protective effect that their religious beliefs had on changes to behaviour, he noted that they found it hard to have their questions answered and to identify suitable religious mentors to assist them in making the transition to adult faith. Rymarz believed that the Catholic school can play an important role to support these youth through a strong commitment to youth ministry that would help "provide strong mentors to youth who act as human models for the best principles of the tradition. Exposure to this is something that many active Catholic youth lack" (2007b, p. 58). He cited the research of Smith and Denton (2005) on the religious commitment of American teenagers which found that religious congregations which prioritise ministry to youth and support for their parents, and make a serious effort to engage youth seemed "much more likely to draw youth into their religious lives and to foster religious and spiritual maturity in their young members" (Rymarz, 2007b, p. 57).

Research conducted by Rymarz and Graham, in the diocese in which this research project took place, examined the educative role of Religious Education and concluded that it was questionable whether Religious Education within Catholic schools played "a significant role in helping students understand the faith tradition, especially when conceptually difficult issues arise" (2006b, p. 87). Rymarz and Graham found that many of the participating core Catholic youth enjoyed Religious Education. Many respondents reported that they enjoyed Religious Education but few were strong in their endorsement. They regarded it as "what could be termed a weak positive light" (2006b, p. 84). Only a few core Catholic youth indicated that Religious Education was one of their favourite subjects. Rymarz and Graham reported that these students did not seem to be challenged by the content presented. In exploring other issues that troubled the students, the researchers found potential for Religious Education to be relevant to these students through addressing some of the serious issues that

confronted them.   In essence Rymarz and Graham highlighted the need for Religious Education to assist core Catholic youth find meaning and purpose in their lives - to develop their basic human spirituality.

Rymarz and Graham suggested that core Catholic youth lacked supportive networks in their school communities and that this may be overcome by the establishment of peer support networks.   They believed these "could also play a role in helping core Catholic youth gain a better understanding of the cognitive basis of religious belief by allowing for discussion in a supportive environment" (2006b, p. 87).   This viewpoint was reinforced through further research in which Rymarz (2009) noted that while the Catholic school was viewed as a supportive place for these religious committed youth as it gave them "a sense that they are not alone, that others share their views and support them", he believed that there was more that the schools could do for these youth who were an 'endangered group' and in need of more support.   Rymarz believed that a strong supportive community would provide a place where questions about the tradition and about being religious can be addressed.   In such a supportive religious group, he felt that youth would have a much stronger chance of relating to others in the school community who "embody the teachings of the tradition, showing them how to live out a strong level of religious commitment" (Rymarz, 2009).

Rymarz and Tuohy (2008, p. 47) confirmed that Australian Catholic schools were providing opportunities for their students to "express and ritualize" their spirituality which were not readily available at home and as a result making a "positive contribution" to the development of their students spirituality.   They considered that it was important for Catholic schools to investigate and explore ways in which they can nurture spiritual and religious growth in youth, and in particular active religious youth.

2.5.3   Personal transformation and personal change;   and student learning

Personal transformation and personal change have come to be regarded as personal goals for the whole school curriculum (Starratt, 1994, 2004).   These concepts need clarification when considering what constitutes the successful teaching of Religious Education.

Personal transformation and personal change are implicit purposes in education, especially where curriculum documentation is concerned with the promotion of the development of values and attitudes (Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), 2005).   According to Crawford and Rossiter (2006), personal aims have grown in prominence in curricula but there has been no concurrent development of a realistic and useful

conceptualisation as to how teachers are to realise these – creating a gap between aims and practice (Crawford & Rossiter, 1993a).   It could well be expected that in an area of personal education like Religious Education, where the purposes are often more long term and ultimately to do with personal change in attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviour, that there is likely to be considerable diversity of opinion about what constitutes successful teaching to promote personal change and transformation.

The complexity of both student personal development and the ways in which it can be affected by classroom teaching make it difficult for teachers to target these aims specifically in lessons, and this problem may leave them with the hope that somewhere, somehow, they may achieve some student personal transformation through their teaching.   For some teachers, the perceived unattainability of such personal educational aims can lead them to regard personal aims as nominal and educational rhetoric.   This would extend the gap between personal aims and practice.   This gap would also be extended by unrealistic expectations of teachers to be heavily responsible for the spiritual and moral development of students.   Crawford and Rossiter (2006) have proposed an explanation of such expectations in terms of people wanting the best for their children and overestimating the schools capacity for bringing about personal change in young people because of the long term success of schools in communicating knowledge and skills.   Ambiguities about the potential for school Religious Education to change pupils personally will affect what the teachers judge to be success in their teaching.

The understanding of what constitutes successful Religious Education is also significantly related to the notion of student learning.   The word learning has become almost idolised in current educational literature.

> Promoting 'learning' and 'learners' have become the new buzz words in education. They figure prominently in school mission and vision statements, and in educational discourse.   But what is being learnt is the crucial question.   Just getting more information in an information –saturated world is hardly an important goal for education.   In the long term, it is the learning that leads to wisdom and personal change that is of consequence. (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 277)

Reference to teaching tended to be gradually replaced by the phrase: teaching and learning. Then there has been a shift towards an emphasis more exclusively on learning; it became ubiquitous.   Its impact on popular thinking is even evident in the way that a number of basically child-care institutions are now called learning centres (Rossiter, 2009a).   It is beyond the scope of this study to review the extensive literature on learning, but sufficient

attention will be given to this genre because of the important link between the notions of learning and successful teaching as the promotion of learning.

There are inherent problems in making personal change and transformation key elements in thinking about successful teaching because:

- personal change and growth are complex and influenced by many factors – the most powerful of which have little to do with schooling;
- links between teaching and resultant student personal change are likely to be very complex and difficult (as well as not ethical) to measure;
- ambiguity exists as to how to put personal educational aims into practice.

Crawford and Rossiter (2006) put the educational quest for personal change and transformation into some perspective by taking these problems into account.   Their proposal was for a more realistic and limited view of educating young people with the hope that learning how to identify and think about spiritual and moral issues in the classroom could help them negotiates personal change in a more informed way when the opportunities arose naturally.   They also noted: it was "important that teachers acknowledge that young people will occasionally recognise special moments of learning that have personal impact.   They gain insights that can make a difference" (2006, p. 304).

Crawford and Rossiter (2006, pp. 307-309) also proposed that the "psychology of the learning environment" was an important factor that affected student and parental perceptions of the value of Religious Education.   A generally low community regard for religion, and the relatively low academic status of Religious Education tended to subvert the potential for Religious Education as a subject where matters of personal and spiritual development could be addressed with substantial engagement by the students.   This view might possibly be shared to some extent by some religion teachers, as well as by other school staff.   This interpretation may explain why students can see the study of religion as an unimportant and largely irrelevant pursuit;   they may consider it as making no contribution to the quality of their lives or their lifestyle as far as getting a job or assisting in a career pathway was concerned.

This same problem is evident where there is a discrepancy between the rhetoric expressed by the Church and the school about the importance of Religious Education, and what actually transpires in the problematic way this subject can be resourced, timetabled, staffed and promoted.   How a subject is presented in the curriculum and how it is taught will affect its perceived status.   "Where it appears to be taught with low grade pedagogy compared with

that used in the important subjects, the message is not lost on the students" (Crawford & Rossiter 2006, p. 307).

A change in perspective may be required by school authorities, educationalists and parents. Crawford and Rossiter (2006) considered that it would be more appropriate and realistic for those seeking to bring about personal change and transformation in students to revisualise the classroom as not so directly concerned with bringing about personal change. Rather its role was to inform students about personal change and to provide learning infrastructure that might help them negotiate personal change on the wider stage of their personal lives.

When considering the educational discourse on personal change and transformation, teachers who were seeking to provide students with the tools to deal with personal change when the opportunity arises, would be likely to think of success in terms of an open inquiring study that helps inform students about personal, spiritual, and moral issues. Possible indicators of such thinking could include:

- promoting critical thinking;
- content relevant and yet challenging to the students lives by addressing contemporary spiritual and moral issues;
- students engaged in the critical interpretation and evaluation of the shaping influence of culture;
- student demonstration of sharing of insights about values;
- quality of the professional relationships between teachers and students in the classroom.

2.5.4   Liberation as an educational aim

Liberation as an educational construct was demonstrated in the 1970s in Paulo Freire's notion of developing a critical consciousness of the social and political dimensions to culture (Freire, 1971; 1980). While always prominent in the sociology of the critical theorists, it became central to the thinking of critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano & Torreset, 2003). And while critical pedagogy was applied principally to adult education, there were also proposed implications for the school curriculum and teaching. For Catholic educators, there was also the influence of the theological theme of liberation that was prominent in Catholic social teaching generally and in liberation theology in particular. (Rossiter, 1981)

McLaren (2003, p. 160) defined critical pedagogy as:

> a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society and nation state.

It developed through the efforts by educationalists to examine the pedagogical implications of critical theory. Critical pedagogy called into question the educational purpose of the schools to reproducing society by reinforcing the assumptions and values of the dominant group.

For teachers whose thinking about Religious Education included the notion of liberation, promoting critical thinking in students would be an aim that was given prominence. This thinking implied the hope to influence beliefs and values, and thus it was similar to the purposes above on personal change or transformation.

For Freire and those associated with critical pedagogy, promoting critical thinking was thought of as providing the energy and commitment needed to bring about social change. Consistent with this view, they advocated a "problem posing pedagogy" that would engage students in the critical diagnosis of social problems. In this way, students might learn to identify injustice and be motivated to take steps to sort out their own personal stance on various issues.

Educators, who wanted to implement such pedagogy, worked with an emancipatory agenda. For any action to take place, these people need to be aware of the issues and be committed to change. If these people adopt this construction of critical pedagogy, it would lead not only to structural changes in educational provision in terms of equity and access, but also to important changes to classroom pedagogy in which students would have a greater scope for negotiating their own learning, and opportunities would present themselves for exploring social issues.

This critical pedagogy may find resonance in classroom Religious Education in the treatment of social justice issues and social action. The following would be indicators of this thinking:

- students demonstration of their awareness of the shaping influence of culture on values and beliefs;
- how teachers deal with moral and social issues in the classroom;
- evidence of student critical thinking in her or his written and oral work;
- evidence of student enthusiasm to be involved in and discuss areas of social action;
- teacher has assisted in the development of critical thinking amongst students.

Table 2.4

Summary of spiritual and psychological constructs that underpin Religious Education in Catholic schools together with indicators of what these constructs might imply as regards what constitutes successful Religious Education

Key constructs	Key focus	Likely purposes and indicators of success in Religious Education
According to religious and spiritual development		
Faith development	This construct is concerned with fostering the development of students' personal faith in the context of the Catholic faith tradition. It is considered inappropriate and not ethical to view faith development as a measurable outcome; it is better regarded as an important hope for young people's spiritual and moral development.	• The level of acquired knowledge and understanding about the Christian story, Catholic faith, scripture, Catholic beliefs and practices. • The imparting of one's knowledge of Catholicism. • Demonstration by students of their familiarity with Catholic practices.
Youth Spirituality	Youth develop their spirituality differently from previous generations – their spirituality is more individualistic, eclectic, secular, and self-determined – and less related to their own faith tradition. Religious Education that takes this into account is concerned not only with access to the religious tradition but also with fostering basic spiritual and moral skills such as identification and evaluation of spiritual and moral dimensions to life.	• Students demonstration of their critical understanding of contemporary personal and social issues through the sharing of insights, their reaction to various stimulus material, and how informed students are in relation to the influence of culture on peoples beliefs and actions. • Students' demonstration of their passion for Social Justice issues in their discussions, written work and actions. • Teacher perception of content as being relevant to the students meaning and purpose in life.
According to semi-religious, spiritual, and personal development		
Personal transformation	Personal transformation and personal change are implicit in the outcomes and objectives of curriculum documentation, especially in Religious Education. There is a need for caution in estimating the possibilities for personal change through Religious Education; personal change (like faith development) is better regarded as a hope than an immediate outcome.	• Student demonstration of sharing of values. • Quality of the professional relationships between teachers and students in the classroom. • Content relevant and yet challenging to the students lives.
Liberation	This construct involves personal change while emphasising critical thinking as a stimulus. It is also linked with the identification and evaluation of justice issues, and the hope that students may be prompted to sort out their own personal stance on various issues.	• Students' demonstration of their awareness of the shaping influence of culture on values and beliefs. • How teacher deals with moral and social issues in the classroom. • Evidence of student critical thinking in her or his written and oral work. • Evidence of student enthusiasm to be involved in and discuss areas of social action. • Teacher has assisted in the development of critical thinking amongst students.

2.6 THE INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THEORISTS ON TEACHERS THINKING ABOUT THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Theorists in Catholic Religious Education in Australia and in the United States have published extensively on the nature and purposes of Religious Education. However, while it is anticipated that the teachers who have undertaken professional development programs in Religious Education at undergraduate, postgraduate and inservice professional development levels would have some knowledge of the thinking of these theorists, it would be difficult to estimate their influence on religion teachers, particularly those who have had limited study and professional development in this area.

While the diocesan education officers, who are responsible for the writing of diocesan guidelines and curriculum statements, could be expected to have some familiarity with the writings of Catholic theorists, again it would be difficult to determine the actual influence of theorists. However, where the theory of Shared Christian Praxis has been adopted by a number of Australian Catholic dioceses as the required approach to Religious Education, it can be acknowledged that this step implies the significant influence of the Irish/United States theorist Thomas Groome, the author of the Shared Christian Praxis (1981, 1991).

Whether or not individual teachers were conscious of the theoretical routes to particular views of the nature of purposes of Religious Education, it remains valuable to identify the background in theory that makes sense of, or that helps interpret the diverse views of religion teachers.

This study will try to identify what teachers understand about the nature and purposes of Religious Education through their views on what constitutes successful teaching. But it is beyond its scope to research the possible influence of Religious Education theorists. While Wanden, in his doctoral research (2009, pp. 66-90), reviewed the research on the contributions to a better understanding of the nature of purposes of Religious Education by theorists such as Di Giacomo (1984), Fahy (1992), Flynn (1993), Hackett (1995), Crotty (2002) and Buchanan (2007); further investigation of this question would require the profiling of the views of particular Religious Education theorists and then comparing this profile with the principles and ideas regarded as important by teachers. But even then, correlations with the particular views of theorists would not be enough to demonstrate a causal influence. A study of the contribution of Religious Education theorists to understandings of Catholic school Religious Education would constitute a substantial and complex study in its own right.

2.7 OTHER ISSUES AND TOPICS THAT HAVE A BEARING ON TEACHERS UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2.7.1 The changing student profile of Catholic secondary schools

Change in the student religious profile in Catholic schools in Australia has been likely to have a bearing on secondary teachers' understandings of the nature and purpose of Religious Education.

The profile of the student population has moved to a more multicultural mix, reflecting the trends in the population mix in the wider community. There has also been a noticeable increase in the number of students who are not Catholic. While the last census figures are displayed in table 2.5 and table 2.6, what is pertinent for this research project was the increase of non-Catholic enrolments in the schools in which the research was conducted from 19% to 33.1% over a period of 18 years.

The Catholic bishops of NSW and the ACT considered that "changes in enrolment patterns and in our educational and cultural context have radically affected the composition and roles of the Catholic school in recent years" (2007, p. 3). In other related research on changes to the student profile in Australian Catholic schools, attention was given to student commitment to and identity with local faith communities. In a research report on Catholics who have stopped attending Mass, Dixon et al (2007) pointed out that concomitant with the declining rates of church going in the wider Catholic community; there were an increasing proportion of Catholic school students who were not regular church goers.

Table 2.5
Enrolment of Students in Australian Catholic Schools 2006

States and Territories	Non-Catholic students		Catholic students	
	Number	**% of**	**Number**	**% of**
Australian Capital Territory	4,611	27%	12,698	73%
New South Wales	47,940	20%	191,334	80%
Northern Territory	2,040	40%	3,105	60%
Queensland	37,581	31%	84,022	69%
South Australia	17,506	37%	29,685	63%
Tasmania	6,100	44%	7,852	56%
Victoria	40,446	22%	144,236	78%
Western Australia	14,266	22%	49,357	78%
Australia	170,551	25%	522,243	75%

From the statistics presented in tables 2.5 and 2.6, it is evident that students of the teachers participating in this study were diverse in their religious beliefs and practices. According to the research reviewed in the section on youth spirituality, many of these students were likely to be relatively disinterested in religion as an important aspect of their lived experience. This reality has implications for teachers in terms of how they identify and understand the spiritual starting points and spiritual needs of their students; and these understandings will affect their view of the role of Religious Education in enhancing students' spirituality and of how they might best engage them in the learning processes.

Table 2.6
Catholic secondary school enrolment 1988 – 2005 for the diocese in which the research was conducted

Percentage of secondary enrolments			Percentage of secondary enrolments		
Year	Catholic	Non-Catholic	Year	Catholic	Non Catholic
1988	81	19	1997	70.9	29.1
1989	80.9	19.9	1998	69.4	30.6
1990	79.2	20.8	1999	69.1	30.9
1991	77.9	22.1	2000	71.1	28.9
1992	76.9	23.1	2001	67.4	32.6
1993	77.8	22.2	2002	66.2	33.8
1994	77.7	22.3	2003	67.9	32.1
1995	71.2	28.8	2004	67.7	32.3
1996	72.2	27.8	2005	66.9	33.1

It is also conceivable that teachers have faced class groups that have substantially more non-Catholics present than Catholics. This situation too could affect their expectations of Religious Education. While there have been some recent writings in Australia about the place of students who are not Catholic in Catholic schools (Welbourne, 2001, 2003; Chambers, Grajczonek, & Ryan, 2006), and while there is also an emerging interest in inter-religious dialogue in Religious Education (e.g. Blundell, 2006; Engebretson, 2009; Jackson, 2006; May , 2006), there remains a need for substantial investigation of how these developments may modify understandings of the nature and purpose of Religious Education as well as lead to changes in curriculum content and pedagogy.

The considerations about the proportion of students who are not Catholic, and about the need for inter-faith (or inter-religious) dialogue, appear to make basic presumptions about some established levels of religious identity amongst students. However, Nipkow (1991) pointed

out that for many youth, their sense of religious identity was often minimal, with little or no feelings of connection with their religious tradition.   Hence, the need for Religious Education to engage them at a very basic level of spirituality seemed to be more fundamentally important than trying to encourage them towards inter-religious dialogue – which might be more likely after they had made some progress in understanding the spiritual and moral dimension to life at a basic level.   The views of Crawford and Rossiter (2006) about young people's search for identity would also seem consistent with this judgment.   Hence, this researcher concluded that a Religious Education that set out to engage students current, relatively secular, spirituality, as considered earlier in this chapter, would seem to be of such importance that it may well cut across questions about "what proportion of students were (nominally) Catholic?"   In other words, the quest of Religious Education to ensure relevance for students in their search for meaning and purpose in their lives would seem to be the basic concern of Religious Education; it should not presume that students have a well accepted sense of religious identity; and this very development of religious identity needs fostering by investigations about how religion might resource young people's search for meaning, identity and spirituality (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, pp. 206-209).   It is not that these considerations will reject or oppose those about students who are not Catholic or about inter-religious dialogue, but they will put them into a larger perspective that takes account of the relative insignificance of formal religion in the lives and spirituality of many pupils in Catholic schools.   Addressing this situation may well have more far-reaching curriculum implications than concerns about the changing religious profile of the students.

2.7.2   Changing profile of religion teachers in Catholic secondary schools

Concurrent with the availability of government funding for non-government schools, a rapid expansion of the Catholic education system took place and with this came a number of challenges for Catholic schools in terms of staffing Religious Education classes.   Over the past forty years, Catholic education has seen the profile of its Religious Education teachers undergo a significant change.

- Up until the mid 1970s, the majority of religion teachers were members of religious teaching orders.   They all had some theological and Religious Education professional development in their years of initial training;

- By the 1990s the large majority of religion teachers were lay people, many of whom had no specific Religious Education training.   Many of these teachers had reluctantly agreed to teach this area and viewed it as their secondary subject area.   Their main qualification was that they were Catholic;

- In recent years, Catholic Education Offices throughout Australia have undertaken significant inservice and professional development programs in Religious Education for teachers. Some have also sponsored teachers to complete postgraduate Religious Education and theology courses at tertiary level. A majority of Religious Education teachers now have some form of formal qualification in Religious Education.

It is beyond the scope of this study, and not so strongly linked to its immediate purposes, to report in great detail on the changing profile of religion teachers. Nevertheless, the study will provide an opportunity to report information about a sample of secondary religion teachers in one diocesan school system. In particular, it will seek information about their level of qualifications in Religious Education and theology, as well as their views about the relevance of the professional development programs they have participated in.

2.7.3   The quest of religion teachers to make Religious Education relevant

The quest for relevance has been an influential component in Catholic Religious Education endeavours since the 1960s. Past efforts in trying to make Religious Education relevant to students' lives have not always met with a great deal of success due to unrealistic expectations, inappropriate content and poor choice of pedagogy (Rossiter, 1999). Today, relevance continues to remain an important goal in Religious Education, especially in terms of content and pedagogy.

Crawford and Rossiter (2006) considered that Religious Education could be regarded as relevant when there were perceived links between what was offered in the classroom (the content and/or the processing of this content) and the experience, interests and needs of the students. Finlay (2004) claimed that relevance involved teachers in helping young people find meaning and understanding by drawing intelligently on the resources of the Catholic tradition. Crawford and Rossiter (2006) believed that given the limited life experience of students, they should not always be expected to see the long term significance of topics selected, nor were they in a position to make a final judgment as to whether or not what was being taught was relevant to their lives or not. Students were dependent on the professional decisions in terms of content and pedagogy made by those educators responsible for the framing of the Religious Education course and its programming at the school level. However, their needs and interests needed to be taken into account. "Some student say in negotiating their learning in spiritual and moral areas is essential" (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 393).

Content relevance, according to Crawford and Rossiter (2006) was concerned with the teaching of issue-orientated topics in Religious Education to clarify meaning and highlight value orientations. They argued in favour of more issue-orientated content in the Religious

Education curriculum, considering that this approach was also more appropriate for contemporary youth spirituality (cf. Section 2.1.4.2).

Crawford and Rossiter (2006) considered that employing teaching techniques that engaged students and assisted them to investigate the potential personal significance of content demonstrated pedagogical relevance. They claimed that it would be counterproductive and artificial to try to find personal relevance in every aspect of the content taught. In the 1970s, relevance was strongly linked to discussion in Religious Education. But the pedagogy that relied too much on non-directed discussion was well intentioned but lacked structure; due to its low-key informal nature, it was not taken seriously by students (Rossiter, 1999; Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 395). Teachers who adopted a more academically oriented pedagogy have found that components such as investigative research, interpretation and evaluation have led to the development of a classroom climate where class discussion has become focused and indeed relevant to students – like an informed debate (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 394).

Consistent with the above discussion, the following can be proposed as indicators of teacher thinking about relevance as a key purpose in Religious Education:

- teachers consider the material covered as academically challenging.
- students demonstrate critical interpretation and evaluation in class discussions.
- students engage in good quality research.
- student learning leads to acceptance of Church teachings as relevant to the issue under investigation.

2.8 REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON TEACHER SATISFACTION WHICH MAY HAVE SOME BEARING ON WHAT IS CONSIDERED SUCCESSFUL TEACHING

While no substantial research specifically on teacher satisfaction in Religious Education could be found, there is educational research concerned with teacher satisfaction that is pertinent to this study. Research literature on teacher satisfaction has identified links with teacher accomplishment, efficacy and student engagement; these constructs are likely to have a bearing on teacher perceptions of success.

The research literature defined the construct teacher satisfaction as an emotive or affective reaction, felt in varying degrees by a teacher, to a moment in teaching that results from his or her comparison of actual outcomes to those desired, expected or deserved (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959; Locke 1976). Satisfied teachers appeared to achieve a sense of accomplishment and pride in having reached children in some way (Sergiovanni, 1967;

Lortie, 1975; Tarr, 1992); their experience of satisfaction was related to feelings of efficacy (Mclaughlin, Pfiefer, Swanson-Owen & Yee, 1986).

Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) developed a theoretical framework – the two factor theory of satisfaction which has formed the basis of further investigations into aspects of satisfaction in teaching. This theory recognised that there were intrinsic motivators that stimulated increased job satisfaction, and extrinsic motivators that do not. Lortie (1975) applied this theory in an extensive examination of teacher job satisfaction. He showed that teachers, motivated by intrinsic factors, tended to find satisfaction in working with students and fellow colleagues, while teachers, motivated by extrinsic factors, tended to find satisfaction with career rewards and promotion. Goodlad (1984) noted that those who chose teaching because of its inherent set of professional values or enjoyment of students, reported fulfilled internal expectations in teaching.

These studies point to engagement of students in the teaching and learning process as a major source of intrinsic satisfaction. This resonates with the conclusions drawn from the literature reviewed in the areas of youth spirituality and relevance. Teachers, who have attained some level of satisfaction in the constructive engagement of students through the use of relevant content and pedagogy, have experienced some notion of success in their teaching of Religious Education.

2.9   RESEARCH ON TEACHER EFFICACY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE NOTION OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHING

Teacher efficacy is a construct which has relevance to the notion of successful teaching. The research literature on teacher efficacy shows that while there are numerous studies of teacher efficacy and its effect on teaching in general, there is none linking this construct with Religious Education.

Lortie (1975) and Bandura (1977) considered efficacy as an intellectual activity by which one forges ones intrinsic beliefs about his or her ability to achieve a certain level of accomplishment. Lee, Dedirk and Smith (1991) and Tarr (1992) concurred, noting that teacher efficacy referred to a teacher's belief in his or her ability to have a positive effect on student learning. Soto and Goetz (1998) echoed similar views that teacher efficacy was the conviction held by the teacher that the desired outcome with a student can be achieved.

Bandura (1977), Ashton and Webb (1986), Coladarchi (1992) and Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) considered that a teachers sense of efficacy may influence her or his

emotive state. Teachers with high self-efficacy tended to display a greater degree of enthusiasm, to be more open to new ideas by reviewing their goal setting, and more willing to try various methods that promised to better engage their students, as well as to be more devoted and persistent in their teaching.

Research by Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer and Wisenbaker (1979); Aston and Webb (1986); Rosenholtz (1987) concluded that a positive correlation existed between teacher efficacy and achievement by students; and other research has demonstrated teacher efficacy to be positively linked to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors of satisfaction (Lortie, 1975; Ciriello, 1987; Lee, Dedrick & Smith, 1991; Tarr, 1992).

In a brief, authored by Principal Partnership (2006), it was noted that recent research has shown teachers with a higher teacher efficacy rating are more successful with students than their colleagues with a lower efficacy rating. This linking has consequences for the ways in which teachers perceive success in the classroom. The perception that one's teaching has been successful increases efficacy beliefs, raising expectations that her or his future efforts will be successful. In contrast, experience of failure in teaching tends to have the opposite effect and undermines a teacher's sense of efficacy. This is akin to the old adage – "Success breeds success". Teachers, who do not believe in themselves and their ability as educators, are unlikely to empower students and fellow colleagues to believe that they can successfully handle the challenges may confront them.

The pedagogy employed by a teacher in structuring the learning opportunities for students in the classroom is in part determined by her or his self efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), a teacher with a high sense of self-efficacy will devote more time to academic pursuits and provide students who are having difficulties the guidance they need to succeed. This has resonance with a Religious Education teacher's quest for relevancy in terms of both pedagogical and content relevance.

It is evident from the research considered above, that a strong conviction of teachers in what they consider as the nature and purpose of Religious Education, coupled with their pedagogical skill would inform their notion of what it means to be successful in teaching religion.

2.10 OTHER FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE THINKING ABOUT SUCCESSFUL TEACHING

2.10.1 Teacher orientations

When participating in the teaching and learning process in the classroom, the teacher will perceive, analyse and judge what transpires according to his/her own view of reality. Habermas' critical theory framework (1972), which has already been mentioned (c/f section 2.1.3.4), not only provided a theoretical basis for the meta-approach of Groome's shared Christian praxis model, it impacted on the way teachers critiqued the content and context of in their teaching, and the methodology employed.

A number of theorists, inspired by the work of Habermas, have sought to make sense of the contestation and confusion in educational practice by proposing a trilogy of orientations to teaching. Kemmis, Cole and Sugget (1983, pp. 8-14); Grundy (1987); and Lovat (1989) offered the following orientations:

- The Vocational / neo-classical: This is based on preparing the student for efficient participation and contribution to the wider society beyond school. In terms of Religious Education, a teacher, with this educational orientation dominating her or his thinking, would feel successful in teaching Religious Education if the student knew about Catholic beliefs and practices; and what the Church taught on moral issues; and would know something of what moral and social issues were about.

- The Liberal / Progressive: This orientation sees education as a preparation for life, which aims to develop the whole person. In terms of Religious Education, a teacher, with this educational orientation dominating her or his thinking would feel successful in teaching Religious Education if students would be able to process symbolism and meaning as to why the Church has certain beliefs and practices; they would be able to see aspects of what transpired in the classroom as being relevant to them and has contributed to their spirituality in a positive way.

- The Socially / Critical: This orientation sees all stakeholders as interdependent where people will critique handed down knowledge, seeking to question and research its value, finding out other points of view and, identifying the gap between knowledge and lived reality – between theory and practice. In terms of Religious Education, a teacher with this educational orientation dominating her or his thinking, would feel successful in teaching Religious Education if her or his students would engage in a critical reflection of the content and appropriate what they consider as truth to inform their spirituality and religious outlook.

The application of this conceptual framework can be useful in providing a means by which a better understanding and knowledge can be constructed in the examination of the context in which teaching and learning take place, and also of what may be the motivational factors of

the teacher(s) involved and the basis on which perceived success in teaching was being judged. This orientation framework has formed the basis of socio-critical educationalist theories that yielded valuable insights into what constitutes successful teaching.

2.10.2 Pedagogical content knowledge

Research on the notion of pedagogical content knowledge is also relevant to teachers understanding of what constitutes successful teaching of religion. Shulman (1986) coined this term to represent the combination of the dimension of subject matter (the knowledge for teaching) and the ways a teacher represents and formulates this knowledge to make it comprehensible to others. His initial definition and understanding of pedagogical content knowledge has been refined and developed by other theorists. Grossman (1988) proposed that the term includes four elements. These are:

- knowledge, beliefs, values, commitments, and passions about the purpose of teaching a particular subject. These are reflected in: the goals selected by the teacher in teaching the subject; issues he/she chose to emphasise; the content ignored; and the assignment set;
- the knowledge teachers have of students, their background knowledge and experience. This shapes the types of illustrations and examples chosen to present the content;
- curricular knowledge – the types of curricular materials available, what works or does not work with the students, what the students already know, and what they need to learn;
- knowledge of a repertoire of instructional methods and strategies for teaching particular topics to certain students.

Gudmundsdottir's research (1988) reflected the same themes as Grossman's. He found that a teacher's pedagogical content knowledge was strongly influenced by her or his disciplinary background, her or his value orientation, her or his substantive knowledge, and beliefs. Liddy and Welbourne (1999, p. 21) noted that Gudmundsdottir (1990) widened the concept of pedagogical content knowledge to include "more stress on the influence of teachers personal values and their value orientations to the way they conceived of and restructured their content knowledge for teaching."

Hattie (2003, p. 5), in his research on those teachers who constantly had a greater degree of positive influence on the achievement of students in their teaching (the expert teachers), claimed that they possessed a pedagogical knowledge that was

> more integrated, in that they combine a new subject matters content knowledge with prior knowledge; can relate current lesson content to other subjects in the curriculum; and make lessons uniquely their own by changing, combining, and adding to them according to their students needs and their own goals.

While there was no specific research linking the concept of pedagogical content knowledge with a teacher's experience of success in Religious Education, this study may be able to identify whether the perceived level of the pedagogical knowledge was influential. The following issues raised in the Religious Education literature suggest that there may well be a significant linkage.

White (2004) considered a lack of a coherent pedagogical framework was a critical inhibitor to effective Religious Education. He considered this framework to be a recapturing of the cognitive dimension in Religious Education through reference to sound pedagogical principles that provide structured, sustained and focused opportunities for students; and that informed the evaluation and development of teaching strategies used in Religious Education. The absence of such a framework resulted in teachers:

- uncritically following planning cycles (Malone, 1997; Ryan, 1999);
- reverting from constructivist learning approaches when dealing with life experiences to more didactic transmission models when presenting the faith tradition (Malone & Ryan, 1994; Spurling-Janes, 1995);
- not empowering students to critique their religious tradition (Lovat, 1989; Raduntz, 1995); and
- not allowing for the individualised learning needs of the student cohort (Malone & Ryan, 1996).

Incorporation of a coherent pedagogical framework would be likely to result in better planning and delivery of the Religious Education program in schools and could lead to teachers more likely experiencing success in their teaching of religion.

Table 2.7
Influential pedagogical practices identified in Hattie's research

Practice	Effect-Size	Improvement in Rate of Learning
Feedback	1.13	56.5%
Instructional quality	1.00	50%
Direct instruction	.82	41%
Remediation/feedback	.65	32.5%
Class environment	.56	28%
Challenge of Goals	.52	26%
Peer tutoring	.50	25%
Mastery learning	.50	25%
Homework	.43	21.5%
Teacher Style	.42	21%
Questioning	.41	20.5%

Source: Hattie (2003, p. 4)

Hattie (2003) investigated the impact of certain identified factors relating to student achievement. His findings may well have significance for Religious Education as regards pedagogical content knowledge. Of the many factors identified as having an impact on student achievement, Hattie found that teachers were by far the greatest single influence and accounted for 30% of the variance in achievement. In examining this finding in more detail, he identified a number of pedagogical practices that appeared to contribute to expert teachers' higher level of success and influence on student achievement. The main pedagogical practices, cited by Hattie in order of influence, are listed in table 2.7 above. Hattie research referred to a term effect-size which he used as a common expression for the magnitude that each pedagogical practice had on students' performance. An effect-size of 1.0 indicated an increase of one standard deviation, typically associated with the advancing student achievement by one year which equated to the improvement of the rate of learning by fifty percent. Examination of student work samples, in Hattie's research, showed a marked increase in the standard and quality of their work when taught by teachers using the above practices.

2.10.3   Professional development and inservice programs for teachers

This section examines literature that potentially links the notion of success in Religious Education with the experience of professional development and inservice activities.

Religion teachers need to feel confident in their knowledge and skills to teach effectively and be successful. Bezzina (1996, p. 4) and Smyth (1987, p. 219) believed that opportunities for professional development and inservice can have a positive influence on a teachers success, provided that these opportunities were designed to focus on a teachers intrinsic need to increase their professional effectiveness and to do their job to the best of their ability – increasing their efficacy. The professional competence of the religion teacher was often the focus of professional development and inservice programs in Religious Education.

Gaffney (1998, p. 54) proposed a three tiered approach to professional development in Religious Education which may prove useful in determining which type of professional development could contribute most to a religion teachers experience of success. His approaches were:

- The Ecclesial Tradition
- The Revisionist Tradition
- The Reconceptualist Tradition

However, there was no empirical evidence for the relative influence of each type of program.

Fullan's work on professional development and inservice activities (1991) provided a more useful spectrum of types of activity that could be applied to analyse professional development in Religious Education.   He considered that nothing has promised so much and yet been so frustratingly wasteful as the thousands of workshops and conferences that have led to no appreciative improvement or significant change in practice when teachers returned to their classrooms.   In a review of inservice over ten years, Fullan (1991, p. 316) summarised the reasons for so much failure in the past:

- One Shot conferences were widespread but ineffective;
- People, other than those for whom the inservice was intended, frequently selected the topics;
- Follow-up support for ideas and practices introduced in inservice programs occurred in only a minority of cases;
- Follow-up evaluation was infrequent;
- Inservice programs rarely addressed individual needs and concerns;
- The majority of programs involved teachers from different schools and/or school districts;   but there was little recognition of the differential impact of positive and negative factors within the systems to which they returned;
- There was a significant lack of any conceptual basis in the planning and implementing of inservice programs that might ensure their effectiveness.

Complementary research by Loucks-Horsley and Associates (1987) (as cited in Fullan (1991, p. 343)) and Dunlop (1990) (as cited in National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) (1994, pp. 20-21)) proposed a list of elements that contributed to effective practice in professional development and inservice activities.   These included:

- collegiality and collaboration.
- leadership and sustained administrative support.
- recognition of adult learning principles.
- sense of ownership by teachers.
- incorporation of available knowledge bases.
- appropriate incentives and rewards.
- reflection of an appropriate conception of teaching.
- variety in presentation strategies.

Professional development activities that are modelled on an Action Research methodology have gained favourable comment as to their effectiveness.   Sagor (1997) and Harris (1995) both indicated that a teachers repeated exposure to this method results in teachers becoming not only more effective practitioners but also more fulfilled educators.   Liebermann and Grolnick (1999, p. 199) noted that Action Research inspired professional development, because it encouraged teachers to participate in shaping the agenda for the professional development and inservice activity, that was "responsive to their questions, their learning and their need for support as they tackle tough issues of teaching and learning."

In his research on the professional development of Religious Education teachers, Bezzina (1996) pointed to the need for more research to be carried out in this area to gauge what experiences were considered effective in bringing about improvement to the quality of the teaching and learning. While not specifically targeting Religious Education, some research by Southern Cross University had been carried out involving teachers of the diocese, in which this study was focused, and the value they placed on professional development. Graham and Phelps (2003, p. 3) surveyed 180 teachers from this diocese and, in an unpublished report on the professional development approaches and needs of diocesan teachers, found the majority of teachers considered their ongoing professional development as very important (32%) or extremely important (63%), while only 5% saw it as of moderate or little importance.

Table 2.8
A summary of how teachers valued various professional development approaches

Type of professional development approach	Little or no value	Moderate value	High to very high value
School-based meetings/workshops	11	28	60
Regional workshops	6	29	62
Reading professional literature	22	44	34
Learning with and from your work colleagues including mentoring	6	14	80
Conferences or involvement with professional groups	4	17	79
TaFE courses or other training programs	18	21	50
Postgraduate courses	13	29	43

When asked to indicate the effectiveness of the professional development activities they had been involved in, 21% saw them as extremely effective, 47% as very effective, 22% as moderately effective and 6% as of being little or no effect. Participating teachers were asked to indicate the value of various approaches to professional development. These are summarised in table 2.8 above.

From these studies, a list of identifiable characteristics can be derived that could be used for interpreting the worth and effectiveness of any professional development and inservice activity. In turn, this could provide insights into the ways in which professional development might have impacted on teachers' understanding of success in Religious Education. In addition, this study will provide new data on religion teachers' experience of professional development.

2.11   CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a systematic literature review in which a range of research, theories, normative documents and religious/educational constructs that together constituted the background thinking that could have influenced teachers views of what counted as successful Religious Education, were examined.   The coverage of pertinent literature has provided a strong basis to inform the research undertaken to expand on the knowledge and further the debate as to the nature and purpose of classroom Religious Education in Catholic secondary schools.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design used in this study.   It will outline the methodology used to gather and analyse the data, including the details of the questionnaire administered, the sample of teachers used in participant feedback groups, the schools involved, the questions administered and the data analysis procedures used.   The chapter will commence with notes on the epistemology and theoretical framework underpinning the study.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Mikkelsen (2005) referred to theoretical frameworks as "orientations or ways of looking at the social world" (p. 157).   These frameworks include various assumptions, conceptual ideas, and explanations related to the research problems and the method of enquiry.   Crotty (1998, p. 3) noted that a theoretical perspective provides the philosophical stance that informs the methodology and provides a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria. Thus it ensures a consistency between the research problem, the methods of data collection, the interpretation of the meaning and significance of the data.   Adopting an appropriate theoretical framework provides assistance to the researcher in her or his clarification and articulation of the research process.

In this study, the secondary teachers' perceived notions of success in teaching religion, as well as the perceived influences on their thinking about success, are personal constructs – and as such, they include feelings, attitudes and values.   In particular, the study investigates teachers' interpretations and judgments about their teaching practice, as well as estimates of what factors have affected their thinking about their professional work.   A theoretical framework that includes a constructionist epistemology and an interpretivist perspective was most appropriate to accommodate the type of data collected and the interpretative analysis. Even though both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and interpreted, both of these types of data were essentially about teachers' interpretations.   Also, while some higher order statistical analyses were used on this data – methods that might usually be expected to fit within a more positivist theoretical paradigm – the overarching epistemology and

theoretical perspective remained as constructionism and interpretivism because of the personal nature of the data itself. The use of different methods thus showed some affinity with what Cresswell (2003) described as a mixed methodology. Table 3.1 summarises the theoretical framework adopted.

Table 3.1
Theoretical Framework

EPISTEMOLOGY	• **Constructionism**
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	• **Interpretivism**
RESEARCH METHOD	• **Participant Feedback Groups** • **Questionnaire**

3.2.1   Epistemology - Constructionism

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, methods and limits of human knowledge (Creswell, 2002a; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Auerswald (1985, p. 1) defined epistemology as "a set of imminent rules used in thought by a large groups of people to define reality". Every research perspective is relative to one or more modes of interaction of particular personal, social, and/or cultural conditions in the construction of reality. A research design needs to declare the position taken about how knowledge is specifically constructed and researched (Crotty, 1998). In this particular project, the subjects were secondary school religious education teachers, and the interactive construct was teacher success.

There are three fundamental principles that apply to the epistemology of constructionism. The first principle is that knowledge is actively reconstructed by the learner rather than being a passive transmission of knowledge acquired through the senses, or by way of communication (Creswell, 2002b; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The second principle relates to the function of knowing as adaptive and "contextually circumscribed" (Cherryholmes, 1993, p. 125). The third principle relates to the effectiveness of learning where part of an activity, where the learner experiences, is the construction of a meaningful product (Papert, 1989).

Constructionism is a suitable epistemological framework for this study because the focus of the research design is to explore how secondary religious education teachers construct meaning from within their experiential world, namely their view of success in teaching religion, and what has influenced this notion of success. Constructionism is thus a valid basis for this study because the data to be collected was this interpretation of the meaning of

classroom experiences that related to success. This process of constructing meaning about their teaching is subjective and active. The participants would draw on their personal background and knowledge in order to make sense of their reality. Success in teaching is a personal construct formed from an accumulation of experiences and cognitive development that has evolved and has been synthesised, expressing key aspects of the individual's meaning of competence in teaching religion. This construct of meaning is an important consideration of Constructionism.

> Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998, pp. 8-9).

Van Manen (1994) suggested that when there is a pedagogic relationship of adult researcher, or teacher interacting with children, a constructionist epistemology is appropriate. This is also applicable to situations where a researcher relates to teachers with the focus of attention on their thinking about their professional work with children. The researcher was interested in questions relating to "what" success is and "how" people may be influenced to achieve it; this relates to educators' "life world where knowledge speaks through lived experiences…back to our world, to our lives, to who we are, and what makes us write, read, and talk together as educators" (Van Manen, 1994, p. 46). The researcher and the participants, the teachers, are considered as separate parts of the one relationship that gives meaning. The constructionist approach is appropriate for acknowledging the complexity of the pedagogical relationship under investigation. Knowledge and understanding will result from the gathering of information, ideas and opinions from the participants.

Crotty (1998) considered that the choice of qualitative or quantitative research was only a choice of method within one chosen epistemology. For Crotty, both methods were considered appropriate within a constructionist framework.

3.2.2   Theoretical perspective – Interpretivism

Researchers may seek to conduct their educational research, grounding it through any number of paradigms and methodologies. The research approach in this study is both empirical and inductive yielding both quantitative and qualitative data. An interpretivist theoretical perspective (within the broad epistemology of Constructionism) was chosen to accommodate

the special emphasis of this study on teachers' interpretations.   Harmony between theoretical perspective and type of data enhanced the validity of the study.

A theoretical perspective of interpretivism is designed to make sense of the social reality under investigation.   Neuman (1997) proposed three perspectives for use in social research:

1. a positivist paradigm through which one can describe and predict behaviours;
2. an interpretive paradigm through which the researcher can understand meanings;
3. a critical theory paradigm for promoting emancipation and empowerment.

Earlier work by Lather (1991) offered a fourth, a deconstructionist paradigm that would permit a researcher to pursue the redefining of concepts.   While there are aspects of all four perspectives that could prove helpful in explaining the final "Big Picture" developed from the research, they are used predominantly with deductive research.

Of the different theoretical perspectives that may be used to support parts of this study, an interpretivist approach offers the best system for processing pertinent insights into the notion of successful teaching – because this perspective was consistent with both the process through which participants derived useful meanings and personal knowledge and with the means used in the study to access these meanings.   The following paragraphs illustrate the congruence between this study and the interpretivist perspective.   The interpretivist perspective carries its own assumptions about reality, epistemology and objectivity.   The data gathering strategies are consistent with these assumptions.

An interpretivist approach "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life world (Crotty, 1998, p. 67)."   Interpretive research is the study of the social action in which people attach subjective meaning (Crotty, 1998).   The aim of interpretivism is to explore the values, attitudes and beliefs, which influence people to act in a particular way.   Interpretive researchers understand that patterns are created out of evolving meaning systems, or social conventions that people generate as they interact (Crotty, 1998).   Interpretivism as a theoretical perspective allows the researcher to gain access to the meaning behind people's actions (Crotty, 1998).   The search for meaning is catalytic to the construction of a teacher's perception of success in her or his teaching.   This search is an active, conscious reflection on the teacher's professional practice.   The interpretivist paradigm considers that reality is the mind dependent and influenced by the process of observation (Crotty, 1998).   Interpretivism seeks to produce descriptive analyses that emphasise deep, interpretive understandings of social phenomena (Crotty, 1998).

In interpretive research, the researcher is highly involved in collecting and analysing the data (Creswell, 2002a; Lovey, 2000). Interpretive studies are generally concerned with issues of interaction and meaning. Interpretive analysis requires the creative involvement of the researcher. Because of this requirement, "nearly as many analysis strategies exist as… researchers" (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 17).

Glaser's and Strauss' grounded theory is a construct within the interpretivist perspective, some aspects of which have been used to assist in the interpretation of data (Byrne 2002). However, Grounded Theory was not followed as a formal, principal method according to the detailed principles and procedures elaborated by Glaser and Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). Grounded Theory relates to inductive research where the theoretical schemes are derived from empirical investigation. Grounded Theory is an iterative process where researchers engage in constant dialogue with the data until an end state of adequate description and interpretation is achieved. This results in a delimited formal theory connecting components of social action. Byrne (2001) noted that within this approach, there is a notion of causal liability which brings it close to the perspective of critical realism. Melia (1997, p. 31) pointed out that in carefully analysing the data items using this framework, it would "lead to the emergence of conceptual categories that would describe and explain the phenomenon under study."

The stance taken by the researcher in adapting aspects of Grounded Theory for use in data interpretation is consistent with the views of Bryman and Burgess (1994). They asserted that pure grounded theory is rare, as most researchers use the theory in a general way, adapting some aspects to fit the circumstances of the particular case. Maykut and Moorehouse (1994, p. 146) noted that the combination of various methods increased:

> The likelihood that the phenomenon of interest is being understood from various points of view and ways of knowing. Convergence of a major theme or pattern in the data from interviews, observations and documents lends strong credibility to the findings.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The intention of this study was to give a voice to teachers' views about religious education and about what they thought constituted successful religion teaching. The literature review showed that there was little research on teacher perceptions of religious education. The literature review also examined different understandings of the nature and purposes of religious education as well as a number of issues that could be expected to have some bearing on how teachers thought about successful religious education.

3.3.1 Literature review phase

The theoretical framework outlined above appropriately informed the literature review by helping provide conceptual clarity in the process of identifying a range of contesting paradigms and ideas that affect thinking about classroom religious education. Four key themes emerging from this review of literature underpinned and informed both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the data collection:

- the Church's position on the normative purposes of religious education in Catholic schools;
- the significant role played by teachers in formulating their own particular purposes for the classroom teaching of religion;
- the potential for ambiguity of purposes and differences of intent between the normative purposes and the idiosyncratic views of teachers as regards what is to be achieved in classroom;
- the range of factors that may influence teacher thinking about the purposes and practices of religious education – and the consequent effects on ideas about success.

The commonality in the identified themes centred on how teachers constructed their professional notion of success in the teaching of religion.

3.3.2 Empirical research phase

In this phase of the study, all secondary teachers of religious education in the eleven coeducational schools and colleges of the regional diocese were given the opportunity to participate and to contribute their views about what constituted success in religious education. A survey methodology was used that combined a questionnaire given to the whole population of religion teachers with participant feedback groups which involved a smaller number of teachers who volunteered to participate further in this way.

3.3.2.1 Survey research

According to Borg, Joyce and Meredith (1993), survey research typically employs questionnaires and interviews to determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of a target group of people about the subject being investigated. This study used both quantitative methodology to collect data by questionnaire, and qualitative methodology to collect data by use of open ended questions in the questionnaire and participant feedback groups.

The survey method used in this research project provided a low threat way of obtaining information about a participant's past experience anonymously. It was based on the need to

access comprehensive information on each teacher's professional characteristics and knowledge, as well as on the beliefs, opinions, attitudes and motives that informed their thinking about religious education. The structured survey was considered to be an efficient way of collecting data in large amounts at a low cost in a short period of time. Structured surveys that combine data collecting methods such as questionnaire and participant feedback groups are amenable to statistical analysis to assist in the interpretation of data.

While most of the questionnaire consisted of fixed-response Likert scale items, a number of open-ended questions where participants wrote about their own views were included. The open-ended questions provided scope for participants to comment in some detail on particular issues and questions. This would provide additional qualitative data to the quantitative data coming from the Likert scale items. The open-ended questions also provided participants to explain their views of issues that may have remained somewhat ambiguous in some fixed responses. The open-ended questions, as well as further qualitative data from the participant feedback groups could provide a useful triangulation of information enhancing both validity and reliability in the research (Burns 2000, p. 568; Neuman, 1997, p. 228).

3.3.3 Use of questionnaire

Within the context of interpretive research, a questionnaire is an instrument used in the collecting of data. Its use permits the interviewer to direct the interaction with the participants and to introduce ideas relating to the investigation into the research process with the intention of finding out what the participants think of these ideas (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 2003). The main types of interpretive questionnaires are the face-to-face, postal, electronic, and telephone (Maxwell, 1996; Neuman, 2003). The purpose of this questionnaire was to give all secondary religious education teachers, within the regional diocese in which this study was conducted, the opportunity to express their point of view regarding how they perceived the nature and purpose of religious education, and success in their teaching.

The postal method was chosen because this method of administration has frequently been "the best form of survey in an educational inquiry" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 262). A fuller account of the administration of the questionnaire is given in section 3.5.2.

Likert scales were used in the questionnaire to accommodate a range of responses to each item. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) considered these useful as they build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response while still generating quantitative data. The

level of discrimination is dependent upon the quality of the questions.   These afforded the researcher the freedom to fuse measurement with opinion, quantity and quality.   Details of how the questionnaire was constructed, tested for reliability and validity, and administered will be explained later in the chapter.

3.3.4   Use of participant feedback groups

Participant feedback groups were a form of group interview that relied on the interaction between the group members in discussing the topic supplied by the researcher.   While these groups have some aspects relating to their purpose and use that are of a similar nature to focus groups, they are larger in size and the qualitative data that may be generated is open to mass scrutiny by other group participants.   The purpose of this form of group interview method was similar to that of focus groups in obtaining "descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Gillham, 2005, p. 117).   Although Participant Feedback Groups are often a contrived setting, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 272) noted that the "topic of the interview is the lived world of the subjects and their relationship to it" and that these can yield insights that might not be otherwise available in a straightforward interview of one individual at a time.

In the participant feedback groups, the interview was focused on the theme of teacher success in teaching religious education.   It was neither strictly structured, nor entirely non-directive (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 272).   Participants were encouraged to communicate with one another by being able to ask questions, exchange anecdotes and comment on one another's experiences and points of view;   in this way the researcher facilitated the discussion (Creswell, 2002a).   The method is particularly useful for exploring knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what teachers think, but also how they think about a question and why they think that way (Lovey, 2000, p. 50).   This method is also consistent with the interpretative theoretical perspective for the study.

In this research, the main advantage in the use of participant feedback groups was the encouragement of participation from those teachers who otherwise would have been reluctant to be interviewed on their own (Creswell, 2002a).   This was crucial to the research undertaken as it enabled a broader range of responses to the questions.

Three separate groups of teachers were used as participant feedback groups to comment on the key research questions about success in teaching religion.   This complemented the data from the questionnaires, and contributed to the validity of the findings by verifying the views

and understandings that were identified in the quantitative data.   Thus a two stage approach could be taken to the interpretation of data (Blumer, 1986).   Firstly, the questionnaire data was collected and collated.   Secondly, the participant feedback group responses helped triangulate the key emergent themes in the survey responses.   These participant feedback groups were also used to explore for richer interpretive data and yielded more detailed and personal data about issues, and this complemented the data from questionnaire.   The overall interpretivist perspective helped achieve a consistency between the direction of the research, the data collection and the data analysis (Blumer, 1986).

While the data from the participant feedback groups would help in triangulating the findings of the research, these group interviews have limitations as the participants can only describe their own perceptions and interpretations (Gillham, 2005).   Their views can be subject to personal bias (Chase, 2005;   Patton, 1990;   Neuman, 2003) and the researcher too may carry his or her own bias into the interpretation of results (Cherryholmes, 1993).   As far as possible, this latter problem was addressed by checking interpretations of the data for bias with the research supervisor and a critical friend – a religious education consultant with the regional diocese in which this research was being conducted.

The research data collection strategies are summarised diagrammatically in figure 3.1.   This diagram seeks to demonstrate the independence of the groups of teachers who participated in the research**.**
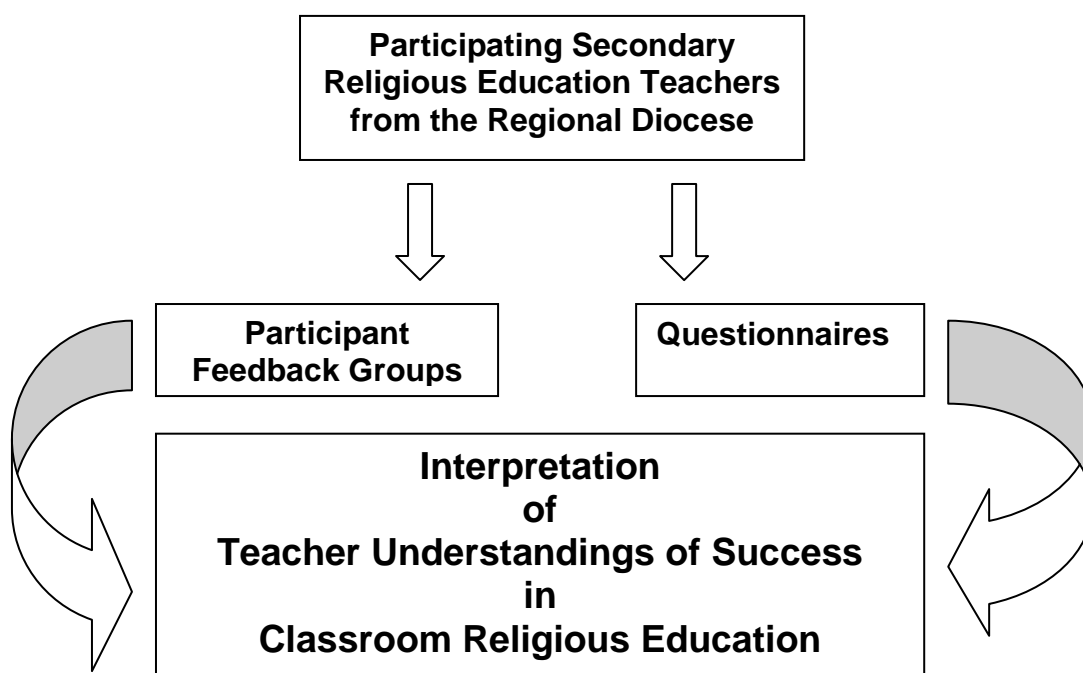
Figure 3.1   Data gathering strategies

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3.3.5 Analysis and interpretation of data phase of the study

Stage three of the research design was the analysis of the data collected and presentation of the findings of the research. The data collected from the questionnaires were coded and digitised. Using the statistical package SPSS 14.0, the data were organised and analysed to highlight findings that would serve as a basis for the interpretation of its meaning and significance.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS

This study invited participation from all religious education teachers in the eleven Catholic secondary schools in the diocese. The participating teachers represented 35% of the full time school staff employed in the secondary schools and Colleges in the diocese.

Restricting the research to this particular regional diocese had the following advantages:

- each school and College shared a common program of Religious Education which was resourced by the Catholic Education Office of the diocese;
- decisions about what was to be taught were made by Religious Education Coordinators at cluster meetings held twice a year (the decisions were made after appropriate discussion);
- the schools serviced predominantly regional city student populations that were similar in gender mix, socio-economic status and culture.

These factors assisted in eliminating some variables that may have affected the findings if the scope of the research was to be broadened. These commonalities would help ensure the likelihood of coherence and integrity in the data collection, while also allowing for variation caused by educational factors such as those identified in the literature review.

3.5 CONSTRUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

3.5.1 Questionnaire construction

A search was undertaken to locate a questionnaire that could be replicated, or modified and used for this study. However, there were no questionnaires that directly probed the areas under investigation in this study. But, the questionnaire used by Tiernan (2000) in researching *The Commitment of Catholic and Non-Catholic Teachers in Catholic Schools* proved useful as a model for the instrument that was developed in terms of style and structure; also some statements from Tiernan's questionnaire were suitably modified for use in this study.

The questionnaire was semi-structured having a Likert scale response together with space for any optional comments for each item. This structure gave participants the freedom and opportunity to rate various statements about success in teaching religious education, and about what may have influenced their thinking on success, while they could also comment further if they wished. Also there were some open-ended items that allowed them to articulate what aspects of their teaching experiences may have contributed to their notions of success.

In the first stage of questionnaire development, the researcher developed statements that teachers could associate either with being successful in teaching religion or not being successful. Three other experienced educators from the same school with extensive experience in religious education (though not teaching it at this point in time) helped as critical friends. They critiqued the initial statements, offering advice on putting checks into place to ensure validity and reliability in responses. The questionnaire was then further developed in the light of a *Typology of aims and purposes for religious education* developed by Rossiter (2005), this researcher's supervisor. The typology included six interrelated grids of purposes. An abbreviated version of the typology is included as Appendix D to show the range of purposes that are proposed for religious education. This outline can be used to show how the questionnaire covers an extensive range of aims and purposes; in addition, the typology identifies a number of areas where there is likely to be ambiguity and conflict in purposes; and this helped with the identification of issues for examination in the literature review and in the interpretation of data. The six interrelated grids in the typology were:

A. <u>Focus on students</u>: Classification of aims for religious education related to changes intended or hoped for in students;
B. <u>Focus on the religious tradition</u>: Paralleling each of the categories in A, indicating how the aims for personal development of the students may be linked with a role for the religious tradition;
C. <u>Focus on the teachers' perspective of religious education processes</u>: Metaphors, themes and constructs for describing and interpreting the process of classroom religious education;
D. <u>Focus on issues in theory and practice</u>: Issues that affect the orientation of classroom religious education; there is a polarity showing the different and conflicting interpretations of what is appropriate;
E. <u>Content areas</u>: List of content areas for classroom religious education;
F. <u>Pedagogy</u>: Classification of pedagogies and teaching and learning strategies.

(Rossiter 2005)

In the second stage of its development, a prototype of the questionnaire was evaluated by the researcher's supervisor and four other academics in the School of Religious Education at Australian University. In the light of their critiques, it was modified further to enhance its

design, style, clarity of expression, and appropriateness of questions (Templeton, 1994). The principal critiques that resulted in changes and enhancements were:

- Precision in the wording of some items was improved.
- A clear targeting of items on the area of pedagogy.
- Increasing the number of items in some categories to enhance the power of the questionnaire (e.g., on pedagogical content knowledge).

The questionnaire items were grouped logically into the following categories:

1. key ideas and themes regarding nature and purposes of classroom religious education;
2. pedagogies – teaching and learning processes used by teachers;
3. other student centred and teacher-directed processes and goals;
4. other key processes and goals - especially from a religious perspective;
5. acknowledged background influences on teachers thinking about successful religious education.

The third stage in the questionnaire's development was an appraisal by the researcher's critical friends. Each reported that it took about twenty minutes to complete; that it was clear and concise in its directions, and easy to complete. All believed the questionnaire's strength lay in its invitation to teachers to reflect on the quality of their teaching, and on the influences on their thinking about the purposes and practices of religious education. Because of the satisfaction registered by the critical friends, the questionnaire was not modified further at this stage.

The complete questionnaire as administered is included in Appendix C, together with a copy of the explanatory letter sent out with it.

In relation to the use of factor analyses (see later), the results of these higher order statistical procedures would show some confirmation of the consistency of the constructs and clusters of items used to investigate particular issues.

3.5.2 Administration of the questionnaire

For any empirical study, it is appropriate before making any significant investment of time, energy and money in data collection, to trial the research instrument, to work out any faults and to test it before extensive use. As a significant trial, the questionnaire was presented to the Diocesan Religious Education and Ministry Coordinators at a biannual conference, to seek their co-operation and support in administering the questionnaire to their departmental staff. After initial discussion on the time frame for this research, the assembled coordinators decided that they should do the questionnaire then and there so they could make possible

recommendations for any changes that were thought necessary in its layout and items. The group strongly endorsed the use of the questionnaire without further modification, citing the following:

1. The questionnaire was easy to follow, with directions both clear and concise.
2. All items were considered relevant to what might constitute success by teachers they knew. The questionnaire was judged to be comprehensive.
3. The time taken to finish the questionnaire varied between 18 minutes to half an hour.
4. The Likert scales, together with the opportunity to express personal opinions in the free response sections for all items, were regarded as a desirable feature of the questionnaire.
5. No changes to the questionnaire were recommended.
6. The questionnaire was regarded as a valuable opportunity for getting important feedback about perceptions of religious education from teachers. Such feedback could potentially be helpful in the planning of professional development for religion staff groups.

This development served a number of purposes:

- a means by which a critical group of stakeholders could attain ownership of the research;
- a further check of the clarity of the instrument's items, instructions and layout;
- feedback on the validity of the questionnaire items;
- feedback on the response categories used;
- a further check on the appropriateness of the questionnaire.

This group served the purposes of a trial for initial testing of the questionnaire before its final use.

Because this trial use of the questionnaire was not under exactly the same conditions as when finally used, it was not considered to be a pilot study in the strict sense. But because the group completed the questionnaire in a favourable time slot without any interruption, and because there was no further modification of the questionnaire, the data from this test study were pooled with the data from the rest of the cohort (in this sense it was treated like a pilot study). The anonymity of this group was preserved. Because the questionnaire included an item that identified current school religion coordinators, it was possible to test for any significant differences between their responses and those of teachers who were not in this leadership position. Borg, Joyce and Meredith (1993, p. 112) considered that if a pilot study was completed, the researcher "can be more confident that the data obtained in the main study will be valid."

These questionnaires were sent out to the religious coordinators of each of the participating schools and colleges, who distributed them to members of their departments. They directed staff to complete them and to post them back to the researcher in the stamped addressed

envelopes supplied.   The questionnaires were not marked in order to ensure anonymity; neither could they be traced back to any particular school.   One hundred and twenty three questionnaires were returned out of a possible two hundred and ten.   This was a return rate of 58.6%.   This return rate represented the percentage of the total population of diocesan secondary religion teachers that participated in this stage of the research.

3.6   THE CONDUCT OF THE PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK GROUPS

Three Participant Feedback Groups were conducted by the researcher.   The first feedback group consisted of teachers from a religious education department from one of the schools within the diocese.   Its participants were of a similar gender mix, age spread and years of experience in teaching religious education as the group that participated in the questionnaire (cf. table 4.3 & table 4.4).   Their participation was of a voluntary nature.   Each of the other two participant feedback groups consisted of voluntary teacher representatives from all the secondary schools of the diocese in which this research project was being conducted.

Each group was briefed about the purpose of the session prior to its commencement. Participating teachers were informed that their written comments would be a valuable source of data for the study, and that they were encouraged to hand these in at the end of the session. Also it was explained that brief notes would be taken by a designated minutes secretary using a recording sheet to highlight points raised and sentiments expressed in the group (see Appendix N).   Whatever was shared in the groups and any quotations used in this study would remain confidential – no individuals would be identified by what they said.   The information from each of the participant feedback groups was sorted into clusters that were identified using key words and key concepts to group and condense the data.   Quotes either from the participating teachers' written sheets or those expressed verbally were recorded during the discussion process.

The interview strategy, used to conduct each of the participant feedback groups, was the same for all three groups;   it was structured to allow a free and flowing interaction among the teachers present.   Initially, those present were asked to write down on a piece of paper, supplied by the researcher, their response to the following three statements:

- I feel successful in my teaching of religious education when…
- What factors have contributed in a significant way in their experiencing of success in the religious education classroom?
- What factors have inhibited their experience of success in the secondary religious education classroom?

The responses were then shared and discussed in the groups in an atmosphere that the researcher considered was trusting and open (cf. Gillham, 2005). Points raised by the teachers were recorded along with quotes from some of the teachers present. When a factor contributing to or inhibiting success was established and, after discussion on that factor had taken place, the researcher asked those teachers present to indicate whether they agreed with this factor as a contributor or inhibitor of success in line with their experience in teaching religion in the classroom. The number was then recorded on the form which can be found in Appendix N and later converted to a percent of those in attendance.

Data from the participant feedback groups were similar to that from the open-ended questions in the questionnaires. This qualitative data confirmed emerging themes in the quantitative data, while adding some new information. The sharing of perceptions of reality developed a momentum in the participant feedback groups that appeared to make them successful sources of data while also being an enjoyable and useful educational event for the participants (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2003).

3.7   ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

3.7.1   Questionnaire analysis

The questionnaire was set up to survey the views of religion teachers about various aspects of religious education, viewed through the lens of their potential contribution to success in religion teaching.

Each questionnaire was allocated a consecutive number as they were received. The quantitative data in the questionnaires were checked, and then entered into the SPSS 14 social research software program. (Flick, 1998; Neuman, 2003). Coding was used in the early professional characteristics items helping put some order on the raw quantitative data. The SPSS program was then used to generate basic descriptive statistics for each item and the results collated in logical groupings as indicated in Appendix E.

3.7.2   Factor analysis

Following the generation of descriptive statistics which would inform the first level of interpretation of the questionnaire data, it was considered that a factor analysis would be applied to the data to see if it might provide additional information about the consistency and

coherence of the datasets. A factor analysis is a statistical method for data reduction which is used as a way of reducing the number of variables in the data to a smaller group of underlying variables, or clusters of items that can explain most of the variance observed across a much larger number of variables. While the questionnaire was not specifically designed for one factor analysis as it used three different response scales for the sub-groupings K, L, M and N of questionnaire items, a separate factor analysis was applied to each of these four sub-groupings within the questionnaire. These were labelled Factor Analysis K, Factor Analysis L, Factor Analysis M, and Factor Analysis N.

Factor Analysis K was applied to the data collected from questionnaire items 1 to 67 in which the participating teachers used the scales strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree to indicate how they perceived success in the teaching of religion   Factor Analysis L was conducted on the data collected from the teachers' response to questionnaire items 68 to 81, using the same response scales as for Factor Analysis K, to indicate the effects of various resources on their experience of success in teaching religion.   Factor Analysis M was conducted on the data collected from the participating teachers' responses to questionnaire items 82 to 109.   The teachers responded to these items using the scales strong affect, some effect, uncertain, little if any effect, and no effect whatsoever.   The teachers used these scales to record their opinion about what affected their experience of success in the teaching of religion.   Factor Analysis N sought to identify the background influences on their experience of success in the teaching of religion.   This was conducted on the data collected from the teachers' responses to items 110 to 120, using the scales very helpful, helpful, unsure, unhelpful, and very unhelpful.

These four factor analyses attempted to see if there were correlation patterns in the questionnaire items;   and if the identified correlated clusters were consistent with the logical clusters of items constructed to account for particular ideas or issues (For example: items logically clustered such as those concerned with: *faith*:   faith, faith development and catechesis;   *religion as a subject*:   subject orientation, assessment, academic status etc.). Factor analysis is often used in data reduction to identify a small number of factors that explain most of the variance observed in a large number of items.   Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 354) considered that its application to research data was appropriate where investigators aimed to impose "an orderly simplification" on a number of interrelated measures.   The factor analyses might help confirm the initial constructs used in developing the questionnaire.   This would be evident if there was consistency in the ways participants

responded to items clustered around particular ideas, themes or issues (see the logical structure of the questionnaire items in Appendix C).

While there are several different types of factor analysis, the type adopted in this study was Principal Components Analysis (PCA), which is a commonly preferred option for data reduction according to the SPSS manual.   The PCA attempts "to provide a smaller number of linear combinations of the original variables in a way that captures most of the variability in the patter of correlations" (Pallant, 2007, p. 179).

The following briefly describes the procedures and terms used in this analysis:

a. **Factor Extraction and Rotation:**

The extract box in SPSS 14 software allows for choices of method and rotation procedure.   Varimax was chosen as the most commonly used method for orthogonal rotation (i.e. keeping the rotated factors uncorrelated).   Orthogonal rotation implies an acceptance of the assumption that there is no correlation among the factors.   However, if this assumption is not correct, the program does not remove the correlation. Rotation is used to simplify the interpretation of a factor analysis by maximising the loading of each variable on one of the extracted factors while minimising the loading on all other factors.

Eigenvalues greater than one were selected.   Eigenvalues represent the proportion of variance explained by a given variable.   When sorting the factors by their eigenvalue results, the components that cluster about a factor yet to be identified are listed in order that indicates its level of contribution and importance (explaining the greatest amount of variance) to that factor.   Prior to the extraction process, the maximum iterations for convergence were set at 25.   After a varimax rotation, each original variable tends to be associated with one (or a small number) of factors, and each factor tends to represent only a small number of variables (Abdi, 2003, p. 3).   The eigenvalues for each of the factor analyses are contained in Appendices I, K, N, and Q.

b. **Correlation Matrix:**

The coefficients of correlation express the degree of linear relationship between the row and column variables of this matrix.   The closer to zero the coefficient are, the less the relationship between them;   the closer to one, the greater the relationship.   A negative sign indicates that variables are inversely related.   The principal diagonal

will contain communality estimates.   Communality measures the amount of variance that is accounted for in each variable.

c. **Rotated Factors:**

The rotated factors delineate distinct clusters of relationships, if such exist.   That is, using varimax, each factor has been rotated orthogonally until it defines and delineates a distinct cluster of interrelated variables.

d. **Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)** – a measure of sampling adequacy:

KMO provides an index between zero and one that is used to assess the adequacy of the correlation matrix for factor analysis.   This measure compares the magnitudes of the observed correlation coefficients with the magnitudes of the partial correlation coefficients.   Small values of KMO indicate that factor analysis is not a helpful procedure for data reduction.   The SPSS software package suggests that a KMO value greater than 0.7 supports an appropriate factor analysis and that values less than 0.5 indicate that the factor analysis is not worth pursuing because of a lack of data correlation with little consequent explanatory power.

e. **Kaiser's Measurement of Sampling Accuracy (MSA):**

This measure is used as an index to determine whether the data are adequate for the useful employment of a factor analysis.   Generally, an MSA of 0.5 or higher is considered adequate.   In the SPSS output, the first diagonal line of the anti-image correlation matrix gives us the MSAs for individual variables.

f. **Anti-Image Correlation Matrix:**

The anti-image of the correlation matrix is the negative of the partial correlations, partialling out all other variables.   The MSA statistic for each item is shown as the diagonal of the matrix.   An inspection of the correlation coefficients on the diagonal shows whether the measures of sampling are above the acceptable level of 0.50.   If any of the items are less than 0.50, they are considered as not contributing and are dropped from the analysis.

g. **Factor Loading:**

This term expresses the correlation of the item with the factor.

h. Cronbach's Alpha:

Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of the internal consistency and reliability of the analysis in the identification of factors. The values of this measure are expressed in decimal form from zero to one. George and Mallery (2003) provided the following rules of thumb:

"_ > 0.9 – Excellent, _ > 0.8 – Good, _ > 0.7 – Acceptable, _ > 0.6 – Questionable, _ > 0.5 – Poor, and < 0.5 – Unacceptable" (p. 231).

i. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity:

The purpose of this test is to determine whether the variables are correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for a factor analysis – testing the value of the analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity tests whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that the factor model was inappropriate. A statistically significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.05$) indicates that sufficient correlations exist among the variables to proceed.

3.7.3 Paired-samples t test

This test is an inferential one that determines if there is a significant statistical difference between the correlated means of two data groups, based on the assumption that the data is drawn from the same subjects and that they are drawn from a population that is normally distributed. The groups are established by pairing items on the basis of some relational aspect between the items. In this study, it was the use of textbooks for one pairing and theology for another. This pairing is said to be effective if the Person Correlation Coefficient is positive that is r > 0 and the *p* value is small - that is $p < 0.05$. These measures indicate that the two means (μ_1, μ_2) are significantly correlated and that a paired-samples t test for checking the statistical significance was an appropriate choice of test. A null hypothesis H_0 is proposed alongside an alternative hypothesis H_1. For the purposes of the tests conducted, these were:

H_0: There is no significant difference between the means of the two items, that is $\mu_1 = \mu_2$.
H_1: There is a significant difference between the means of the two items that is $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$.

If the absolute value of the t statistic is less than its critical value of 3.37 for 122 degrees of freedom (df) and that $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis would be accepted. If the absolute value of the t statistic is greater than its critical value of 3.37 for 122 degrees of freedom (df) and that $p < 0.05$, then there is a 95% level of confidence in rejecting the null hypothesis in favour

of the alternative hypothesis. If a P level of $p < 0.01$ is used, then the result would be deemed to be highly statistically significant (Arkkerlin, 2009).

3.7.4   Conceptual analysis of the qualitative data

A conceptual analysis of the qualitative data from open-ended questionnaire items and participant feedback groups was based on inspection for key words and key concepts.   In this way a set of interactive concepts and categories were developed.

3.4.7.1   Analysis of the open-ended questionnaire items

The initial group of pre-defined categories, used in the Likert questionnaire items, was expanded to accommodate some new ideas or associations evident in the open-ended qualitative data.   Comments and statements were codified and sorted into clusters that expressed common themes, concepts or purposes.   This procedure helped the researcher examine the textual data for specific concepts while allowing for a level of coding flexibility that was open to important material to be incorporated into the coding process.   This sorting and sifting framework allowed for distinctions in language, relationships, phrases, patterns, and themes that were identified on an individual and collective level (Hollway & Jefferson, 2002;   Glesne, 2006).

Reflective notes were written to cover the common themes and identify the major and minor ideas in the data (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005;   Neuman, 2003;   Hollway & Jefferson, 2002).   This provided a set of results that were used to articulate the ideas, concepts, and understanding of the participants, confirming, complementing and expanding on the quantitative questionnaire data.   Results of this analysis are presented in the next chapter where percentage and mean responses to clusters of related items are displayed in tabulated and graphical form.

In turn, the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data informed the interpretation of themes, patterns, and relationships in chapter 5.

3.4.7.2   Analysis of data from participant feedback groups

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the data from the three participant feedback groups were collected using two sources.   These were:

- The comments written down by participating teachers on the three categories for investigation;
- The notes recorded by the minutes secretary and the researcher using the form, displayed in Appendix N, to note points raised and notable comments made.

The data gathered was codified and categorised into the prominent 'ideas' and 'clusters of ideas' expressed in participant feedback groups, with confidentiality preserved by identifying contributors according to group and a participant number. The number of participating teachers, whose written notes supported the various key ideas (or cluster of ideas), noted on the recording sheets, was then converted to a percentage of the total number in their particular group. This was then displayed in tabulated form – resulting from a conversion of qualitative data to quantitative data. Comments by teachers which were judged to support various viewpoints in a cogent way were selected and used in the reporting and discussion of data; this helped promote the 'individual voice' of the teachers and it also enriched the interpretation of the data.

3.8 LEGITIMATION

Verification and legitimation of research findings is often discussed in relation to concepts of reliability, validity and generalisation (Neuman, 2003). Ensuring there is a high degree of internal validity in data helps develop a satisfactory level of reliability (Neuman, 2003). In terms of trustworthiness, a term referring to the believability of the findings of the research project (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), interpretive research attempts to build dependability to make a reasonable claim on methodological consistency.

In addition, there is a need for a degree of confidence that the results of the study will reveal truth, in a philosophical sense. However, this truth is relative to the position and contribution of the participants, not the pursuit of an absolute (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Neuman, 2003). Use of both quantitative and qualitative procedures served to triangulate the data collection, contributing to both validity and reliability. This also helped endorse the validity and the utility of the interpretive constructs used to consider the meaning and significance of the data.

3.8.1 Reliability

A research task needs to hold up to a degree of scrutiny in terms of its findings and the potential bias of the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Glesne, 2006). Hence, the researcher attempts to ensure that both the recording of observations and the interpretation of their meaning are as free as possible from contamination by the researcher pre-set ideas. This helps ensure a level of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in the data

that helps enhance the trustworthiness and rigor of the study (Lincoln & Gruba, 1985; Creswell & Miller, 2000).   This means that the data sources are clearly demarcated and the chain of assembly in analysis, reporting and interpretation is self evident to the reader. Moreover, the theoretical framework that specifies the research design protocols needs to be detailed, well articulated, and adhered to consistently.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 269), a questionnaire is a useful instrument in conducting research in that it is anonymous;   it tends to encourage greater honesty;   it is more economical;   and there is the possibility that it may be mailed, eliminating the potential influence of personal contact with the researcher or with other key figures in the workplace.

The sample of teachers who filled in the questionnaire accounted for 58.6% of the target population.   Measures were taken to determine to what extent the sample was representative of the population.   This included the examination of percentage of respondents for each age category and gender balance at the time the questionnaire was administered (cf. chapter 4).

Checking and testing the questionnaire with academics, critical friends (who were experienced religious education teachers) and religious education and ministry coordinators, helped improve the eventual reliability by removing ambiguities and potential problems with items.   In addition to the scope for open-ended responses for each questionnaire item, some participants had opportunities in the participant feedback groups to check that their interpretations were being validated, and their views were comprehended.   This qualitative data helped build the confirmability of the overall survey results.

As explained in chapter 4 section 4.4, the factor analyses of fixed response items in the different parts of the questionnaire helped confirm the logical structure of the questionnaire. These analyses showed that there was consistency in the ways that participants responded to questions about key ideas, themes or issues.

3.9   POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS IN THE RESEARCH

The objective of this research was to gain meaningful descriptions of the participants' experience, being as faithful as possible to the sense and meaning they attributed to their experience (Tellis, 1997;   Neuman 2003).   The role of the researcher was to assist participants in exploring and articulating the meaning of their experience and, without imposing his own biases and interpretations on the data, and to identify core themes and trends in the meanings that they contributed (Tellis, 1997).   This required a degree of self-

awareness on the part of the researcher to be able to filter out biases and preconceptions brought to the research, even though the ideas and intuition of the researcher were important in determining the research questions, data collection strategies and precise questions asked of participants. A strong focus on the research issues rather than the researcher's initial pre-conceived ideas about the problems can help minimise undue influence on the outcomes by the researcher.

Researcher bias can lead to compromises in the participants' ability to disclose information, as well as to the researcher's capacity to identify key issues in data, and it can raise power issues (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Therefore, the use of multiple strategies for enhancing reliability created reader confidence in the findings (as noted above). The efforts to gain the interest and approval of key personnel in the Catholic Education Office and the meetings with the religious education Coordinators as a group helped significantly in lessening the potential for researcher bias; a sense of collaboration with the participants was thus developed. The research was accepted by participants as an opportunity for them firstly, to reflect on their practice in a meaningful way, and secondly, to contribute their own say about what was happening in this field and about what problems existed and needed to be addressed (cf. Creswell, 2002a).

The teachers had good prior knowledge of the research project and the involvement of the researcher (Creswell & Miller 2000). All due care was taken to ensure that the research using the participant feedback groups was completed with similar consistency on all occasions, and within the interpretivist framework that underpinned the study.

Data collection, within the interpretivist paradigm is varied and allows for a holistic approach to information gathering (Tellis, 1997). "Real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce; discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account for a reader" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Personal interpretation and the derivation of meaning, related to the various themes that were identified in the study, varied from participant to participant. This study provided a snapshot of participants' perceptual constructs about successful religious education at a specific point in time.

In the use of the survey methodology, a number of delimiting and limiting factors needs to be acknowledged. The target group of respondents, from only one Catholic diocese, was narrow in scope was delimitation in terms of the generalisability of conclusions for Australian Catholic education. The investigation excluded teachers from primary schools so that a more

precise focus could be maintained on the issues specific to secondary schools and to pupils in that age range. The participants (from a regional diocese) taught a clientele of students that varied to some extent in cultural background and diversity, life experience, and value orientation; but this is likely to be different from those of pupils in schools located in capital cities. This is also a natural limitation of the scope of the study.

The sampling method could be viewed as a potential limitation. The respondents to the questionnaire and those involved in the participant feedback groups may reflect a bias in that it may not be precisely representative of the target population for this study. The use of multiple data sources was used to alleviate the threat of bias and to obtain confirmation of findings through the divergence of different perspectives.

A further potential limitation was (as noted above) the possibility that the 58% of the target population may not be a reliable sample of the population of religious education teachers in the diocese. This would be dependent on whether the age, sex and other pertinent characteristics of the sample of the participating teachers were reflective of the larger population. While this was not tested in detail, the response rate was considered acceptable for this research design and high enough to alleviate this concern.

Two other factors that may possibly limit the accuracy of the data have to do with the attitudes of the participants. The responses of some may be affected by their lack of concern for the worth of this sort of research; the other limiting factor is that some participants may be ambivalent or somewhat confused in their interpretation of the meaning of their own teaching experience.

3.10   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study adhered to all of the ethical protocols required by the University that govern data gathering strategies and the privacy and security of data records. Research approval was sought from the Australian Catholic University Research Project Ethics Committee. Written approval was also sought from the relevant Catholic Education Office authorities and school principals (Appendix A). All secondary religion teachers received a letter outlining the nature and purpose of the research project (Appendix B). They were made aware of the ethical protocols that applied and that participation was voluntary. An undertaking was given by the researcher to the teachers who participated in the questionnaire and/or the feedback groups that steps would be taken to protect their identity and confidentiality of their involvement and that any of the views and comments that they shared would be recorded

confidentially to protect both the identity and the sensitivity of participants (Guba, 1989; Doucet & Mauther, 2002; Berg, 2004; Glesne, 2006).

Given the sensitive and personal nature of the investigation, it was possible that the participants might feel some personal gain from the opportunity to reflect on, and work out their own responses to, the various questions posed in the study. This possibility was consistent with the theoretical framework that allowed for some insight and personal growth for participants as a result of their involvement (Doucet & Mauther, 2002; Berg, 2004; Glesne, 2006). Reciprocity is consistent with the epistemological framework underpinning the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

To maintain anonymity, teacher codes will be used for labelling quoted contributions and for indicating school sites (Doucet & Mauther, 2002; Berg, 2004; Glesne, 2006). Raw data and the subsequent analysis of results have been safely archived at the University. This included questionnaires, written transcripts and other pertinent documentation.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has explained the research design and the underpinning epistemology and theoretical framework. It has also addressed a number of issues that relate to the use of questionnaire and participant feedback group methods, as well as to questions about ensuring validity and reliability in the collected data. Finally, attention was given to limitations of the study and to ethical questions in the research process.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF THE VIEWS OF RELIGION

TEACHERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the research undertaken based on both the quantitative data collected from the teacher responses to items in the questionnaire and the qualitative data collected in the conducting of participant feedback group interviews, and the free response questions in the questionnaire.   The meaning and significance of the data will be considered in the next chapter.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH

The information about the participating teachers in this research project highlighted the personal and professional characteristics of this sample of secondary Religious Education teachers within the diocese in which the research took place.

4.2.1 Personal characteristics of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire

Of the teachers employed in the diocese in which this research was conducted, there was a mix of full time, part time and casuals.   In the secondary schools, there were 6 religious teachers who were members of various religious orders and 1073 professional teachers.   Of the professional teachers employed at this time, 444 were male (41.4%) and 629 were female (58.6%).   Non-catholic teachers, employed by this diocese, accounted for 18.5% of these teachers (86 male teachers and 113 female teachers).   The number of the teachers engaged in teaching Religious Education at the time of this research was 210, of which 45.7% were female and 54.3% were male.   The number of Religious Education teachers who responded to the questionnaire was 123 or 58.6% of the target group.   The gender of the teachers who participated in the survey was 53 female (43% of the sample) and 70 male (57% of the sample).   This sample was representative of the Religious Education teacher population in the diocese.

4.2.2 Professional characteristics of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire

Of the 123 teachers who completed the questionnaire, 99 were accredited by the Regional Catholic Education Office to teach Religious Education in the diocese (80.5%) while 24 had not gained accreditation (19.5%).   The data showed that 104 of the respondents had some

formal, recognised qualification to teach Religious Education (84.6%); 21 had multiple qualifications in Religious Education (17.1%) while 19 teachers had no formal qualifications in Religious Education (15.4%). The number of the teachers in the sample who held the various types of qualification and the relevant percentages, approximated to the nearest whole number, is displayed in table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Participating teachers' qualifications in Religious Education

Type of qualification held by participating teachers	No. of teachers	% of qualified teachers trained at this level
Foundations of RE. - A former diocesan certification of training in RE	26	19.1
Study at a Bachelor's Degree Level	39	28.7
NSW Diocesan Certificate of RE.	23	16.9
University Graduate Certification.	21	15.5
Study at a Masters Degree Level	20	14.7
Other certifications not listed above	7	5.1
Total Number of Qualifications held	136	100

Of those surveyed, the number of the teachers with multiple qualifications is listed below in table 4.2. All participating teachers with multiple qualifications obtained at least one through university study.

Of the teachers surveyed in the questionnaire, 20 had a Masters Degree in Theology or Religious Education as their highest qualification (16%); for 35 teachers, their highest Religious Education qualification was an undergraduate qualification (28.5%), while 16 had some form of graduate certification (13%). Seventeen had the Diocesan Certificate of Religious Education (RE) (13.8%), and 12 with the Foundations of Religious Education (RE) Diploma (9.7%).

The professional experience of the teachers surveyed is summarised according to gender breakdown in table 4.3. Then, it is presented to show two aspects – experience teaching at secondary school level, and years teaching Religious Education. Figure 4.1 graphically displays the number of years that these teachers have spent teaching religion, spanning a range of 29 years with the largest group being 13 teachers with only one year experience (10.6% of the sample).

Key Statistics

Mean = 14.16yrs
Median = 15yrs
S.D. = 8.826
Range = 29yrs
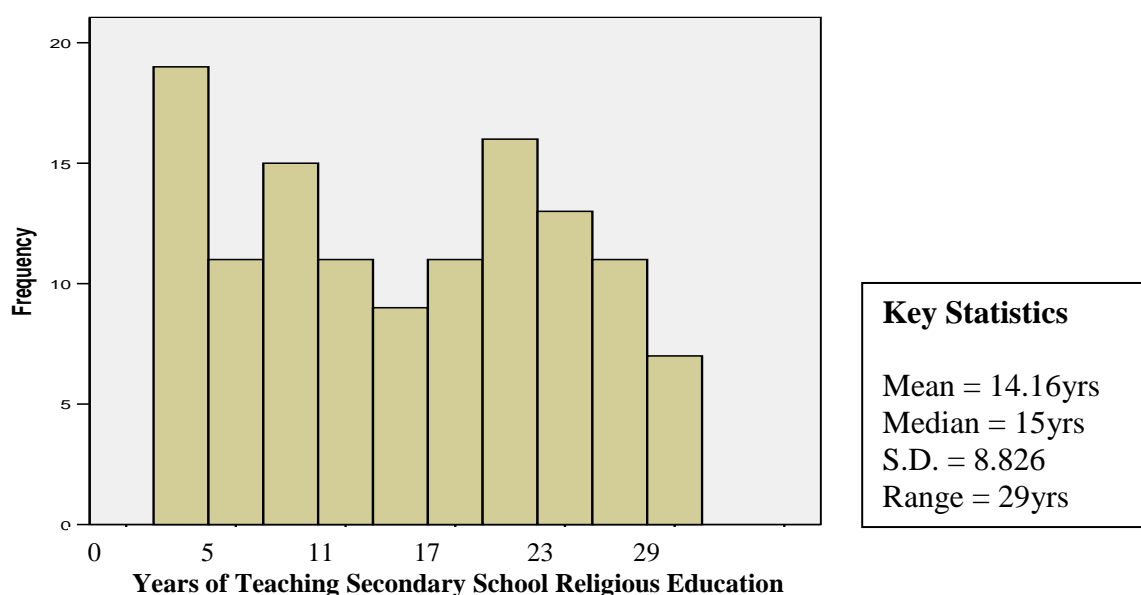
Figure 4.1
Years of Teaching Religious Education in Secondary School for all survey participants

Table 4.2
Breakdown of the participating teachers with multiple qualifications in Religious Education

Number of qualifications held by participating teachers	Number of teachers	% of the total of participating teachers
Two certifications	15	12.2
Three certifications	4	3.3
Four certifications	1	0.8
More than four certifications	1	0.8

Table 4.3
Gender breakdown and years of experience of participating teachers in teaching secondary Religious Education

Experience (years)	Female Teachers	Male Teachers	Total Number
1 - 5	13	13	26
6- 10	12	11	23
11 – 15	9	7	16
16 – 20	11	13	24
21 – 25	6	14	20
26 - 30	2	12	14
Totals	53	70	123

Of these, three were in their first year of teaching, three in their second year, one in his/her 3rd year, two in their seventh year and one each in her or his thirteenth, fifteenth, twenty-sixth and twenty-eighth years of teaching respectively. Table 4.3 above shows the gender

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breakdown of the teachers against various groupings of years of experience in teaching secondary level Religious Education.

4.2.3 Demographics of the participant feedback groups

The details of the participant feedback groups are listed in table 4.4 below. The sample of the teachers who participated in the participant feedback groups accounted for 32.4% of the total number of Religious Education teachers in the diocese. Each of the levels of experience in this sample was well represented. This representative sample would be likely to give a representative account of the thinking of secondary Religious Education teachers in the diocese.

Table 4.4
Gender breakdown and composition of the participant feedback groups

Participant feedback group criteria	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Totals
Number of male religion teachers	13	10	11	34
Percentage of male religion teachers	52%	55.6%	44%	50%
Number of female religion teachers	12	8	14	34
Percentage of female religion teachers	48%	44.4%	56%	50%
1 – 5 yrs Experience in RE	4	3	4	11
6 – 10 yrs Experience in RE	4	4	5	13
11 – 15 yrs Experience in RE	3	3	7	13
16 – 20 yrs Experience in RE	5	5	4	14
21 – 25 yrs Experience in RE	6	2	3	11
26 – 30 yrs Experience in RE	3	1	2	6

4.2.4 Concluding remarks

When the gender composition of both the participating teachers for the questionnaire (43.1% female and 56.9% male) and those who participated in the participant feedback groups (50% female and 50% male) are compared to the gender composition of the total population of Religious Education teachers at the time of the data collection (45.7% female and 54.3% male), both samples of the teachers – for the questionnaire and the participant feedback groups – would be likely to provide data which would be representative of the target group of the teachers for this research project. Many of those who responded to the questionnaire had professional qualifications with approximately 43% having some form of university qualification and 36% having received training through initiatives of the diocesan Catholic Education Office. While this is an improvement on what was the case some 40 years ago, there were a significant number of Religious Education teachers with little or no qualifications in this area of the curriculum.

4.3   RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE PART OF THE SURVEY

Because this is the first time that data on success in religion teaching has been collected, it was decided that the analysis and reporting of the results would concentrate on the views of the whole group in relation to how participating teachers responded to this construct, and not to further extrapolate the data to yield differences between groups such as female and male, Religious Education coordinator or ordinary teacher, experienced and inexperienced teachers. While such further analyses were considered beyond the scope set for the study, the data could be still used as a starting point for identifying initial trends on these questions, and this could be addressed in follow-up research.

4.3.1   Descriptive statistics of responses to the questionnaire items

The following analysis presents the data for the various groupings of items identified in the methodology and research design in chapter 3.   While groupings of questionnaire items used varying descriptors to differentiate the thinking of the participating teachers, these were considered comparable in describing the degree to which participating teachers agreed with the items.   Thus the teachers' responses were reported as degrees of agreement.   The percentage frequencies of responses and means were recorded for each item in each grouping. In addition, the item scores for all who agreed, total agreeing are noted (i.e., sum of frequencies for strongly agree and agree) together with total not opposed to the proposition, which also includes the frequency which indicated uncertain.

Following the reported data and comments that highlighted the results for each main grouping of items, there will follow a report on a higher order statistical analysis of the data.   A summary of the questionnaire items in its original numerical sequence, together with means and standard deviations, are included in Appendix E.

The item-grouping data are reported in this sequence:

1. key ideas and themes regarding nature and purposes of classroom Religious Education;
2. pedagogies – teaching/learning processes used by the teachers;
3. other student centred and teacher directed processes and goals;
4. other key processes and goals – especially from a religious perspective;
5. acknowledged background influences on the teachers thinking about successful Religious Education.

4.3.2.   Highlighting the results reported in table 4.5

The following sections highlight the findings for each of the main categories of questionnaire items that were listed in table 4.5 (see p.126-p.131).   Numbers in brackets have been used to identify questionnaire items.

1.1   Theology and Catholic teachings

While 42.3% of the teachers surveyed did not support the notion of students attaining knowledge and understanding of theology as a good indicator of successful teaching of religion, 33.3% did support it (64).   Approximately 40% of respondents agreed they experienced success when students participated in theologizing about material being covered in class (94).   There was, however, more support by respondents for the item about students having learnt good Catholic theology (20).   It was noteworthy that the statement about students returning to good traditional Catholic theology only found support among 19.5% of the teachers (91).   A paired-samples t test indicated that the difference between the means for items 20 (3.37) and 91 (2.64) was statistically very significant (as the computed t value was above the critical value of 3.37 for 122 degrees of freedom for $p = 0.001$ (see Appendix F). This difference between the two means suggests that the meaning assigned to good traditional Catholic theology was negative, possibly referencing to a notion of an authoritarian approach – the idea of imposing particular beliefs or doctrines.   The data indicated that there appeared to be some ambivalence among participants in relationship to the place of theology in successful religion teaching.

Although imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith was strongly endorsed by 87.8% of respondents (82), the opportunity to communicate the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church was supported by only 35.7% of the teachers (85).   Again, as for item 20, this item may have had some authoritarian overtones.   Sixty-eight percent of the teachers supported the notion that students who expressed an interest in Catholic teachings was a good indicator of success while a further 18.9% were not opposed to this view (26).

Strong endorsement of the experiential dimension of Religious Education was observed in three areas – with 80.5% of the teachers supporting the item about developing student familiarity with Catholic religious practices (98), 87.8% supporting the item about giving students the opportunity to practise their faith (104), and 91.1% endorsing the item about relating the Church's teachings to the life experience of students (86).

General comment

It was evident that the teachers strongly endorsed the imparting of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic tradition, and that their support for the other areas was not as strong.   From the data, there seems to be some ambivalence among the teachers that could well be related to a notion that, where something is insisted on in an authoritarian fashion, such as the idea that there must be a return to a good old fashioned theology, that there was a negative reaction.   While noting that some ambivalence about the theology related items exists among the teachers, they strongly endorsed the experiential dimension where students have experience of Catholic religious practices.

1.2   Scripture

A notable minority of the teachers (37.7%) were uncertain as to whether scripture should have prominence in a lesson (48).   Over two-thirds of the teachers surveyed saw students taking an interest in scripture (22) as well as students interpreting scripture (27) as good indicators of how well their teaching was affecting their students.   However, the statistics show that a significant percentage of the teachers appear to remain uncertain about the appropriate place of scripture in their teaching.

1.3   Relevance

The items relating to the critical understanding of contemporary personal and social issues were strongly endorsed (19, 40, 86, 103).   Items relating to Social Justice where students learn and put what they have learnt into practice were strongly supported with 97.6% of the teachers citing students expressing an interest in discussing such matters (32);   and 87.8% believing student enthusiasm to act on a social justice issue as an important indicator of success (34).   Just over 81% of the teachers endorsed as important items: topics which were perceived by students as relevant (9);   and where students showed responsiveness to insights given (28).   There were 97.6% who endorsed the item about assisting students examine issues related to meaning and purpose in life as important (96).

General comment

The quest for relevance in Religious Education as a key indicator of success was strongly endorsed in the results presented above.   The link between social justice issues, meaning and purpose in life and relevance also attracted strong support.

1.4   Religion as an academic subject

The participants were apparently divided over whether an academic orientation to classroom Religious Education should be considered important with 31.7% disagreeing with the notion that religion should have an academic focus, with 27.6% uncertain and 40.6% agreeing that it should (12).   While 44.7% considered lack of academic rigour as an indicator of lack of success, 33.3% did not support this notion (56).   There were 81.3% of participants who were not opposed to the notion that Religious Education should be as challenging as other subjects (100).   This was a strong endorsement of the idea that in the secondary school, religion needs to be operating as, and perceived as, a genuine academic subject in the curriculum.

Widespread support for demonstration of critical thinking amongst students as an indicator of good teaching was evident in the data.   In particular, the following aspects received strong endorsement from the teachers: students displaying critical thinking in their written work (4) – 91.1%;   students challenged to think critically by use of stimulus material (17) – 93.5%; teaching students to think critically (43) – 77.8%;   helping students become well-informed and critical thinkers (84) – 95.9%.

Student demonstration of awareness as to how culture impacts on beliefs and attitudes was considered a good indicator by 80.5% of respondents (23).   Other aspects which gained strong endorsement by the teachers included: provision of opportunities for students to learn study and research skills (92) – 79.6%;   engaging students in quality research and projects (3) – 91.1%;   perceived effective use of worksheets by students (71) – 94.3%;   student level of response to an assignment or homework task (8) – 69.7%;   student results on an assessment task (44) – 69.9%.

The teachers were divided over whether the following should be considered a good indicator: student inability to develop and articulate arguments with evidence, with 39% agreeing with this, 26.8% were uncertain and 34.1% disagreed (63);   a student's level of research skills, with 37.4% disagreeing, 23.6% uncertain and 38.2% in agreement (61);   use of another teacher's worksheet that was obtained just prior to a lesson, with 41.2% in disagreement, 27.7% uncertain and 22.6% in agreement with this (78);   providing a relaxed atmosphere, with 51.2% agreeing, 22% uncertain and 26.8% disagreeing (7).

General comment

The teachers considered it important that Religious Education be perceived by students and other stakeholders as operating like any other key learning area. Critical pedagogy that promoted critical thinking was strongly endorsed. Student quality of work produced was also strongly supported. The level of support for provision of a relaxed classroom atmosphere showed that a number of the teachers still viewed Religious Education not as an academic pursuit - in other words not like a standard academic subject but rather as a complement or alternative to academic subjects;   or as an activity that was too personal and faith-oriented to be an academic subject.

1.5   Promoting faith development

Of the participating teachers, 73.2% of them supported the item on feedback from students about how influential a lesson had been on their personal development of faith (30). This highlighted the endorsement of the aim of fostering personal faith. However, there appeared to be more ambivalence with respect to the reverse item where the perception that a lesson had not fostered students' faith development was considered to be a sign of lack of success (67);   34.2% agreed with this proposition, 28.5% were uncertain and 37.4% disagreed with it.

General comment

The mixed reaction of the teachers to the notion of success being measured in terms of faith development seems to show that the use of this construct as an indicator was perceived as problematic.

1.6   Discussion and sharing of personal and faith insights

The proposition that students' sharing of personal insights with each other was a favoured outcome (1) was supported by 93.4% of participating teachers. Of these, 34.1% strongly endorsed it;   while 82.9% felt that their facilitating of students sharing of personal faith with others was important (99). While 60.1 % agreed with the notion of being able to share their personal beliefs and faith with students, 20.3% of the teachers were uncertain and a further 19.5% of them disagreed with this aspect (21).

The teachers indicated a high level of importance for discussion as part of their teaching practice. Of note were 92.6% of the teachers who were not opposed to the idea that discussion was more important in religion than in other areas of the curriculum (90);   90.7% endorsed the statement that a large proportion of the lesson time was taken up by discussion

(6);   95.9% judged the eagerness of students' participation as a key indicator (2);   92.7% of the teachers agreed with the statement about evidence of critical thinking in discussion, of which 48.8% strongly agreed with it (5);   97.6 % agreed that students showing an interest in social justice issues was a good indicator of success, with 47.2% strongly agreeing (32).

General comment

Student sharing of their personal insights and their involvement in classroom discussion activities were well supported by the teachers.   Discussion was supported as an important part of the pedagogical process employed in the Religious Education classroom.

1.7   Developing students' personal spirituality

Over 89% of the teachers agreed with the statement that developing students' personal spirituality was considered a good indicator of the effectiveness of their teaching (106).

1.8;   1.9   Where reflective and prayerful activities are included in religion classes

Eighty-three percent of the teachers agreed that students enjoying a meditation or quiet refection session were good indicators of success (33).   While 69.1% agreed that provision of the opportunity for prayer or prayerful reflection in their lessons was valuable, 11.4% did not (18).   Also 87.8% agreed with the statement about giving students opportunities to experience their Catholic faith.   Of these, 33.3% strongly endorsed this view (104). Seventy-four point six percent of respondents endorsed the statement about students preparing and conducting good paraliturgies.   However 10.6% did not believe this to be the case (13). Over ninety-four percent were not opposed to the notion that the degree of student participation in a prayer service would be a good indication of the level of student engagement (29).

General comment

While reflective and prayerful activities attracted a reasonably strong level of support, there was a significant minority who did not consider it to be necessarily important.   Support for providing opportunities for students to experience their faith was consistent with earlier comments about the perceived importance of the experiential dimension.

1.10   The personal and spiritual role of the religion teacher

A majority of the teachers (60.1%) gave positive support to the statement about their sharing personal faith and beliefs with students (21).   The teachers' self-perception as a witness and spiritual role model was judged to be important: 86.9% agreed with this notion, 34.1% strongly (107);   93.5% of respondents supported the concept of witness to Catholic beliefs and values (93);   81.3% of the teachers endorsed indications of responsiveness by students to spiritual and moral insights (28);   86.2% of participants believed their personal relationship with students was significant (29).

General comment

The results on these items strongly endorsed the teacher's role of being a witness and role model.   There was a difference in the levels of endorsement between that for personal sharing of faith (21) and for witnessing (93) – with the latter having a higher rating.   This discrepancy between a lower score for sharing of personal faith and the high score for witnessing may need further clarification of witnessing and sharing as potentially problematic areas as indicators of success.   A paired t test was conducted to check the statistical significance of the difference.   The result indicated that this was statistically very significant (see Appendix F).   This showed that the teachers attached more importance to witnessing than personal sharing.   Personal relationships with students were also highlighted as important.

Table 4.5

Presentation of data for Area 1 of questionnaire analysis: Key ideas and themes regarding nature and purposes of classroom Religious Education

	Item category	Quest. item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% Uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
Area 1: Key ideas and themes regarding nature and purposes of classroom religious education											
1.1	**Theology and Catholic teachings**										
1.1.1	1.1.1 **Theology** 1.1.1.1 Knowledge and understanding of theology	64	Students understood little of the theological complexity in the material presented	1.6	42.3	22.8	31.7	1.6	33.3	56.1	2.89
	1.1.1.2 Process of theologising by students	94	Students get involved in theologising.	3.3	16.3	40.7	35.8	4.1	39.9	80.6	3.21
	1.1.1.3 Emphasis on Catholic theology 1.1.1.3.1Good Catholic theology	20	Students showed they were learning good Catholic theology.	0.8	17.1	33.3	41.5	7.3	48.8	82.1	3.37
	1.1.1.3.2 Back to good traditional Catholic theology	91	Getting back to good traditional Catholic theology.	8.9	38.2	33.7	18.7	0.8	19.5	53.2	2.64
1.1.2	1.1.2 **Catholic teachings** 1.1.2.1 Communicating Catholic teachings	82	Imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith tradition.	5.7	0	6.5	70.7	17.1	87.8	94.3	3.99
	1.1.2.2	85	An opportunity to communicate the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.	6.5	25.2	32.5	33.3	2.4	35.7	68.2	3.00
	1.1.2.3	86	Educating students in their Catholic faith and in spiritual/moral issues.	2.4	0	6.5	56.1	35	91.1	97.6	4.24
	Experience of Catholic religious practices	98	Developing students' familiarity with Catholic religious practices.	8.1	0	11.4	68.3	12.2	80.5	91.9	3.84
	1.1.2.5	104	Giving students the opportunity to experience their Catholic faith. (e.g., having Mass, Reconciliation).	4.9	0	7.3	54.5	33.3	87.8	95.1	4.16

Note: Percentage responses for each item were recorded, together with the total agreeing (sum of responses at 4 and 5), total not opposed to the statement (sum of responses to 3, 4 and 5) and the mean score for each item.

	Item Category	Quest. Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% Uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
	Student interest in Catholic teachings	26	Students expressed an interest in Catholic teachings.	0	13.1	18.9	62.3	5.7	68	86.9	3.58
1.2	**Scripture**										
1.2.1	Understanding and knowledge of scripture	48	Understanding scripture had a prominent place in the lesson.	1.6	21.1	31.7	39	6.5	45.5	77.2	3.28
1.2.2	Student interest in scripture	22	Students showed an interest in scripture.	0	10.6	18.7	65	5.7	70.7	89.4	3.66
1.2.3	Critical interpretation of scripture 1.2.3.1	27	Students showed some critical interpretation of scripture in the light of modern scripture scholarship.	1.6	13.1	19.7	49.2	16.4	65.6	85.3	3.63
	1.2.3.2	42	Students showed a good capacity to interpret scripture critically.	1.6	9.8	15.6	59.8	13.1	72.9	88.5	3.70
1.3	**Relevance of Religious Education: Relevant to life & critical study of contemporary personal and social issues**										
1.3.1	Critical understanding of contemporary personal and social issues 1.3.1.1	19	Students showed they were giving thoughtful attention to contemporary spiritual and moral issues.	0	4.9	8.1	55.3	31.7	87	95.1	4.14
	1.3.1.2	103	Opportunity for informing students about contemporary spiritual and moral issues.	0	0.8	4.1	48.8	46.3	95.1	99.2	4.41
	1.3.1.3	86	Educating students in their Catholic faith and in spiritual/moral issues.	0	2.4	6.5	56.1	35	91.1	97.6	4.24
	1.3.1.4	40	Students showed they were well informed about contemporary issues.	0.8	14.6	19.5	55.3	9.8	65.1	84.6	3.59
1.3.2	Social justice issues (thinking, discussion and also social action) 1.3.2.1	32	Students showed interest in discussing one or more social justice issues.	0	0.8	1.6	50.4	47.2	97.6	99.2	4.44
	1.3.2.2	34	Students were enthusiastic to act on a social justice issue.	0	2.4	9.8	35.8	52	87.8	97.6	4.37
	1.3.2.3	97	Providing the opportunity for students to do some social action.	0	1.6	2.4	52	43.9	95.9	98.3	4.38

	Item Category	Quest. Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
1.3.3	Content perceived as relevant to students' lives (might include any of the above content areas, issues of meaning and purpose in life) 1.3.3.1	9	The topic was perceived by students as relevant to their lives.	0	8.9	9.8	45.5	35.8	81.3	91.1	4.08
	1.3.3.2	28	Students were responsive to spiritual or moral insights that I gave them.	0	6.5	12.2	62.6	18.7	81.3	93.5	3.93
	1.3.3.3	96	Helping students look at issues related to meaning and purpose in life.	0	0	2.4	41.5	56.1	97.6	100	4.54
	1.3.3.4	59	The students indicated that the topic was not relevant to their lives.	0.8	38.2	16.3	39	5.7	44.7	61	3.11
1.4	**Religion as an Academic Subject**										
1.4.1	Academic orientation (same presumptions about teaching and learning as for other subjects) 1.4.1.1	12	I taught religion as an academic subject.	4.9	26.8	27.6	33.3	7.3	40.6	68.2	3.11
	1.4.1.2	56	Students did not work at the same level of rigour as in other academic subjects.	1.6	31.7	22	36.6	8.1	44.7	66.7	3.18
	1.4.1.3	100	Religious Education should be as challenging academically as any other subject.	3.3	15.4	17.9	39.8	23.6	63.4	81.3	3.65
1.4.2	Critical thinking 1.4.2.1 Demonstration of critical thinking by students (analysis, interpretation, evaluation of material; organising arguments with evidence) 1.4.2.2	4	Students displayed critical thinking in their written work.	0.8	2.4	5.7	42.3	48.8	91.1	96.8	4.36
		17	Students were challenged to think critically by stimulus material (e.g., handout, video).	0	0.8	5.7	57.7	35.8	93.5	99.2	4.28
	1.4.2.3	43	I helped students learn how to think critically.	0	4.1	18	51.6	26.2	77.8	95.6	3.97
	1.4.2.4	84	Helping students to become well informed and critical thinkers.	0	0.8	3.3	49.6	46.3	95.9	99.2	4.41
	1.4.2.5	92	Providing an opportunity for students to learn study and research skills in religion.	0.8	9.8	9.8	64.2	15.4	79.6	89.4	3.84

	Item Category	Quest. Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% Uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
	1.4.2.6	5	Students showed evidence of critical thinking in discussion about the topic.	0	0.8	6.5	43.9	48.8	92.7	99.2	4.41
	1.4.2.7	57	Students did not demonstrate any critical thinking regarding any of the material presented in a lesson.	0.8	10.6	15.4	53.7	19.5	73.5	88.9	3.80
	1.4.2.8	63	Students were not able to develop and articulate arguments with evidence.	0	34.1	26.8	31.7	7.3	39	65.8	3.12
	1.4.2.9	65	I didn't encourage any critical reflection of the material presented in my lesson.	1.6	13	18.7	57.7	8.9	66.6	85.3	3.59
1.4.3	Critical interpretation of culture Interpretation of the shaping influence of culture	23	Students showed an awareness of the shaping influence that culture can have on people's beliefs and attitudes.	0	3.3	16.3	57.7	22.8	80.5	96.8	4.0
1.4.4	**1.4.4.1.1 Student work** Project work and quality student research.	3	Students were engaged in quality research and projects.	0.8	2.4	5.7	54.5	36.6	91.1	96.8	4.24
	1.4.4.1.2	61	Students showed a low level of research skill.	0.8	37.4	23.6	31.7	6.5	38.2	61.8	3.06
	1.4.4.1.3	52	I perceived that students did poor work on research or projects.	0.8	25.2	18.7	48.8	6.5	55.3	74	3.35
	1.4.4.2.1 Use of student worksheets. (shows three perspectives on use of worksheets: extensive use, used effectively and last minute provision by others).	50	I used a lot of worksheets in the lesson.	19.8	55.4	14.9	8.3	1.7	10	24.9	2.13
	1.4.4..2.2	71	My worksheets seemed to be used effectively by students.	0	0.8	4.9	80.5	13.8	94.3	99.2	4.07
	1.4.4.2.3	78	I used another teacher's worksheet given to me just prior to my lesson.	8.4	41.2	27.7	21.8	0.8	22.6	50.3	2.57
	1.4.4.3.1 Work on assessment tasks (assignments & homework).	8	The assignment or homework task I had allocated was taken up enthusiastically.	0.8	13.9	15.6	54.9	14.8	69.7	85.3	3.66
	1.4.4.3.2	44	Students did well in assessment tasks.	0	10.6	19.5	62.6	7.3	69.9	89.4	3.67

	Item Category	Quest. Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% Uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
	1.4.4.3.3	53	A majority of my students did not achieve a good result on an assessment task.	1.6	28.5	18.7	44.7	6.5	51.2	69.9	3.26
1.4.5	**Prefer a non-academic setting** Relaxed atmosphere; low key; not same presumptions about teaching and learning as in other subjects.	7	My students were relaxed and I did not have to subject them to the sort of academic pressure that they experience in other areas of the curriculum.	2.4	24.4	22	37.4	13.8	51.2	73.2	3.36
1.5	**Developing students' personal faith (or promoting faith development**										
1.5.1	1.5.1 Promoting students' personal faith	30	Students indicated that the lesson had an influence on the development of their personal faith.	0.8	6.5	19.5	43.9	29.3	73.2	92.7	3.94
1.5.2	1.5.2	67	It appeared that my students' faith development was not furthered.	0.8	36.6	28.5	29.3	4.9	34.2	62.7	3.01
1.6	**Discussion and sharing of personal / faith insights**										
1.6.1	Students sharing of personal and faith insights	1	Students shared personal insights with each other.	0.8	3.3	2.4	59.3	34.1	93.4	95.8	4.23
	1.6.1.2.	99	Helping students share their personal faith with others.	0	7.3	9.8	59.3	23.6	82.9	92.7	3.99
	1.6.1.3	21	I was able to share my personal faith and beliefs with the students.	2.4	17.1	20.3	46.3	13.8	60.1	80.4	3.52
1.6.2	1.6.2.1 Lesson time spent on discussion: lot of time in discussion	6	A large proportion of the lesson was taken up in discussion.	0.8	18.7	22.8	43.9	13.8	67.7	90.7	3.51
	Discussion more important in religion than in other subjects	90	Discussion is more important in religion class than in other subjects.	0.8	6.6	20.5	51.6	20.5	72.1	92.6	4.20
1.6.3	liked discussion (good eager participation)	2	A number of students participated eagerly in discussing a topic.	0	2.4	1.6	45.5	50.4	95.9	97.5	4.44
	1.6.3.2	60	Many of the students did not participate in the class discussion.	0.8	19.5	14.6	59.3	5.7	65	79.6	3.50
1.6.4	Critical thinking in discussion (implies an informed debate)	5	Students showed evidence of critical thinking in discussion about the topic.	0	0.8	6.5	43.9	48.8	92.7	99.2	4.41
	1.6.4.2	32	Students showed an interest in discussing one or more social justice issues.	0	0.8	1.6	50.4	47.2	97.6	99.2	4.44

	Item Category	Quest. Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% Uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
1.7	**Developing students' personal spirituality**										
1.7.1	Students explore and develop their own spirituality	106	Giving students guidance in exploring their own spirituality.	0	1.6	8.9	56.1	33.3	89.4	98.3	4.21
1.8	**Religious Education to include reflective and prayerful activities**										
1.8.1	**1.8.1 Reflection, devotion, prayer** (meditation, private prayer, class prayer)	18	There was an opportunity for prayer or prayerful reflection during or after the lesson.	0.8	10.6	19.5	55.3	13.8	69.1	88.6	3.71
1.8.2	1.8.2	33	Students appeared to enjoy a meditation or quiet reflection session.	1.6	4.1	11.4	48	35	83	94.4	4.11
1.9	**Religious Education to include liturgy, paraliturgy and organised prayer sessions**										
1.9.1	Experience of Catholic liturgy	104	Giving students the opportunity to experience their Catholic faith. (e.g., having Mass, Reconciliation).	0	4.9	7.3	54.5	33.3	87.8	95.1	4.16
1.9.2	Paraliturgies or organised prayer sessions 1.9.2.1	13	Students prepared and conducted good para-liturgies.	1.6	9	14.8	54.1	20.5	74.6	89.4	3.79
	1.9.2.2	15	Students participated well in a classroom prayer session.	0	5.7	12.2	63.4	18.7	82.1	94.3	3.79
1.10	**Personal and spiritual role of the religion teacher**										
1.10.1	Teacher sharing her or his personal faith insights	21	I was able to share my personal faith and beliefs with the students.	2.4	17.1	20.3	46.3	13.8	60.1	80.4	3.52
1.10.2	Teacher as a witness and spiritual role model 1.10.2.1	107	The religion teacher as a spiritual role model for students.	0.8	2.4	9.8	52.8	34.1	86.9	96.7	4.17
	1.10.2.2	93	The religion teacher being a witness to Catholic beliefs and values.	0.8	2.4	3.3	46.3	47.2	93.5	96.8	4.37
	1.10.2.3	55	I was not able to give witness to my personal faith.	4.9	41	22.1	23.8	8.2	32	54.1	3.11
1.10.3	Spiritual and moral insights given by the teacher	28	Students were responsive to spiritual or moral insights that I gave them.	0	6.5	12.2	62.6	18.7	81.3	93.5	3.93
1.10.4	Teacher personal relationship with students	29	Students responded to me as a person and not just as someone in charge of them.	0	5.7	8.1	56.9	29.3	86.2	94.3	4.10

N.B. * indicates use of the continuum of descriptors from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

4.3.3 Highlighting the results reported in table 4.6

The following sections highlight the findings, reported in table 4.6 (see pp.134-135), for each of the main categories of questionnaire items in cluster two: Pedagogies – teaching and learning processes used by the teachers

2.1 Student-focused activities

It was noted that 57.8% of the participants agreed with the statement that a student listening to the teacher's presentation of the topic was an important aspect of their teaching, while 23.6% were uncertain (10).   Student completion of work set for the lesson attracted a positive response from only 56.1% of respondents while 24.4% disagreed (35).   The observation that students remained focused on the lesson topic was endorsed by 82.9% of the teachers (37).   The results for the item on students being occupied quietly for a lesson were somewhat ambivalent with 47.2% of the teachers disagreeing with this, 20.3% being uncertain and 32.6% agreeing (38).   The respondents strongly endorsed the statement about students asking interesting questions about the topic with 91.8% in the affirmative (11).   The items about promoting students' questioning about religion in a positive way that enhanced their spiritual development also indicated some ambivalence with 47.2% agreeing with this notion and a further 46.3% strongly agreeing (95).   While 65.5% did not agree that student performance in rote learning of set answers to set questions, it is noteworthy that 16.4% of respondents supported it (41).   Only 30.1 % of respondents endorsed the regular use of the textbook (75), while 74.1% found them helpful (116).

Effective use of the library by students was strongly endorsed by 86.9% of respondents (72), but the statement that the library was not being extensively used met with an ambivalent response.   While 31.9% disagreed with this, 29.5% remained uncertain and a further 38.5 % agreed with it (81).   Of note, 64.8% of respondents agreed that student ability to use computers to produce work (73) and their appropriate use of technology was important for success, but 16.4% did not agree while 20.5% were ambivalent to its use (80).   Selection of a video or DVD, which students found interesting, was endorsed by 83.8% of participating teachers (16), while its usage as informative stimulus material was affirmed by 86.9% (74).   Student enjoyment of this resource was endorsed by 65.1% of the teachers (31), while observed student lack of interest and dissatisfaction in the video or DVD contributed to a negative perception of teacher success (54).   The statement "students working together cooperatively on group tasks" was endorsed by 82.9% of respondents.

General comment

Cooperative learning, effective use of the library, appropriate selection and use of stimulus material, and questioning techniques were all well supported by the participating teachers. Just over 50% judged their success in behavioural terms. A paired- samples t test was run to check the statistical significance of the means for item 75 (mean = 2.78) and item 116 (mean = 3.32). The result of this test showed that for $p < 0.01$, the difference between the means was very significant. This suggested that while use of the textbooks did not attract a strong endorsement in terms of being an indicator of success, they were considered helpful when used. This result pointed towards a selective use of textbooks.

2.1 Teacher directed activities

Of the participating teachers, 86.9% believed that video or DVD use as informative stimulus was a positive aspect in their teaching of religion (74). The responses to the statement about how creative arts may be linked to the teaching of religion (24) indicated a level of ambivalence. The statement about having guest lecturers presenting religious material to students (77) was strongly endorsed by 90.9% of respondents. Only 22.7% found the following of a prescribed lesson plan as beneficial (46). Fifty-two percent of the teachers felt that keeping to a time schedule in teaching religion was not a positive contributor to their sense of being good teachers (47).

General comment

The use of informative DVDs and guest lecturers was supported by the teachers as resources that enhanced their work in the classroom. A majority of the teachers did not consider keeping to the program's time constraints a priority in their teaching. The low level of support for prescribed lesson plans may indicate a level of confidence and familiarity with the content they were to present and/or they may have believed they were pedagogically competent in Religious Education.

Table 4.6

Presentation of data for area 2 of questionnaire analysis: Pedagogies – teaching/learning processes used by the teachers

2. PEDAGOGIES – TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESSES USED BY THE TEACHERS											
	Item Category	**Quest Item No.**	**Question item text**	**% 1 Strongly disagree**	**% 2 disagree**	**% 3 uncertain**	**% 4 agree**	**% 5 strongly agree**	**% Total agreeing**	**% Total not opposed to idea**	**Mean**
	2.1 Student focused activities										
2.1.1	2.1.1 Listening to verbal presentations by teacher	10	Students listened to my systematic verbal presentation on the topic.	1.6	17.1	23.6	48	9.8	57.8	81.4	3.47
2.1.2	General student involvement and participation in the lesson 2.1.2.1	35	The students completed all the set work for the lesson.	0.8	23.6	19.5	48.8	7.3	56.1	75.6	3.38
	2.1.2.2	37	Students remained focused on the topic of the lesson.	0	3.3	13.8	67.5	15.4	82.9	96.7	3.95
2.1.3	Students occupied with class work (working or listening)	38	Students were occupied quietly for a lesson.	10.6	36.6	20.3	29.3	3.3	32.6	52.9	2.78
2.1.4	Students asking questions about topic 2.1.4.1	11	Students asked interesting questions about the topic.	0	4.9	3.3	59.3	32.5	91.8	95.1	4.20
	2.1.4.2	95	Promoting students' questioning about religion in a positive way that enhances their spiritual development.	0	2.4	4.1	47.2	46.3	93.5	97.6	4.37
2.1.5	Learning answers by heart to set questions.	41	Students learned set answers to a set of religious questions.	18	47.5	18	14.8	1.6	16.4	34.4	2.33
2.1.6	Student use of a set student textbook 2.1.6.1	75	I used the set textbook regularly.	8.9	38.2	22.8	26	4.1	30.1	52.9	2.78
	2.1.6.2	116	The set student textbook(s): (helpful to the teacher).	0.9	9.8	15.2	62.5	11.6	74.1	89.3	3.63
2.1.7	Student use of the library for learning 2.1.7.1	72	The library was used effectively by my students.	0	3.3	9.8	71.5	15.4	86.9	96.7	3.99
	2.1.7.2	81	The library was not extensively used.	1.6	30.3	29.5	33.6	4.9	38.5	68	3.07
2.1.8	Use of computers and information technology for project work and study 2.1.8.1	73	Students were able to use computers to produce work.	0	16.4	18.9	49.2	15.6	64.8	83.7	3.61
	2.1.8.2	80	Information technology was not used appropriately.	1.6	18.9	14.8	54.1	10.7	64.8	79.6	3.50

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	Item Category	Quest Item No.	Question item text	% 1 Strongly disagree	% 2 disagree	% 3 uncertain	% 4 agree	% 5 strongly agree	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
2.1.9	Teacher use of a video or film (enjoyment, use as stimulus material) 2.1.9.1	16	I presented a video that students found interesting.	0.8	4.9	10.6	73.2	10.6	83.8	94.4	3.88
	2.1.9.2	74	A video was used as informative stimulus material	0	5.7	7.3	71.5	15.4	86.9	94.2	3.97
	2.1.9.3	79	I showed a video without previewing it first.	1.7	24	10.7	44.6	19	63.6	74.3	3.48
2.1.9 Cont.	Teacher use of video or film. 2.1.9.4	31	Students enjoyed the viewing of a film or video.	2.4	13.8	18.7	54.5	10.6	65.1	83.8	3.57
	2.1.9.5	54	Students were uninterested or unimpressed with the material in a film or video.	0.8	23.6	17.9	48	9.8	57.8	75.7	3.42
2.1.10	Student use of the internet for study and assignments.	76	Students reported information they found on the Internet.	0.8	9.8	27.9	49.2	12.3	61.5	89.4	3.59
2.1.11	Working with other students cooperatively; and in group work (cooperative learning)	39	Students worked together cooperatively on group tasks	0.8	5.7	10.6	61.8	21.1	82.9	93.5	3.97
	2.2 Teacher directed activities										
2.2.1	2.2.1 Teacher use of stimulus material	74	A video was used as informative stimulus material.	0	5.7	7.3	71.5	15.4	86.9	94.2	3.97
2.2.2	Teacher use of creative arts in Religious Education	24	Students were able to see how the creative arts are linked with religion.	4.1	16.4	36.1	36.1	7.4	43.5	79.6	3.24
2.2.3	Special presentation by a guest lecturer	77	There was an interesting guest lecturer.	1.6	7.4	13.9	59	18	77	90.9	3.81
2.2.4	Teacher followed a set lesson plan and school program. 2.2.4.1	46	I followed the lesson plan provided.	4.9	51.2	21.1	20.3	2.4	22.7	43.8	2.64
	2.2.4.2	47	I kept to the program's time schedule.	7.3	44.7	21.1	23.6	3.3	26.9	48	2.71

4.3.4 Highlighting the results reported in table 4.7

The following sections highlight the findings, reported in table 4.7 (see pp.138-139), for each of the main categories of questionnaire items in cluster 3: Other student-centred and teacher-directed processes and goals.

3.1 Student-centred processes and goals

Student enjoyment of lessons as an important consideration in their teaching (36) was endorsed by 78.9% of the teachers. The statement on student disinterest in the institutional Church was supported by 71.5% of the teachers (62). Of the participating teachers, 42.3% confirmed that they felt encouraged when students identified themselves as belonging to the Catholic Church (25), but 32.5% seemed to be ambivalent about this. The teachers endorsed the view that detection of any student disinterest in the institutional Church and /or criticism of the institutional Church did not imply a lack of success in their teaching (66, 58). The teachers strongly endorsed the promotion of questioning by students that enhanced their spiritual development in a positive way (95). The statement "getting students to become regular church going Catholics" met with an ambivalent response. This suggests a complexity in views on the nature and purpose of Religious Education (105).

General comment

These results showed that student level of disinterest detected by the teachers in the classroom was a factor that negated their experience of success. While student detachment and criticism of the institutional Church may was not considered to be an indicator of lack of success – as if the religion teachers were responsible for students' participation in Catholic parishes – it was a concern for some. This suggests that a number of teachers may be uncertain or divided over how the future religious participation of their students should figure as a purpose of their teaching.

3.3 Teacher-centred processes and goals

Over 86% of the teachers agreed with the statement that establishment of good relationships with students was important (29). Also 90.1% believed that teacher feelings of confidence and being well informed in teaching the set topic were a significant aspect of success (45). The response to item 49 indicated that some of the teachers may be teaching religion because they have to, and not because they want to, with 33.6% agreeing with the statement; 48.3% did not, while 18% were uncertain. The teachers' response to whether, having an opportunity

to discuss the teaching of a current unit with colleagues, both before and after, was worthwhile, showed that 67.2% were in agreement, 17.2% uncertain and 15.6% disagreeing (14).   Teacher interaction in curriculum planning and lesson planning was endorsed by 99.2% of respondents who felt that this had a positive impact on their teaching (118).

General comment

Teacher confidence and competence were highlighted here as exerting a strong influence on how they perceived themselves as effective teachers.   The teachers valued interaction with colleagues as a positive influence on their teaching of religion.

A brief summation

As well as reporting on perceived notions of success in their teaching of religion, the data highlighted a number of key aspects in the thinking of the teachers about the nature and purpose of Religious Education in the classroom.   Imparting knowledge and understanding of the Catholic tradition, the experiential dimension, making the teaching relevant to the lives of students in terms of content and pedagogy were all strongly endorsed as good indicators of success.   The teachers did indicate that student disinterest in lessons, and student detachment from the Church was a concern, although not all shared this concern to the same degree.   The results highlighted the importance of teachers being a witness to the Gospel and the living out of the Catholic faith.   Yet it appeared that the construct of faith development was problematic for the teachers as an indicator of success;   in addition, there appeared to be some uncertainty about the student-teacher personal relationship aspects.

Table 4.7

Presentation of data for Area 3 of questionnaire analysis: Other student-centred and teacher-directed processes and goals

3. Other student-centred and teacher-directed processes and goals											
	Item Category	Quest Item No.	Question item text	% 1 Strongly disagree	% 2 disagree	% 3 uncertain	% 4 agree	% 5 strongly agree	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
3.1 Student-centred processes and goals											
3.1.1	**3.1.1 Student enjoyment of lessons.**	36	The students appeared to enjoy lesson.	0	4.1	17.1	60.2	18.7	78.9	96	3.93
3.1.2	Students show an interest in the content and lesson	62	Students were uninterested in the content of the lesson.	2.4	11.4	14.6	63.4	8.1	71.5	86.1	3.63
3.1.3	Students show an interest in the Catholic Church or acknowledge belonging to the Church 3.1.3.1	25	Students saw themselves as belonging to the Catholic Church.	2.4	30.1	25.2	35.8	6.5	42.3	67.5	3.14
	3.1.3.2	66	Students showed they were uninterested in the Institutional Church.	4.9	53.7	21.1	19.5	0.8	20.3	41.4	2.58
3.1.4	Students critical of the institutional Church 3.1.4.1 (just criticism, compared with openness to student questioning as useful educationally).	58	Students were very critical of the institutional Church.	10.6	57.7	18.7	10.6	2.4	13	31.7	2.37
	3.1.4.2 Student questioning allowed in class.	95	Promoting students' questioning about religion in a positive way that enhances their spiritual development.	0	2.4	4.1	47.2	46.3	93.5	97.6	4.37
3.1.5	Students becoming regular Church-going Catholics.	105	Getting students to become regular church-going Catholics.	13	41.5	25.2	17.9	2.4	20.3	45.5	2.55

		Item Category	Quest Item No.	Question item text	% 1 Strongly disagree	% 2 disagree	% 3 uncertain	% 4 agree	% 5 strongly agree	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
		3.2 Teacher-centred processes and goals										
3.2.1		3.2.1 Good personal relationship between teacher and students.	29	Students responded to me as a person and not just as someone in charge of them.	0	5.7	8.1	56.9	29.3	86.2	94.3	4.10
3.2.2		Teacher feels well-informed and confident	45	I felt confident in my teaching the set topic.	0	0.8	9	51.6	28.5	90.1	99.1	4.24
3.2.3		Teacher feeling of being able to survive religion lessons.	49	I survived the lesson.	21.3	27	18	18	15.6	33.6	51.6	2.77
3.2.4		Teacher cooperation (talking over planning, sharing resources) 3.2.4.1	14	There was the opportunity to discuss the teaching of a current unit with colleagues both before and after it was taught.	2.5	13.1	17.2	47.5	19.7	67.2	84.4	3.66
		3.2.4.2	118	Interaction with fellow teachers in curriculum planning and lesson preparation	0	0	0.8	47.5	51.7	99.2	100	4.37
		3.2.4.3	78	I used another teacher's worksheet given to me just prior to my lesson.	8.4	41.2	27.7	21.8	0.8	22.6	50.3	2.57

4.3.5. Highlighting the results reported in table 4.8

The following sections highlight the findings, reported in table 4.8 (see pp.143-145), for each of the main categories of questionnaire items in cluster 4:   Other key processes and goals – especially from a religious perspective

4.1   Key processes in terms of Catholic religious constructs

Participating teachers' responses to the purpose of providing catechesis showed that there was some apparent ambiguity about its appropriateness.   Of the participating teachers, 4.1% felt it was unimportant, 12.2% believed it has had little if any influence on their thinking, 33.3% were uncertain about its significance, 41.5% felt it had some significance while 8.9% believed it was important (87).   Of note, 43.1% agreed with the item about evangelizing students as important for success and a further 15.4% indicated strong agreement, while 13.8% disagreed (101).

The item about the religion teacher as a spiritual role model was endorsed by 52.8% of the teachers.   A further 34.1% agreed strongly (107).   It was note worthy that 46.3% of respondents felt that being a witness to Catholic beliefs and values was important while a further 47.2% endorsed this strongly (93).   Of the teachers, 59.3% believed that they experienced a level of satisfaction when they were able to assist students to share their personal faith with others.   A further 23.6% agreed strongly (99).   Fifty-two percent considered that seeing the teaching religion as a ministry of the Catholic Church as was important, while 24.4% endorsed this strongly (83).   Of note, 73.2% showed that students' indication that the lesson had an influence on the development of their personal faith was an important indicator of success (30).

Over 56% of the sample agreed with the item on giving students guidance in exploring their own spirituality, while a further 33.3% agreed strongly (106).   While 17.1% of respondents indicated strong agreement with the item about imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith tradition, 70.7% registered agreement (82).

Thirty-five percent of participating teachers strongly agreed that combining the handing on the faith tradition with educating students on spiritual and moral issues was a good indicator of successful teaching, with a further 56.1% agreeing.   This was a strong overall endorsement of this purpose in the teaching of Religious Education (86).   There appeared to be some ambivalence in the responses to the item about communicating the teachings of the catechism

of the Catholic Church.   The responses showed about one third in agreement, a third uncertain and a third in disagreement (85).

Helping students know the Christian story and the challenges it presents was strongly endorsed by the participants.   Of the participating teachers, 33.6% endorsed the item strongly with a further 58.2% indicating agreement (109).   The teachers considered that the shared Christian praxis approach to teaching Religious Education had little bearing on how they viewed success with 7.4% indicating strong agreement with the item and further 24.8% indicating agreement (88).   Developing students' familiarity with Catholic religious practices (an experiential dimension) was strongly endorsed, with 68.3% agreeing with the item and a further 12.2% strongly agreeing (98).   Giving students the opportunity to experience their Catholic faith was also strongly endorsed with 87% overall in agreement with the item (104).

Getting students to become regular church-going Catholics did not figure strongly as an indicator of successful Religious Education.   This was a significant point to come out of the information gathered and was consistent with the results on this area in the earlier part of this chapter (105).

It was noted that 48.8% of respondents agreed with the item about helping students discover and consider adopting Gospel values, with a further 38.2% indicating strong agreement (108). Observations of students' interest in social justice matters were strongly endorsed as an indicator of success (32, 97, and 34).

General comment

Handing-on the faith tradition, educating students in moral and spiritual issues, knowing the Christian story and the challenges it presents were strongly supported by the teachers.   Being role models, giving witness in teaching, and understanding Religious Education as a ministry attracted support, but this support was not as strong as for other areas.   There was strong endorsement of the experiential dimension and student appropriation of Gospel values for their spirituality as important aspects.   Support for the Shared Christian Praxis approach and viewing the purpose of Religious Education in terms of prompting student attendance at Mass was not strong.

The findings above indicate a level of ambivalence among the teachers about purpose in Religious Education with a significant number appearing to be uncertain about the relevance of the constructs catechesis and evangelisation.   The data also points to the concepts of ministry, witness and being a role model as being accepted as important by the teachers.

4.2 Other key spiritual and personal development processes

Of note, 64.2% of the teachers agreed with the item on informing students about other world religions while a further 27.6% indicated strong agreement (102). Overall, the item was strongly endorsed. The item on increasing religious literacy amongst students was endorsed by 66.7% while a further 8.9% strongly agreed (89). Forty-five point five percent of the teachers agreed with the item linking teaching with helping young people find meaning and purpose in life; in addition, further 56.1% strongly agreed (96). This showed very strong overall endorsement of the purpose of helping young people in their search for meaning: 64.2% of the teachers endorsed the item about providing study and research skills (92). The importance of evidence of student critical thinking in either discussion or written work was evident in 48.8% agreeing and 46.3% strongly agreeing with the items (4, 5). Overall, 95% agreed that opportunity to inform students about contemporary spiritual and moral issues was an important element in their success (103). Over 80% agreed with the item about students displaying an awareness of how culture can influence people's beliefs and attitudes (23).

General comment

There was strong endorsement of most of the items on personal development process. This included the focus on helping young people in their search for meaning and purpose in life. Another part of this process was helping them develop critical thinking about religion and about the potentially shaping influence that culture could have on people's beliefs and behaviour – together with developing skills in the identification and evaluation of contemporary spiritual and moral issues. In addition, the value of informing students about other religions was endorsed. The teachers also regarded improvement in religious literacy as a valuable goal.

Table 4.8 *Presentation of data for Area 4 of questionnaire analysis: Other key processes and goals – especially from a religious perspective.*

4. OTHER KEY PROCESSES AND GOALS – ESPECIALLY FROM A RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

	Item Category	Quest Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
	4.1 Key processes in terms of Catholic religious constructs										
4.1.1	**4.1.1 Catechesis** Catechesis (involvement of students in a process of catechesis)	87	Providing catechesis (an education in faith for believers).	4.1	12.2	33.3	41.5	8.9	50.4	83.7	3.39
4.1.2	**4.1.2 Evangelisation** Evangelisation (engaging students as an evangelisation)	101	Evangelising the students (advocating the good news of Jesus Christ to invite students to Christian personal faith).	5.7	8.1	27.6	43.1	15.4	58.5	86.1	3.54
4.1.3	**4.1.3 Witnessing*** 4.1.3.1.1 Teacher as a witness and spiritual role model	107	The religion teacher as a spiritual role model for students.	0.8	2.4	9.8	52.8	34.1	86.9	96.7	4.17
	4.1.3.1.2	93	The religion teacher being a witness to Catholic beliefs and values	0.8	2.4	3.3	46.3	47.2	93.5	96.8	4.37
	4.1.3.1.3	55	I was not able to give witness to my personal faith	4.9	41	22.1	23.8	8.2	32	54.1	3.11
	4.1.3.2 Students to become personal witnesses of Christianity	99	Helping students share their personal faith with others.	0	7.3	9.8	59.3	23.6	82.9	92.7	3.99
4.1.4	4.1.4 Ministry Seeing the teaching of religion as a ministry of the Church	83	Teaching religion as a ministry of the Catholic Church.	0	8.1	15.4	52	24.4	76.4	91.8	3.93
4.1.5	**4.1.5 Faith development*** Development of students' personal faith 4.1.5.1	30	Students indicated that the lesson had an influence on the development of their personal faith.	0.8	6.5	19.5	43.9	29.3	73.2	92.7	3.94
	4.1.5.2	67	It appeared that my students' faith development was not furthered.	0.8	36.6	28.5	29.3	4.9	34.2	62.7	3.01
4.1.6	**4.1.6 Student spirituality*** Students explore and develop their own spirituality	106	Giving students guidance in exploring their own spirituality.	0	1.6	8.9	56.1	33.3	89.4	98.3	4.21
4.1.7	**4.1.7 Handing on the Catholic tradition** **4.1.7.1.1 Well informed about the** **Catholic faith tradition***	82	Imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith tradition.	0	5.7	6.5	70.7	17.1	87.8	94.3	3.99

	Item Category	Quest Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
	4.1.7.1.2	86	Educating students in their Catholic faith and in spiritual and moral issues.	0	2.4	6.5	56.1	35	91.1	97.6	4.24
	4.1.7.2 Knowledgeable of the Catholic Catechism*.	85	An opportunity to communicate the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.	6.5	25.2	32.5	33.3	2.4	35.7	68.2	3.00
	4.1.7.3 Knowing the Christian story and its challenges	109	Helping students know the Christian story and see the challenges it presents.	0	2.5	5.7	58.2	33.6	91.8	97.5	4.19
	4.1.7.4.1 Following a Shared Christian Praxis approach	88	Following the Shared Praxis approach.	6.6	15.7	45.5	24.8	7.4	32.2	77.7	3.05
	4.1.7.4.2	109	Helping students know the Christian story and see the challenges it presents.	0	2.5	5.7	58.2	33.6	91.8	97.5	4.19
	4.1.7.5.1 Experience of Catholic liturgy and prayer *(familiarity with these)	98	Developing students' familiarity with Catholic religious practices.	0	8.1	11.4	68.3	12.2	80.5	91.9	3.84
	4.1.7.5.2	104	Giving students the opportunity to experience their Catholic faith. (e.g., having Mass, Reconciliation).	0	4.9	7.3	54.5	33.3	87.8	95.1	4.16
	4.1.7.6 Students to become involved participants in the life of the Church	105	Getting students to become regular church-going Catholics.	13	41.5	25.2	17.9	2.4	20.3	45.5	2.55
4.1.8	**4.1.8 Christian interest in social justice and social action * (see also 4.2.5 on study of contemporary spiritual and moral issues)** **4.1.8.1 Discovering and considering Gospel values**	108	Helping students discover and consider adopting Gospel values.	0	3.3	9.8	48.8	38.2	87	96.8	4.22
	4.1.8.2 Interest in social justice issues	32	Students showed an interest in discussing one or more social justice issues.	0	0.8	1.6	50.4	47.2	97.6	99.2	4.44
		86	Educating students in their Catholic faith and in spiritual and moral issues.	0	2.4	6.5	56.1	35	91.1	97.6	4.24
	4.1.8.3 Involvement in social action in the community*.	97	Providing the opportunity for students to do some social action.	0	1.6	2.4	52	43.9	95.9	98.3	4.38

	Item Category	Quest Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree 1	% disagree 2	% uncertain 3	% agree 4	% strongly agree 5	% Total agreeing	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
	4.1.8.4 Enthusiasm to act on social justice issues.	34	Students were enthusiastic to act on a social justice issue.	0	2.4	9.8	35.8	52	87.8	97.6	4.37
	4.2 Other key spiritual / spirituality / personal development processes										
4.2.1	**4.2.1 Knowledge of world religions** Well informed about world religions	102	Informing students about world religions.	0	2.4	5.7	64.2	27.6	91.8	97.5	4.17
4.2.2	**4.2.2 Religious literacy** Improving students religious literacy	89	Increasing the religious literacy of students.	0	8.1	16.3	66.7	8.9	75.6	91.9	3.76
4.2.3	**4.2.3 Meaning and purpose in life** Examining issues in meaning and purpose in life*.	96	Helping students look at issues related to meaning and purpose in life.	0	0	2.4	41.5	56.1	97.6	100	4.54
4.2.4	**4.2.4 Critical study of religion*** 4.2.4.1 Development of research and study skills in religion*.	92	Providing an opportunity for students to learn study and research skills in religion.	0.8	9.8	9.8	64.2	15.4	79.6	89.4	3.84
	4.2.4.2.1 Critical thinking about religion*.	4	Students displayed critical thinking in their written work.	0.8	2.4	5.7	42.3	48.8	91.1	96.8	4.36
	4.2.4.2.2	5	Students showed evidence of critical thinking in discussion about the topic.	0	0.8	6.5	43.9	48.8	92.7	99.2	4.41
4.2.5	4.2.5 Study of contemporary spiritual and moral issues & critical interpretation of culture (See also 4.1.8 on social justice issues). **4.2.5.1 Becoming informed about contemporary spiritual and moral issues.**	103	An opportunity for informing students about contemporary spiritual and moral issues.	0	0.8	4.1	48.8	46.3	95.1	99.2	4.41
	4.2.5.2 Critical interpretation of culture*. Interpretation of the shaping influence of culture	23	Students showed an awareness of the shaping influence that culture can have on people's beliefs and attitudes.	0	3.3	16.3	57.7	22.8	80.5	96.8	4.0

N.B. * indicates use of the continuum of descriptors from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

4.3.6   Highlighting the results reported in table 4.9

The following sections highlight the findings, reported in table 4.9 (see pp.148-149), for each of the main categories of questionnaire items in cluster 5:   Acknowledged background influences on the teachers thinking about successful Religious Education.

5.1   Professional development programs for Religious Education

Overall 79.5% of the teachers acknowledged benefit to their teaching when a strategy learnt from an inservice course worked well (51).   Similarly 81% agreed with the importance of professional development events that allowed them to explore their spirituality (110). Professional development events that were practically oriented to improving classroom practice was also strongly endorsed (89.6%) (111).

5.2   Study courses in Religious Education

Less strong in endorsement, but still prominent (62%), was the value in study courses in Religious Education (112).   Ten percent of respondents considered that such courses had no value for them (112, 113).

General comment
Generally, the teachers found professional development and inservice events useful in their quest for improved performance in their teaching when they were able to appropriate and apply strategies from these events to their teaching in the classroom.   Their teacher training in Religious Education was felt by the majority to be adequate.

5.3….Diocesan and school Religious Education documentation

While 45.4% of the teachers did not endorse diocesan Religious Education guidelines as figuring prominently in their planning of lessons and a further 26.4% were uncertain about this, 28.1% of participating teachers felt they had benefitted from consulting Religious Education guidelines (70).   Of the participating teachers, 50.9% of them felt that diocesan Religious Education guidelines had some bearing on how they approached the teaching of religion (117).   Of the participating teachers, 51.2% thought they had experienced success when they used strategies specified in the school's Religious Education program (69). While 26.9% of the teachers experienced satisfaction in keeping to the school's Religious Education program's schedule, 52% did not (47).   Over 56% expressed their lack of support for the belief that a teacher was effective if he or she followed the lesson plan prescribed (46).

General comment

The opinion of the teachers was fairly equally divided over the influence that the Religious Education curriculum documentation may have had on their perceived notion of success in teaching Religious Education.

5.4 Student text-based curriculum

While 67.5% of the teachers considered that set textbooks have a positive background influence on their success in teaching, 80% were not opposed to this view (116).

General comment

The results confirm that the introduction of the textbook series *To Know, Worship and Love* has made a recognised contribution to Religious Education since its introduction.

5.5 On professional reading in Religious Education and/or theology

Sixty-four percent of the sample indicated their belief that professional reading had influenced their thinking about Religious Education. (114). The results relating to professional reading of journals showed that 43% agreed this had a positive influence on their thinking (115).

5.6 Professional interaction with colleagues

There were 50.4% of the teachers who indicated strong agreement with the item about the interaction experienced with fellow teachers in curriculum planning and lesson preparation while a further 46.3% indicated agreement (118). Over 81% of the teachers agreed on the value departmental meetings (119). Overall, 92.7% of respondents considered that good resourcing of the curriculum area by the Religious Education Coordinator was important in assisting them teach Religious Education effectively (68). Of note, 21.9% of the teachers indicated that they had experienced success in appropriating another teacher's worksheet prior to their lesson (78). It was noted that 97.8% of the teachers indicated that their on-the-job experience of teaching of religion has had an influential success factor (120).

General comment

The evidence suggests that for this sample of teachers, professional reading of journals, articles and books was thought to have a positive impact on their thinking about their teaching of religion. There was strong endorsement of interaction with colleagues as a formative influence. The teachers also believed that departmental meetings were helpful. They considered that the resourcing of religious education by the Religious Education Coordinators was a crucial aspect influencing the success of their teaching.

Table 4.9

Presentation of data for Area 5 of questionnaire analysis: Acknowledged background influences on the teachers thinking about successful Religious Education

5. ACKNOWLEDGED BACKGROUND INFLUENCES ON THE TEACHERS THINKING ABOUT SUCCESSFUL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION											
	Item Category	**Quest Item No.**	**Question item text**	**% Strongly disagree 1**	**% disagree 2**	**% uncertain 3**	**% agree 4**	**% strongly agree 5**	**% Total agreeing**	**% Total not opposed to idea**	**Mean**
	Professional Development programs for RE										
5.11	5.1.1 Useful learning from a professional development events	51	A strategy learned from an inservice course worked well	0.8	9	10.7	67.2	12.3	79.5	90.2	3.78
5.12	5.1.2 Value of professional development events aimed at teacher spirituality.	110	Professional development events that allowed me to explore my spirituality.	0	4.3	14.5	46.2	35	81.2	95.7	3.87
5.13	5.1.3 Value of professional development events aimed at practical classroom implications.	111	Professional development events that were practically oriented to improving classroom practice.	0	3.5	7.9	50.9	37.7	88.6	96.5	3.85
	Study courses in RE (University and others)										
5.21	Study courses on Religious Education and theology at university or elsewhere 5.2.1	112	Whole program of Religious Education study at university or through another organisation (e.g., CEO (Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters Programs, Certificate of Religious Education).	0	10.2	27.3	36.4	26.1	62.5	89.6	2.42
5.22	5.2.2	113	Particular units in a university course or program.	0	10.4	20.8	44.2	24.7	68.9	89.7	2.02
	5.3 Diocesan and school RE documentation										
5.311	5.3.1.1 Diocesan guidelines for Religious Education (Official RE curriculum statement)	70	I consulted the diocesan Religious Education guidelines in planning lessons.	10.7	34.7	26.4	24.8	3.3	28.1	54.5	2.71
5.312	5.3.1.2	117	Diocesan Religious Education guidelines (background influence on teacher).	1.9	11.1	36.1	44.4	6.5	50.9	87	2.89
5.321	5.3.2.1 School Religious Education program	69	I used the teaching strategies specified in the school Religious Education program	1.6	23.6	23.6	42.3	8.9	51.2	74.8	3.33
5.322	5.3.2.2	46	I followed the lesson plan provided.	4.9	51.2	21.1	20.3	2.4	22.7	43.8	2.64
5.323	5.3.2.3	47	I kept to the program's time schedule	7.3	44.7	21.1	23.6	3.3	26.9	48	2.71

	Item Category	Quest Item No.	Question item text	% Strongly disagree* or very unhelpful 1	% disagree* Or Unhelpful 2	% uncertain* or unsure 3	% Agree* or helpful 4	% strongly agree* or very helpful 5	% Total agreeing*	% Total not opposed to idea	Mean
5.4 Student text based curriculum											
5.4	Set student textbook (student resources and student text based curriculum).	116	The set student textbook(s): (background influence)	0.8	8.9	13.8	56.9	10.6	67.5	80.3	3.74
5 Professional reading in Religious Education and/or Theology											
5.51	*5.5.1 Book on Religious Education*	114	Professional reading of books: For example, A teacher text in Religious Education or Theology or a resource book on Religious Education	0.8	3.3	17.9	48.8	15.4	64.2	82.1	3.87
5.52	5.5.2 Professional journal on Religious Education and/or theology.	115	Professional reading of journals: For example, journals on Religious Education or theology	0	4.9	25.2	35	8.1	43.1	68.3	3.63
5.6 Professional interaction with colleagues											
5.61	5.6.1 Individual guidance from REC or other colleague and interaction with colleagues.	118	Interaction with fellow teachers in curriculum planning and lesson preparation.	0	0	0.8	46.3	50.4	96.7	97.5	4.37
5.62	5.6.2 Staff meetings for the school Religious Education staff.	119	Departmental meetings of the school Religious Education staff	0.8	4.1	13.8	65	16.3	81.3	95.1	3.92
5.631	5.6.3.1 Use of other teachers' or REC's resource materials (e.g., worksheets).	68	I was given good resources by the Religious Education Coordinator	0.8*	3.3*	3.3*	57.7**	35*	92.7*	96*	4.23
5.632	5.6.3.2	78	I used another teacher's worksheet given to me just prior to my lesson.	8.1	39.8	26.8	21.1	0.8	21.9	48.7	2.57
5.633	5.6.3.3 On the job experience (learning as you go).	120	On the job experience of teaching religion.	0.8	0	1.6	48.8	48	96.8	98.4	4.40

4.4   RESULTS OF A HIGHER ORDER STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

As explained in chapter 3 section 3.7.2, a separate factor analysis was applied to the data collected from the teachers' responses to each of the four sub-groupings of items used in the questionnaire. .   These were:

* **Factor Analysis K** - The teachers' perceptions of success in the teaching of religion;
* **Factor Analysis L** - Effects of resources on each teacher's experience of success in teaching religion;
* **Factor Analysis M** - Thinking about Religious Education that has affected each teacher's experience of success in the teaching of religion;
* **Factor Analysis N** - Background influences on each teacher's experience of success in the teaching of religion.

These factor analyses were used to explore and confirm data structures and constructs from the responses gathered through conducting the questionnaire.   These factor analyses were useful in testing the coherence and consistency in the way the participants responded to each of the particular groupings of items, using the same response scale in each sub-grouping of items for the teachers' responses.

For each of these factor analyses, the eigenvalues are listed in detail in the appendices.   The clusters of items identified from the application of each factor analysis are summarised in tabular form along the items in each cluster, their factor loadings, and the percentage of the variance explained.

4.4.1 Factor Analysis K: Perception of success in the classroom teaching of religion

This factor analysis was conducted using the data collected from the first 67 items of the questionnaire.   Using the varimax rotation described in chapter three, the first round of analysis gave the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) as 0.683.   This statistic indicated the degree of common variance as mediocre.   The Bartlett's test of sphericity produced a value for 'p' less than 0.05.   This result for Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, indicating that the variables were correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis.   Both these statistics confirmed that the data were suitable for factor analysis.   A Cronbach's Alpha (α) value of 0.839 was obtained in this first run at reducing the questionnaire items to clusters.   This coefficient of reliability indicated that the items within these clusters were internally consistent, and confirmed that the items were reliable in reducing data to identifiable clusters of items.

On examination of the anti-image correlation matrix, Kaiser's Measurement of Sampling Accuracy (MSA) values highlighted that questionnaire items 6, 58, 59, 60, 64, 66 and 67 did not contribute to the factor analysis as their values were below 0.5. These seven items were therefore excluded from the items to be considered in the secondary round of the analysis to provide a more accurate clustering of items in the analysis.

Using the same procedures as for the first round of the analysis, the second round targeted 60 questionnaire items. Communalities provided information as to the percentage of variance in a particular variable that can be explained by an extracted cluster of items (combination of variables). On the completion of the rotation of factors, an examination of the communalities of the remaining 60 items highlighted strong readings for all items (see Appendix G). Eigenvalues greater than one helped identify 16 clusters which explained 69.54% of the variance. These were displayed in Appendix I. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) had risen to 0.731, which indicated the degree of common variance as reasonable. Again Bartlett's test of sphericity produced a value for p less than 0.05. Both these statistics reconfirmed that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Further Cronbach's alpha (α) was equal to 0.866 for this set of items which showed that this extraction was stronger in its reduction of questionnaire items to form identifiable clusters.

SPSS generated a component matrix (see Appendix H) which noted the factor loading of each item of the questionnaire for each of the possible factors. These factor loadings express the correlation of each of the items with the emergent clusters. Of the 16 possible clusters of items noted, it was evident in an examination of the data presented in this matrix that 3 distinct clusters of items had emerged as a result of the reduction process. The others were disregarded due to the cross loading of items among the other clustered items. This confirmed the high level of complexity in the sample and inter-connectivity amongst some of the items. It also indicated that the respondents answered the items in each of these clusters in a consistent way with the same intention in mind. These factor loadings are summarised in table 4.10 (see p.151).

The first cluster of items is interpreted as indicating that students were self- motivated in their involvement in planned Religious Education activities, and responded to being challenged by their Religious Education teacher. The researcher has labelled this cluster as _Student Engagement_. The sentiments listed in the items reflected teacher perception of the importance they placed on the level of student engagement in the teaching and learning process.

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The second cluster of items listed in table 4.10 identified the teachers' judgement in terms of perceived criteria relating to accepted practice among the teachers in terms of meeting deadlines, ticking the boxes of things required to be accomplished, and mastering prescribed aspects of the set Religious Education curriculum.   In consideration of these aspects, the researcher considered that the sentiment expressed in the second cluster of items suggested the teachers' belief in their *Compliance with faculty expectations* as influential in being a worthwhile and contributing departmental member.

The third cluster of items identified academic rigour, students' standard of work, student achievement, development of student skill and interest in what has been taught.   These criteria indicated that the teachers' responses to these items in the questionnaire associated Religious Education with being one of a number of subjects offered as part of their school's curricula.   The researcher considered that this cluster reflected the teachers' thinking on their success and the purpose of Religious Education in terms of it being an academic subject. This cluster of items has been labelled as *Academic Orientation*.

General comment

Student engagement, compliance with faculty expectations and the academic orientation of the teachers were three identified clusters of items, resulting from the factor analysis, which appeared to have a bearing on the respondent teachers' interpretation of success in their teaching of religion.   This result confirmed the findings noted in the descriptive statistics reported earlier in the identification of student engagement and academic orientation as being among the important areas of thinking influencing the teachers' perceptions of success.   This process has identified compliance with faculty expectations as a cluster of items that may require further scrutiny.

Table 4.10

Factor loadings for each identified clusters of items from Factor Analysis K

Cluster	Proposed name for explaining the thinking for each cluster	% variance explained by the cluster	cumulative % of variance explained by clusters	Item No.	Detail of the Items from Questionnaire in Each Cluster	Loading of each item on the cluster
1	Student Engagement	18.831	18.831	22	Students showed an interest in scripture.	0.622
				40	Students showed they were well informed about contemporary issues.	0.609
				03	Students were engaged in quality research and projects.	0.571
				17	Students were challenged to think critically by stimulus material.	0.551
				08	The assignment or homework task I had allocated was taken up enthusiastically.	0.547
				23	Students showed an awareness of the shaping influence that culture can have on people's beliefs and attitudes.	0.504
2	Compliance with faculty expectations	8.697	27.528	46	I followed the lesson plan provided.	0.695
				41	Students learned set answers to a set of religious questions.	0.686
				47	I kept to the program's time schedule.	0.676
				50	I used a lot of worksheets in the lesson.	0.629
3	Academic Orientation	6.454	33.982	56B	Students worked at the same level of rigour as in other academic subjects.	0.651
				22B	I perceived that students did excellent work on research or projects.	0.577
				54B	Students were interested or impressed with the material in a film or video.	0.577
				63B	Students were able to develop and articulate arguments with evidence.	0.543
				53B	A majority of my students achieved a good result on an assessment task.	0.529
				62B	Students were interested in the content of the lesson.	0.524

n.b. Items denoted with a B have been reworded to reflect the opposite to the negative item in the questionnaire

4.4.2 Factor Analysis L: Effects of resources on experience of success in teaching religion

Factor Analysis L was a separate factor analysis conducted on the questionnaire items 68-81 inclusively. The statistical package SPSS was again used for this purpose, with the same settings as for Factor Analysis K in terms of:

- eigenvalues greater than one being selected;
- the use of varimax as the method of rotation of factors.

As a result of using the varimax rotation of factors, the first round of the analysis produced a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) as 0.662. A KMO statistic of this value indicated that the degree of common variance among these items was judged as mediocre. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a value for 'p' less than 0.05. This result for this Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was considered significant as it indicated that the variables were still correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis.

An examination of the anti-image correlation matrix showed that Kaiser's Measurement of Sampling Accuracy (MSA) value for questionnaire item 78 indicated that it was not statistically contributing to this analysis as it had a MSA value of 0.4246 which was below the required value of 0.5. On checking the communalities of each item it was discovered that item 71 communality value (i.e. the percentage of variance in item 71 that is explained by an extracted factor) was low. These statistics did not support the retention of items 71 and 78 for the second round of Factor Analysis L. These two items were therefore excluded from the items to be considered in the secondary round of the analysis.

The second round of the analysis was conducted on the ten remaining items in this section of the questionnaire using the same settings for the first round rotation of factors. The second rotation produced a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) of 0.653, which confirmed the degree of common variance as mediocre. Again Bartlett's test of sphericity produced a value for 'p' less than 0.05. Both these statistics reconfirmed that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Further Cronbach's alpha (α) was equal to 0.568 for this set of items. As this is less than the benchmark value of 0.7, the items that were factor loading may be of questionable reliability. This was not surprising considering the size of the sample items under investigation.

The total variance explained for Factor Analysis L is displayed in Appendix K. In examining the eigenvalues for this Appendix, the coherence of the data suggests the existence of five

possible clusters of items that explain 64.222% of the variance. Further investigation of the Rotated Component Matrix for Factor Analysis L in Appendix J provided sufficient grounds for a reduction of clusters to four due to the cross factor loading experienced in dealing with a small group of items.

The four clusters of items that were identified in the examination of Factor Analysis L's Rotated Component Matrix are summarised in table 4.11 (see p 155).   The first cluster of items has strong factor loadings.   They indicated the pragmatic use of either technology or the library as possible fillers for teaching.   The teachers could use these indicators to judge their practice in terms of what they believed to be useful occupiers of time.   The researcher considered the label Teacher use of resources as appropriate in describing this cluster of items.   A Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted on these clustered items and produced a score of 0.691 which George and Mallery (2003) would consider as just acceptable.

The second cluster of items was linked to the appropriation of technology for use in the teaching and learning.   The teachers, who supported this cluster of items, considered their use of technology as an important aspect of their teaching, as well *as* the medium of choice for youth of today.   Use of technology seems to be an appropriate description of this cluster.

A Cronbach's Alpha test was also conducted on this second cluster of items and produced a score of 0.7 which George and Mallery (2003) would consider as acceptable.

The third cluster of items described behaviours of the teachers who considered compliance with the set program as an important aspect in looking to be a dutiful member of the Religious Education team of teachers.   The teachers, who judged their practice in this way, were apparently looking to exterior indicators which have been associated with perceived good teaching practice in other areas of the Curriculum.   Program Compliance is a term that could best describe this mindset of the teachers.   A Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted on these clustered items and produced a score of 0.619 which George and Mallery (2003) would rate as questionable.

The fourth cluster of items indicated that the teachers perceived success through the provision of external resources to provide students with opportunities to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the subject area.   *External Resourcing* is the label used here to describe this cluster of items.   A Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted on these clustered items and produced a score of 0.51 which is considered by George and Mallery (2003) as poor.

Table 4.11

Factor loadings for each identified clusters of items from Factor Analysis L

Cluster	Proposed name for explaining the thinking for each cluster	% variance explained by the cluster	cumulative % of variance explained by clusters	Item No.	Detail of the items from questionnaire in each cluster	Loading of each item on the cluster
1	Teacher use of resources	22.265	22.265	80B	Information technology was used appropriately.	0.880
				79	I showed a video without previewing it first.	0.828
				81B	The library was extensively used.	-0.679
2	Use of Technology	15.071	37.336	76	Students reported information they found on the Internet.	0.825
				73	Students were able to use computers to produce work.	0.734*
				74	A video was used as informative stimulus material.	0.657*
3	Program Compliance	11.120	48.455	69	I used the teaching strategies specified in the school Religious Education program.	0.778
				68	I was given good resources by the Religious Education Coordinator.	0.719
				75	I used the set textbook regularly.	0.574*
				70	I consulted the diocesan Religious Education guidelines in planning lessons.	0.596
4	External Resourcing	8.326	56.781	77	There was an interesting guest lecturer.	0.775
				72	The library was used effectively by my students.	0.663*

Note Well:

- Items 80 and 81 were converted to affirmative statements 80B and 81B.
- Loading marked by an asterisk * indicate they had cross loaded with other clusters but were included due to the high value of the loading

General comment

While the factor analysis reduced the data to four distinct clusters, the associated statistics pointed to a lack in confidence in the reliability of the loading for these factors. Of these clusters, the researcher believed that Teacher use of resources and Use of technology were the only clusters of items reduced from Factor Analysis L worthy of consideration due to the strength of their factor loadings and Cronbach's Alpha readings.

4.4.3   Factor Analysis M: Thinking about Religious Education that has affected each teacher's experience of success in the classroom teaching of religion

Like the previous factor analyses, Factor Analysis M was conducted on the data collected from item 82 to item 109 of the questionnaire, using the same method of extraction and rotation of factors for the first two factor analyses. The first round of the analysis on these 28 items computed a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) as 0.790. This statistic indicated a reasonable degree of common variance. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a value for p less than 0.05, which indicated that the variables were correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis. Both these statistics confirmed that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

An examination of the anti-image correlation matrix highlighted Kaiser's Measurement of Sampling Accuracy (MSA) value for questionnaire item 90 as 0.398. This statistic's value indicated that this item was not contributing to this analysis. The analysis also showed a strong communality scores for all items except 100 and 107. These low scores highlighted the low percentage of variance in these items that is explained by the extracted factor(s). With this statistical insight, items 90, 100 and 107 were disregarded from the second round of the analysis.

The second round of analysis of the 25 remaining items produced a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) of 0.792. This statistic indicated a reasonable degree of common variance. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a significant value for p less than 0.05, indicating that the variables were correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis. Both these statistics confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis. This analysis produced a strong set of Communality values for each item (see Appendix L). A Cronbach's Alpha (α) value of 0.871 was obtained in the analysis and which indicated that the clusters of these items were internally consistent, and confirmed that

the items were reliable in reducing data to identifiable clusters of items.   In summary, these statistical measures provided a strong basis of support for the findings of this analysis.

From an examination of the data (see Appendix N), it was evident that there were seven clusters of items identified with eigenvalues above one that explain 63.503% of the variance. This observation was confirmed in the Rotated Component Matrix (see Appendix M).   It was evident in the Rotated Component Matrix that there were many items that were loading on these factors.   This showed a lot of inter-correlation between the items in this section of the questionnaire.   The factor loadings for each of these identified clusters were displayed in table 4.12 (see p.158).

In the first cluster of items in table 4.12, these highlighted the thinking of the teachers in terms of assisting youth to find meaning and purpose in life, to assist in the development of critical thinking processes as a means for youth to query, critique and appropriate beliefs and practices into their spirituality.   The common thread in these two items was the teacher quest for relevance in their teaching.   This finding was congruent with findings from the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire presented earlier in this chapter.

The second cluster of items listed in table 4.12 was consistent with the idea of coming to know value and accept the message of Jesus Christ.   This mindset behind the association of ideas endorsed one of the main purposes for Religious Education in Catholic schools – *Evangelisation* of youth.

The third cluster of items centred on the main process of education of faith in students.   This involved the imparting of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church to youth.   For shared Christian praxis to be linked to the other two items, it was proposed that this method was interpreted as catechesis.   The clustering of these items identified and endorsed catechesis as influential in the teachers' thinking about the nature and purpose of Religious Education.

The fourth cluster grouped three items that linked success with the reestablishment of youth's participation in the Church's communal life.   The teacher responses to these items were indicative of hoping to turn back the clock to when Church attendance, strict adherence to the Church's teachings, participation in Church activities and rituals were the norm.   In consideration of these aspects, the label that the researcher considers as a best fit for this cluster is '*Institutional Maintenance'*

Table 4.12

Factor loadings for each identified clusters of items from Factor Analysis M

Cluster	Proposed name for explaining the thinking for each cluster	% variance explained by the cluster	cumulative % of variance explained by clusters	Item No.	Detail of the items from questionnaire in each cluster	Loading of each item on the cluster
1	Relevance	25.967	25.967	096	Helping students look at issues related to meaning and purpose in life	0.797
				095	Promoting students' questioning about religion in a positive way that enhances their spiritual development.	0.699
2	Evangelisation	9.772	35.739	108	Helping students discover and consider adopting Gospel values.	0.782
				109	Helping students know the Christian story and see the challenges it presents.	0.659
				101	Evangelising the students (advocating the good news of Jesus Christ to invite students to Christian personal faith).	0.599
3	Catechesis	6.643	42.382	085	An opportunity to communicate the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.	0.716
				088	Following the Shared Christian Praxis approach.	0.712
				087	Providing catechesis (an education in faith for believers).	0.608
4	Institutional Maintenance	6.346	48.728	105	Getting students to become regular church-going Catholics.	0.705
				104	Giving students the opportunity to experience their Catholic faith (e.g., having Mass, Reconciliation).	0.664
				091	Getting back to good traditional Catholic theology.	0.608
5	Education in Faith	5.606	54.334	082	Imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith tradition.	0.812
				086	Educating students in their Catholic faith and in spiritual and moral issues.	0.691
6	Education about World Religions	4.777	59.110	102	Informing students about world religions	0.788
				089	Increasing the religious literacy of students.	0.632
7	Student pro-active learning	4.393	63.503	097	Providing the opportunity for students to do some social action.	0.679
				092	Providing an opportunity for students to learn, study and research skills in religion.	0.649

The two items that formed the fifth cluster centred on the key concepts of personal faith and the education of youth in the faith. This cluster of items highlighted an important religious and ecclesiastical construct examined in the literature review – education in faith. The next cluster of items combined two items that sought to expand the thinking and knowledge about religion in general. This attitude was more prevalent amongst senior teachers and represents Education about world religions.

The last cluster of items in this factor analysis was student-centred. In thinking about their teaching, the teachers apparently responded to these items with the view that they judged themselves successful when students were doing something constructive in terms of their education. This line of thinking pointed to the fostering of student pro-active learning as a key element in the thinking related to the items in this cluster.

General comment

This section of the factor analysis highlighted the potential influence that various schools of thought about Religious Education appear to have on the classroom teachers' notion of success. The identified clusters of items relate to various constructs to which the teachers attached meaning in their thinking about Religious Education. This analysis suggests that there was some ambivalence about the nature and purposes of Religious Education, and that there may be competing discourses that help create the uncertainty and potential confusion.

4.4.4   Factor Analysis N: Background influences on each teacher's experience of success in the classroom teaching of religion

Factor Analysis N was conducted using the data collected from items 110-120 of the questionnaire. Using the varimax method of rotation and the same setting as the previous factor analyses, the first round of analysis computed a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) as 0.743. It was evident from this statistic that there was a reasonable degree of common variance among the items while the KMO for these items was 0.743. The data were also subjected to a Bartlett's Test of sphericity which produced a value for 'p' less than 0.05. This result was significant in that it indicated that the variables were correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis. A Cronbach's Alpha (α) value of 0.742 was obtained in this first run at extracting factors. The value of this coefficient of reliability, being above 0.7, confirmed that the items were internally consistent, and confirmed that the items were reliable in reducing data to identifiable clusters of items.

An examination of the anti-image component matrix showed that the Kaiser's Measurement of Sampling Accuracy (MSA) values for items 116 and 119 were below 0.5. The MSA values for these items indicated that they were not contributing to the reduction process of the factor analysis. These items were therefore excluded from the secondary round of the analysis in order to gain a more accurate clustering of items.

Using the same procedures as for the first round of the analysis, the second round targeted the remaining nine questionnaire items. On the completion of the rotation of factors, an examination of the communalities of the remaining nine items indicated strong readings for all items (see Appendix O). These readings provide the percentage of variance in each item explained by the extracted factors. An inspection of Appendix Q highlights the eigenvalues which explain the total variance for the factor analysis. The information displayed in this Appendix shows that the eigenvalues greater than one identify three clusters of items that explain 65.88% of the total variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) had risen to 0.745, which confirmed the existence of a reasonable degree of common variance. Again Bartlett's test of sphericity produced a value for 'p' less than 0.05. Both these statistics reconfirmed that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Further, Cronbach's alpha (α) equated to 0.751 for this set of items. This value indicated that the degree of internal consistency and reliability of this analysis of items in the identification of clusters of items was acceptable.

The Rotated Component matrix (see Appendix P) provided the factor loadings for each of the items for each of the three identified clusters. This second round of extraction was tested for its internal consistency and reliability in the identification of clusters of items using Cronbach's Alpha. The score recorded for this analysis was 0.751 which indicated that the extracted clusters reliability and internal consistency were quite acceptable. These clusters of items were listed in table 4.13 (see p.161).

The Rotated Component matrix (see Appendix P) provided the factor loadings for each of the items for each of the three identified clusters. This second round of extraction was tested for its internal consistency and reliability in the identification of clusters of items using Cronbach's Alpha. The score recorded for this analysis was 0.751 which indicated that the extracted clusters reliability and internal consistency were quite acceptable. These clusters of items were listed in table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Factor loadings for each identified clusters of items from Factor Analysis N

Cluster	Proposed name for explaining the thinking for each cluster	% variance explained by the cluster	cumulative % of variance explained by clusters	Item No.	Detail of the Items from Questionnaire in Each Cluster	Loading of each item on the cluster
1	Teacher training	37.705	37.705	113	Particular units in a university course or program.	0.855
				112	Whole program of Religious Education study at university or through another organization; e.g. CEO (Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters Programs, Certificate of Religious Education).	0.779
				114	Professional reading of books: for example, teacher text in Religious Education or theology or a resource book on Religious Education.	0.564*
2	Professional development	14.893	52.599	111	Professional development events that were practically oriented to improving classroom practice.	0.859
				110	Professional development events that allowed me to explore my spirituality.	0.762
				117	Diocesan Religious Education guidelines.	0.516*
3	Further professional experience	13.281	65.880	118	Interaction with fellow teachers in curriculum planning and lesson preparation.	0.793
				120	On-the-job experience of teaching religion.	0.729
				114	Professional reading of books: e.g. A teacher text in Religious Education or theology or a resource book on Religious Education.	0.606*

*Please note: the asterisk * denotes an item which has cross factor loading. These were included in these clusters as the loading was strong for that item.*

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Factor Analysis N sought to identify those clusters which the teachers believed were helpful in their teaching of religion. The first cluster of items indicated teacher training and professional reading as being significant in how teachers perceived success. In this cluster, the teachers had linked reading of professional material with teacher training. This cluster of items was identified as *Teaching Training*.

The items associated with the second cluster indicated a link between professional development activities and the teachers finding them helpful in relation to their teaching practice. The teachers valued activities whose content and pedagogy could be easily appropriated for classroom use as well as activities that enhanced their own spirituality. The teachers, within the diocese where this research was undertaken, had experienced recent professional development activities associated with the Religious Education Curriculum guidelines in line with the Catholic Education Office's adoption of this documentation for implementation in all stages of secondary schooling. This could explain the association of item 117 with other items in this cluster. *Professional Development* was chosen as an appropriate label for this cluster of items.

The third cluster of items dealt with the on-the-job reality of teaching. This cluster was helpful in providing support for the teachers, as interaction with fellow colleagues provided opportunities to bounce ideas off each other, share insights and resources. This finding suggests that teachers were willing to try out new strategies and resources as a result of their interaction with colleagues. Interaction with fellow colleagues was not the only way to gain new ideas or insights into teaching. Professional reading was another recognised source and this may explain why this was linked to this cluster of items. *Further Professional Experience* was considered as an appropriate label for this factor.

General comment

The results of this factor analysis confirmed the findings highlighted in the descriptive statistics. The teachers attributed training in pedagogy, content and spiritual development as influential on their perception of success.

Summation

The clusters of items, which were identified as a result of the reduction process used in the factor analysis, were summarised in table 4.14. The four factor analyses did not disconfirm any of the logical structure used in questionnaire construction. These analyses offered confirmation of the validity and reliability of the findings noted in the comments on the

descriptive statistics.   The factor analysis highlighted the cross correlation of items and the complexity of the discourses that were apparent in Religious Education.   Of interest has been the identification of clusters of items – the attainment of mandatory curriculum requirements, professional development and further professional experience as being influential in the teachers experiencing of success in teaching religion.

Table 4.14
Summary of the labels attributed to clusters of items resulting from Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis	Labels for clusters of items resulting from Factor Analysis
K	Student Engagement Compliance with faculty expectations Academic orientation
L	Teacher use of resources Use of technology Program compliance External Resourcing
M	Relevance Evangelisation Catechesis Institutional maintenance Education in faith Education about world religions Student pro-active learning
N	Teacher training Professional development Further professional experience

4.5   ANALYSIS OF OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS 121-125

Questionnaire items 121-125 provided respondents with the opportunity to give written feedback about: issues relating to professional development activities;   highlighting any other factors that may have contributed or hindered their experience of success;   making recommendations about any particular teaching and learning procedures which has led to their successful teaching;   and commenting on the relative importance of discussion in their teaching of religion.

The method of analysis of the data from these open-ended questions was explained in the last chapter.   On inspection of the responses given to each of these questions and after a key word/phrase analysis, descriptive statements were developed for use in coding the data.   By coding the responses, it was possible to convert the qualitative data into quantitative data – giving frequencies for the key ideas expressed by respondents.

4.5.1 Professional development

The teachers were asked to respond as to whether or not professional development activities have contributed in a noticeable way to their improved teaching of religion. These activities would include such things as increasing their knowledge of the content, trialling various pedagogical methods; and their own spiritual and faith development. The descriptive statements developed from the responses of the participating teachers, the frequency of those who responded in kind, and the percentage of responses that each represented are listed in table 4.15 (see p.65).

Some of the responses provided more than one aspect as to their view on the influence of these activities on their experience of success in teaching religion. The areas of positive contribution noted from table 4.19 indicated that the teachers saw value when the professional development activities:

- contained relevant content and useful input into improving teacher pedagogical expertise; promoted their spiritual and faith development;
- provided opportunities for collegial interaction and networking;
- re energised them in their teaching.

Approximately 7% of respondents criticised the usefulness of activities that were not relevant to the present day youth culture and situation experienced. A significant minority (approximately 13.8%) indicated that, either due to an apparent lack of opportunity for them to attend, or due to infrequent attendance at inservice programs they were unable to comment. A further 13% declined to offer any comment.

General comment

The comments of the teachers supported any professional development activity for Religious Education which set out to improve teacher knowledge, networking amongst the teachers, collegial support or pedagogical awareness. These findings endorsed the sentiments expressed earlier in this chapter on professional development. While support was evident from respondents' comments about the value and usefulness of professional development activities, there was a significant minority, (28%), that experienced little or no positive contribution from these activities.

Table 4.15

Professional development contributions to successful teaching

Areas of Contribution	Frequency	% of Responses
Increased knowledge and understanding of syllabus content, and standards referencing.	**27**	**19.3**
Improved teaching and learning processes by linking specific strategies and ideas to specific units.	**26**	**18.6**
Spirituality and faith development.	**8**	**5.7**
Collegial interaction and networking which promotes new ideas and opportunities for teaching.	**22**	**15.7**
Injected enthusiasm – renewed commitment, confidence, creativity, motivation.	**14**	**10**
Not relevant to the present day youth culture and situation experienced in the classroom.	**10**	**7.1**
No contribution due to lack of opportunity to attend and low frequency of attendance at in-service programs.	**17**	**12.1**
No comment made by respondents.	**16**	**11.5**
Totals	**140**	**100**

4.5.2   Other contributing factors

The responses related to other contributing factors were grouped under four categories. Some responses highlighted more than one factor that they considered contributed to their experience of success in the teaching of religion.   These were listed in table 4.16 below.

The teachers agreed, that the networking that took place among fellow staff, was very helpful with their teaching of religion.   Giving witness, involvement in ministry and faith development also rated strongly.   Approximately 19% of the teachers rated their own depth of faith and commitment as Religious Education teachers as very important.   This reinforced the findings in the earlier analysis of the questionnaire items.

Table 4.16

Other contributing factors cited by respondents

Factor Cited	Frequency	% of Responses
The supportive network in the school or college including sharing amongst staff	39	25.2
Giving witness, involvement in ministry and faith development	27	17.4
Own faith and teacher commitment	29	18.6
Skill as a Religious Education teacher	48	31
No factors mentioned	12	7.8
Total	155	100

Respondents also noted their skill as a Religious Education teacher as a significant factor.

This represented 31% of this group sample.

General comment

A number of these factors, inherent in the comments made by participating teachers, were consistent with the findings of the results of the questionnaire reported earlier in this chapter. Skill as a Religious Education teacher attracted much support. This is indicative of the level of expertise that present day teachers possessed in terms of pedagogical skill and content knowledge.

4.5.3   Factors that inhibit success in teaching classroom religion

The participating teachers had the opportunity to elaborate on any influences that that they thought had inhibited their success in their religion teaching. These were placed into various inhibitor groupings. Details of these groupings are listed below in table 4.17.

Table 4.17
Identified factors/influences that inhibit success

Inhibitor Factor	Description of the Inhibitors to Success	Frequency	% of Responses
A	Lack of knowledge of Catholicism, skill and training	21	12
B	Lack of personalism resulting in student apathy and attitude to the subject	24	13.7
C	Inadequate preparation, planning and availability of good resources	35	20
D	Inappropriate curriculum	17	9.7
E	Lack of relevance: Not engaging students through interests, experiences and spirituality	7	4
F	Lack of support in the school or college community for adequate time allocation to teach Religious Education; for good allocation of lesson placement in the timetable; for its primacy for the existence of Catholic education	38	21.7
G	None cited as problematic	33	18.9
Totals		**175**	**100**

Inhibitor factor A highlighted the teachers' poor knowledge of the bible;   lack of familiarity with, and knowledge of Catholicism;   and poor training. The teachers were particularly critical of the lack of relevant training at university and teachers' college and at inservice courses which had resulted in poor selection of appropriate teaching strategies;   and undermining their confidence in their ability to be successful.

The respondents whose comments were grouped for factor B drew attention to the problem of student apathy and their increasingly negative attitude towards Religious Education. They felt students' detachment from viewing religious commitment as an important aspect in their

lives had manifested itself in their attitude towards the attainment of religious knowledge. The teachers felt frustrated at students' expressed belief that it was not as important a priority in comparison to other subject areas. This finding endorsed sentiments expressed in both the literature review and in the questionnaire data reported earlier in this chapter on personalism.

A significant number of the responses (20%) were allocated to factor C. Some of the teachers considered that the lack of time to allow them to thoroughly prepare for lessons was a source of frustration. They felt there was little opportunity for them to interact and share with fellow Religious Education teachers. Similarly, they were frustrated with the lack of good quality resources, the time taken to locate worthwhile resources and the limited assess they had to these. Teacher frustration with curriculum planning was also apparent. The teachers commented on the inflexibility of some of the Religious Education coordinators and their apparent lack of direction. The grounds for such criticisms were based on noticeable disorganisation in the programming, no schedule of units; no plan for promoting teacher participation in the renewal, subsequent lack of group ownership of the programs and goal setting for the Religious Education department. Other respondents pointed to a lack of a culture of collegial cooperation where Religious Education teachers worked together and affirmed each other. They felt that this has led to some of their colleagues becoming less motivated in their teaching and expressing a negative attitude towards this subject area. These indications are consistent with the questionnaire data.

The responses that were grouped as factor D highlighted dissatisfaction with the appropriateness of the secondary Religious Education curriculum. These responses were critical of the syllabus topics on offer to their students. They felt these did not relate to the students' life experiences or interests. The topics were regarded as boring. Some of the teachers' comments for factor D also criticised the Studies of Religion course, labelling it as a sociology course masquerading as Religious Education. Others were dissatisfied with the introduction of the textbook *To Know, Worship and Love* without sufficient inservice preparation. They considered the textbook to be didactic and associated with a narrow rigid program with an emphasis on assessment.

The responses of the teachers clustered in factor E related to the lack of engagement of students' interests, their spirituality, and their life experiences. The teachers, who responded this way, pointed to the limited time for faith and spiritual development. They felt that academic rigour got in the road of effective teaching of spirituality and religion. Both factors

D and E highlighted the need for relevance in both content and pedagogy. Relevance was identified as a major influence on the teachers' thinking about, and experience of success.

Factor F responses related to the teachers' frustration at the perceived lack of visible support within the school milieu for Religious Education. This group of responses was the largest of the six categories accounting for 21.7% of the total. The teachers, who responded in this manner, offered a range of reasons for feeling inhibited in their teaching of Religious Education. Some felt that the lack of parent support and faith formation in the home was partly responsible for student apathy towards Religious Education. Other teachers considered the lack of timetabling support, especially where lessons were allocated to time slots not regarded as prime teaching time; as well as not being given close enough to the mandated hours set in the curriculum documentation to complete the required programmed course. They felt that appointing unqualified teachers to teach the subject was frustrating. They saw this as a continued denigration of Religious Education. Some believed that a problem existed with some senior executive members who were either not familiar with teaching Religious Education or were not affiliated with the Church. They felt uncertain about the strength of these people's conviction about the importance and centrality of Religious Education and whether they can be counted on to assist in improving the profile of this discipline. The teachers believed that this perceived lack of support had translated itself into large class sizes and a lack of a stimulating environment. Other teachers considered the need to consult with the clergy on religious matters as restrictive and frustrating. The level of frustration was evident with some apportioning part of the blame to the Church. Lack of flexibility among clergy was cited as problematic as the participating teachers considered their support for the prescribed curriculum, their lack of support for relevant liturgies and their desire for the teachers to toe the party line was inhibiting their efforts to make the students experience of religion more meaningful.

General comment

The concerns raised by the teachers, in the responses to the open-ended questions, were grouped into factors, and were similar to those noted in the fixed questionnaire items. Most statements in the questionnaire were written in the affirmative and the open- responses expanded on the reasons of those who did not support those statements. There were some important issues raised with regard to relevance and the lack of support of the school's community which will be examined in the next chapter.

4.5.4   Recommended teaching and learning strategies

Participating teachers were asked whether they could recommend any particular teaching and learning procedures that they thought would assist in the discourse on success in teaching. The recommendations they made are listed in table 4.18.

The data showed that the teachers' use of cooperative learning techniques and varying their strategies were considered to be pertinent to success.   Of these strategies, discussion was prominent as was experiential learning.   Personalist approaches and witness accounted for 8% of the responses.   These findings were also consistent with the questionnaire results.

Table 4.18
Recommended teaching and learning strategies

Group	Successful pedagogy strategies utilised by the teachers	Frequency	% of Responses
A	Varying the teaching and learning strategies and activities in lessons.	23	15.3
B	Use of prayer services and/or liturgies	13	8.7
C	Discussion of stimuli both in small groups and in class forums	14	9.3
D	Use of co-operative learning strategies and group work	34	22.7
E	Use of relationship building exercises	6	4
F	Use of personalist approaches and witness	12	8
G	None cited	48	32
	Total	150	100

4.5.5   The importance of discussion as a teaching and learning strategy

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of discussion as a teaching and learning strategy in Religious Education by comparison with its use in other subjects.   The data are summarised in table 4.19.   A significant number of respondents (76.4%) endorsed discussion as an important teaching and learning strategy of equal or greater importance in Religious Education than in other subjects.   Of these, 52.8% believed it to be more important.   It was noteworthy that a large minority of the teachers endorsed the role of discussion in the promotion of critical thinking amongst students.   The importance of this finding will be discussed in the next chapter.

Those participants, who did not support this statement, offered a variety of reasons.   Some considered it important but so too were opportunities for peer, partner and group work, journaling and other strategies that were employed to internalise faith, knowledge, and

students' experience. Discussion was regarded as just one of the many pedagogical techniques at the teacher's disposal. Others believed it was dependent on what topic was being taught or what outcomes were being targeted in the lesson. The teachers also recognised its usefulness when sometimes an opportunity presents itself where some discussion may be required to assist students with the clarification of spiritual and moral issues.

Table 4.19

The importance of discussion as a teaching and learning strategy in religion classes in comparison to other subjects

Is Discussion more important?	Reason Given	Frequency	%
Yes	Dependent on topic being taught and maturity of class group.	7	5.6
	When it promotes relevance.	4	3.2
	When it promotes personalism.	11	8.9
	It promotes critical thinking in students.	33	27
	No reasons were cited by respondents.	10	8.1
Total figures of those participating teachers who agree		66	52.8
No	Other strategies were just as important.	4	3.2
	Equally important in other subjects.	29	23.6
	Dependent on topics, and the preferred teaching methodology.	7	5.6
	Other one-off reasons were cited.	5	4
	No reason cited by respondents.	7	5.6
Total figures of those participating teachers who disagree		52	41.6
Neutral	No answer given	7	5.6

General comment

The open ended items on the questionnaire provided the teachers with the opportunity to further elaborate their views on issues and provide further insight into their thinking behind their responses to the items in the questionnaire. The responses proved valuable in triangulation of the results of the questionnaire data.

4.6 ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK GROUP DATA

The methodology used to analyse the data collected from the participant feedback groups was outlined in chapter three. For each of the participant feedback groups, the recorded descriptive statements were then coded and sorted into coherent groupings. The number of the teachers who agreed with each grouping was recorded as a percentage of those present in each instant. This resulted in a conversion of qualitative data into quantitative data with frequencies of the key ideas.

4.6.1 Participant feedback group 1: The teachers from the central region

The participating teachers indicated that they were successful in teaching Religious Education when:

1. <u>Critique of issues and relevance of Church teaching</u>: They engaged the students by offering them opportunities to critique the issue being examined, to see how the Church's teachings and scriptural references could be relevant to developing a balanced view. As a teacher from group 1 put it "I found success in being able to offer my students opportunities to examine the teachings of the Church and scripture as having relevance to the topic or issue under consideration" (2006, teacher comment 1.27). Sixty-four percent of those present endorsed this view.

2. <u>Relevance to students' personal lives</u>: They taught appropriate content which they believed engaged the students at a personal level and seemed to be relevant to their lives. One teacher noted that "I experience success when I am well prepared and seek to make each lesson relevant to student interests and experience" (2006, group 1, teacher comment 1.31). Eighty percent were in favour of this view.

3. <u>Personal relationship with Jesus</u>: They made an impact on the students' spirituality by making Jesus known and loved. A participating teacher shared this insight with others in the group. "Students are usually receptive to what is being taught, especially when it helps them make sense of their reality. They see Jesus as the light to follow. Making Jesus known and loved among the students has traction in my classroom" (2006, group 1, teacher comment 1.11). This view was endorsed by 52% of the group.

4. <u>Handing-on of the Catholic faith</u>: They felt they assisted in handing on the Catholic faith to students. The idea that Catechesis was important was supported by 24% of the group.

5. <u>Program outcomes</u>: They met the outcomes prescribe by the program/syllabus. Only 12% supported this viewpoint.

When asked what factors contributed in a significant way in their experiencing of success, they pointed to the following as being the most influential:

1. <u>Professional development opportunities</u>: The school made provision for relevant professional development opportunities. These provided opportunities to develop their knowledge and skill base. One teacher summed up the benefits of these opportunities. "Professional development has had an impact on my teaching in RE especially when I feel that I have gained knowledge about a topic and/or being taught something pedagogically useful" (2006, group 1, teacher comment 1.16). This factor was endorsed by 52%.

2. <u>Resourcing by the Religion Education Coordinator</u>: The collegial support was promoted by the Religious Co-coordinator. As a teacher from group 1 pointed out "My teaching is well supported by quality resources supplied by the REC." (2006, teacher comment 1.24). This was accepted by 80%.

3. <u>Ready availability of resources</u>: The REC resourced the program with up-to-date DVDs, taped programs and electronic resources. This factor was best summed up by a group 1 teacher who noted "I felt supported in my teaching where various resources are made readily available, especially DVDs and computer orientated ones (2006, teacher comment 1.18)". This was supported by all present.

When asked what factors inhibited their experience of success, they highlighted the following:

1. Imposition of grading system: Teachers were unhappy about the imposition of a grading system on this curriculum area by the administration. This view was held by all those present.   This had replaced the previously held and well supported system of the allocation of marks in the reporting system.   As one teacher put it "What gets me irritated is the lack of consultation about important matters such as replacing marks with grades.   There has been no debate over what might be considered to be in the best interests of the student" (2006, group 1, teacher comment 1.37).

2. Scheduling of RE lessons: Religion lessons were scheduled at difficult times of the week e.g. Friday afternoon's last period.   A teacher from group 1 summed up the frustration of those present, commenting that "Religion is difficult enough to teach without having to be faced with a majority of my lessons on after lunch and especially on last period on Fridays" (2006, teacher comment 1.38).   All present were supportive of this as an inhibitor to success.

3. Lack of time allocated to RE: There was not enough time allocated by the school to the subject area.   This situation seemed to convey the feeling that the school's rhetoric on the importance of Religious Education was not matched by its actions.   This factor attracted some strong words from some of those present.   One teacher summed it up this way.

> What's got me mystified is that the administration from the principal down come up with the rhetoric that Religious Education is the reason for our existence but their actions don't live up to it.   For example, I have found we don't get the period allocation to do the subject justice.   We have had our period allocation cut over the years, been given lesson times which get eaten into by assemblies;   and even seen the religious leadership devalued with the RE co-ordinator dropped from the executive (2006, teacher comment 1.39).

Sixty-four percent identified with this response.

General comment

The data collected in this first participant feedback group highlighted the complexity of the views held by the teachers regarding the nature and purpose of Religious Education in the secondary school.   The data supported the notion of content relevance and use of relevant pedagogy to engage the students at a personal level.   The teachers voiced support for the provision of professional development, collegial support and resourcing as being most influential of their perceptions of success.   These data were consistent with the previous findings from the questionnaire.   Lack of a supportive school environment was highlighted in the conversation.   Timetabling issues predominated.   The imposition of grading was done without consultation, and it was evident that these teachers were offended by this matter. The findings relating to timetabling issues that emerged in this participant feedback group reinforced the findings in the questionnaire.

4.6.2   Participant feedback group 2:   Teachers from all over the diocese

The second Participant feedback group consisted of 18 secondary Religious Education teachers from across the diocese (see table 4.4 for demographics of this group). The participating teachers believed that they were successful when:

1. Relevance of Church's teachings: The students were inquisitive about what the Church had to say on issues they felt were important.   One teacher explained this viewpoint.   "I experienced success when my students expressed genuine interest in what the Church had to say on various issues" (2006, group 2, teacher comment 2.17).   Sixty-six point six percent of the participating teachers supported this view.

2. Relevance of content: The material taught by them was relevant to the students and met their needs in terms of faith development and enhancing their spirituality.   As a teacher from group 2 pointed out "the material taught by me was relevant to the students and they found it worthwhile in their meaning making and giving them purpose in their lives" (2006, group 2, teacher comment 2.2).   This viewpoint was endorsed by 77.8% of the participating teachers.

3. Promoting evangelisation: They promoted evangelisation among the students.   One teacher in the group shared this insight with others in the group.   "I felt that I was promoting evangelisation when I heard a student say, for example, - "I never thought of God like that – that makes sense!" – the light bulb goes on" (2006, group 2, teacher 2.6).   Of note, 88.9% of the teachers in this group supported this view.

4. Handing on the Catholic faith: They passed on the Catholic faith.   One teacher noted that he felt successful when "I passed on my knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith" (2006, group 2, teacher comment 2.7).   This viewpoint was supported by 22.2%.

5. Students choosing to be active in faith communities: Students decided to be active in their faith.   One teacher pointed out that he felt successful if students decided to be active in their faith: "I felt success when any one of my students decided to be active in their faith" (2006, group 2, teacher comment 2.8).   This was supported by 11.1% of those teachers in the group...

6. They met the outcomes prescribed in the Catholic Education Office's documentation. Only 16.6% supported this view.

When asked what factors contributed to their experiencing of success, they pointed to the following:

1. Crucial role played by REC: The support and guidance of the Religious Education coordinator was crucial.   This viewpoint was supported by 72.2%.   One of the teachers from this group noted that "I felt that the support and advice given to me by the Religious Education co-ordinator assisted me in being more effective as a teacher and so I believe she helped me to be successful in teaching my year 8 class" (2006, group 2, teacher comment 2.19).

2. CEO sponsored professional development: The support of the CEO, in sponsoring both professional development and further training opportunities for the teachers, was important to develop their knowledge and teaching skills.   The comment by one of the group 2 teachers (2006, teacher comment 2.5) best summarised the feelings of the group indicating that "the professional development opportunities, organised by the C.E.O., have been

helpful in me experiencing success in teaching religion". This opinion was endorsed by 77.8% of the teachers.

3. <u>Resourcing of the program:</u> The resourcing of the program by the schools is important. All agreed with this view.

4. <u>Collegial support:</u> Opportunities to share ideas with fellow colleagues in the teaching of this area were valued. As one teacher explained – "Yes I found that having a chat with fellow religion teachers was beneficial in sharing new ideas, knowledge and pedagogy that engages students" (2006, teacher 2.9). This factor was endorsed by 55.5% of those present.

When asked what factors inhibited their experience of success, they highlighted the following:

1. <u>Timetabling issues:</u> The competition for prime teaching time in the timetable was a concern. One teacher put forward this comment on the effect of this on her teaching of religion. "There needs to be a realization among those responsible for timetabling that although everyone is keen for their faculty to access prime teaching times, that religion should have priority. This year the period time slots allocated to Year 9 RE made it extremely difficult to teach it" (2006, group 2, teacher 2.10). This view was supported by all present.

2. <u>Negativity of a significant minority of students:</u> The negative attitude of a significant minority of students in attendance at schools had become more prominent. These students are often ones who have no affiliation with the Catholic community other than their attendance at the school. As one group 2 teacher noted: "I get very frustrated when those non religious students who attend my school come to class with a negative attitude towards the subject. It can be most off putting when you are trying your best to make the lesson as meaningful as possible for students" (2006, teacher comment 2.13). This view was supported by 61.1%.

3. <u>Boring and uninspiring content:</u> There are certain topics or units that have to be taught to the students, that no matter what were tried, were found to be both dry and uninspiring. A participating teacher explained his frustration: "Some of the topics are plainly not relevant to students. They find them dry and boring, no matter what you do to liven it up. Maybe some of those responsible for this curriculum may like to take my year nine class I have this year and teach them literary forms in the scriptures" (2006, group 2, teacher comment 2.5). This was endorsed by 38.9%.

General comment

The data collected from this participant feedback group differed in some aspects from that of the previous group. One item was the inquisitiveness of students about the Church position on various matters. This was reported in questionnaire item 26 with a similar result. The idea of relevance was again supported, especially in relationship with faith development and youth spirituality. It was evident in the discussion that took place within the group that evangelisation was considered the primary purpose of Religious Education. While the aim of passing on the Catholic faith did not resonate with a majority of participating teachers, it had the support of a significant minority. These findings were congruent with findings from the questionnaire.

Support was expressed for the role of the Religious Education coordinator in terms of guidance and resourcing. The provision of professional development activities and fostering collegial support were appreciated. These factors were consistent with the data from the interviews.

Concerns relating to the negative impact of the timetable were again raised by the teachers present. Competing for prime teaching time for Religious Education was viewed as inhibiting quality teaching. One teacher pointed out: "If the successful teaching of Religious Education was as important as they make out then this would not be an issue" (2006, teacher comment 2.4). The negative attitude of students and the choice of topics again were prominent in people's discussions.

4.6.3 Participant feedback group 3: The teachers from all over the diocese

The third participant feedback group consisted of twenty-five secondary Religious Education teachers from across the diocese (see table 4.4 for demographics of this group).

The participating teachers believed that they were successful in teaching when:

1. <u>Student critical appraisal of work</u>: The students were engaged in a critical appraisal of what they were taught. As one group 3 teacher explained: "When students really start to question and re appraise their beliefs in light of relevant material covered in class" 2007, teacher comment 3.8). Forty-eight percent of the participating teachers endorsed this view.
2. <u>Relevant content</u>: The content taught was relevant to the students needs. One of the group 3 teachers 3.2 indicated that "I felt successful when I sensed that the content I taught was relevant to the students need in making sense of their life situations" (2007, teacher comment 3.2). Sixty-four percent of the teachers endorsed this view.
3. <u>Students relating to content on a personal level</u>: Students were able to relate to what has been taught on a personal level. One of the group teachers pointed out that "I experienced success when any of my students were able to relate to what has been taught on a personal level. I get a warm fuzzy feeling when this happens" (2007, teacher 3.3). Twenty percent of the teachers believed this was important.
4. <u>Relevance of the teachings of Jesus</u>: Students gained insights into the teachings of Jesus and saw these as applicable to their own life. One teacher shared this insight: "It never ceases to amaze me that when students indicate that they have found some relevance in the message of Jesus' from his stories, I feel I have achieved something worthwhile" (2007, teacher comment 3.17). This was endorsed by 40% of the teachers.
5. <u>Student interest in the Catholic faith</u>: Students became more interested in what the Catholic faith has to offer. One teacher pointed this out to others present, noting that "every now and again I have experienced some of my students becoming more interested in what the Catholic faith has to offer. I feel I have got somewhere with my teaching religion" (2007, teacher comment 3.5). Twelve percent of the teachers supported this view.
6. They felt they had strengthened the faith of students. This was endorsed by 12%.

When asked what factors had contributed in a significant way in their experiencing of success, they pointed to the following:

1. Awareness of social justice issues: Efforts to ensure students were aware of the social justice stance of the Church.   One teacher believed that this factor had contributed to her experience of success.   "When I taught the topic *Working for Justice in Australia* to my year 10 class and I sense that my efforts to ensure my students have a strong knowledge about the proactive stance of the Church on social justice issues have taken root" (2007, teacher comment 3.22).   This was supported by 64% of those present.

2. Opportunities for professional development: The provision of opportunities for professional and personal development that were made available by the C.E.O.   One of the participating teachers in feedback group 3 noted that "I value the opportunity to come on in-service courses as I always benefit through the sharing of ideas and resources with other teachers" (2007, teacher comment 3.23).   Forty-eight percent of the teachers agreed.

3. Staff interaction: The interaction that took place both formally at Religious Education department meetings and informally amongst the teachers on matters pertaining to both knowledge of content and how best to teach it.   As one participating pointed out: "I found interactions with fellow teachers about content knowledge and best ways of teaching it, whether it was at religion department meetings or just over a cuppa, as an important contributor to my success as a religion teacher" (2007,. teacher comment 3.13)   This was supported by 88%.

4. Resourcing and support of the REC: The resources and background reading supplied by the Religious Education co-coordinator.   Ninety-two percent thought this was true in their school.

When asked what factors have inhibited their experience of success in Religious Education, they highlighted the following:

1. Lack of support of professional development by school authorities: The lack of support for professional development in this subject area by the administration of the schools has inhibited the experience of success.   Being a regional diocese, there were not that many opportunities available each year and, when they were available, schools placed restrictions on how many could attend.   One group 3 teacher noted that "I have been teaching Religious Education for a number of years now and this is only the second time I have had an opportunity to attend.   I have found that the administration at my school don't seem to be supportive of people attending in-service sessions such as these because they feel they disrupt the teaching and learning" (2007, teacher comment 3.16).   This was supported by 20%.

2. The feeling of lack of support by clergy: The expectations of the clergy that the teachers were not doing enough to improve the number of students practicing their faith, inhibited teacher experience of success.   One teacher shared the following experience.   "I got the shock of my life when at the commencement Mass for the beginning of the year for all those in the Lismore area, the Bishop said we were failing the Church in our duty as teachers and this was evidenced in the lack of attendance of young people at Church" (2007, group 3, teacher comment 3.14).   This was endorsed by 40%.

3. Increase in non Catholics at school: The increase in students who are not Catholic in the schools has impacted on RE.   These students, along those who were catholic in name only, made it difficult in teaching some content of the course.   A teacher shared this with the members of group 3.   "There is nothing more disheartening than fronting up to teach your

religion class knowing that no matter what you teach in that lesson, you most probably won't engage many of the students because they don't identify with Catholicism as they are either non- catholic or catholic in name only. It seems these are on the increase" (2007, teacher comment 3.8).   Thirty-two percent identified this as an issue.

4. Poor timetable allocations: Poor allocation of prime teaching time in the timetable was seen as problematic by 52%.

General comment

The data collected from this participant feedback Group highlighted relevance as an important issue related to success.   Engagement in critical thinking processes was endorsed by nearly half present in this group.   Personalism was supported by a significant minority of the teachers.   Faith formation did not attract as much support as in the previous groups.

The social justice stance of the Church attracted support as an important factor.   Provision of professional development activities was regarded as important.   Both the formal and informal collegial support found within the Religious Education departments again attracted endorsement along with the supportive role played by the Religious Education coordinators.

The lack of support for training and updating the teachers by school administration was felt to be an inhibiting influence on improving the quality of the teaching and learning activities provided.   Some felt that the clergy were overly critical of the teachers not doing enough to promote the faith among the youth.   The teachers felt that the increased proportion of non-Catholics inhibited their teaching.   Again the teachers mentioned timetabling issues as having a negative effect.   As with the other participant feedback groups, even though each varied in the emphasis in discussions, the issues raised were consistent with the trends evident in the questionnaire data.

4.6.4   Summary of findings from the participant feedback groups

The data collected from the participant feedback groups highlighted and confirmed issues that had become evident in the questionnaire data.   The participant feedback groups did provide more insight into the thinking behind what the teachers had put into the questionnaire. Therefore the participant feedback groups were justified as an important part of the data collection for this study, not only for getting triangulation, but also for teasing out the meanings behind what they put into the questionnaire.

The evangelisation of students was a well supported construct in these groups.   Catechesis and educational purposes for Religious Education were enunciated and considered important by some of the teachers.   Each of the groups pointed to the provision of professional development activities as an enhancer of the quality of their teaching.   Activities that offered

content relevant material and access to relevant pedagogy were supported. The theme of relevance was prominent in each of the groups. The role of the Religious Education coordinator emerged as a potential enhancer for success in teaching Religious Education in schools. Their facilitation of support, collegial interaction among staff, provision of professional reading material and relevant teaching resources were evidence of this. Providing opportunities for teacher collegial support was also prominent.

Discussion within the participant feedback groups highlighted the inhibiting influence that timetable issues had on the teachers' perception of success. Concern was raised over when and where Religious Education was to be taught. The teachers were not happy with less than ideal placement of lessons during the timetabling cycle or week. The mix of students enrolled at schools in the region is becoming problematic for the teachers. The high level of non-Catholic and non-church-going Catholics in attendance at Catholic secondary schools was thought to militate against catechesis as a purpose for the Religious Education and the teachers attribute their students' apathetic attitude and detached manner in Religious Education to this problem. Some teachers considered that the expectations of clergy, where they equated success with more active church attendance by students at the parish level, were not being realistic.

4.7   CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter analysed the research data collected from both the questionnaires and the participant feedback groups. The factor analysis confirmed the validity of the findings of the descriptive analysis. The data from the participant feedback groups both endorsed and enriched the findings from the questionnaire. The data showed a complexity of viewpoints regarding the nature and purpose of secondary Religious Education; and regarding what teachers consider are important factors in being successful in teaching religion in the classroom. There were a number of factors identified as both enhancing and inhibiting teachers' experience of success. The analyses of the data pointed to the following as important for success in Religious Education: appropriateness of religious constructs in charting a relevant Religious Education for youth, the prominence of attention to youth spirituality in estimating relevance for students, enhancing student spirituality, adopting an academic subject approach, promoting critical inquiry, attending to the personal dimension of students, the place for teachers' personal views, structural and staffing issues. All of these key issues will be considered further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the meaning and significance of the data reported in the previous chapter.   Its structure generally follows the headings for data analysis used in that chapter.

5.2   NATURE AND PURPOSES OF CLASSROOM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Through a focus on what constituted the successful teaching of religion, this research identified key ideas and themes in religion teachers' understandings the nature and purpose of Religious Education.   In general, there was positive endorsement of all the main religious purposes for Religious Education (e.g., handing-on the faith tradition, knowledge of religion, and fostering spiritual and moral development – together with endorsement of traditionally important religious constructs like catechesis, evangelisation and witness).   The differences in the means for religious purposes items were not usually great;   but given the large sample size, these differences may be at least indicators of (or pointers towards) different emphases that warrant further investigation.   The variance between items may also identify areas where there remained some ambiguity or uncertainty of purpose.

5.2.1   Support for the place of theology and Catholic teachings in Religious Education

The data in section 4.3.2 (part 1.1) showed a strong endorsement by the teachers of the purposes of imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith tradition and educating students in their faith, particularly in relation to spiritual and moral issues (88%).   Yet less than half the participants (33%) supported the item on knowledge and understanding of theology.   Where the item specified helping students to theologise, the agreement was 40%; and "where good Catholic theology" was mentioned, the support was 49%, but where "getting back to good traditional Catholic theology" was specified, the support dropped to 20%.   The responses showed that there were significant differences in views about the place of understanding theology as a purpose of Religious Education, depending on what sort of theology was being envisioned.   From the data, there seemed a high proportion of the teachers who questioned the idea of an authoritarian approach in trying to instil theology – or of trying to retain traditional theological understandings.   This expressed concern among the teachers also gave

the impression that traditional theology was considered out of date and as having little in common with the reality of student lives today. This concern could also point to some concern about determining the level of appropriateness and engagement of students with theology (cf. 2.5.2). At the same time, there were teachers who seemed to endorse such an approach. This pointed towards some polarisation of views on the place of theology in the purposes of Religious Education. These issues will be considered further on in the next chapter.

This same polarisation appeared to be evident in the mixed level of support for the place of the catechism of the Catholic Church within the purposes of Religious Education. These findings suggest that while the teachers supported measures they felt would enhance the personal spirituality of their students and acquaint them with the Catholic religious tradition, they were ambivalent about approaches that seemed to include the flavour of authority or traditional doctrines. This also highlighted some divergence of the teachers' views about the wisdom of seeing theological aspects as of principal importance in the teaching of religion; at least, it showed that some of these teachers may have felt uncertain about endorsing theological understandings as key indicator of successful Religious Education. Some possible explanations for these findings may include:

- Some of the teachers endorsed theology's link with success in the purpose of spreading Catholic ideas about God;

- For some of the teachers, theology seemed to have a negative connotation; perhaps they equated the term theology with the indoctrination of students, and possibly with the catechism and doctrinal approach to Religious Education that prevailed up until the early 1960s. This may also have related to the concern of some about not wanting to be perceived as indoctrinating students or as imposing beliefs and doctrines.

- For some of the teachers, there may have been a reluctance to endorse this construct too strongly because this might have given an impression that they were concerned only with dispensing knowledge and understanding – in this case of theology. Such a view may have been felt to be too narrow and not holistic enough.

- Some of the teachers may have been unsure about what theology means in terms of how it should figure in the outcomes of Religious Education.

Whatever the explanation for the views of individual teachers, the data suggest that there is some ambivalence, uncertainty and/or lack of clarity about the place of theology in the purposes of Catholic Religious Education.

The teachers showed a stronger inclination to equate success with ideas like developing in their students a familiarity with Catholic religious traditions and practices, and providing them

with meaningful experiences of Mass and the Sacrament of Penance. This also suggested that they were also interested in the experiential dimension to Religious Education. In addition, these emphases could be interpreted as highlighting a basic concern of teachers that their Religious Education be relevant to the lives of their students – where their spirituality could be nourished by the various expressions of Catholic spirituality; in turn, this could also be helpful in assisting students to identify with the Catholic tradition and consider possible commitment. A teacher from participant feedback group 3 put forward this view: "I have found that opportunities to expose students to expressions of Catholicism such as Mass and Reconciliation are important as I believe these experiences have enhanced my students' spirituality" (2007, teacher comment 3.4). Despite the apparent ambivalence about theology, these findings endorse the importance that the Catholic Church has placed on the role of the Catholic school in providing students with access to its religious traditions, doctrines, and worship practice (**Pope John Paul II, 1997**).

5.2.2 The place of scripture in the purposes of Religious Education

Reference to the scriptures has long been prominent in the curriculum and practice of Catholic Religious Education (Grace, 2002; Stead, 1997). Hence, it could be expected that the teachers would strongly endorse scripture usage by students as an indicator of successful teaching. However, the results in section 4.3.2 suggest that there was some uncertainty about how students' understanding and use of scripture might figure as a measure of success. This uncertainty, while not as evident as was the case for theology, may point to some of the teachers being neither comfortable with nor confident about the level of interpretation of Scripture required in Religious Education. There may also be some ambiguity about how they should use scripture in religion lessons. Some of the teachers may have considered its use as not of great importance, and as such, did not link it to their ideas about effective religion teaching. As a teacher from the first participant feedback group noted: "I don't think mastery of scripture is an essential element in being successful as an R.E. teacher. Sometimes it's helpful to back up a point of view but I don't place a heavy reliance on it in my lessons" (2006, teacher comment 1.40).

The results may also indicate the presence of the different orientations to teaching scripture that were identified in the literature review (section 2.9.1). However, the questionnaire items were not discriminating enough to support this interpretation. Stead (1997) noted that a teacher's use of scripture was often linked to its relevance to her/his own spiritual life. She identified factors that appeared to inhibit teachers' use of scripture in Religious Education.

These included inadequacy of guidelines, lack of teacher confidence, unchurched students and its perception of being boring by both teachers and students. The uncertainty about the place of scripture identified in this study may be, in part, related to the variation in the levels of qualifications and training of the teachers. McLaughlin (2005) considered that some Catholic religion teachers, in their handling of scripture, were largely unqualified to present it appropriately; and this may have contributed to negativity related to its use in the classroom.

Nevertheless, despite this evidence for uncertainty in purpose about scripture, the data showed that students' interest in scripture and their capacity for critical interpretation of scripture were endorsed as valuable components of successful teaching. This could also be interpreted as the teachers hoping that a study of scripture might enhance the personal spirituality of their students, and potentially enhance their engagement with the Church.

5.2.3   The personal relevance of Religious Education to students

The data presented in section 4.3.2, the Factor Analysis M reported in section 4.4, as well as the participant feedback group data (section 4.6) all highlighted personal relevance as a key element in the teachers' views of success in their teaching of religion. They indicated strong support for the belief that if students responded in a positive, thoughtful and/or inquisitive manner (especially to content of a contemporary spiritual, moral or social nature), then this was a good indicator of successful teaching. This suggested that the notion of making some connection with the students' personal spirituality was regarded as important; that meant establishing links with the experience, interests and needs of their students, in the hope that what was taught might be appropriated in a meaningful way. This thinking was strongly endorsed in the responses to the item about assisting students in developing meaning and purpose in their lives. This finding was congruent with the importance of this purpose as identified in the literature review (section 2.6.3). Presenting content in ways that were perceived as relevant to the present and future needs of students was a paramount aim for this group of religion teachers. One participating teacher in the first feedback group summed up this viewpoint – "One thing that I believe is important in being successful as a teacher is providing students with relevant material so that they can appreciate religion as offering some answers to life's questions" (2006, group 1, teacher comment 1.17).

The data also highlighted two important challenges for teachers in the use of content that had potential relevance for students (cf. section 2.6.3). The first was concerned with the selection of content topics. The content needed to have some perceived resonance with their students' life experiences and interests. It was hoped that they would be more naturally interested in content

that they felt was important for their present and future lives; and, consequently they might see benefit in engaging with and appropriating ideas that could help them make more sense of their experience. This would incline teachers to look for issues and content that could connect with their students' basic human spirituality (Rossiter, 2009a). Variance in the religiosity of the students is an important matter to be taken in consideration in dealing with this challenge. This variance can make it difficult to determine what content is likely to be most relevant to a group of students. The problem will be explored further in the next chapter.

The second challenge was associated with the professional competence of both the teachers and those responsible for diocesan religion curricula in presenting students with appropriate content that had some relevance to their future needs, while recognising that the students themselves actually had a limited perspective on life experience at that age. This may become problematic if there was a mismatch between the purposes of the teachers and those of the curriculum developers – depending on their different estimates of the needs of students. There was some indication in the data that this problem may exist where teachers' concerns to engage students through a critical study of contemporary issues related to morality, social justice and social action, were not matched in the religion curriculum which appeared principally concerned with traditions – with an orientation that could be interpreted primarily as 'institutional maintenance'. A teacher from the second participant feedback group pointed out "I get frustrated when students become suspicious of religion as a propaganda machine for maintaining the primacy of the Catholic Church" (2006, teacher comment 2.7). Maroney's (2008) research also identified this problem; he considered that, while the Church's moral teachings had an impact on students, as they were able to connect what the Church taught with their life situation, their overall response to Church teachings still appeared to be somewhat relativistic and individualistic. Crawford and Rossiter claimed that students tended to feel that the Religious Education they received was "out of synch with their spirituality (2006, p. 394)" (cf. Section 2.1.4.2).

The data in this study suggested that the idea of a relevant Religious Education was important for the participants. The interest and level of engagement of students were considered to be dependent to a significant degree on the extent to which they judged particular material and issues to be personally relevant. The need for a relevant Religious Education was endorsed by Hill (2004, pp. 125-129), Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 391), and Hack (2008, p. 99). Crawford and Rossiter (2006) proposed that in content selection "balance is needed and research information required to inform professional decisions about curriculum content (p. 393)." This issue will be considered further in the next chapter.

The research also highlighted teacher acknowledgment of the need to adopt pedagogically relevant teaching strategies which Crawford and Rossiter claimed "help students investigate the potential personal significance of content" (2006, p. 393).   This was summed up by a teacher from the first participant feedback group who commented.

> I have found success with my students when I present material in a way that students find thought provoking.   In doing so, it's important that the material is presented in a relevant context and students are given time to ask pertinent questions and discuss any issue they consider as important (2006, teacher comment 1. 23).

Within the participant feedback groups, relevance of both content and pedagogy were strongly supported (cf. section 2.7.3).   The data suggested that teachers considered the sponsoring of critical inquiry as particularly relevant for the students of today.   They are being educated to be critical consumers and learners through what is offered in other areas of academic endeavour in the curriculum;   this should also happen in Religious Education.   In his research on the teaching of scripture, Grace (2002, p. 22) supported the principle of pedagogical relevance, claiming that "being in rapport with contemporary culture and the interests of youth is regarded as an important constituent of pedagogic effectiveness".   The data also highlighted some criticism of topics that the teachers and students found dry and uninspiring, no matter what pedagogy was used.   As one teacher from participant feedback group one explained: "Let's be honest. There are topics that the kids find boring. They are just not interested.   I find these tough to teach when these are not relevant to where the kids are at" (2006, teacher comment 1. 41)

Even if religion teachers taught content that was acknowledged as relevant by the students, and even if creative pedagogies were used, the situation would still be likely to remain problematic because they still had to contend with a significant proportion of disinterested students (as noted in section 2.6.1).   Hill (2004, p. 117) identified this group as believing that "religion was irrelevant or unconnected with their own spiritual yearnings."

The notion of pursuing relevance in Religious Education was considered to be so prominent in the findings of the study that special attention will be given to this theme in the final chapter. The complex questions about how a relevant Religious Education might best be understood will be explored in detail.   Relevance will be used as a principal unifying theme for consideration of the implications of the study.

5.2.4   Religious Education as an academic subject

While the research data linked teachers' notions of the nature and purposes of Religious Education with the quest for religion as a credible academic area of study, this thinking did not receive overwhelming support from the participating teachers.   There was a small but significant number of the teachers who either did not endorse the adoption of an academic subject orientation for Religious Education or who were uncertain about the value of such an approach.   Some of the participating teachers believed that lack of academic pressure and provision of a more relaxed atmosphere were important in their teaching of religion, and one third did not equate lack of academic rigour with lack of success.   The teachers siding with this view point may have identified with earlier experiential and life-centred approaches to Catholic Religious Education (cf. Section 2.3.3) which presumed that believed that a more relaxed, informal, discussion-based approach was more relevant to student needs;   they may also have felt that an academic orientation was necessarily contradictory to a personal one – as if being academic and studious was incompatible with being personal and relevant.   They may have seen Religious Education as a low key alternative or complement to an academic curriculum.

It was evident from the overall response on this question that there was an inherent complexity in how the teachers viewed the academic study of religion.   This ambivalence and lack of support by some of the teachers for religion as a subject also indicated that, perhaps, they believed Religious Education to be something more than an academic pursuit – in other words an activity that engaged the personal faith of students which in their opinion could not be adequately situated within an academic study.   As one teacher from participant feedback group 3 pointed out, "I am frustrated with the re-assessment of the role that an R.E. teacher has to treat this area as an academic enterprise rather than a more relaxed laid back approach. Have we lost the heart and soul in efforts to engage the head" (2007, teacher comment 3. 7)?

They may have felt that the special emphasis on sharing faith insights in Religious Education tends to go in the opposite direction to what transpires in other academic subjects.

Even though the teachers were not united in their support for a subject-oriented approach to Religious Education, they did however use certain academic criteria to gauge the effectiveness of their teaching.   The criteria that gained teacher endorsement, centred on helping students become well informed and critical thinkers.   The teachers perceived the development and level of use of critical thinking by students in group work, discussion

activity and written work as good indicators of successful teaching.   Further relatively academic indicators included:

- challenging visual stimuli;
- effective use of worksheets by students;
- opportunity to write critically on issue orientated material;
- engaging students in quality research projects;
- student response to assignment and/or homework tasks;
- research tasks that focused on skill development.

These results supported the earlier mentioned statement about the teachers seeing students as critical consumers of educational material.   The teachers used quality stimulus materials (visual, digital or written) in an attempt to develop student awareness of how culture impacts on beliefs and attitudes;   and to promote a healthy critical outlook on spiritual and moral matters, in the hope that students might see their study of religion as relevant to their lives. The teachers also hoped that the use of such materials might incline students to consider that a Catholic viewpoint had something valuable to offer in developing meaning and purpose in life – as indicated in section 4.3.2.   For example, one teacher in participant feedback group 3 commented:

> I achieved a real feeling of success when the students were engaged in a critical appraisal of what they were taught in the classroom. In doing so, they consider what they do in their religion class as important as, or if not more important, than their other subjects. (2007, teacher comment 3. 1)

This quote highlighted the perception that if the teachers sought to present content in a way that prompted students to appraise its importance to their lives, then they were more likely to show some interest and engage in the educative process.   Crawford and Rossiter (2006) referred to lesson content of this nature as having the potential for "personal resonance" if it "has the capacity to engage students' thinking about implications for their lives" (p. 392).

The case for an academic subject oriented approach as the most appropriate for Catholic school Religious Education will be advanced in the next chapter;   and special attention will be given to the question of how an academic approach can at the same time be personally relevant for the students. (cf. section 2.4.5)

5.2.5   The impact of the timetable on teacher success in Religious Education

The data from both the free response section of the questionnaire (section 4.5.3) and the participant feedback groups (section 4.6.4) suggested that timetabling issues had an impact on teacher experience of successful teaching, it also provided some indication of how the subject religion is perceived by stakeholders.   The Sydney archdiocesan Religious Education

curriculum documentation mandated that the junior Religious Education course be assigned 400 indicative hours of teaching time. The data from the participant feedback groups suggested that the allocation of this amount of time for Religious Education had never been realised at their schools. This added to the dilemma faced by those seeking to promote the importance of Religious Education as a subject in the school when it had to compete with other key learning areas for time allocation. This is also problematic from the point of view of teachers who perceived that the rhetoric of Catholic education regarding the primacy of Religious Education in the school had not been matched by timetable practice. While claiming that Religious Education was a fundamental aspect that differentiated Catholic schools from state schools, Catholic schools still allocated it lesson time that was significantly less than that of many other subjects. This situation would also not be lost on students who could deduce that Religious Education was not considered as important as other subjects – for example English, Mathematics or Science. A teacher from group 3 commented:

> As far as I am concerned, the rhetoric of those in charge saying "religion is important – it's the reason for our existence" rings hollow when they put religion classes on in awkward times of the day and don't give us enough time to cover all that we should (2007, teacher comment 3. 9).

Further, a perceived lack of quality teaching time may have led to some negative consequences such as: the programmed course of study in religion could not be completed each year; schools may have resorted to being selective of the units on offer, and as a result, not all of the programmed units would be taught; to cover all the content, the depth of treatment of units has become shallow and the teaching may have become somewhat haphazard.

At what times during the timetable cycle that Religious Education was taught was also considered to have impacted on the teachers' chances of successful teaching. The data indicated a strong feeling of disillusionment and resentment from those who had to teach religion at awkward times – like after lunch, especially on Friday afternoons. Some of the teachers claimed that a large percentage of their teaching time occurred after lunch when they had to deal with relatively disinterested students who were even more unsettled and unfocused at that time. Given the complex array of factors, including the influence of relatively poor parental and community perception of the status of religion in life, it was likely that the teaching of religion would be naturally difficult at any time. The periods after lunch would serve as a multiplier of the student disinterest and lack of application. One teacher from participant feedback group 1 highlighted this issue:

> I have struggled with my year ten students this year. I have to teach them five times over a two week period, four of these are straight after lunch, one of which is Friday. For the first time in a long time, I have found it difficult to get them to focus and settle down to do any work (2006, teacher comment 1. 34).

Crawford and Rossiter noted that there was a problem where schools were not sensitive to the "psychology of the learning environment" and that something can be done to alleviate this problem even if it cannot be solved completely; there was a need for "acknowledgement of the realities within schools and community that have potential to undermine any program that is not alert to the problem and does not attempt to address it (2006, p. 308)".

The issues raised here have to do with the academic subject credibility of Religious Education. In the next chapter this question will be considered further to show how it is connected with the subject-oriented approach and in turn with a relevant Religious Education.

5.2.6 Religious Education as a means of developing a student's personal faith and spirituality

Promoting faith development has long been considered to be one of the key purposes of the Catholic school's mission (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006). It implies the enhancement of the personal religious faith of young people in the context of the Catholic Church's faith tradition. The results in this study showed a mixed reaction on the part of teachers to the construct faith development (cf. sections 1.5 and 1.6 of 4.3.5).

While its appropriateness as a long term goal for Religious Education was not disputed, its use as an immediate objective or outcome – especially as an indicator of success – seemed to be problematic. This may be in part due to the generality of the term which does not easily translate into precise outcomes. Even if students considered that some aspect of Religious Education affected their faith development, it would be difficult for them or their teachers to articulate clearly what this meant. As noted in the participant feedback group data (4.6.2), comments about a positive contribution to faith development would mean one or more of the following: that students appeared interested and engaged in a topic; that there was some emotion associated with sharing personal insights; that students or teachers felt that the study had fostered students' personal development in a general way. As one teacher from participant feedback group 3 noted,

> "I felt that I was successful when the work we done in class engaged the students, led to some sharing of viewpoints and left me with a feeling that this had contributed to their personal faith development in some way, that maybe it strengthened the faith of my students' (2007, teacher comment 3.6).

The participating teachers seemed to understand that, by its very nature, a student's level of faith commitment was a very personal matter which was not open to scrutiny by others – including teachers. While student comments about their experience of Religious Education could provide teachers with some indication of its perceived relevance to their personal spirituality, this would not necessarily be identical with change in faith development. While Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development provided one way of interpreting progressive development in the psychological competencies associated with the believing process, the teachers in this study did not use such a scheme as a template for gauging faith development in their students. Crawford and Rossiter (2006) considered that "faith development is too distant from classroom activities to serve as a useful immediate functional goal" (p. 413). This interpretation was pertinent to the views of the teachers in this study where faith development was referred to in a general way as a desired goal. One teacher from feedback group 2 said, "I think that this goal of promoting faith development is a bit out there so to speak – we will never see the fruits of our labour" (2006, teacher comment 2.4). But nothing was said about how the construct might be used in measuring whether or not their teaching in particular lessons had been instrumental in directly affecting their students' faith development; in other words faith development as a goal did not have the immediacy of other goals like critical thinking which were more readily identifiable with recognisable indicators in student activity. It was therefore likely that there is some level of uncertainty and confusion among religion educators as to how they might interpret this construct in terms of its meaning, achievability and practical implications for Religious Education. The idea of fostering students' spirituality was apparently a more workable purpose for the religion teachers than faith development – even though the latter was still endorsed. This sentiment was implied in a comment from a teacher from participant feedback group one.

> I have experienced success in R.E. when I engaged the students and they got more
> direction and meaning from what was done in class. It has stopped them saying
> "R.E. is gay" (2006, teacher comment 1.21).

The research identified strong links between the idea of guiding students in the exploration of their spirituality and the perceived student engagement or connection with content and process in religion classes – in turn the teachers felt that when this happened, they too were connecting with their students. The teachers' interest in promoting students' spirituality suggested that they were conscious of the importance of spirituality as a sustaining framework within which young people could identify and interpret the spiritual and moral dimensions to life (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Hughes, 2007). The teachers were also ready to identify student interest, discussion and responses to various activities as indicators that they were

exploring spirituality – and this was interpreted as an indicator of successful teaching. As one of the participant feedback group teachers pointed out:

> I taught scripture, and gauged through the student response to both questioning and discussion that they found the meaning/message of what Jesus taught relevant in their lives (2007, group 3, teacher comment 3.7).

5.2.7 Discussion and sharing of personal/faith insights in Religious Education

The research results (section 4.3.2 and section 4.5.5) strongly endorsed the view that teacher facilitation of discussion in which students were able to share personal insights and/or personal faith, was an indicator of success in enhancing students' spirituality. Group and class discussion were used by the teachers to try to facilitate such personal exchanges. Discussion was also strongly endorsed as important for the following purposes: seeking to clarify the meaning of material covered; in clarifying values; and in providing opportunities for the critical appraisal of issues. This suggests that the participating teachers considered that discussion was very important for Religious Education, and probably more important than it was in other subject areas. This prominence given to discussion was consistent with the experiential, life-centred approach (Section 2.3.3) that still appeared to have retained currency in contemporary Catholic Religious Education.

The responses of students to the topics and issues being discussed were interpreted by the teachers as a barometer of the relevance of the content and process; in other words, they were trying to gauge whether the discussions were connecting with the students' need to find some answers to their questions about the meaning of life. The participant feedback group data highlighted this interpretation, as evidenced in the comment by one teacher who pointed out that she had experienced success in her teaching when students were "prepared to listen and discuss in a meaningful way the topics being discussed and presented" (2006, group 1, teacher comment 1. 27). The research also showed the teachers were more likely to allow the discussion to continue at length in a lesson once they appeared to get the students interested and engaged in the topic. This was consistent with earlier judgments made about how important the teachers saw their connecting personally with their students through the discussion of topics they felt would be beneficial for the students' spirituality (cf. section 2.7.3).

The research also indicated that a majority of the teachers endorsed as valuable the opportunity to share their own personal beliefs with students. For some, they may have viewed this personal sharing as a way of demonstrating how they had found meaning and purpose in their lives

through the application of church teachings to various issues that have confronted them. It was also possible that this could be interpreted as witnessing.

Those who appeared unsure or who disagreed with this item may have sensed that there were potential problems in thinking of sharing their personal faith as a key indicator of successful Religious Education; they would not want to see the disclosure of the teachers' views and beliefs as the principal content. They may also have considered this to be a form of imposition of teacher beliefs on the students and that a teacher would be unethical in seeking to influence students to identify with their personal views – whether or not they considered such views consistent with Church teaching (cf. section 2.3.5).

The results on this question are consistent with Crawford and Rossiter's (1985, pp. 56-61; 2006, pp. 293-297; p. 375) claim that the place of personalism (seeking to have intimate personal sharing in the classroom) in Religious Education remains problematic. They did not judge personal interactions as such to be inappropriate, where this occurred in a free and respectful environment; but they labelled as manipulation teachers' endeavours to seek personal disclosures from students which subtly put psychological pressure on students to contribute at such a level. They also argued that a code of teaching ethics was required to spell out in more detail when it would be appropriate for teachers to refer to their own views as educational content in religion lessons.

Because the problems with personalism in Religious Education identified by Crawford and Rossiter (1985, 1988, 2006) appear to be evident in the thinking of the teachers surveyed in this study, further attention will be given to the relationship between personalism and relevance in the next chapter.

5.2.8 Reflective and prayerful activities in Religious Education

The data in section 4.3.2 and section 4.6 showed that the teachers strongly linked successful teaching with the provision of opportunities for students to experience school liturgies in the hope these would enhance student belief and religious practice. Student appreciation of time set aside for meditation or quiet reflection was also strongly endorsed. The teachers reported that students enjoyed these times and they considered that students could use these opportunities to reflect on their lives. As one teacher in participant feedback group 3 noted, he experienced success when he observed "students who learn and appreciate the use and power of individual prayer and meditation during a guided meditation" (2007, teacher comment 3. 12).

A significant number of the teachers indicated a linkage between liturgical, prayer and reflective experiences and successful teaching. This endorsement of Catholic expressions of faith community was linked with the key religious and ecclesiastical construct, Education in Faith, discussed earlier in the literature review (section 2.1.2.1). Students' identification with Catholic expressions of spirituality was also seen to be related to their search for meaning and purpose. This suggested that experience of formal religious spirituality was regarded as a valuable part of the process of nurturing their basic human spirituality. This is a significant point which will be considered further in the next chapter.

5.2.9 The role of the teacher in Religious Education

The research data showed that the teachers' thinking about success in Religious Education included the ideas of being spiritual role models and witnesses to Catholic beliefs and values (see part 1.10 of section 4.3.2). This endorsement of the religious construct witnessing also highlighted an aspect of the teachers' sense of responsibility for handing on the Catholic tradition. This was congruent with the Church's stated position that "the prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teacher, as individuals and as a community" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, n 26). The Catholic Church expected that its teachers would imitate Christ in expressing the Christian message by what they said and by their every action and behaviour (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977).

The teachers' personal and professional relationships with students were regarded as important factors in the Religious Education learning process; if there were quality relationships, the teachers felt that their students might then attach greater value to what was presented (see table 4.7). Maroney (2008) reported that students considered that their religion teachers had a dual role in disseminating information about the tradition and in being credible and approachable role models. Sharing personal faith and beliefs, and giving witness to one's personal faith were well supported by the teachers but the variance on the pertinent items suggested that there was some uncertainty and disagreement about what was involved. This result may well reflect the same problem identified by Wanden (2009, p. 278) who considered that too great a reliance on sharing one's faith may lead to an inappropriate emphasis on the teachers' own beliefs as the principal content for Religious Education, as well as leading to an excessive personalism which created an expectation among students that personal disclosure was a key requirement in Religious Education – and in turn, this could result in students feeling an unethical psychological pressure obliging them to make self-

revelations. This same problem was identified in the conduct of senior school retreats (Tullio, 2009, p. 225). Witnessing as a generic term then becomes problematic because of the range of views it can encompass. For example, while a Catholic school may espouse the belief that its teachers should give witness to the gospel values of love and forgiveness, there may be instances where this is contradicted by the actions and words of a teacher with a significant personality conflict with one or more of her or his students; the discrepancy between theory and practice may end up evoking cynical responses about witnessing by students and parents, as well as by staff.

Hence there is an important dilemma to be resolved for Religious Education about the appropriate place for witnessing and faith sharing. While a natural personalism in classroom interactions may well help make Religious Education more relevant for pupils, an excessive or required personalism may lead to ethically questionable teaching procedures because of manipulation and indoctrination. This issue will be addressed in the final chapter.

5.2   PEDAGOGIES: TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES USED IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The teachers' choice of pedagogies has considerable influence on their students' learning experience. The data highlighted perceived links between the terms student engagement, the teachers' pedagogical knowledge and successful teaching.

5.3.1   Student engagement in Religious Education

The research by Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, and Richardson (2003) on student achievement indicated that teaching had an inherent relational quality. This research showed that a proportional relationship existed between how the teachers related to their students and how students seemed to engage with their learning. The teachers were aware of the importance of student engagement in the learning process. It was evident that they looked to perceived levels of student engagement as a key indicator of successful teaching, as suggested by Bishop et al., (2003). The data further suggests that the teachers were appraising the type, quality and scope of the questions asked by the students as signs of positive engagement. Student questions were believed to provide valuable feedback as to the level of intent and interest of the students.

A sizable majority of the participating teachers indicated that cooperative learning activities were favoured pedagogies that were considered to promote relevance in student learning – as evident in the perceived level of critical engagement with content. How the teachers

structured the patterns of student to student interaction impacted on how well students learned, how they related to the teacher, to each other and their self-esteem (Johnson & Johnson 1997). This research highlighted perceived links between the effective use of cooperative learning strategies and the promotion of gospel values.

5.3.2   The place of technology in Religious Education

The Catholic Church has sought to encourage religion teachers to use similar methods and resources that are employed in other key learning areas of the curriculum;   and this will help to promote religion as a credible area for academic study (Holohan, 1999; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1997).   The teachers in this study reported the use of various technological aids to assist them in the delivery of educational content.   The use of DVDs and videos, which students found interesting and/or informative, was strongly endorsed because of their potential for relevance and for promoting student engagement.   The teachers saw the use of such aids as enriching both their teaching and student learning by tapping into media that young people used on a day-to-day basis as reference points for making purpose and meaning in their lives.

Two thirds of the participating teachers linked the appropriate student use of information technology and computers with successful teaching.   But this was not as strong an endorsement as might have been expected and there was a significant minority who were either ambivalent about, or who disagreed with, the proposition equating the integration of information technology use with successful teaching.   Nevertheless, these results suggested that the teachers' belief in their capacity to teach effectively with technology was a significant factor in the determination of patterns of computer use in the classroom (Albion, 1999).   The data also points towards a number of religion teachers who appear to lack confidence in their technological competence to include relevant information technology techniques in their pedagogical repertoire.   Some might consider that use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) can enable a more relevant and meaningful presentation of content to an already technologically advanced group of students.   But there is probably some ambivalence about equating use of ICT with personal relevance.   This is a question that needs further specific investigation than was possible within this study.   More will be said about the advantages, potential and possible problems with the use of ICT in Religious Education in the next chapter.

5.3.3   Selective use of resources in Religious Education

The selective and effective use of library resources was one of the indicators of successful religion teaching.   Many of the students within the diocesan schools had ready access to computers and ICT in their school libraries;   there was a noted tendency for them to gravitate to the ICT that was available by preference to more traditional methods of acquiring information to complete study tasks.   This could be problematic for the teachers who were either not trained in, or not conversant with, the use of ICT in education.

The diocese purchased sets of religion textbooks as a significant investment in Religious Education to promote student (and parent) access to the theology and Catholic beliefs and religious practices.   The data, in part 2.1 of section 4.3.3, indicated that only 30% of participating teachers linked the regular use of these textbooks with being in some way helpful in Religious Education.   They endorsed a selective use of textbooks as beneficial in promoting student engagement.   Part of this positive support for the use of religion textbooks may be attributed to the fact that having a textbook reinforced, in the eyes of both the school community and parents, the view that religion was to be accepted as an academic subject like other subject areas;   the set student texts may have helped enhance the credibility of Religious Education as an important component of the academic studies on offer in the curriculum.   These results and interpretations are consistent with the findings of Rymarz and Engebretson (2005) that linked teacher use of textbooks with improvements in student knowledge, attitude and performance.

Nevertheless, the selective use of textbooks by religion teachers remains somewhat problematic for Church authorities and those responsible for the current diocesan Religious Education curriculum.   The religious curriculum documentation referred to various pages within the *To Know, Worship and Love* textbooks and to suggested teaching and learning strategies to cover the prescribed outcomes of the course for each year.   While this may be seen as encouraging the use of the prescribed textbook by teachers for lesson use, the listing of page references may be perceived by teachers that certain sections of the textbook are considered to be more pertinent than others in meeting the prescribed outcomes, thus implying the need for religion teachers to be selective in their use of the text.   The focusing on certain pages of the textbook in the documentation may result in limiting the potential use of this resource and, in turn, it could become a negative outcome for those who supported the use of these texts in the hope that their use may lead to the establishment of a textbook driven Religious Education curriculum within schools.

While each year level of the textbook series covers the units listed in the syllabus, there is far more material supplied than is necessary to meet the outcomes, given the timetable constraints placed on religion. The overall volume of content and the apparent digressions in some of the textbook chapters from the listed topics in the guidelines may act as a deterrent to the more extensive use of these texts by the teachers. For example, there are seven topics listed in the Year Seven syllabus, and in the textbook there are 18 chapters used to cover these topics. The first seven chapters of the text covered the first topic of the syllabus: A7-1 Overview of the Old Testament. This sort of problem with the student texts will be discussed further in the final chapter.

5.3.4 Teacher directed activities in Religious Education

The teachers endorsed the use of guest lecturers and presenters as successful elements in Religious Education (see part 2.2 of section 4.3.3). These experiences seemed to interest the students and engage their attention. While the Factor Analysis L pointed towards the teachers' belief in the attainment of compliance with faculty expectations as important for success, keeping strictly to the program time schedule of lessons was not considered so important. Following prescribed lesson plans was not endorsed as an indicator of success. These results indicate that the teachers attached importance to the fulfilling of their obligations regarding curriculum documentation; they were indicators of their concern to satisfy the professional standards and requirements mandated by the Board of Education for school registration and accreditation.

5.4 OTHER STUDENT-CENTRED AND TEACHER PROCESSES AND GOALS EVIDENT IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

5.4.1 Student disinterest in Religious Education

The survey results on student-centred processes and goals in table 4.7 showed that student disinterest in what transpired in the classroom was perceived as militating against successful teaching. To address and to reverse this phenomenon has been a perennial quest of religion teachers. Student disinterest seemed to be more problematic when the student cohort was largely 'unchurched' and nor ready to identify with the hierarchical Church as a faith community. The participating teachers considered that to spark student interest in classroom Religious Education, there needed to be content that was both more thought provoking and relevant than current curriculum content. Relevant content was thought to have more chance of linkage with their spirituality. A teacher from participant feedback group 1 noted:

I experience success when I am well prepared and seek to make each lesson relevant to student interests and experience. It is particularly hard when the content is uninspiring, dry, and detached from their lived experience (2006, teacher comment 1.31).

However the teachers did not consider that student disinterest and detachment from the Church always had a detrimental impact on their teaching.

5.4.2   Student Sunday Mass attendance

The research identified an ambivalent response on whether the purpose of getting students to become regular church-going Catholics should be considered as a key criterion for judging successful religion teaching. The factors affecting Mass attendance by young people are many and complex. On the one hand, some Church authorities (e.g., Catholic Bishops of NSW and the ACT, 2007) have implied a criticism of Catholic schools for not checking and reversing the cultural slide away from participation in Catholic parishes – the implication is that Catholic schools have both a responsibility for, and a competence to affect positively, young people's Sunday Mass attendance. The research showed that some of the teachers tended to endorse this view of clergy who regarded Religious Education in Catholic school as unsuccessful because it was not producing and maintaining a strong and active youth presence in Catholic parishes. On the other hand, the teachers who did not accept such a judgment were in effect rejecting both premises about the Catholic school's responsibility and educative capacity with respect to young people's engagement with the Church. In other words, a successful Religious Education in the Catholic tradition was considered to be not enough in itself to persuade young people to join a Catholic parish.

Wanden (2009, p. 276), in his study of the views of New Zealand Catholic Religious Education teachers, considered that parental attitude and parental religious practice were strong determining factors in the low priority placed on regular attendance at Mass by youth; and this mirrored the broader societal attitude to religion. He concluded that religion teachers naturally had little or no influence on most of the key variables that affect this issue, and that their role was more to educate their students religiously with scope for proposing and encouraging participation in the Church – but not to try to coerce them to attend Mass.

The relationship between Religious Education and young people's Mass attendance is an issue where there are conflicting understandings of role, process and potential outcomes on the part of the different stakeholders in Catholic schooling; thus there are conflicting understandings of the nature and purposes of Religious Education and as a result, different

perceptions of what constitutes success (cf. section 2.3.6). The view that holds Religious Education responsible for youth Mass attendance appeared to operate mainly out of a paradigm of institutional maintenance where the handing-on of the faith and maintaining Church participation were the main priority; the school was viewed as a faith community much like a parish and as an ecclesiastical institution like a seminary. By contrast, the alternative view – that did not see Religious Education as closely linked with Mass attendance – operated more out of a paradigm of enhancing student spirituality which may or may not affect Mass attendance; this view tended to regard the school as a type of community of faith – but not like a parish where attendance was totally voluntary; and it saw the school as a semi-state educational institution of partnership between state and church (with dual responsibilities and accountabilities), and not like a totally ecclesiastical institution such as a seminary.

This research showed that a sizeable majority of the sample of teachers appeared to identify with the alternative view. Their view of Religious Education implied that the potential positive influence on young people's participation in the Catholic Church was a long term hope and not a measurable immediate outcome. It was one aspect of the religious construct faith formation which was better understood as a long-term aspiration or hope that may result from a good Religious Education.

The conflicting teacher interpretations of the Catholic school's role on the question of influencing student Sunday Mass attendance was consistent with the current mix of many different levels of faith commitment and religious practice within the school milieu (for both students and teachers), where participation in parish life had changed from the basis of family cultural heritage to one of conscious choice; in other words, a change from cultural convention to personal intention.

5.4.3   Teachers' pedagogical competence

From the data, it can be inferred that when the teachers felt confident in their knowledge and in their selection of what they believed to be the most effective pedagogy, they felt successful; their perception of efficacy was also related to the notion of engaging students in a meaningful way in studying religion. Their feeling of efficacy was enhanced by involvement in an interactive and collaborative way with their peers; this helped build their confidence and competence through a mastery of pertinent knowledge, selection of appropriate content, and use of effective pedagogy. The teachers regarded mentoring as an important form of professional development. Both confidence and competence could be enhanced through

interaction with their peers and collaboration with colleagues in the various stages of the planning process.

5.5   KEY PROCESSES AND GOALS FROM A RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

The data that related to the teachers' perception of key processes in terms of Catholic religious constructs and other key spiritual and personal development processes were displayed in table 4.8.   There was variance in teacher opinion about the place of key religious constructs in perceptions of success.   While most of the religious processes were well supported, there was evidence of some ambiguity or lack of clarity about the place of constructs like catechesis, evangelisation, mission and so forth in understanding the nature and purpose of Religious Education.   This ambiguity may have been a partial cause of some indecision and frustration in the teaching of religion.

5.5.1   The place of catechesis and evangelisation in teachers' understandings of success in Religious Education

Catechesis: The literature review (Section 2.2.2) showed that the Church, through its official documents such as *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) and its curriculum documentation, emphasised the significant role that the Catholic school should have in providing catechesis.   Catechesis was identified in the data as a key religious construct for expressing the purposes of Religious Education;   it showed that a small majority supported catechesis as an indicator of success (cf. section 2.3.2).   A third indicated that they were uncertain about this.   The participant feedback group data also showed the linkage between catechesis and success was supported by a minority.   What was evident in the overall data was the lack of a strong endorsement of catechesis as a key indicator or success; and this underlined the ambivalence among the teachers about this religious construct.   This was consistent with Finn's findings (2009, pp. 142-144) that in a sample of teachers and parents there was a general endorsement of catechesis and evangelisation as important aims for Catholic Religious Education – but at the same time, they regarded the constructs as confusing and generally not helpful for understanding the nature and purposes of Religious Education.   Generally it could be expected that the notion of endorsing catechesis as a purpose would be associated with endorsing a catechetical approach to teaching – that is, presuming that all participants are committed believers and proceeding on the basis that the activity would involve the sharing of personal faith.   The questionnaire was not set up to discriminate between these two ideas.

<u>Evangelisation</u>:   The construct evangelisation was more strongly endorsed by the participating teachers than catechesis as an indicator of successful teaching.   This was evident in both the questionnaire and the participant feedback group data.   As one teacher explained:

> I experienced success when I notice that the light of Christ is switched on in those students who are uncommitted to even Christianity.   It is very motivating to me to find my students gaining insights into the teachings of Jesus and saw these as applicable to their own life situation. (2007, group 3, teacher comment 3.4)

Nevertheless, there remained a significant number of the teachers who remained uncertain about whether they would consider evangelisation as a key indicator or success.

This ambivalence about both the religious constructs could mean that the teachers tended to endorse the normative views of Religious Education given to them by authorities while at the same time feeling somewhat uncomfortable about them – but they were not willing to dismiss these terms as of little or no significance.   This ambivalence may also suggest a basic lack of familiarity with these terms.   In addition, it may indicate some lack of confidence in the expressed normative position on catechesis and evangelisation as a realistic perception of the present reality in Catholic schools;   in other words, use of catechesis and evangelisation as key purposes for Religious Education did not appear to acknowledge adequately the diversity in faith affiliation, levels of religiosity and secular spirituality in the students and their families.   Some teachers were probably considering other constructs as more realistic and informative in the judging of their success in teaching religion.

Some Catholic educators will have been influenced by recent thinking about "new evangelisation" as a "second" application of this process to address specifically the secular spirituality of youth with a renewed effort to prompt a religious responsiveness in young people to turn to greater engagement in Catholic parishes (Catholic Bishops of NSW and ACT, 2007; Engebretson et al., 2008).   It is likely that this usage too is met with some ambivalence on the part of religion teachers, particularly if it is perceived in terms of a church 'recruitment drive' which would tap into the problem of using Mass attendance as a measure of success in Religious Education as discussed above in 5.4.

These considerations suggest that there is a need for all stakeholders in Catholic Religious Education to use these religious constructs like catechesis and evangelisation with due caution.   There is a need for more specificity in the meanings being intended.   For example, teachers who may be ambivalent about the expression new evangelisation may have less difficulty with the term if it were spelled out as the offer of an unconditional help to enhance

and support the basic human spirituality of young people whether or not they were considering engagement with a local parish. This interpretation of new evangelisation harmonises with particular aspects of evangelisation enunciated in the 1976 seminal papal document *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Pope Paul VI, 1976) – for example:

[Evangelisation should not] ignore the importance of the problems so much discussed today, concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world. (n 31)

it [is] undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving. (n 36)

Evangelisation must touch life: the natural life to which it gives a new meaning. (n 47)

5.5.2 The place of the religious constructs witness and ministry as indicators of success in Religious Education

Witness and ministry are two prominent religious constructs used by Church authorities in stressing the importance it accords education in Catholic schools and, in particular, Religious Education. This is evident in Catholic Church documentation where teachers are exhorted to imitate Christ in expressing the Christian message in word and action (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) – as noted above in 5.2.8, and covered in the review of normative Catholic literature in section 2.1.2.5.

Witnessing: Witnessing was one process that the teachers endorsed strongly as an indicator of successful Religious Education. There were two forms of giving witness that the teachers could identify with. One was through deed where the teachers attempted to live out the gospel values such as faith, love for one another, reconciliation, servant leadership and hope through Jesus Christ, in a visible way. The other was by word where the teachers shared their views with others, in particular their students. For this second aspect, what was said above about the sharing of personal faith in section 5.2.6 is directly applicable to this discussion of witnessing.

A third of the participants indicated that they felt unsuccessful when they were unable to give witness to their personal faith (see part 4.1 in section 4.35). This suggests that the teachers, who endorsed witnessing, may tend to perceive in religion teaching an opportunity to share or proclaim their own viewpoints. This will often be congruent with Church teaching; sometimes it may not be. As discussed in section 5.2.6, this is where witnessing and faith sharing as a process can become problematic as this may result in a distortion of Church teaching (Pope John Paul II, 1997, n 6). Concentrating on the teachers' own beliefs as content in Religious Education is regarded as problem and not healthy witnessing – as will be

discussed in more detail in the next chapter.   Too much focus on witnessing may have been the starting modus operandi of some untrained religion teachers who were recruited to teach religion for no other reason other than that they were Catholic and were good people.   They may have felt that it was enough that they give witness to gospel values.   And if this was their main understanding of Religious Education, then it was bound to become problematic because it substituted witnessing for teaching – and their personal views became the de facto principal content;   and their feeling of success would have been associated with opportunities to share their personal views and with students responding in agreement.   Aspect one of witnessing – the quality of the individual evident in behaviour – applies to the teacher all of the time at school, including teaching in the classroom.   Aspect two of witnessing may contribute to religion teaching in a healthy way as a part of the process (cf. chapter 6), but if this becomes the central focus or if done excessively, Religious Education is seriously compromised because witnessing would be replacing teaching.

Ministry: The data indicated teacher endorsement of Religious Education as a ministry of the Church along the lines indicated in the consideration of ministry in the literature review (section 2.4.4).   Ministry was synonymous with the idea of religion teachers being entrusted with the handing-on of the faith tradition and being active partners in the evangelising mission of the Church.   In addition, ministry was felt to include the aspect of witnessing by being role models for students in their day-to-day living.   It is worth noting that some participating teachers may not have clearly differentiated between classroom Religious Education and the holistic impact of Catholic education in the areas of ministry and witness.

Despite the endorsement of both witnessing and ministry as valued processes, the data showed some ambivalence and lack of support for them as indicators of successful Religious Education.   While it was not within the scope of the survey to discriminate carefully on this issue, it appeared that some of the problems noted above may well have been affecting the hesitance of some participants about giving unequivocal endorsement of these religious constructs as purposes on Religious Education.   They appeared to have doubts about the relevance of the construct witnessing for classroom Religious Education even if it was felt to be pertinent to the whole life of the school where the teachers had a responsibility to be good Christian role models.   Also, they may have considered that no amount of testimony or verbal witnessing in the classroom, or of good moral example in their own lives, was sufficient in itself to persuade students to adopt a faith commitment.   Some of the teachers may have tried witnessing as a classroom pedagogy and found it wanting, and perhaps even disillusioning –

particularly in the light of student disinterest in the subject and their detachment from the faith community.

5.5.3 The construct of faith development as an indicator of success

Attention has already been given to the construct faith development and to young people's spirituality as reference points for teachers' views of success in section 5.2.5 dealing with key ideas in thinking about the nature and purposes of Religious Education. Given the explanations in that section, it is likely that, while the principal focus of faith development is the growth of a personal religious faith, the teachers have also interpreted it as connected with young people's growth in understandings about the meaning and purpose of life. Student feedback as to whether or not an educational activity had an impact on their faith development was reported as an important indicator of successful Religious Education, even though it was not possible to identify what such student feedback meant in any detail apart from stating that their faith had been affected. For example, one teacher reported: "I felt success when any one of my students decided to be active in their faith" (2006, group 2, teacher comment 2. 8). Two of the three participant feedback groups referred to the importance of the teacher's role in enhancing the faith development of students.

There was a significant minority of the teachers who were ambivalent about the significance of this construct for their view of success; this was also reflected in the participant feedback groups. As noted in section 2.2.5, this uncertainty probably arose from confusion about what constituted faith development, and from ambiguity in the way the term is used in Religious Education discourse. Some of the teachers may have identified personal interchanges and personal sharing of insights as instances of faith development. Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 378) considered that this implied a false dichotomy about faith – by labelling personal activities such as retreats and meditations as faith development while the ordinary classroom teaching of religion activities was regarded as less important because it was concerned just with knowledge. The data also indicated that many of the teachers appeared to see students' faith development as part of a personal change process, regarding it as an activity not open to public scrutiny. These teachers may have considered faith development of students as an implied hope that may happen over the course of their lives, and that it was unrealistic to think of trying to detect any positive increment in faith during the time they spend at school.

5.5.4 Youth spirituality as reference point for judging successful Religious Education

As noted in section 2.2.5, youth spirituality is an emergent construct that appears to be becoming more prominent as a reference point for indexing successful Religious Education than the construct faith development. This impact on the thinking of teachers has probably been affected by the significant decline in student religiosity over the years, where only a minority of young people are now regular church goers. If it has become increasingly unrealistic to think of effective Religious Education in terms of changing young people's religious practices (cf. section 5.4.2), then it is likely that the notion of youth spirituality could well become a more attractive goal which can cover the spiritual dimension to their personal development, whether or not they are formally religious. Youth spirituality (Section 2.4.2) is particularly concerned with youth processing meaning and purpose of life and how they make sense of their experience of life. Student feedback (including interest and level of engagement) was again a significant indicator for the teachers that they were being successful with respect to the goal of enhancing student spirituality. This was strongly endorsed by the teachers. As one teacher commented:

> Student feedback is important. I feel successful when my students respond inspirationally, critically and intelligently to lesson content, indicating the time spent together has helped them make sense of something in their lives. (2006, group 1, teacher comment 1.33)

Two of the three participant feedback groups noted the importance of the provision of opportunities for the spiritual development of students. There was also some evidence of uncertainty in a significant minority of the participating teachers about how Religious Education might relate to youth spirituality. This may be due to a natural level of ambiguity in the use of the term spirituality and to the difficulties in contemporary discourse about the spiritual where there appears to be an increasing divergence between the spiritual and the religious (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 179). For example, some educators tended to think of spirituality as the result of a privatisation of religious practice; this would see students' spiritual development as part of their overall personal development which was a private concern and not measurable in any tangible way. Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 208) considered that today's young people know they have a real choice about what elements of religion, if any, they will appropriate and include in their spirituality.

Because of the growing importance of youth spirituality as a key reference point for Religious Education, it will be considered in more detail in the final chapter, particularly as regards its link with the notion of relevance in Religious Education.

5.5.5 Handing-on the Catholic tradition through Religious Education

The research indicated a strong endorsement by the teachers of the purpose of educating students in the Catholic faith and in spiritual and moral issues.   This endorsement also included knowledge of the Christian story and of the inherent personal, spiritual challenges of Christianity.   This supported an education in faith understanding of Religious Education which was prominent in diocesan Religious Education curriculum materials on the diocesan Religious Education website (2009) where the authorities proposed that it "is a curriculum model which meets the challenge and the vision of an education in faith perspective."

The data indicated that there was ambivalence about shared Christian praxis as a method for teaching religion.   This was not surprising as this approach, while prominent in some Australian Catholic dioceses, was not promoted by the diocese where the research was conducted.   This was not to say that teachers did not employ some elements of the shared Christian praxis approach or even of critical pedagogy (Darder et al., 2004) in their teaching as result of prior success in the employment of a critical approach in other curriculum areas.

The data indicate low agreement with the item about communicating the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.   While this publication was originally written for bishops and writers of catechetical materials, other uses have evolved.   The teachers may view this publication as more of a teaching resource for the teachers than a reference book for students. Students may access the catechism as part of a research activity when it was appropriate to do so, but the teachers did not see sustained student access to the catechism as a key aspect of Religious Education.   The teachers may also have considered that the use of the catechism would have proved difficult for students, especially in junior classes, because of its ecclesiastical language.

The exposure of students to various Catholic liturgical practices, prayer, reflection, meditation, the Mass and sacraments as ways of experiencing Catholic spirituality was strongly endorsed.   The teachers also generally believed that providing opportunities for students to experience religious practices may encourage an appropriation of Catholic religious spirituality to some degrees;   and they hoped that this might encourage some to commit to further participation in the worshipping community of a parish.   The variance in the results on these questions also suggested that there was some hesitation about seeing religious practices as key elements in successful Religious Education.   It is possible that some may have seen this as part of the same problem identified in section 4.4.2 about student Mass attendance as a measure of success.   There was evidence that there is a minority of

religion teachers who have a natural concern to promote young people's engagement with the Catholic church, but they are at the same time reluctant to see this as the key measure of successful Religious Education;   in other words, they see the fostering of young people's spirituality as more fundamental than a goal where principal focus appears to be on institutional affiliation and engagement.   This group would not see the teaching of religion from a specifically catechetical perspective – but from one more generally concerned with enhancing student spirituality.

5.5.6   Social justice and social action linkage to success in the teaching of religion

The areas of social justice and social action were strongly endorsed by the participating teachers.   The reason may lie with their perception that students have not only appropriated the philosophy of Catholic social action, but have also been motivated to convert their new found knowledge and belief into practice.   The teachers saw such involvement as giving students a more grounded meaning and purpose to their lives.   They considered that the active engagement of students in trying to build a better, more caring society was an example of their students acting on their learning; and the promoting the Catholic way of living as having relevance in their lives.   The teachers also believed that this engagement resulted in their students tending to be more 'switched on' in class as they derived satisfaction from contributing to the greater good and the realisation that their learning had value and connection to life.   The underlying hope was that, as a result, their students would become proactive in the living out of the gospel values of love and compassion for others;   and that this may translate in the students intentionally being inclined to become more proactive in, and committed to, expressions of the Catholic way of life.

5.6   OTHER KEY SPIRITUAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

5.6.1   Knowledge of other world religions;   and, meaning and purpose of life as indicators of success in teaching religion

The participating teachers strongly endorsed the processes attaining knowledge of other religions, and knowledge of the meaning and purpose of life as key indicators of successful Religious Education.   The teachers considered students' interest in finding meaning and purpose in their lives as an important factor that motivated their quest for relevance in Religious Education.   This interest may have translated into the students' desire to examine the paradigms offered by other religions to provide answers to questions about the meaning of life.   The teachers believed that student knowledge of other religions may in fact enrich their

understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices, and lead to a greater student religious commitment.

5.6.2 Critical study of religion as an indicator of success

The teachers endorsed the adoption of a critical study of religion by their students as an important criterion for success and effectiveness. Demonstration of students' critical thinking could be evidenced in both written and oral forms. The teachers considered these aspects of student performance as measurable, and that these measures indicated some interest in thinking about the relevance of a Catholic viewpoint on life.

The teachers tended to regard discussion as a way of promoting the development of the critical thinking process in Religious Education. While student discussion that reflected this critical process may have resulted in some stimulating debates, their contributions may or may not have reflected their own value positions. It would be inappropriate for the teachers to try to judge the quality of their teaching by the level of personalism reflected in these contributions (Crawford & Rossiter 2006). In the next chapter, this issue of the place of personalism will be considered further in relation to the teachers' quest for relevance.

5.6.3 Study of contemporary spiritual and moral issues and critical interpretation of culture

The data indicated that the study of contemporary spiritual/moral issues and critical interpretation of culture were endorsed by a large majority of participating teachers as good indicators of success – probably because they felt that these aspects were important in making their teaching relevant and in helping engage students (see part 4.2 of section 4.3.5). The teachers saw the informing of students about contemporary spiritual and moral issues as important in assisting them to apply what they have been taught to everyday life and to help clarify their own beliefs; it was also helpful for their growing appreciation of the views of others, and for their increased understanding of the Church's teachings on these issues. As one teacher from participant feedback group 2 explained: "I experienced success when my students expressed genuine interest in what the Church had to say on various issues" (2006, teacher comment 2. 17).

While the raising of student awareness of the shaping influence of culture on people's beliefs and attitudes was accepted as a good indicator of success, there was also some uncertainty evident in the responses about the items on this topic. This ambivalence may be connected to

a lack of professional development explaining the value of such an approach to Religious Education; or possibly to a lack of teacher knowledge about the issues in question.

There appeared to be some linkage between the ideas of promoting personal relevance and using a critical, problem-centred approach. Crawford and Rossiter (2006) argued that content had the potential for personal resonance when it engaged students' thinking in terms of what implications this material may have for their lives. Some of the teachers believed that a strong critique of culture may help foster thinking about the personal relevance of religion. One teacher from participant feedback group 2 noted, "I experienced success when the kids I taught found what was covered in class made sense to them personally – they had the realisation that religion may count in life" (2006, teacher comment 2. 18).

5.7 THE CONNECTION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO PERCEIVED SUCCESS IN RELIGION TEACHING

The data confirmed the value that the teachers placed on professional development activity as a means of promoting good practice in teaching. The teachers considered professional development opportunities that provided one or more of the following benefits were strongly linked to their notion of successful teaching:

- a strategy that enhanced the teaching and learning;
- an amalgam of practical strategies aimed at improving classroom practice;
- opportunities for teachers to develop their own spirituality.

In the open ended responses, the teachers elaborated on how these professional development opportunities contributed to better teaching. The underlying consensus centred on the high level of satisfaction experienced when new content and pedagogical knowledge proved to be both relevant and useful in their present situation. This was consistent with the views of Bezzina (1996) and Smyth (1987) about the positive influence of professional development activities on teachers' performance.

It is concluded that more frequent professional development opportunities that focused on content and pedagogy would be beneficial. Given the conclusions reached earlier in this chapter, it is also proposed that professional development on youth culture would prove helpful. The other key factor would be the ready accessibility of such programs. This topic will be considered further in the next chapter.

The data suggested that while a majority of participating teachers linked their past teacher training to their success as religion teachers, and similarly their postgraduate study in Religious Education, there was a degree of ambivalence about the significance of prior

training and postgraduate study. Perhaps some felt that their past training and subsequent professional development in Religious Education were not extensive enough. Perhaps too, the extensive cultural change and secularisation in Australia, together with technological advancement, and changes in educational theory and practice may have eroded teachers' confidence and perceived ability to address the various challenges in teaching religion in secondary schools. While the research identified teachers' judgments about the value of professional development, there was not scope to analyse the influential factors in any detail

5.8   LINKS BETWEEN DIOCESAN AND SCHOOL DOCUMENTATION AND SUCCESS IN TEACHING RELIGION

The data suggested that the teachers considered themselves to be good practitioners when they demonstrated compliance with authoritative requirements set at various at school – by the Religious Education Coordinator, the Principal, or the Curriculum Coordinator, through the completion of registers, meeting various deadlines, involvement in school religious activities, and/or completion of set tasks. This seems to highlight the level of professionalism evident in the teaching ranks today; becoming accustomed to meeting government mandatory requirements may be a contributing factor.

The literature review (section 2.3.5.1.) referred to positive impact that diocesan guidelines had on Religious Education in terms of content, suggested teaching and learning strategies, and assessment of learning (both formative and summative). However data in this study indicated that the teachers in this particular diocese did not endorse strongly the link between consulting these guidelines and successful Religious Education. Whether or not this occurred in other dioceses is yet to be determined. The teachers said that the religion curriculum was in some ways inappropriate to the needs of students. They considered it to be dry, uninspiring and boring. This view of the curriculum, held by some, may explain why a minority of the teachers did not see that consulting guidelines would promote successful teaching. Just over a quarter registered uncertainty about this item. While over half of the teachers regarded the guidelines as having some background influence (in setting the parameters for topics or background reading), a third were uncertain about such influence. The data identified some ambivalence in the teachers about giving systematic attention to diocesan guidelines as significant in informing their teaching. This may have been related to the problems with the use of guidelines noted in the literature review by Barry (1997), Malone and Ryan (1994, 1996), and Rossiter (1997). This has implications for a review of the role of guidelines and syllabi for Religious Education – this will be considered further in the next chapter.

School program documentation was endorsed as valuable by a majority of the teachers because they considered that it assisted them in achieving a good level of competence in their teaching, particularly in terms of suggested teaching strategies. Also the provision of lesson plans assisted some of the teachers but this use was not considered as a major contributor to the experience of success.

5.9 PROFESSIONAL READING AND PROFESSIONAL INTERACTION WITH COLLEAGUES

There was a reasonably strong level of support for the notion that the professional reading of books and journals enhanced teaching. This suggests that a majority of the teachers had access to both books and journals on Religious Education. But there was also some ambivalence in the responses on this question. This may have been simply a problem of the availability of time for reading because of the extensive demands of their professional role in schools, or perhaps also some lack of enthusiasm for professional reading. The data could not discriminate.

The questionnaire data showed that interaction with colleagues attracted a high level of support by participating teachers. Having the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern such as appropriate teaching strategies, as well as the sharing of ideas, resources and advice were valued highly by the teachers. Similarly there was strong endorsement of the value of departmental meetings, especially where this provided professional development. On-the-job experience also attracted strong support as a component of successful teaching. The teachers valued the formative influence of peer interaction as well as practical experimentation with content and pedagogy. The Religious Education Coordinators (RECs) played a significant role in peer interaction. The participating teachers identified RECs support in supplying quality resources, sharing of ideas and strategies as an important ingredient in success.

5.10 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS

While the questionnaire was not constructed with items that would suit a factor analysis, this procedure when performed on the main groups of items was nevertheless useful in providing validation of the results and conclusions from the descriptive statistics and the analysis of the participant feedback group qualitative data.

Factor Analysis K highlighted 3 distinct clusters of questionnaire items that were labelled as student engagement, compliance with faculty expectations and academic orientation. Student

engagement was linked to the perceived interest and enthusiasm of students for the work presented by the teachers. This clustering of items implied teacher judgment of success when they could see their students' participation in the learning process evidently helping them make more sense of life issues. Signs of student engagement were regarded as indications that Religious Education was relevant to students' spirituality. The other two clusters of highly correlated items highlighted a subject orientation in Religious Education. They indicated teacher awareness of the demands of religion as a subject. These two clusters confirmed the consistency of comments about the importance of religion as a credible academic subject as a key element in thinking about what constituted successful Religious Education as explained in sections 5.2.3 and 5.3.1.

While Factor Analysis L identified four clusters, only two of them had enough statistical strength to be considered as having a significant bearing in explaining the teachers' perception of success. These clusters were labelled as teacher use of resources and use of technology. Both of these clusters suggested that the participating teachers sought ways other than face to face teaching to engage their students. The two prominent formats were the use of information technology and viewing pertinent programs on video/DVD. The teachers appeared to consider these important in their efforts to make the topics they were teaching as relevant as possible for their students.

Factor Analysis M showed high levels of inter-correlation through the 28 items used. The factors identified indicated that relevance, evangelisation, catechesis, education in faith and education about world religions were prominent in the thinking of teachers about successful Religious Education – and this implied their importance in understandings of the nature and purpose of Religious Education. The identification of these clusters was significant in confirming the validity and reliability of the conclusions reached from analysis of the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire data. This factor analysis also identified the existence of support for the notion of handing-on the faith or the institutional maintenance of Catholicism as a key theme in Religious Education among some of teachers. These teachers may have seen their role as enculturating their students using a catechetical model – even if such a perspective may have been limited in terms of relevance to the perceived spiritual needs of students. The cluster of items labelled student pro-active learning suggested that teachers tended to think about success in terms of providing opportunities for their students to be pro-active in their learning. This ties in with the importance of relevance as discussed earlier in the chapter.

Teacher training, professional development and further professional experience were three identifiable clusters that emerged from Factor Analysis N. The factor loadings of the items from each of the clusters suggested that the professional development theme was prominent in the thinking of the participating teachers about successful Religious Education; it also underscored the value and utility of their past and present professional development. Again these clusters confirmed the conclusions drawn from the earlier analysis.

The results of the factor analyses were useful because they were consistent with the conclusions drawn from inspection of the descriptive statistics and the analysis of open-ended and participant feedback group data. All of this multiple sourcing of data and dual forms of analysis added to the reliability and validity ascribed to the data.

The factor analyses did indicate some strong correlations between questionnaire items as well as some inter correlation between clusters of items. The factor analyses pointed to the complexity and interplay of the various issues present in secondary Religious Education, and to a degree of variance among religion teachers as to how they perceived successful teaching as well as to how they understood the nature and purpose of Religious Education. The analyses confirmed that relevance and student engagement were two particularly prominent ideas in the thinking of teachers about successful Religious Education which they considered had a positive impact on their students.

5.11   CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the meaning and significance of the research findings. The results indicated that while there was a diversity of opinion among the participating teachers regarding the nature and purpose of Religious Education, there was strong support from these teachers linking success experienced in the classroom with student and teacher perception of personal relevance where the content and method of addressing issues considered to be relevant to the present and future needs of students. The teachers also confirmed youth spirituality as a vital component to be considered in the engagement of students in religion lessons.

Religious Education as an academic subject was identified as a significant issue in the discussion of the results along with pedagogical issues, the place of technology, discussion and the role of teachers in such an enterprise. The importance of professional development and collegial support was also linked positively to the experience of success by the participating teachers in meeting this academic challenge.

The following chapter, Chapter 6, will review and conclude this study.   It will consider further the issues raised from the research and it will speculate about how the problems might be addressed.   It will also propose implications for the successful teaching of religion.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

This research study has been one of the first that has given a significant voice to religion teachers in expressing their views about what constitutes success in Religious Education. Success is understood in terms of achieving what is valuable in Religious Education.   Hence, their understandings of success imply views about the nature and purposes of Religious Education – views with which their thinking about successful Religious Education is consistent.

This chapter will discuss the wider meaning and significance of the views of the sample of secondary religion teachers.   It will examine further the key issues identified in the previous chapter and it will suggest how greater attention to these issues in both the theory and practice of Religious Education in Catholic schools can lead towards a better consensus about how Religious Education might be more successful and more relevant in meeting the needs of young people.   In doing this, the researcher will take account of the research findings and the interpretation of issues in the literature review in proposing his own view of Religious Education as one that should inform Catholic secondary school Religious Education theory and practice.

The final section of the chapter will offer recommendations for the further development of Catholic Religious Education, together with suggested areas for further research.

6.2   DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH UNDER THE UNIFYING THEME OF A 'RELEVANT', 'SUBJECT-ORIENTED' RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As elaborated in the previous chapter, a number of key principles and issues were emphasised by the participants, as summarised below.   But in each of the first two items, while the principles were strongly endorsed, there was also a significant minority view which pointed towards some remaining ambiguity and lack of substantial consensus about these issues.

1.   The acknowledged importance of the <u>religious and ecclesiastical constructs</u> that underpin the purposes of Religious Education in Catholic secondary schools.
2.   Religious education as a <u>credible academic subject</u> in the school curriculum.   A subject-oriented approach to teaching religion is required, with an open, student-centred, inquiring and information-rich approach to teaching, and which encourages critical thinking and evaluative skills.
3.   Religious education as <u>relevant to young people's needs and life experience</u>.

Hopefully, it will make connections with their life experience, as well as helping them to put their life experience into a spiritual/religious perspective;   it can thus contribute to their search for meaning and purpose in life.

4.   Religious Education needs to enhance <u>young people's personal spirituality</u>;   in turn, this needs to take into account the general characteristics of contemporary youth spirituality.

5.   Religious Education needs to have a <u>healthy personal dimension</u>.   Being able to discuss personal insights can make a valuable contribution to student personal and spiritual development.   Both teachers and students contribute to the personal dimension of Religious Education.

6.   A <u>favourable structural organisation</u> and timetabling for Religious Education in the school curriculum have an important bearing on successful Religious Education.

7.   The <u>professional training and development of religion teachers,</u> especially with regard to pedagogical content knowledge, has a significant bearing on successful Religious Education

This researcher considers that a significant element behind the ambiguity about nature and purposes noted above for items 1 and 2 has to do with the difficulty that a number of religion teachers have in reconciling these two principles with principles 3 and 4.   For example, there appears to be no difficulty or hesitancy with religion teachers' endorsement of the importance of having Religious Education relevant to young people's lives and spirituality.   But there are different estimates as to whether an academic subject orientation can be relevant. Specifically this brings principle 2 into conflict with the combination of 3 and 4.

Hesitancy about item 1 may have to do with teacher thinking that the purposes of inducting young people into the Catholic faith tradition are not sufficient to meet all of the spiritual needs of contemporary youth.   The teachers know that the majority of their students (including a significant number who are not Catholic) will never become practising members of a Catholic parish.   Hence, enhancing and resourcing young people's personal spirituality (implied within principle 4) is regarded as a further significant element in Religious Education that is needed over and above the purposes associated with familiarising them with Catholicism.   This view does not substitute for, or diminish, the importance of the aim of handing on the Catholic tradition;   but it complements that aim and suggests that this 'enhancing personal spirituality' purpose needs further clarification and more affirmation in the normative purposes for Catholic secondary school Religious Education.

The data reported and discussed in chapters 4 and 5, expressing teachers' views was not sufficiently discriminating about these problems.   Hence, this researcher will extrapolate from the data and from the interpretation of issues in the literature review to propose a way of addressing the problems identified and charting a way forward for Religious Education theory and practice.

The researcher's own view of what Catholic secondary school Religious Education should entail does not go beyond existing theory and practice; but it proposes a combination of three key contemporary ideas within a conceptual formula that tries to eliminate the polarities about whether or not secondary school Religious Education should be approached as an academic subject, and whether or not such an approach can be relevant to young people's lives and spirituality.

These polarities in purposes can be reduced by relating and integrating in a harmonious way the concerns associated with items 2, 3 and 4 above. In other words, ideas about *academic subject*, *relevance* and *youth spirituality* need to be brought together into a constructive whole that helps resolve the apparent conflict in purposes. While being a credible academic subject, Religious Education can at the same time be personally relevant to the needs of young people, and it can enhance and resource their personal spirituality no matter what their formal religious practice. Being academic and personally relevant are not exclusive as some religion teachers appear to think. In turn, the development of this line of thinking this could lead to greater practitioner consensus about what is thought to be the most appropriate understanding of the nature and purposes of Religious Education in Catholic secondary schools.

In arguing this case, *relevance* will be used as a key unifying and organising theme. Hence, at the beginning of the discussion, this term will be revisited with a view to showing its importance as an integrating principle.

Often, the most influential thinking underlying the participants' views of successful Religious Education appeared to be about how it might be helpful in promoting the personal and spiritual development of students. While achieving this goal was not open to ready identification, let alone measurement, it showed that what was important for the teachers was the belief that their teaching was directed in a way that hopefully would benefit their students both spiritually and morally. The responses to many of the questionnaire items, as well as to open-ended questions and in the participant feedback groups, could be interpreted as making most sense within a *student-centred framework* – where the process and content of Religious Education were directed towards making a difference to students' lives. This was applied both to those who were religious and church going, as well as to those who had more tenuous links with Catholicism (In addition, the student body included increasing numbers who were not Catholic). The key student-centred contributions from Religious Education were understood in two dimensions: in terms of giving students access to, and experience of, their own Catholic religious tradition; and in helping them find meaning and skills for negotiating

their own personal path through life.

One way of naming this important student-centred framework was to describe it as the purpose of trying to make Religious Education as *relevant* to young people as possible. In other words, there was the desire to make it beneficial to the spirituality of youth whether or not they became practising Catholics as adults. This purpose went beyond the ideas about Religious Education in the recent Catholic Bishops' document *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads* (2007) which seemed to put the emphasis on promoting increased engagement with Catholic parishes and arresting the decline in Catholic Sunday Mass attendance as a principal goal of Religious Education. It is not that promoting such engagement is inappropriate – but for the teachers this seemed to be not a sufficient or adequate purpose for encompassing what they hoped to achieve in Religious Education.

The notion of the *relevance* of Religious Education can be summarised with respect to:-

- how it meets the spiritual, moral and identity needs of young people;
- how it makes meaningful connection with their experience and life world;
- how it makes meaningful connections with their cultural religious tradition;
- how it may help them chart their personal way through life with all its complexities; and problems;
- how it helps them learn how to identity, interpret and evaluate contemporary spiritual and moral issues.
(Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, pp. 391-408)

This understanding of relevance will be used for discussing the conclusions and recommendations of the study. This theme helps link together the key issues noted in the outline below.

6.2.1 Relevance from the students' perspective: The relevance of Religious Education for contemporary youth spirituality

    6.2.1.1 The relevance of Religious Education in addressing the basic human spirituality of youth;

    6.2.1.2 Utilising youth spirituality as a useful interpretive framework for informing and estimating relevance in Religious Education;

    6.2.1.3 A subject-oriented approach to Religious Education with both content relevance and pedagogical relevance.

6.2.2 Relevance from the educational perspective: To be perceived as personally relevant, Religious Education needs to be a credible academic subject in the curriculum

    6.2.2.1 Personal relevance and academic subject credibility;

    6.2.2.2 Promoting Religious Education as an academic subject;

    6.2.2.3 Academic credibility for Religious Education as reflected in the staffing, structure, organisation and timetabling of the subject;

6.2.2.4 The status of the Religious Education school leadership role and the academic credibility of Religious Education.

6.2.3 Relevance from the perspective of the theory and practice of Religious Education

6.2.3.1 Problems for understanding the nature and purpose of Religious Education related to the use of ecclesiastical and religious language;

6.2.3.2 The need for a reconceptualisation of Catholic school Religious Education that gives more attention to being relevant to youth spirituality and to the possibilities and limitations of the classroom context.

6.2.3.3 Relevance and the place of Theology in school Religious Education

6.2.4 Relevance from the perspective of classroom teaching: The resourcing and teaching of Religious Education

6.2.4.1 Further clarification of the use of outcomes in diocesan Religious Education guidelines;

6.2.4.2 The use of student texts: How their use in successful teaching might be enhanced;

6.2.4.3 The use of information and communications technology (ICT) for enhancing both the relevance and the successful teaching of religion.

6.2.5 The relevance of Religious Education from the perspective of the professional development of teachers

*   *   *   *   *   *   *   *   *   *   *

6.2.1 Relevance from the students' perspective: The relevance of Religious Education for contemporary youth spirituality

The notion of being relevant to students was prominent in the thinking about what constituted successful Religious Education by the teachers surveyed in this study.   The need for relevance was also highlighted in recent Australian and New Zealand research on Religious Education by White (2003), Finn (2009), Maroney (2008) and Wanden (2009).   The theme of relevance is also prominent in much contemporary writing about Religious Education, often in terms of an underlying assumption that does not need to be articulated because of the basic concern of Religious Education to promote the personal, spiritual and moral development of young people – for example, in books on Religious Education by Grimmitt (1987, 2000), Jackson (1997, 2004), Crawford and Rossiter (2006) and publications concerned with youth spirituality such as Engebretson (2007).   Crawford and Rossiter (2006) gave special attention to articulating what relevance could mean for Religious Education, and in differentiating content relevance and pedagogical relevance.

6.2.1.1   The relevance of Religious Education in addressing the basic human spirituality of youth

A key to both the planning and evaluation of potential relevance for Religious Education lies in an understanding of contemporary youth spirituality – encompassing the diverse ways in which they may identify a spiritual and/or moral dimension to life.   It is diverse, experiential,

and cannot be articulated precisely;   it refers to the ways in which youth construct meaning and identity;   and thus it is at the core of their personal development.   This presumes that one can identify general characteristics of the spirituality of young Australians that can be taken into account, even if it is acknowledged that not all individuals will fit the pattern – young people will range across a spectrum from a formal religious spirituality to a rather secular spirituality that appears more subjective, eclectic, individualistic and lifestyle oriented (as investigated and summarised in chapter 2, section 2.4.2).   Before expanding on a view of Religious Education as relevant to contemporary youth spirituality, some important qualifiers need to be addressed about the appraisal of what is thought to be relevant.

A successful, relevant Religious Education could be regarded as meeting two requirements: firstly, a realistic understanding of youth spirituality as the 'spiritual starting points' of students;   and secondly, the attempt to 'engage' students' spirituality through content and process that are hopefully perceived as pertinent to their experience and understandings while prompting them to consider new ideas and issues.   The word 'hopefully' was used because there is no absolute criterion for determining what will be relevant and no particular pedagogy that will ensure it is achieved;   tentative judgments about relevance need to be developed in the light of a number of considerations, including student views.

1.   Student perceptions of relevance: What students perceive as relevant will be important to determine and pay attention to;   but the notion of relevance for Religious Education needs to be larger than what the students themselves would identify as relevant.   For example, with their limited life experience they may not yet be able to make wise judgements about all they need to know and experience with respect to religion and life.   If their judgement about relevance is strongly affected by what they enjoy and dislike in Religious Education, then while this will provide useful information for educators, it may well cover a limited range of issues that are primarily of subjective and existential interest.   Also, because of a general widespread cultural negativity about religion, their judgments with respect to many religious matters (for example, church history) are likely to be dismissive.   If students were given the total say about relevance, many may well be likely to propose that Religious Education should be optional, giving them the opportunity to avoid it altogether.   If Religious Education was perceived as more concerned with ensuring the continuity of Catholicism and the handing-on of the Catholic faith than with addressing student needs, this perception would not incline students to see the subject as relevant.

2.   <u>Variance in student religiosity</u>:   The students who are regular church-goers are now in a minority in Catholic schools (Rymarz & Graham, 2006a, 2006b).   While it remains important to provide a Religious Education that enhances their religious spirituality, there are problems in religion curricula that seem to imply that all students either are, or should be regular church-goers.   These curricula are written primarily from an ecclesiastical perspective which, in the main, does not extend beyond concerns to hand-on the religious tradition and to promote engagement with the Church.   Rossiter (2009a) proposed that there needs to be wider acceptance of the secular spirituality of the majority of youth in Catholic schools without judging it in deficit terms such as un-churched, secular or non-religious.   He considered that people had a basic, human, psychological spirituality that was a precursor to a religious spirituality, and that Religious Education needed to give more attention to this human dimension of spirituality – whether or not young people were going to engage with a local community of faith.   Having elements in the religion curriculum that try to address this basic level of spirituality does not mean that it substitutes for content more aligned with traditional religious spirituality;   neither would this compromise the needs of the religious youth who could benefit equally from work related to basic human spirituality.

Students' perception of what is relevant in Religious Education may well be related to their level of religiosity.   For students who are religious and who are actively engaged in a local community of faith, formal religious content, for example in theology and scripture, may naturally be regarded as more relevant to their lives than would be the case for students who are not religious.   The notion of critical interpretation of culture and the study of contemporary spiritual and moral issues could be regarded as having potential relevance for all students – both those who are religious and those who are not.   Relevance should not be associated rather exclusively with spiritual and moral topics that are not evidently religious. The potential for relevance to basic human spirituality of such topics should not preclude the possibility that formal religious material can be perceived as relevant not only by religious students.   If formal religious content is presented with a pedagogy that helps students link the study of content with life experience, then it may also have potential life relevance for students who are not formally religious.

What was said here about the value of a relevant Religious Education to both religious and non-religious students would also apply to students in Catholic schools who were not Catholic.   Further detailed consideration is needed for the implications for Religious Education in the presence of students who are not Catholic.   It is beyond the scope of this study to go into this question any further.

3.   Educators' perceptions of relevance: Religion teachers and those responsible for religion curricula have to weigh up various sources and judgments about what constitutes relevance. While taking into account student views, they have accountability to the Church for educating young people in their religious tradition.   Hence, whether or not students become active church members, they have a right to a basic knowledge and understanding of their cultural religious heritage.   But in the weighing up of views that may be conflicting, educators need to give principal attention to the situation in item 2 above so that Religious Education endeavours to be as relevant as possible to the majority of students.

4.   Addressing basic, human spirituality in Religious Education: Without the need to change the Catholic secondary school religion curriculum radically, educators can make significant adjustments in the teaching approach that take into account contemporary youth spirituality. For example, as noted in chapter 2 section 2.4.2, a prominent starting point for youth spirituality is their interest in what affects them in the here and now;   they are likely to be more concerned with lifestyle than with spirituality as such.

In taking such spiritual starting points into account, teachers would not make unrealistic assumptions about their students' religious affiliation.   In terms of content and method, special attention could be given to the identification and evaluation of contemporary spiritual and moral issues.   Such an approach would indicate to students that the subject was directly concerned with the spiritual and moral issues facing youth – evidence that it was not exclusively concerned with Catholic religious traditions.   Similarly, a study of religious traditions could be approached from the standpoint of resourcing young people's spirituality with the culture that was their birthright – whether or not they were going to make significant use of it later in life.

It needs to be acknowledged that there is no automatic formula for determining successful student engagement in Religious Education, even though one might expect that contemporary issues would be more likely to attract their interest than theology (an interest in theology would be something to be expected as more of interest to those in adulthood).   Hence looking for indicators of personal engagement can be problematic.   Educators need to do whatever they can to provide a relevant Religious Education for their students, but they need to acknowledge that their own paradigmatic views of the importance and relevance of religion and Religious Education are not likely to be congruent with those held by their students. Also, teachers can set out to make the process of Religious Education more relevant to their students;   but they cannot make the Church itself relevant for them.   The spirituality of the

teacher will often be distinctly religious and not similar to the spiritualities expressed by the students.

There must be some acknowledgement of the different spiritual frame of reference out of which many young people operate. The purpose of Religious Education, therefore, is to enhance and resource student spirituality (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 396), whether this is relatively secular, less inclined to be part of the church, or formally religious and associated with active engagement in a parish.

This view of Religious Education in Catholic schools is thus broader in purpose than that of just handing-on the faith tradition through seeking to achieve the set knowledge, skill and value outcomes of the religion curriculum. Attention given to contemporary spiritual and moral issues and attempts to relate different aspects of Religious Education to the lived experience of students are intended to increase the personal relevance of the whole process. Hopefully this emphasis would assist them to become more reflective and critically evaluative of their own personal experience as well as that of others; in addition, it could help them become more aware of the potential impact of culture on beliefs and values. Hopefully, too, this evaluative activity could help them see how a Catholic worldview and elements of religious spirituality could contribute to the process, giving a broader perspective to the personal and social context of contemporary spiritualities.

A Religious Education that tries to engage student spirituality, as suggested above, could help young people in discerning the meaning and significance of both their personal experience and their experience of the Catholic tradition. The critical evaluation of cultural influences could also help provide them with a more relevant way of accessing the values and beliefs of the Catholic Church. If a case is to be made for Catholicism to young people who are uncertain about possible religious commitment, this approach is probably the most appropriate way of doing so. As will be suggested below, this thinking about how to address youth spirituality can be translated further into both the theory of Religious Education as well as to content and pedagogy.

6.2.1.2 The use of youth spirituality as an interpretive framework for informing and estimating relevance in Religious Education

An understanding of contemporary youth spirituality has potentiality as a key area of thinking or framework that can be used for proposing and estimating relevance in secondary school Religious Education. In other words, various questions, content and methods in Religious Education can be considered in terms of their relationship with youth spirituality; and this

relationship can often be the crucial factor in decision making.   Having such a framework is consistent with the proposal of Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 404) that "religious educators need an understanding of spirituality and identity issues that will serve as an interpretive background to their educational work and personal interactions with youth".

As indicated in section 2.4.2 in chapter 2, spirituality is linked with the way people make sense of life;   there is a significant overlap between the constructs spirituality and personal meaning (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006).   Spirituality is where people integrate rational discourses and non-rational modes of understanding and experiencing to help them make meaning of their lives and of the reality they experience.   The non-rational refers to the experiential dimension of spirituality which cannot readily "be described by exact terminology or by concepts" (Minney, 1991, p. 391).   Ideally, the part of Religious Education studies related to spirituality will allow students to consider and hold these different dimensions in creative tension.

Giving special attention to what has been described above as basic, human spirituality acknowledges that there is a significant need to address the ways in which non-religious youth will encounter spiritual and moral dimensions to life.   Just providing them with a study that revolves relatively exclusively around Catholic religious traditions and practice will not be adequate, because many of them will have no later involvement with the Church.   But this is not to say that the concepts of religion and faith are no longer relevant in the lives of students. Religious practice and beliefs can be considered as the formal expression of spirituality referenced to religion.   Teacher efforts to educate students in Catholic beliefs and practices can enhance the spirituality of both religious and non-religious youth by providing them with a Catholic-influenced scaffold for viewing the world.   It is one baseline for spirituality that they might assimilate or not, but it should draw their attention to a religious interpretation of reality.

This proposed approach does not appear to compromise in any significant way the spirituality of young people who are religious.   For example, it should still help enhance the religious spirituality of those who have been identified as core Catholic youth – those young people who participate in a Catholic parish – as described by Rymarz (2004), Rymarz and Graham (2005, 2006a, 2006b).   Rymarz and Tuohy (2008, p. 47) described young Catholics who were religious and were practising members of a parish, and they considered that Religious Education needed an emphasis on providing them with opportunities to express their religious spirituality;   this they considered was part of the religiosity of the Catholic school and it was

considered to make a positive contribution to the spirituality of religious youth. The proposed approach to enhancing the basic human spirituality of youth should be beneficial to all youth no matter how religious they were. Also, this approach would complement and not substitute for or eliminate the expression of Catholic spirituality that should normally be part of a Catholic school.

Various key ideas in Religious Education can be considered in terms of how they sit with understandings of youth spirituality. For example, the process of faith as a "believing activity, and believing in a revealing God" (Moran, 2009, p. 15) can be viewed as a constructionist activity. Fowler's faith development theory described faith as "a mode of knowing", and as "giving purpose and goal to one's hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions" (Fowler, 1995, pp. 11, 14). His description points to faith as a dynamic entity as it strives to make sense of one's understandings in the light of one's experiences. Christians believe that faith is a gift from God. From this perspective, the nurturing of the gift of faith is a lifelong activity, where at some point in time, it was hoped that each believer would come to a realisation of this gift together with its acceptance as a principal motivator for life. While for many youth the spirituality implied in their way of life is almost independent of their traditional religion, this does not necessarily mean that they are giving up identification with their religion, but rather they see no real need for participating in formalised religious practices; they may see these as optional, cultural expressions of spirituality. Schweitzer (2006, p. 91) identified this as the 'individualised' religion of young people; he considered that they made a distinction between "their own faith" and the "faith maintained and taught by religious institutions"; this they did while taking for granted that all individuals have the right to shape their own lives "according to their own wishes and life plans" (p.90) – they were reluctant to be told by the Church what they should do.

Hence the experience of Religious Education in Catholic schools for students should be as noted in the previous section – an unconditional resourcing of their basic human spirituality for life, together with access to the traditional spiritual resources of Catholicism whether or not they choose to make use of them.

Adopting youth spirituality as a framework for appraising relevance in Religious Education would be an acknowledgment of the reality of the student milieu that the classroom religion teacher faces. It would involve acknowledgment and acceptance of the ways students perceive, understand and process their reality in a positive way and not in terms of a negative or deficit model (for example as in the unchurched). It would help teachers interpret, and not

be distressed by, the student responses in the classroom that showed disinterest. It would provide them with more realistic ways of understanding, interpreting and dealing with a range of life issues.

With an understanding of youth spirituality as their principal guide, religion teachers could re-interpret some of the more traditional purposes for Religious Education. In attempting to engage students in a critical discourse about spiritual and moral issues they would be addressing basic human spirituality. Evangelisation and catechesis could be reformulated by using the following three levels of potential student engagement, taking for granted that the crucial factor would be the students' own personal freedom:

- **Psycho-emotional level of engagement:** Addressing basic human spirituality could be interpreted from a religious perspective as a *pre-evangelisation* where students were helped educationally in their concerns to find meaning and values in their life situation. They may appropriate some values that (from a religious perspective) could be labelled as a gospel value orientation, even though there may be no belief in God or any religious commitment. It may well be that many students in Catholic secondary schools are not engaged beyond this basic level; but this should be considered as fulfilling the school's fundamental commitment to providing a relevant Religious Education. This is not failure; rather this level should be regarded as personal development and achieving the basic level of success in Religious Education – the students have been well educated spiritually and religiously.

- **Spiritual level of engagement:** Where Religious Education prompts students to respond subjectively (not necessarily evident to others) to a sense of the transcendent in life, this could be interpreted from a religious perspective as engagement at a level of *evangelisation* where they might seek to access God as a source of meaning, inspiration and hope in their lives; and this may involve some response to their understanding of the ministry and teachings of Jesus. Carotta (2002, p. 14) noted that the "notion of a God who loves you unconditionally is naturally appealing to a young adolescent". For some, but not all, this spiritual questing could be regarded as an indication of some spiritual hunger. In this situation, the students may appropriate some Catholic religious ways of knowing and may identify to some extent with Catholic teachings on various issues. In this situation more religious resources might be assimilated into their perception and interpretation of reality. Whether or not students respond at this level

should not be regarded as indicators of success or failure. Response at this level is determined freely by the individual.

- **Religious level of engagement:** Where students' identification with the Catholic church as a source of spirituality was more formal, they might seek a constructive and interactive engagement with the tradition through its liturgy and prayer life, its theology, its engagement in the social sphere and in a local community of faith, together with the notion of having access to lifelong Religious Education that might offer guidance and meaning in their lives. This level of religious engagement could be labelled as a *catechesis*. Here, the young people would have acknowledged a gift of faith in their lives and they sought to nurture its development. As for the spiritual level of engagement, response at this level or lack of a response has nothing to do with successful or unsuccessful Religious Education. Catholic schools would be just as successful in religiously educating students who chose to be practicing Catholics as it would in educating those whose engagement was at the psycho-emotional level – and even those who did not respond at the basic level would still be receiving an education that set out to help them with respect to the spiritual/moral dimension to life.

This sort of re-interpretation of traditional aims for Religious Education – in terms of links with understandings of youth spirituality – would help educators in Catholic schools acknowledge their commitment to educating young people in the Catholic tradition and to the purposes proposed by ecclesiastical authorities while also acknowledging the real possibilities and limitations in that situation. The teaching of religion in the classroom could then be regarded as an authentic response of the Catholic school and the Church in addressing youth's distinctive spiritual needs while being faithful to their evangelising mission.

The next section looks more closely at the implications of an understanding of youth spirituality in classroom practice.

6.2.1.3 A subject-oriented approach to Religious Education with both content relevance and pedagogical relevance

The most appropriate approach to classroom Religious Education identified in this research (and strongly endorsed by the researcher) is that regarded as an open, inquiring, information rich, and student-centred study of religion. This fitted best with the subject-oriented approach identified in the historical typologies of Religious Education identified in chapter 2. An academic emphasis was needed to make religion a credible subject in the curriculum so that it did not suffer by comparison with what was done in other academic subjects – even if it

did not have the same academic status as subjects like English and Mathematics. It was argued that this sort of approach was in no way incompatible with concerns to meet affective, emotional and spiritual needs. The subject-oriented approach in Religious Education (as with study of poetry, drama and music) had a natural facility for addressing emotive, spiritual and value issues. Earlier historical problems related to an excessive use of discussion as a personal process that facilitated faith development have been explained (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006), suggesting that the model for discussion in Religious Education should be that of an informed debate rather than personal sharing. For religion teachers who may be hesitant about the value of religion as an academic subject, the most significant question that would need to be resolved before they could comfortably endorse a subject-oriented approach would be how it accommodates a personal dimension. The following sets out a proposed resolution.

In the light of this summary description of the classroom process in teaching religion, attention will now be given to notions of content and pedagogical relevance which seek to enhance the overall relevance of Religious Education.

1. <u>Relevance in content:</u> The issue of content relevance emerged from the study as a significant area of concern for teachers. Their view that it is important for content to be relevant so it can be linked to either the lived experience of students, their areas of interest or perceived needs is strongly endorsed and recommended as a key principle for Religious Education.

Given the limited scope of the life experience of students, they are somewhat reliant on those with the responsibility for what topics and issues will be treated in the classroom, to choose ones with their interests and life needs in mind (see 6.2.1.1 – item 1 above). This can still be balanced with some student say in negotiating their learning in spiritual and moral areas which Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 393) argued as "essential" so that informed decisions can be made about the potential relevance of content to be covered in the classroom.

In discussing content relevance, the issue of personalism (interest in the personal dimension and in personal insights) in content cannot be ignored. Personalism can be problematic in Religious Education if content and/or issues are selected solely to elicit personal contributions as a required aim, objective or outcome of the classroom teaching and learning process; this is where the sharing of personal insights or personal disclosures are over-emphasised as process goals. Content itself can have personal resonance when it has the capacity to engage student thinking in relation to any of a range of present day value-related issues (e.g., cyber bullying; binge-drinking; mental health; consumerism that targets people's identity

vulnerability; religious sects and cults; theological issues like "who is Jesus?", "what is redemption/salvation?"), or when it can alert them to other life-related issues. This may be an authentic consequence of the selection of content for class deliberation, but not a deliberate ploy to manufacture prescriptive personalism.

2. Relevance in pedagogy: The selection of appropriate pedagogy is important both for relevance and for success with respect to constructive links with student spirituality. An inappropriate pedagogy may subvert otherwise relevant content. "Pedagogical relevance is evident where good teaching strategies help students investigate the potential personal significance of content" (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 393). Adoption of pedagogical methods that encourage students to engage more critically in the learning process is an important component of this relevance. The use of this student-centred pedagogy will sometimes turn spiritual and moral problems into topics for student investigation. An adoption of this pedagogical approach would be consistent with Warren's notion that the critical interpretation by students could be viewed as a starting point for what he termed 'cultural agency'. Warren (1992) considered culture to be socially constructed and open to investigation; and Religious Education could play an important role in encouraging and skilling "young people to go beyond being 'passive consumers of culture' to become 'active constructors of culture' " (cited in Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 405). This highlights the need for the engagement of students in investigative research in which they learn how to identify and evaluate issues, find and access the relevance of information. This is in tune with Crawford and Rossiter's view (2006, p. 238) that Religious Education needs to include a strong component of critical interpretation and evaluation of culture.

While a detailed debate on learning styles is beyond the scope of this study, suffice to say it is important for teachers to access a variety of methods and strategies that allow for a thorough exploration of the selected issues and content that focus on informative learning and permit personal reflection of what has been covered in class.

Class discussion has been one of the common methods used by religion teachers as a form of personal interaction between teacher and students, and between students on aspects of the content and issues being examined in the hope that this may help students make sense of them and reflect on potential implications for their lives. Class discussions and group interactions are a way in which participants may contribute effectively in expressing views in an intellectual discourse without specifically identifying their own distinctive stance on the matter. Crawford and Rossiter considered that:

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> Sometimes in favourable circumstances, personal views may be shared in class; and they may even become commonplace, helping students learn from the personal contributions of others and learn how to develop and express their own insights. (2006, p. 393)

However, some teachers have used this pedagogical tool to pursue their own personalist agenda, which this researcher considers as inappropriate and potentially damaging to an authentic exploration of the content/issues in the classroom. Dating back to the 1970s, there was a tendency to presume that personal discussion was a prime site or activity for faith development, and so there tended to be a naïve notion of personal sharing (and a display of emotions) as being associated with and promoting personal faith development. What is more appropriate is the idea of an informed, critical discussion where the model is focused more on an informed debate than on personal sharing. The idea of discussion as an informed debate does not rule out personal discussion when it occurs naturally.

The research of Tullio (2009) has indicated that the quest for personalism has long been a problematic area in the theory and practice of secondary school retreats. While the informal setting of retreats naturally makes for greater informality in discussion, sometimes it is open to emotional manipulation where group leaders have unrealistic expectations of significant personal disclosures by students. It may well be that the problem is more related to meeting their own personal needs through the intimacy of group discussions on retreat. The idea of discussion as an informed, critical debate provides a way to relate the relevance of discussions to the relevance of content and the relevance of youth spirituality without pursuing a contrived personalist agenda.

Pedagogical relevance is particularly important in areas of teaching about religion where at first sight there may appear to be little or no scope for content relevance. This will usually apply to the teaching of religious traditions. One particular example is in the teaching of scripture. The first purpose in teaching the bible in Religious Education is to help students achieve a basic understanding of the bible as religious literature with different literary forms written within a faith community and for inspiring the faith of members of the religious tradition; they are primarily documents about faith, and they are interpreted by believers as carrying revealing messages about God that can still be accessed today by the religious community – even if interpretations may vary from time to time and according to socio-cultural context.

It is proposed that this first basic educational purpose needs to be met (biblical education) before the material itself becomes more accessible to the students in the way of sources

of inspiration for life and religious believing.   Paralleling the study of poetry, drama and novels, students need a basic understanding of the text in its original context as the best starting point for their own personal reflection and emotional responses – whether or not these are ever vocalised in the classroom.   For example, after a sequence of literary study of say the Gospel of Matthew, the teacher may say something like, "Now like all great poetry and drama, this gospel can speak to people personally across many generations. Consider for yourselves what personal message it might have for you to reflect on or what message might it have for the local church in this city."   With even a few moments allowed for personal reflection, there will not be any requirement that the students voice their personal responses (if any) to these more personal questions.   Teachers would hope that their systematic literary and theological study of scripture with students might provide the ground work that might enable them later to make more use of scripture as material for personal reflection and meditation.   Moran's (2009, pp. 37-60) notion of "believing in a revealing God" would see this process as believers opening themselves to inspiration from a continuously revealing God in the same way that their religious forbears had done with the scriptures for 2000 years.   Being opened to this potential, reflective relationship with the Christian scriptures is in no way incompatible with a critical study of the texts and of the various questions about the interpretation of scripture.   One could suggest that the personal reflection will be more fruitful (and less open to fundamentalist problems) if students experience the critical study of scripture.

This sequence illustrates one example of how a religion teacher might try to promote pedagogical relevance for biblical study with older students.   For younger students, this sort of pedagogical relevance might be fostered through a variety of more 'hands on' pedagogies like role playing stories from the New Testament – or using scripted dramas, drawing cartoon stories, making posters, creating videos and so forth. – which help the students transpose the New Testament story and message to contemporary times.

Pedagogical relevance in this instance is about trying to help students relate scripture to the contemporary search for meaning and purpose in life.   However Grace (2003, p. v) found in his research on the use of scripture in Victorian Catholic secondary schools, that there was "a predominance of a thematic, literal, non-critical use of scripture".   He also noted that "this misuse of scripture comes about from teachers' catechetical understanding of the nature of religion".   His research established a critical link between the teachers' methods of scripture usage and how they perceive the nature and purposes of Religious Education.   Thus the impact of attempts to find pedagogical relevance for

teaching scripture will ultimately depend on both the the teachers' perception of the nature and purpose of Religious Education and on their competence to use their knowledge of biblical interpretation, and their capacity to help students discover how biblical theology might be applied to contemporary society or their lived reality in a meaningful way.

3. Personalism and relevance: The teachers' interest in sharing their personal viewpoints emerged as significant area of concern in this study.   There was a polarity in the opinions expressed with regard to this issue where some saw sharing of their views as important while others considered it to be problematic.   This issue raises a number of ethical considerations as to the appropriateness of the sharing of personal views by teachers in the light of their professional commitments in the classroom.

Two potential problems with teachers sharing personal views were identified in Catholic church documenation. The first was noted in *Catechesi Tradendae,* where Pope John Paul II (1979) indicated that it was inappropriate for teachers/catechists to focus exclusively on their own personal views:

> [The religion teacher/catechist] will not seek to keep directed towards himself and his personal opinions and attitudes the attention and the consent of the mind and heart of the person he is catechising. Above all, he will not try to inculcate his personal opinions and options as if they expressed Christ's teaching and the lessons of his life. (n 6)

The document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Cathoolic Education, 1988) drew attention to the problem where educators tried to impose beliefs:

> a catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a christian education; this is its right and its duty.   To proclaim or to offer is not to impose, however;   the latter suggests a moral violence which is strictly forbidden, both by the gospel and by church law. (n 6)

Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 295) noted that personal sharing by teachers may lead to two extremes.   The first extreme was referrd to as partiality where the teachers' personal views on issues dominated the teaching process, leading to a significant narrowing of the content to make it coextensive with the teachers' own views.   The content thus became more of an exhoration where one point of view and bias were evident.   This would be perceived by students as authoritarian and sermonising.   The second extreme was neutrality which teachers might regard as a safe option where teachers decide never to express their opinions to

students.   Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 295) believed holders of this position gave the impression that "neutrality is a suitable stance to take on moral issues."

A code of ethics is needed to provide regulation as to what personal views are referrd to, as well as how and when they might be used.   Hill (1981) proposed an ethical stance called committed impartiality.   This stance notes that while teachers' own views should not be a prominent component of their teaching, they can prove to be a valuable content resource along with other content if these are capable of making a contribution to the investigation of the content.   The teachers' views "are then not accorded priviledged status;   but are to be examined critically alongside the other content" (Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, p. 296).   A code of teaching ethics would emhasise to teachers that their role in the teaching of religion has more to do with their professional commitment to student enquiry rather than with an opportunity to freely express their views.   An adoption of a code of teaching ethics would impact on how class discussions are conducted where the emphasis would be placed on a critical debate and exploration of the issue under investigation.   The teacher's input would then be considered as one of a number of contributions to the debate – as would the personal contributions of students.

With this being an issue of critical importance, it is puzzling that diocesan authorities have not sought to address this matter more fully in their religion curriculum documentation.   The lack of attention to this issue is a current problem in all Catholic diocesan Religious Education documentation.   The explication and adoption of a code of teaching ethics would help provide a clear set of guidelines for teachers in how to approach various controversial moral issues.

The clarification of the conditional, valuable place for teachers' personal views in the religious educaion process is also important for clarifying what is to be uderstood by witnessing as discussed in section 5.2.8.   The principal value of witnessing is in a role modelling of moral and appropriate Christian behaviour rather than a pursuance of a personalist agenda in classroom interactions that may lead to excessive personalism and result in use of unethical teaching procedures with overtones of manipulation and indoctrination.

One aspect of witnessing may be the sharing of personal insights, but this cannot be unconditionally considered to be appropriate subject matter in the lesson.   Teachers should only disclose their personal insights under certain conditions, and also with the intent that these would be treated as additional resources for student inquiry.   The appropriateness of the personal disclosures is dependent on satisfying the code of teaching ethics that would regulate

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what personal views are referred to, as well as how and when they might be used. Consideration of these points would put the idea of witnessing into better perspective. This clarification of witnessing is also a point that is lacking in diocesean guidelines.

6.2.2 Relevance from the educational perspective: To be perceived as personally relevant, Religious Education needs to be a credible academic subject in the curriculum

6.2.2.1 Personal relevance and academic subject credibility

Even where there may be both content and pedagogical relevance, the potential of Religious Education for engaging students in a study that is personally relevant for them can be compromised by the students' negative perception of the subject. This applies particularly in senior examination classes. The personal relevance of Religious Education in its own right is not sufficient to command the serious attention of students in an environment where the perceived importance of the principal subjects that count towards final results dominates their attitude to the whole curriculum. What may well be regarded as personally relevant in Religious Education, and even interesting to study, is not taken very seriously in this examination focused context. A fully examination accredited religion subject, like the *Studies of Religion* course in NSW, is more likely to receive the studious attention of young people because of its academic status than a non-accredited program such as a school-developed course – even if the latter has more relevant content than the former. But even having an accredited subject like *Studies of Religion* will not solve this problem completely.

In reviewing spiritual and moral education in the United Kingdom, Rossiter (1996) pointed out that even in the United Kingdom where Religious Education had long been a standard subject in the public school curriculum, when students perceived that there was a lack of academic subject credibility, their potential interest in the subject's personal/spiritual capacity was subverted. This was the same problem that Crawford and Rossiter (1991) had identified earlier for Catholic school Religious Education as caused by the psychology of the learning environment – explained in detail in Crawford and Rossiter (2006, pp. 307-309). It then follows that where a subject like religion lacks perceived academic credibility in the curriculum its capacity for personal relevance to students is undermined. To this extent, for spiritual/moral subjects like religion, ethics or philosophy, perceived academic status is linked with perceived personal relevance.

The perceived relevance of Religious Education as subject in the Catholic school curriculum is an important issue for those associated with Catholic education. Religious Education needs to be established as a credible academic field of study if students, parents and teachers

are going to treat it with the respect it deserves – this is a pre-requisite, but not the only one, for perceived personal relevance; its perceived personal relevance will also depend on how, in a balanced way, it attends to the moral, spiritual and religious needs of students.

Within the format of an academic subject, it remains important that Religious Education strikes a balance in content between furthering student knowledge and understanding of the Catholic tradition and addressing key contemporary spiritual and moral issues and questions about meaning and purpose in life. According to Crawford and Rossiter (2006, pp. 394-396), this will require some shift in emphasis towards a more issue-oriented approach which could assist in making Religious Education more relevant for students. In turn, if religion teachers see this approach as better meeting the needs of their students it could engender a renewed enthusiasm for what they are teaching. Such an approach could also find resonance with parents who look to Catholic education to assist them in the holistic education of their children – especially in helping them negotiate a path through life which increasingly appears complicated and problem-filled.

6.2.2.2   Promoting Religious Education as an academic subject

Along with the prominence of the underlying theme of personal relevance for Religious Education the other key theme that was evident in the results of this study was the teachers' concern that religion be taught as an academic subject. Prominent in their views were the ideas of having students well informed about religion, and of promoting critical thinking. As part of the curricula offerings in Australian Catholic secondary schools, Religious Education stands as a compulsory area of study for each year of a student's enrolment due to its fundamental importance as part of the educative ministry of the Church. It is envisaged that a study of religion will provide students with a meaningful grasp of Catholicism based on an integration of faith, culture and life through increased knowledge and understanding. For many of the students, the Catholic school is their only contact with the organisational Church and it offers them what may be their only significant opportunity to engage in critical reflection and discussion of religion and the Church. Student intellectual development is fostered through an acquisition of knowledge of the faith tradition and skill development. While this dual focus implies that the classroom's main contribution to the Religious Education of youth is through the cognitive domain, it does not discount the reality that choice of appropriate content and pedagogy by teachers would foster both cognitive and affective development. In other words, an appropriate selection of content and pedagogy would ensure that an academic approach to the teaching of religion would not mean that that the affective and personal domains would be neglected. There are many examples within the

curricula offerings of schools, such as English, Music, and Art where these three domains are attended to in the hope of providing a holistic treatment.   Di Giacomo (1985) pointed out that:

> Academically respectable courses in Religion, as well as in other subjects, can be provocative and stimulating.   They can stress not only serious content goals, but also process goals which include student-centredness, open-ended discussion, critical thinking and alternative outcomes.   The best teachers in any school are those who do justice to these elements, content and process.
>
> (Cited in Crawford and Rossiter, 1988, p. 83)

An academic study of religion would be beneficial for both the students and the teachers. The perception of the study of religion as a worthwhile academic pursuit would be considered more seriously by students, parents and teachers as part of the overall education process. Provided that syllabus outcome statements are achievable and allow for academic challenge, scope for open-ended discussion and reflection, teachers would be comfortable in the knowledge that they would be able to employ various familiar pedagogical methods and assessment procedure methods to Religious Education in terms of knowledge and skill acquisition.   Crawford and Rossiter pointed out that "Religion should be taught with at least the same degree of skill, intellectual challenge, rigour and teacher commitment as is expected in any other subject area" (1988, p. 83).   Students would be able to view the knowledge and skills gained in terms of academic achievement and as transferable to other intellectual pursuits.   Above all, it would permit the Religious Education classroom to be seen as providing an open, inquiring, academically challenging environment that allows students to explore questions about life, morality, spirituality, religion and faith.

6.2.2.3   Academic credibility for Religious Education as reflected in the staffing, structure, organisation and timetabling of the subject

The timetabling of subjects could well be the singular most potent instrument, used in any school that has direct impact upon teaching and learning.   Brady (2006, p.7) pointed out that:

> On a daily basis, the timetable significantly influences the organizational and educational experiences of students and teachers alike, and is a crucial factor in the shaping and ordering of curriculum.

This has implications for the teaching of religion in the secondary school in terms of allocation of teachers, allocation of teaching time and when it is taught.

The current custom and practice in Catholic schools indicate there is a discrepancy between the stated importance of Religious Education and the practice with respect to how Religious

Education is treated as a curriculum subject in the timetable. On the one hand, there are Catholic secondary schools where timetable allocations for religion seek to match the indicative time of 400 hours as specified in the diocesan guidelines for Religious Education in junior secondary classes. Among these, some have included the time for retreats, reflection days, liturgies and prayer as part of the overall allocation, even though this is contrary to the stipulations in the Sydney archdiocesan guidelines (Catholic Education Office, 2003, Year 7, p. 12; Year 9, p. 12; Year 10, p. 12; Year 8, p. 13). On the other hand there are schools that allocate time for Religious Education that falls far short of the indicative time, which the authors of the guidelines considered was "necessary for students to demonstrate achievement of the syllabus outcomes in stage 4 and 5 (years 7 – 10)" (2003, Year 7, p. 12; Year 9, p. 12; Year 10, p. 12; Year 8, p.13).

Depending on circumstances, some schools tended to treat Religious Education as a timetable-filler subject. How Religious Education fared from the subject period allocation was the evidence – for example, where all religion lessons were assigned to afternoon sessions, including Friday afternoon. Also, assignment of religion classes could be used to fill up teacher loads – here there was the rationale that because staff members were Catholic they could fill in as a religion teachers, although they had little specific Religious Education background knowledge and training. The existence of these scenarios, even if they are less prominent now than they were in the 1970s to 1990s, was counter-productive to efforts to improve the academic standing of Religious Education. Such problems also could be regarded as compromising the evangelising mission of the school. There is a need for more recognition that Religious Education teachers are key personnel in Catholic schooling. Lack of teacher professionalism in this area could lead to an ineffectual presentation of the traditions and beliefs of the Church and may contribute to feelings of confusion and disillusionment among students, parents and even teachers.

The Catholic bishops of NSW and ACT in their document *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads* (2007, p. 14), drew attention to the need to give proper attention to the place of Religious Education in the curriculum:

> If Catholic schools are to succeed in passing on the Catholic faith to the next generation: RE classes will therefore be given priority with regard to the school curriculum, time and space allocation and the choice and recognition of staff.

To respond to this standard, school administrations would need to select the teachers who will best teach Religious Education and then build their teacher allocations around that initial selection. Similarly, a suitable allocation of overall subject time together with a good share

of the prime teaching slots in the timetable are needed;   for example, Table 6.1 highlights the number of periods required to fulfil the mandatory requirements for the three most common timetable cycles.

Table 6.1
Period and Time Allocation for Stage 4 and 5 Secondary Religion Classes

Timetable cycle	Total of indicative time per cycle	Number of 45 min. periods per cycle	Number of 50 min. periods per cycle	Number of 60min. periods per cycle
5 Day Fixed	150 minutes	3.5	3	2.5
6 Day Cyclic	180 minutes	4	3.6	3
10 Day Fixed	300 minutes	6.5	6	5

Note: The indicative time is that which is recommended in the Sydney archdiocesan Secondary Religious Education Curriculum documentation.

The extent to which religion teachers are qualified to teach Religious Education has significant implications for the staffing of the subject.   If Religious Education is to be seriously considered as an academic subject, then the appointment of teachers appropriately qualified to teach this area is fundamental to its ultimate success.   The problem noted above about unqualified teachers needs to be eliminated.   While various Catholic dioceses have had policies, often financially supported, for the training of religion teachers through postgraduate studies, more needs to be done to ensure that all who teach religion have some form of accredited Religious Education qualification.

6.2.2.4   The status of the Religious Education leadership role and the academic credibility of Religious Education

While a final responsibility for the religious leadership in a Catholic school rests with the school principal, a key role is played by the subject coordinator for religion – usually termed the Religious Education Coordinator (REC).

Both the position of Religious Education Coordinator and the curriculum area of Religious Education need recognition and appropriate levels of support to translate the ideals for Religious Education into practice, and to reduce any lack of congruence between the theory and actual practice.   The Brisbane Catholic archdiocese endeavoured to increase the status of the Religious Education coordinator within Catholic schools by making this position a school executive responsibility with the title Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE).   The purpose of elevating the position of Religious Education coordinator to the level of Assistant Principal was to enhance the status of religion as a subject.   While this may help improve the authority base and status of the Religious Education coordinator, it may affect their curriculum role by adding

more administrative duties to the already heavy load that often included responsibilities for liturgies and retreats – making the role even more stressful than it usually was. The executive position may give the incumbent more scope for exercising leadership in the school in religious and spiritual matters, but there is also the possibility that this role may increase responsibilities for the day-to-day running of the school, diminish the time available for attending specifically to the religion curriculum.

Another approach to enhance the effectiveness of the coordination of Religious Education has been to lessen the burden of Religious Education Coordinators by splitting the role and dividing responsibilities between two or more leaders in the general area. This may include a position focus on liturgy and prayer, retreats, or ministry. In Victoria, the creation of the role named faith development coordinator was developed to complement the curriculum work of the religion coordinator – intentionally dividing responsibilities along cognitive and affective lines. While this division of labour was not in question, Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 416) considered that the label 'faith development coordinator' implied a problematic denigration of the relevance of classroom Religious Education to young people's faith by implying that faith was affective while Religious Education was cognitive – while at the same time promoting a naïve view of emotion and sharing of personal insights as the equivalent of faith development.

In Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney in 2009, new positions, usually with a part time allocation, have been created for youth ministry. As well as having a pastoral focus, this role has been set up to foster links with parishes and to follow up participation in World Youth Days.

Despite these various developments, the valuing of the religious leadership role in Catholic schools is not uniform across the Catholic systems. Catholic school systems have usually set out to require that principals, assistant principals and Religious Education coordinators are "practising Catholics who understand and profess the Catholic faith, model it in their own lives and can teach it affectively (CEO Sydney, 2003, p. 18)." Also, Catholic school systems have had policies and activities designed to address the need for enhancement and revitalisation of the spiritual lives of key leaders in Catholic schools, as well as for regular staff. Also important to demonstrate is a practice showing that the position of Religious Education coordinator is considered an important and valuable stepping stone for individuals who may wish to take on higher leadership roles in Catholic schools at positions of principal and deputy principal.

6.2.3   Relevance from the perspective of the theory and practice of Religious Education

The previous sections have focused on two significant aspects of school Religious Education – it needs to be relevant to the spirituality of contemporary youth;   and that in doing so, it needs to present and function as a credible academic subject in the school curriculum that provides challenging study of religious traditions and contemporary spiritual and moral issues.   These two aspects need to figure more prominently in the theory for Religious Education that is articulated for Catholic schools.   At present, insufficient attention to them results in a gap between the theory/rhetoric of Religious Education in the normative diocesan documents on Religious Education and how the teachers perceive and respond to the situation that they experience in the classroom.   This creates difficulties for religion teachers because they have a sense of obligation to the expressed views of authorities and hence to the words and ideas they are given to describe the task of Religious Education as a key element in the Church's evangelising mission, while at the same time they feel that the spiritual world that the authorities seem to presume is quite different from the one inhabited by the students before them in religion class.   Hence at times religion teachers feel that the official theory and rhetoric requires them to think and act one way, while the obvious spirituality of their students makes them think that other purposes may be more realistic because they are perceived as more relevant for their pupils.

This hiatus impacts on teachers' understanding of what constitutes success in teaching religion.   The ambivalence and ambiguities identified by the respondents in this study showed that there is not a clear consensus among religion teachers about the nature and purposes of Religious Education, as well as different estimates of the spiritual/moral needs of their students.   Thus it is proposed that formulations of the purposes of Catholic secondary school Religious Education need to address these two areas in evidently more realistic ways about what can best be done within Religious Education to enhance youth spirituality, while not neglecting the task of giving them access to their own religious tradition.   Hopefully such a development would firstly affirm the experience of many religion teachers and also affirm that trying to address young people's spiritual and moral needs and take into account their spiritual starting points has been a valuable and valid response to their ministry and mission as religion teachers.   Hopefully, too, such a development would increase a consensus among religion teachers about the nature and scope of their professional task.

Within this section, two areas will be discussed each of which requires a reformulation that will hopefully impact positively on the relevance of Catholic school Religious Education.

6.2.3.1 Problems for understanding the nature and purpose of Religious Education related to the use of ecclesiastical and religious language

Over a long period, a number of studies have confirmed the existence of a complexity and some level of ambiguity in religion teachers' views of nature and purpose of Religious Education (e.g., Moran 1978; Rossiter 1981, 1983; Crawford & Rossiter, 1985, 1988, 2006; Wanden, 2009; Finn, 2009). When asked questions about what they perceive this nature and purpose to be, religion teachers have, among other things, invariably referred to a number of religious and ecclesiastical constructs (as identified in chapter 2 section 2.2) such as evangelisation, catechesis and faith development, even though they appear to have difficulty explaining what they think these terms mean. Part of their ambiguity about purposes is tied up with the use of such terminology. Stereotypic ways of talking about Religious Education thus trace back to a combination of use of the language of ecclesiastical constructs together with an identification, even if vague, with one or more of the influential approaches to Religious Education (identified in chapter 2 section 2.3) that still have varying degrees of currency.

While recent research, including this study, has confirmed that religion teachers endorse the importance of key religious and ecclesiastical constructs such as catechesis, evangelisation, faith formation, inculturation, ministry, mission and witness (Moran, 1989; Maroney, 2008, Finn, 2009; Wanden, 2009), this does not necessarily imply that they are appropriate and non-problematic for describing Religious Education within the school setting. What this does mean is that religion teachers have respect for normative statements about Religious Education – whether or not they are helpful. It was significant in the results of this study that, together with the endorsement of these constructs, there was also an identifiable level of uncertainty and perhaps confusion as to their practical meaning and utility in the secondary classroom setting. The perceived importance of these constructs may well be due more to deference to their ecclesiastical source than to their utilitarian value to explain the nature and purpose of Religious Education in a way that is helpful to teachers. More research is needed specifically on this question.

There is general acceptance that in looking specifically from the Catholic Church's religious perspective of handing on the faith tradition, Church authorities (including Catholic school education offices) will continue to use distinctive ecclesiastical constructs like catechesis and evangelisation to articulate purposes in pastoral and educational ministries. But this should not be the only perspective nor the only language used for such a task. If it is not complemented by the description of purposes in more educational language – together with

more clarity and simplicity in specifying what aspects of catechesis and evangelisation are pertinent to the classroom – then the relatively exclusive use of ecclesiastical language will remain problematic.   This problem has been highlighted in other recent research where Wanden (2009) considered that ambiguity as to nature and purpose of school Religious Education was in part related to a less than precise use of ecclesiastical language, and Finn (2009) who showed that a sample of parents and teachers were confused by these terms and found them not helpful in their understanding of Religious Education.

Less use of ecclesiastical terms and more use of educational terms that make sense to parents and teachers would be beneficial for Religious Education.   This would be a long overdue response to the identification of the problem that dates back to Moran's (1970) seminal article on the problem with ecclesiastical terminology and Rossiter's (1981) critique of the overuse of the term catechesis; in addition, this would be consistent with the view of Pope John Paul II as quoted in the Vatican documents making a distinction made between catechesis and religious instruction (Religious Education) (Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools,* 1982, n 56; also referred to in later documents).

Another aspect of the problem Religious Education has with ecclesiastical constructs is that when the terms are used by educators, it can have the effect of closing down the conversation because it stops them from having to explain in more precise detail what they understand the Religious Education process to be.   Crawford and Rossiter (1985, pp. 32-42) provided the most specific critique of the problem.   Later Crawford and Rossiter (1988, pp. 111-122) extended this critique to identify similar problems with the use of devotional, emotional and presumptive language that impacted negatively on Religious Education;   then they interpreted problems with the use of the religious constructs faith development and faith formation (Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, pp. 411-419).   In addition, these authors provided a useful example of how to avoid the problem with ecclesiastical and religious constructs when differentiating the Religious Educational role of the school from that of the family (Crawford & Rossiter, 1985, pp. 1-5); they distinguished the 'school teaching' of religion (concerned with lesson content, pedagogy, assessment and other curriculum matters) from 'family teaching' (a type of family and community socialisation where children learn values and ways of relating from their social interactions) in language that was independent of ecclesiastical constructs and which was readily accessible to both teachers and parents.   This approach, while making sense to parents and teachers, can help reduce significantly the confusion of purposes in Religious Education as well as help eliminate unrealistic expectations of classroom Religious Education to bring about change in students' personal faith.

Ecclesiastical and religious language does not have resonance with all the stakeholders in Catholic schooling and if they are used without qualification, important understandings of Religious Education may not be communicated accurately to those who have had little exposure to it or who have acquiesced with only a partial comprehension of the terms. If the problem is not addressed, there is a potential danger that it will continue to sustain an ambiguity and lack of consensus about expectations of Religious Education. In turn, such ambiguity would inevitably impact negatively on the relevance of Religious Education for youth, as well as on religion teachers' understandings of what constitutes success.

6.2.3.2 The need for a reconceptualisation of Catholic school Religious Education that gives more attention to being relevant to youth spirituality and to the possibilities and limitations of the classroom context

There has been a long and continuous discourse in Australia about the nature and purposes of Catholic school Religious Education. Key contributions include the following examples from authors such as Rummery (1975), Rossiter (1981, 1983, 1999), Crawford and Rossiter (1985, 1988, 1992, 2006), Lovat (1991, 2002), Malone and Ryan (1996), Ryan (1997, 2006, 2007), Liddy and Welbourne (1999), Engebretson (1999, 2009), Engebretson, Fleming and Rymarz (2002), O'Grady (2005), and Holohan (1999). Overseas writers have also contributed such as Moran (1970, 1971, 1978), Boys (1989), Groome (1991), Purnell (1985) and Nichols (1978). However, it is difficult to estimate where ideas about Religious Education from this discourse have entered into Catholic diocesan guidelines for Religious Education, and which are the documents most likely to have direct impact on religion teachers in Australian Catholic schools. While no doubt there has been some influence from the theorists noted above (for example on the notion of religious literacy adopted by the Brisbane Catholic Education Office; and the widespread use of Groome's (1980, 1991) shared Christian praxis method), in general, the diocesan documents reflect a position that is more evidently related to normative church documents because of their particular dependence on episcopal authority and on the ecclesiastical and religious constructs.

What is proposed here is that diocesan documents on Religious Education for Catholic schools need to give much more serious attention to youth spirituality (including the place of students who are not Catholic) and the education process in the classroom as implied in the issues discussed in sections 6.2.1, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 above. It is considered that such a reconceptualisation of Religious Education in diocesan documents would not so much introduce radical new change, but would lessen the gap between rhetoric and reality. Also, it would be a strong affirmation of the work that religion teachers are already doing and not the

implied blame for failure that was evident in the NSW and ACT Catholic Bishops' document on Catholic schools (2007). This conceptualisation would also be likely to help increase teacher consensus about what is a realistic approach to secondary classroom Religious Education. In turn this could affect teachers' understandings of successful Religious Education. This proposed reconceptualisation would also be in keeping with the general recent experience in Australian schools where rapid change relating to technology, knowledge, acquisition of key competencies, value systems and family structures have impacted on understandings of what is a successful education.

The proposed reconceptualisation of Religious Education at diocesan level is linked to a paradigm shift that has been occurring in Catholic schools from a more *institutional maintenance* and *handing-on the tradition* paradigm towards a *resourcing and enhancing youth spirituality* and *academic subject* paradigm. Symptomatic of this shift in paradigms has been change in the enrolment mix of students from more *homogeneous and religious* to a more *diverse range of religiosity*. Also influential has been the growing distinction (while still allowing for significant overlap) between the *religious* and the *spiritual* (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 179). In addition there has been more interest in spirituality and identity as *meaning making processes* (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Hack, 2004). Accompanying this has been a growing secularity in youth spirituality, a rise in student disinterest in religion and an increased detachment from the wider faith community of the Church even if some sense of religious identification remains (Schweitzer, 2006). This paradigm shift marks a significant change in emphasis in the understanding of Catholic schools from being considered catechetical, *socialising faith communities* to what could be described as *intentional faith communities engaged in the educational enhancement of spirituality* – where a core of religiously oriented staff offer unconditionally a spiritual education that is intended to enhance the basic spirituality of students while giving them access to their cultural religious heritage. This marks a shift from a situation where:

- a catechetical approach dominated the thinking and processes of Religious Education;
- students were regarded as compliant, receptive members of the Catholic faith community;
- this approach was considered congruent with the teaching ministry of the Church in cultivating the inherited faith of adherents.

By contrast, the newer paradigm reflects what a Catholic school might best offer to a relatively secularised youth, acknowledging that most students will not become practising members of a parish, while what is offered to them will be valuable for their negotiation of a meaningful path through life. As far as religion is concerned, the Catholic school as an intentional faith community[1] would be mainly evangelising in focus, where the principal

aspect of evangelisation would be to enhance the human spiritual dimension to students' lives – rather than as a drive to recruit them to parishes.   In this situation, there is an increasing need for religion teachers to use relevant content and pedagogy to engage students in a critical appraisal of religious knowledge, to deepen their understanding of the faith tradition, and to skill them as critical interpreters of culture.   It is hoped that the students would appropriate knowledge and experience that enriched their spirituality and helped them to make constructive meaning for life in terms of their relationship with themselves, others and God; and this would be done through the lens of Catholicism.

The reconceptualisation of Catholic secondary school Religious Education proposed here implies the need for a reappraisal and clarification of the educational expectations of Religious Education – especially in the light of being more relevant to young people's spirituality – and the adoption of an unambiguous language to communicate this view.   It is likely that such a reconceptualisation in diocesan documents may not be forthcoming in the near future.   Nevertheless, a study like this may provide further stimulus for Catholic secondary schools themselves to try to shift their thinking in this direction so that even if the normative documentation tends to naturally lag behind what is happening in the field, a more realistic and relevant conception of Religious Education at the school level may prove beneficial both for the religion teachers and the students.

6.2.3.3   Relevance and the place of theology in school Religious Education

Another significant area where there was ambiguity in the teacher's comments about successful Religious Education related to the place of theology.

The uncertainty of a number of the participants shown in responses to items that used the word 'theology' appeared to relate to two issues:

The first has to do with the contemporary relevance of theology. There was evident concern among teachers where the word theology evoked ideas about *traditional theology* which was considered to be 'out of date' or which appeared to have little meaning with reference to people's lives today.

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1 These intentional faith communities are complex and are characterised by the following:
   a. Members who have an individualised belief in God
   b. Members who choose to take up the religious culture experienced at the school to enhance and enrich their spirituality.
   c. Members who critique the world they live in through a paradigm influenced by the life values that inform their spirituality.
   d. A culture that is strongly egalitarian in social and gender relationships.

The second issue appeared concerned with a feeling that teaching theology involved a relatively authoritarian pedagogy – telling young people what are the teachings of the Catholic Church and telling them what they should believe.

The negative reaction from the teachers about theology could have more to do with a high regard for personal freedom and distaste for authoritarian teaching of religion, than it did with the relevant meanings in theology for contemporary life.   This study suggests that substantial further research is needed on the place of theology within classroom Religious Education in Catholic schools.   This would need to include questions about what sort of theology should be taught.   Also pertinent is the question of the relevance of theology to life and potential problems with the relevance of theological language and theological constructs.

Yet another significant issue would be determining the appropriate level and type of engagement that could be expected of young people with respect to theology – in other words, the extent to which Religious Education seeks to familiarise young people with Catholic theology as well as the extent to which it might engage them in some 'personal theologising'. What is meant by the idea of student theologising is reflection on the meaning and personal significance of theological understandings of God, Jesus, the Christian life and the church. This researcher considers that both of these elements are important in the theological dimension to Religious Education – it needs to educate students theologically to some extent.

The other aspect considered to be important, is the perceived relevance of theology to student spirituality.   And, as noted above, this includes both content and pedagogical relevance.   A further complication that might be addressed in research about the place of theology in Religious Education would be the possible links that some that individuals (both teachers and students) see between theology and the church.   If the two are identified to some extent, then the relevance of theology becomes entangled with ideas about the relevance of the church.

6.2.4   Relevance from the perspective of classroom teaching: The resourcing and teaching of Religious Education

From the perspective of the classroom teaching of religion three key issues that emerged from this study were:

- the structure and purposes of diocesan guidelines
- the use of student texts
- the use of information technology in Religious Education

6.2.4.1 Further clarification of the use of outcomes in diocesan Religious Education guidelines

Diocesan Religious Education guidelines have been instrumental in assisting those who are teaching religion by providing a syllabus, knowledge and skill outcomes; essential background reading and information on each topic; suggested methods and assessment strategies; and, the listing of appropriate resources.

There remains, however, a need for more clarity about the *hopes* for personal and spiritual development rather than expressing these as measurable outcomes. This would help avoid the confusion of long term possible future personal development with the immediate, measurable knowledge and skill outcomes that can be followed up after particular lessons. As noted in chapter 2, section 2.4.1, the notion of belief or faith outcomes and their measurement are considered both unrealistic and not ethical. Actual personal change is a valuable hope for Religious Education; but it is not appropriate to try to measure outcomes relating to faith, values and attitudes (Rossiter 1998, 1999). There are no guarantees that personal and spiritual areas could be assessed objectively and these should not be included in any measures of success in teaching religion. The long term potential personal and spiritual outcomes would be more appropriately referred to in guidelines by phrases such as "It is hoped that students will..." rather than as intentions where "Students will be able to..." (CEO Sydney, 2003).

Where the archdiocese of Sydney *Religious Education Curriculum - Secondary* document did specify value and attitudinal outcomes, its authors used leading verbs such as: articulate, choose, discuss, demonstrate, determine, justify, participate, recommend, and share. Usually such verbs are associated with the articulation of cognitive skills and they do not necessarily indicate or imply that actual personal change has taken place in students' values and attitudes. The values outcomes in this document are open to alternative interpretation as knowledge outcomes related to values.

Hence, there is a need to revise the document where values/beliefs/attitudes outcomes have been specified. They need to be rephrased as hopes that cannot and need not be assessed. If Religious Education is to be taken as a serious academic subject and if it is to comply with the stated wishes of the Church that it mirrors best educational practice, then this question needs to be addressed.

Most current Catholic diocesan guidelines are an amalgam of curriculum support documentation with aspects of a syllabus. This may have led to some ambiguity about

purposes and some lack of consistency in the teaching of religion. While some current guidelines provide a framework for teaching and learning in Religious Education, they tend not to be specific enough in mapping out with sufficient clarity what students need to learn about and learn to do. Currently work is being done in some dioceses to develop Religious Education programs that state these aspects of learning more specifically, together with the development of student performance descriptors and key competencies – as are required in other key learning areas.

It is suggested that further development of more uniform Catholic religion syllabi for stages 4, 5 and 6 is needed, with the added proposal that they be modelled along the lines of the NSW State based *Studies of Religion* syllabus. This procedure might also help specify a more realistic indicative time frame of 350 hours for years 7 to 10 inclusive. Such a proposal may well reflect more realistically what some current religion teachers are actually doing where they teach fewer topics than are prescribed in the guidelines, while allowing for the time spent in providing liturgical and sacramental experiences.

This proposed reform could promote a more general and common approach to the religious content covered in Catholic secondary schools Religious Education, with a better structuring of programs for junior secondary classes.

In line with earlier comments in section 6.2.1.1, further development of Catholic diocesan Religious Education should reformulate the understanding of Religious Education with less dependence on an uncritical and ambiguous use of ecclesiastical constructs like catechesis and evangelisation. Description of the task of Religious Education needs to give more attention to the way in which it might promote the basic human spirituality of young people and help them find meaning and values in life. Similarly, in appraising current content and units, along with traditional religious content, more scope should be given to the study of contemporary spiritual and moral issues and to the role of Religious Education in the critical interpretation and evaluation of culture. It is considered that such moves could help enhance the personal relevance of Religious Education, while being consistent with its nature as a credible academic subject in the curriculum. In turn, this could sharpen religion teachers understanding of their role and help bring about a greater consensus about the desired nature and purposes of Religious Education.

6.2.4.2   The use of student texts: How their use in successful teaching might be enhanced

It was established in the literature review and supported by the findings of this study that there are positive and negative aspects regarding the use of textbooks in the teaching of religion. The issue of textbook use is an important one because of the considerable Catholic investment in the development of the *To Know, Worship and Love* series of texts, and because these books have been widely adopted in various Australian Catholic dioceses.

Classroom Religious Education supported by a specific textbook is appealing because it signifies to students, parents and teachers that it has equality with other subjects in the curriculum, and because it is also consistent with the purpose of teaching religion along academic lines.   While this series of texts delivers useful material for classroom use, the following comments propose how the selective use of textbooks, together with notes on possible improvements, may enhance both the relevance of the texts and the teachers' experience of success through their use.

In this study, the participants indicated that they made selective use of the textbooks in their religion lessons.   This may not have been consistent with the intention of those who endorsed the introduction of the texts.   This partial use of the texts may have been due to the number of chapters in the books exceeding the topics outlined in the guidelines, giving teachers the impression that not all of the material in the books was pertinent to their needs.   The teachers may also have been reluctant to use all of the activities proposed in the books because of time constraints in covering particular topics within the prescribed number of periods.   This selective use may also have been due to individual teachers' judgement about the suitability of the match between the proposed activities in the textbooks with the pedagogy they employed.   The question of teachers' selective use of student texts is an important area for further investigation.

If in the future there were to be a revision of these texts in the light of teacher and student experience, the following suggested changes are proposed:

- The chapters could be better arranged to fit with syllabus topics.   This may mean the trimming of the number of chapters per book.   Table 6.2 illustrates the present arrangement of text book chapters.   Alternatively, the book chapters could be clearly clustered to match the syllabus units.

- The student learning activities could be graded to include work suitable for average, and more slow-learning students as well as for the academically more capable.

- The knowledge and skill outcomes that the learning activities are intended to address could be more clearly identified for teachers to assist them in their preparation of student work.

- A more transparent understanding of what students need to learn about and learn to do could be embedded in the prologue of each chapter.

Table 6.2
Comparison of Curriculum/Guidelines topics and number of chapters covered by the To Know, Worship and Love textbook series

Year group	No. of guideline topics	No. of textbook chapters
7	7	18
8	8	18
9	8	12
10	7	13

The adoption of measures like the above could be considered in any textbook revision for their potential to make the series a more appealing resource that would in turn enhance their use in the classroom.

6.2.4.3 The use of information and communications technology (ICT) for enhancing both the relevance and the successful teaching of religion

The creative integration of information and communications technology (ICT) within classroom teaching and learning is an area that is pedagogically challenging for many teachers, including those involved in Religious Education. If used well, ICT can enhance both content and pedagogy. For the teachers specifically, it can increase their sense of mastery, competence, and ready access to a wide range of resources – all of which can impact on their experience of successful teaching. Students, through ICT, can have much more ready access to the same sources of content as the teachers; it can extend their research skills as well as their creativity in preparing presentations to report on student research.

The idea of the creative use of ICT to enhance student learning regards ICT as a means to an end and not an end in itself – as if the mere use of such technology was the equivalent of learning. Hence, as for all curriculum areas, care is needed in Religious Education to avoid using ICT as a substitute for teaching or learning, as noted by Rossiter (2008, 2009b) – for example, where sending students to the library to do computer research has been used by unprepared and unprofessional teachers to substitute for their teaching – just as similar teachers in the past sent students to the library for relatively undirected library research. Because one of the key roles proposed for Religious Education is the critical interpretation and evaluation of culture, this subject is particularly well placed for studying questions about

the effects of ICT on people's lives.   For example, religion classes at secondary level could investigate questions about the place of technology in contemporary lifestyles;   they could consider the potential personal impact of the use of internet social networking sites like YouTube, Myspace, Facebook and Twitter, appraising some of the positives and negatives in terms of enhancing relationships.   It would not be so much about finding definitive answers to questions about relative influence;   but the very investigation and the theorising about personal influence would be educative for the students.   Religious Education classes could also investigate values questions such as the use of technology in cyber-bullying, pornography and sexual exploitation.

The main challenge for religion teachers in this area is the wise and creative integration of ICT into their teaching, and determination of what constitutes the appropriate use of ICT by their students specifically for learning in the spiritual/moral area.   This challenge is exacerbated by the apparent lack of:

- availability, access to and reliability of ICT at school;
- confidence and competence in the teachers own use of ICT.

In spite of these difficulties, there is a need for religion teachers to consider the benefits that adopting a pro-technological stance in their selection of pedagogies that can enrich the students' learning experience in the classroom.   Ryan (2001b, p.20) considered that this stance towards a more frequent use of available technologies should be a means to an end and believed that teachers need to allow their students to work with these materials in ways which increase their critical understanding and appreciation.   This could include providing learning opportunities like: the construction of wiki sites to enhance the research skills of students; the use of podcasts to provide access to the collective wisdom of the wider community on religion and on contemporary issues;   accessing and appraising pertinent video clips from YouTube, GodTube or Google Video.   Teachers may get students to create their own podcasts and to capture various oral presentations using such iPod technology as iTalk.   ICT that could assist students with the vocalisation of various scripture passages is now readily available on the internet.

For religion teachers (as for all teachers) to become more advanced in the use of ICT will require schools to commit to a development program for upgrading their ICT knowledge and skills; and it will require that the teachers themselves be willing participants to improve their repertoire of skills in using ICT effectively.   Albion (1999) cited a study conducted by Borchers., Shroyer and Enochs (1992) that demonstrated that a professional development

program that included several workshops over an extended period and onsite support for participants could be effective for increasing both self-efficacy and computer use. In the business world, employers insist that their employees have certain certifications to demonstrate they have the necessary skills to be a valued member of their workplace. Perhaps the adoption of a program that results in certification of teachers' competency to handle various ICT technologies may prove to be the catalyst needed for teachers to come to terms with these issues.

While religion teachers may seek to incorporate ICT into their lessons as a way of increasing the engagement of their students with religion, there are some theorists who have raised concerns about potential problems in an over reliance on the use of ICT. – as if it were essential for learning in the contemporary classroom (Ryan, 2001b; Laura & Marchant, 2002; Engelberg & Sjoberg, 2004; Laura & Chapman, 2009). For example, Laura and Chapman (2009) pointed towards problems they considered were arising from the technologisation of education. They believed that an inverse proportional relationship existed between the level of ICT use in the classroom and the level of disconnectedness of students. They argued that "the more virtual the classroom becomes, the more disconnected students become" (2009, p. 289). Laura and Chapman claimed that the quality relationships that develop between students and their teachers may play a critical role in the students' personal construction of self-esteem, their motivation to learn, and their confidence to confront new challenges. They believed these developmental processes might be under threat from excessive use of ICT in the classroom as "much of the traditional personal interchange between students and teachers at every level is steadily being diminished" (2009, p. 294). They also felt that there was little critical reflection by teachers about questions as to whether computer-based learning was systematically depersonalising the classroom.

While the views of Laura and Chapman may be in a minority as far as thinking about the place of ICT in student learning is concerned, they have drawn attention to potential problems that merit more systematic investigation.

Because of the important place proposed for critical evaluation of culture in Religious Education, this area of study is an ideal one for consideration of the values dimension to the use of I.C.T in both personal/social life and in education. Hence, the topic of the significance of I.C.T in school learning could be considered by students as part of a wider student investigation of the potential personal and social impact of new developments on their

interpretation of culture. Some initial questions for consideration along these lines were proposed by Crawford & Rossiter (2006, pp. 230-238).

6.2.5 The relevance of Religious Education from the perspective of the professional development of teachers

This research project identified a strong link between teachers' notion of success in the teaching of religion with the provision of professional development opportunities for teachers. Professional development and in-service opportunities have been, and should continue to be, important for developing both the content and pedagogical knowledge of teachers, as well as in providing experiences that can assist in their own personal spiritual and religious development.

The Catholic Church, through the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education's publication *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982, n 27), highlighted the importance it attached to professional development and in-service opportunities, noting:

> It is not enough that the initial training be at a good level; this must be maintained and deepened, always bringing it up to date. This can be very difficult for a lay teacher, and to ignore this fact is to ignore reality.

Catholic education authorities have gone to great lengths to provide opportunities for staff to further their knowledge and skills training, as well as for the enhancement of their own spirituality. But, as indicated in the results of this study, these efforts have met with mixed results. This raises the question about what teachers consider to be worthwhil*e* professional development and in-service opportunities.

Effective professional development seeks to be a positive influence on what content the teachers teach, how they enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skill, and on the teachers' desire to increase their professional effectiveness in the classroom. There are many benefits associated with professional development that the teachers highlighted in this study, which included:

- networking with other teachers from other schools
- gaining new ideas to try out in the classroom
- being challenged to think creatively and critically
- having the opportunity to reflect on your own practice
- learning with and from fellow colleagues

These benefits were also noted in research by Graham and Phelps (2003)

Catholic education authorities should not discount the value workplace learning has for the professional development of religion teachers.   It is a valuable, relatively inexpensive and convenient way of providing much needed professional development.   There is an increasing trend for schools to provide more professional development opportunities onsite.   For example, Religious Education coordinators have used part of their scheduled meeting time to get a staff member present what would be considered best practice in pedagogy or information to increase the background knowledge of fellow department members.   These have proven beneficial both for the presenter and for the staff in attendance.   This particular approach was endorsed by King, Hill & Retallick (1997, p. 29) who acknowledged that teacher workplace learning was an essential component of the overall professional development of teachers.

The results of this study showed that workplace teacher learning can be useful in the quest for better background knowledge and pedagogical skills.   The support of teacher professional learning communities inside schools can encourage collaboration and reflective dialogue about classroom practices, and can help improve teacher background knowledge of theology, scripture and religious practice.

It is proposed that each Catholic school needs to devise an effective professional development plan for their teachers of religion.   Providers of professional development need to pay attention to the results of research that has the potential to inform the planning and implementation of effective professional development activities.   Failure to do so may result in schools not optimising the benefits of a professional development plan.

> Indeed, most of the staff development that is conducted with K-12 teachers derives from the short term transmission model;   pays no attention to what is already going on in a particular classroom, school or school district;   offers little opportunity for participants to become involved in the conversation;   and provides no follow up. We have been engaged in this form of professional development for years, knowing full well that this approach is not particularly successful. (Richardson, 2003, p. 401)

This study showed that religion teachers valued opportunities to further the development of their own spirituality.   It is important that school administrations are proactive in providing spirituality experiences for staff.   In so doing, there is a need to clearly differentiate between professional development activities aimed at enhancing their professional work as religion teachers and spiritual experience activities that are proposed for the personal benefit of teachers themselves – the latter may well also need personal freedom in decisions to participate or not.

Proposed professional development plans need to address not only the needs of the staff, but also the future needs of the school in terms of enriching what they offer in terms of Religious Education to students – and to the wider community. Providers of professional development and in-service opportunities for teachers – namely those employed or contracted by Catholic Education Offices – need to work in consultation with both teachers and school administrations over what is required. The participants in this study registered some concern that a number of these providers have often been out of the classroom situation for some time and their conception of the reality of today's classroom is not in sync with that of the teachers they are trying to assist.

In conclusion, this study has investigated Catholic secondary school teachers' perceptions of what constituted the 'successful' teaching of classroom religion according to the teachers' intentionality. Using the genre 'success', it gave the sample of teachers a 'voice' in articulating their understandings of the nature and purposes of religious education, and what issues militate against the successful teaching of this area of curriculum. This study has raised a number of key issues which include: the desirability of critical inquiry and an academic subject orientation; ambivalence about ecclesial constructs like catechesis and evangelisation; a need for 'relevance' – in both content and pedagogy; and the need for stakeholders to pay attention to contemporary youth spirituality as a way of informing a more relevant religious education.

6.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

The potential personal relevance for young people in Religious Education in Catholic secondary schools needs to be promoted at both systems and school level. From the primary school years on, Religious Education needs to be proposed as an academic subject that does not suffer by comparison with the academic demands accepted as normal in other learning areas. This view needs to be promoted not only in official documentation at diocesan and school levels, it needs to be communicated to parents and students in clear transparent language without religious or ecclesiastical jargon. In addition, the status of, and important regard for, Religious Education needs to be reflected in the way it is structured and organised in the school curriculum. In addition, special attention needs to be given to a general explanation of the potential for personal, spiritual relevance in Religious Education. The distinctive personal contribution that Religious Education can make to young people's search for meaning and identity needs to be articulated. This includes the importance of providing access to cultural religious heritage no matter what the future religiosity of the students. Also important would be an explanation of the role of Religious Education in the critical evaluation

of culture, showing how it can help young people in charting a meaningful and purposeful life.

6.3.1 General recommendations related to Catholic Religious Education theory and practice

1. Religious Education as an academic study

Continuing efforts are needed to promote ever increasing acceptance of Religious Education as a credible academic study.   This needs to be developed across the secondary school and not just at the senior school level where state-based religion studies courses may be implemented.   This emphasis does not imply that the cognitive should be a dominant dimension but as for other subjects, it is a contextual emphasis within which best attention is given to the affective domain.   This emphasis could increase the level of consensus emerging about the nature and purposes of Religious Education in Catholic secondary schools.

2. **Development of more educational language for describing the nature and purposes of Catholic school Religious Education**

There is need for a more common educational language for discourse about Catholic school Religious Education that is not made esoteric and ambiguous by too extensive a use of ecclesiastical and religious constructs.   This development could promote better communication among the stakeholders in Catholic school Religious Education.

3. **Use of youth spirituality as an interpretive framework for appraising relevance in Religious Education**

An understanding of contemporary youth spirituality is proposed as an area of research that can be used as a framework to inform decisions about what content and methods are most likely to be relevant to the spiritual and moral needs of youth.   While considerations from a number of viewpoints are needed for deciding content and method, it is proposed that taking into account youth spirituality should be a principal one.

4. **Developing relevance in Religious Education in both content and pedagogy**

A re-appraisal of the content in Catholic secondary school religion curricula is needed to create a balance between learning about the Catholic traditions and the spiritual and moral issues that are relevant to the promotion of basic human spirituality.   This does not mean minimising or substituting for the prominence that a study of Catholic traditions should retain.   A prominence should be given to student-centred pedagogy that can help young people search for information themselves and develop confidence in their own interpretive and evaluative skills.   Such research-oriented pedagogy can offer them more opportunities to reflect on the personal meaning of what is being investigated.   Relevant pedagogies can help students better learn from their own life

experience. Attempts to engage students in a productive way in the classroom study of religion can include the appropriate use of technology (ICT).

6.3.2 Recommendations for school authorities at the system level

1. **Development of religion syllabi for use in the three stages of secondary Religious Education**

   It is proposed that diocesan guidelines for secondary Religious Education have a more specific syllabus component, for example: along the lines modelled by the N.S.W. Board of Studies for stage 4 and 5 courses. This would mean a restructuring of guidelines to include both syllabus and syllabus support documentation. In particular, syllabi could identify more clearly objectives in the areas of students learning about and learn to do. Additionally, performance descriptors could be developed to assist teachers with the planning of teaching as well as for assessment and reporting. The maintenance of diocesan independence has apparently inhibited the Catholic bishops of Australia from developing a national Religious Education syllabus and curriculum as has happened in New Zealand and in England. However, the development of diocesan syllabi in a comparable syllabus formats may at least provide a better basis for comparison.

2. **Revision of aims, objectives and outcomes in Religious Education programs**

   It is proposed that the aims, objectives and outcomes of the stage 4, 5 and 6 courses in Religious Education could be reworked in terms of the three categories, namely, psycho-emotional, spiritual and religious, as noted in section 6.2.1.2. This is in tune with the idea of addressing the needs of youth spirituality as proposed in recommendation 6.3.1.3 and section 6.2.1.2. It is proposed that assessment of value and attitudinal outcomes should not be included in any revision because of the problems in their proposal and measurement (section 6.2.4.1) and that the aims that were implied in such outcomes be more appropriately expressed in terms of hopes.

3. **The continued use of professional development activities to enhance teachers' capacities to conduct a relevant Religious Education**

   It is regarded as important to affirm the current practice of regional professional development programs that can enhance teachers' capacity to conduct a relevant Religious Education. Many of the issues identified in this study and in chapter 6 could well be addressed. Care is needed in the planning of such activities so that they are sensitively attuned to local school needs and interests. Differentiation is needed

between events geared to enhancing professional practice from those that are primarily for the personal and spiritual development of teachers. Provision is needed for investigating what constitutes appropriate and relevant use of ICT in Religious Education and to translate these findings into useful programs for religion teachers.

4. **More curriculum attention to content and method that will enhance the basic human spirituality needs of youth**

It is proposed that diocesan religion curricula need to address the recommendation 6.3.1.3 above to give more specific attention to the basic human spirituality needs of students. This complements the study of the religious tradition and will not compromise the Religious Education received by those students who are religious and are practising members of a parish.

5. **Adopting a code of teaching ethics to inform and guide teachers' reference to their own personal beliefs and views in the classroom**

A code of teaching ethics based on the position of committed impartiality needs to be published for secondary religion teachers in diocesan guidelines. This is considered an essential component for any education linked to the moral and spiritual development of youth. Adoption of this code would affirm the Catholic school's commitment to protect the integrity of its students and to ensure that indoctrination and manipulation of students are always excluded from any pedagogical practice by teachers.

6. **Affirming the importance of religious leadership in schools**

The work done at system level to enhance the status and the effectiveness of religious leadership in Catholic schools, particularly in the role of the Religious Education Coordinator needs to be affirmed and continued. The pros and cons of making the religion coordinator a school executive position need to be considered (as in the case of Assistant Principal Religious Education in Queensland Catholic schools). An appropriate division of labour for the position between two individuals with specified roles may also be considered in the light of current practices of this type. Any action to enhance the role and effectiveness of those who are leaders in school Religious Education will help give wider community and school legitimation of the prime purpose for the existence of Catholic schools is in terms of the Religious Education of youth.

6.3.3 Recommendations for local Catholic school authorities

1. **Affirmation of the primacy of Religious Education in timetabling decisions**

   To address the disparity that sometimes exists between schools over the treatment of Religious Education in terms of period allocation, teacher selection and when it is scheduled to be taught, it is proposed that school administrations select the staff for Religious Education before allocating the rest of the teachers' loads. It would also further support Religious Education if the minimum time of 320 hours for the stage 4 and 5 courses, be mandated, together with a more realistic indicative time of 350 hours.

2. **The development of religion learning communities among the school staff**

   If Catholic school Religious Education is to become distinctive for a role in helping its students become critical interpreters and evaluators of culture, then this role needs to be modelled appropriately by school staff. One move in this direction could be the idea of staff meeting periodically, whether informally or within staff meetings, to act as a learning community seeking to develop this critical skill among the staff group itself. Meetings that function along these lines could formally discuss contemporary issues and ways these might be addressed both in Religious Education and in across-the-curriculum studies.

In conclusion, the importance of developing relevance in Religious Education in both content and pedagogy, as a fundamental task in the teaching of religious education in the classroom, cannot be understated. Using basic human spirituality as an important student-centred framework would provide teachers with the means to make Religious Education a more *relevant* and worthwhile pursuit for young people. This would hopefully promote the engagement of youth with aspects of Catholicism that would:

- meet the spiritual, moral and identity needs of young people;
- make meaningful connection with their experience and life world;
- make meaningful connections with their cultural religious tradition;
- help them chart their personal way through life with all its complexities; and problems;
- help them to learn how to identity, interpret and evaluate contemporary spiritual and moral issues.

Before any content, curriculum or textbook is considered; the starting points in an educational setting are the students – adolescent to young adult. Given that differentiation is an

educational principle, the naming of basic human spirituality coupled with individual personal freedom in developing faith responses, and levels of engagement from psycho-emotional; through spiritual and religious profoundly alters the theory and practice especially in secondary schools.   Non-catholic students (pre-evangelised), non-practicising students (evangelised) and practising students (catechised) have different needs.   This means the solution is quite "complex".

6.4   PROPOSED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While this study has identified a range of issues in secondary school Religious Education, the following notes topics that warrant further research attention because they appear to be issues or problems that appropriately follow up the findings and conclusions to this research.

Further research on teachers' understandings of successful Religious Education

With some refinement and selection of questionnaire items in the light of the results of this study, a survey instrument could be readily developed that could be used more widely to investigate what teachers understand by success in Religious Education, and by implication to study teachers' understanding of the nature and purposes of Religious Education.   The issues identified in such work could inform professional development programs that tried to address problematic perceptions of Religious Education.

Similarly, further research could be directed to the use of ecclesiastical and religious constructs in conceptualising Religious Education.   This may test further the extent to which there are problems with the interpretation of these terms and whether or not their use inhibits clarity and realism in the purposes of Religious Education.

While this study focused on the notion of teachers' understandings of successful Religious Education, it could well be complemented by research that specifically investigated how teachers understand the notion of a Religious Education that is relevant to young people.

Research in youth spirituality

While this thesis has referred to a number of recent research studies on youth spirituality, this area is regarded as so fundamentally important to Religious Education that it should remain a priority research area for Catholic Religious Education.   In particular, Rossiter's (2009) notion of basic human spirituality needs further investigation with reference to young people. If the focus of the spiritual dimension to life for many young people is increasingly located in personal development issues and not in more formal religious questions, then this needs to be

tested in exploratory studies which may then have implications for the notion of Religious Education as the critical interpretation of culture.

Further curriculum research

Whether or not the proposed use of syllabus statements in the religion curriculum would be considered beneficial could be investigated.

The ideas of content and pedagogical relevance were prominent in the conclusions drawn from this study. However, further speculation as well as empirical studies would be needed to establish the potential significance of these constructs.

Questions that warrant investigation include: the utility of formats for diocesan Religious Education guidelines, and whether or not a syllabus format would be helpful for religion teachers.

There is a need to further investigate the extent to which the personal and faith orientation of Religious Education, with its special emphasis on sharing faith insights, are obstacles for teachers to adopt a subject orientated approach in their teaching of religion.

There is a need for further clarification of the use of various resources in Religious Education, including student textbooks. The particular, appropriate use of ICT in Religious Education needs to be clarified to inform the direction of any professional development programs in this area.

6.5   CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the Catholic Bishops' document *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads* (2007, p. 12-13), the formula for the success of Catholic schooling that they recommended, among other things, was a "new evangelisation". They also expressed concerns that Catholic schooling, and presumably Religious Education, were unsuccessful because they were not arresting the decline in youth engagement with Catholic parishes. This stance appeared to misunderstand and to underestimate the complexity of contemporary youth spirituality. Yet it seemed to overestimate the power of links between education and changing young people's spirituality. In so doing, the document implied a view of successful Religious Education that misunderstood both the process of Religious Education as well as the spirituality of many who were receiving it.

It was noted in the introductory chapter of this thesis that there remains a degree of uncertainty among religion teachers in Catholic secondary schools about the nature and purposes of Religious Education. Inevitably this would have an influence on what they judged to be successful religion teaching. This study has been innovative in the way it has given a voice to a sample of secondary religion teachers on this question – and innovative in the way it has made use of the genre of success. The teachers' voice has in turn identified a number of critical issues for Religious Education.

In extrapolating from the research findings, the researcher developed his own view of Religious Education which considers that the issue of *relevance* is both a crucial and central unifying theme for the future of Catholic secondary school Religious Education; it was not missing from Religious Education, but it needed more prominence, especially at the classroom level. The study's conclusions may help by informing efforts to address those issues, working towards a greater consensus around the question of how Religious Education can become more *relevant* to young people whose spirituality is different from that of many of the adults who conduct their Religious Education in Catholic schools.

The bishops document *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads* (2007) saw the present situation of Catholic schools as a problem. It tended to view the current spirituality of many youth in terms of a deficit model that is often characterised by the use of words such as unchurched, irreligious or unspiritual – even though these specific words were not used, the idea of secularisation was. And the document judged the situation from the point of view of getting young people to participate in Catholic parishes. But if it is accepted that, for whatever reason, the bulk of Catholic adults and young people are not going to participate in the Church in this way, and if this is accepted as the norm and not defined as a deficit or something faulty with the school system, then Religious Education would be more free to give attention to enhancing the basic, human, psychological spirituality that operates in the way young people deal with the spiritual and moral issues of life. This needs to be offered unconditionally to the students in Catholic schools (along with continued attention to the religious tradition itself) whether or not they ever associate with a parish. This will also be helpful to the youth who will go on to be committed to a parish.

What teachers imply when they talk about the need to make Religious Education relevant is their effort to try to do something that will resonate with relatively secular youth to help them negotiate a meaningful life in a complex world – hopefully drawing on the 2000 year tradition of wisdom in Christianity. In implying this, the teachers are also acknowledging the

spirituality of their students by trying to be attuned to their spiritual starting points and trying to build a healthy spirituality from there.   To provide a relevant Religious Education like this requires supporting relevant content and relevant pedagogy.   It will not be sufficient for today's youth if religion teachers just concentrate on all the traditional religious topics which one would expect from the official church authorised guidelines.   While teachers may believe that following the course outlined in the normative guidelines remains important, their thinking about the spiritual needs of their students implies some concern that the guidelines and the course are insufficient – even if valuable.   If this is the case, then further research on teachers' understandings of what constitutes a relevant Religious Education would be the most important follow up to this study.

There was anecdotal evidence that teachers who participated in this study appreciated the opportunity to have a voice in what is happening in Religious Education and in what needs to happen in a way that was non-threatening and confidential.   And in addition, a number acknowledged it was a valuable opportunity to reflect on the possible meaning and purpose, and possible effectiveness of their teaching.   Hence the research had professional learning and professional development dimensions to it.   This is not an undesirable thing in a doctoral research project.

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✚ ACU National

Mr. David Kenyon,
68 Hellyar Drive,
Wollongbar.
 N.S.W. 2477

Ms Dianne Marshall
Director,
Catholic Education Office,
Keen St.,
Lismore.
N.S.W. 2480

Dear Dianne,

I am currently enrolled in the Doctorate of Education programme in the School of Religious Education at the Australian Catholic University at St. Mary's Campus, Strathfield. I am writing to seek your permission to conduct my research in the secondary schools and colleges of the Diocese of Lismore.

It is envisaged that the research would include administering a questionnaire to current religious education secondary teachers and a subsequent follow up interview with a representative cross section of these.

The proposed study seeks to investigate the following areas of research in relation to secondary classroom religious education:

- The notion of successful religion teaching
- Perceived influences on the expectations and experience of success.
- Implied understandings of the nature and purposes of classroom religious education.

I have enclosed an abstract, which outlines in more detail, various aspects of the investigation including the methods of gathering the information.

I would appreciate it greatly if I can get your approval in writing so I can forward it to the Ethics committee to assist in gaining clearance for the research to proceed.

Looking forward to your reply,

Yours sincerely,

David Kenyon.
M.Ed; M. CURR.STD; B.A.; B.Ed.

⊕ACU National

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT:

An investigation into secondary classroom religious education teachers' perceptions relating to:

- Their notion of successful religion teaching
- The perceived influences on their expectations and experience of success.
- Their implied understandings of the nature and purposes of classroom religious education

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

MR. DAVID KENYON.

NAME OF PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED:

Ed.D. - DOCTOR OF EDUCATION.

I am seeking your assistance in conducting this research. This particular project seeks to investigate what Lismore Diocese secondary religion teachers notion of successful religion teaching; perceived influences on the expectations and experiences of their success; and implied understandings of the nature and purpose of classroom religious education In conducting this investigation, two instruments will be used to gather the necessary information for this empirical study. One of these instruments is a questionnaire, which all current religion teachers, such as yourself, in participating Diocesan schools and colleges, are encouraged to answer. After initial processing of the information collected, it may be necessary to interview a cross section of the participating teachers on emergent themes resulting from an initial processing of the data from the questionnaire - namely the processes used in the religion classroom, their judgment as to how students react to these processes, the impact of resources on the quality of their teaching, their understandings of the nature and purposes of Religious Education in the classroom, what they consider to be the competencies needed to teach religion in the secondary classroom and the impact of professional development - as critical indicators of success.

Your participation would include the completion of the questionnaire attached, which is designed to seek your professional opinion on the aspects outlined above. This will be totally anonymous. It is envisaged that this would take approximately twenty five minutes of your time. I also may need to interview a cross section of teachers to expand upon and enrich the information gathered. This is voluntary. If you wish to be involved in the interview process, please contact me at the email address quoted over the page. I will endeavour to contact you to arrange a possible time convenient to you. I envisage this interview to take between 20 to 40 minutes.

Information gained from this investigation would be of prime importance in assisting educators like yourself in your endeavours to improve the standing of Religious Education as an important academic subject and the standard of Religious Education teaching in the classroom.

The study will investigate the range of influences, that you and other religious education teachers consider have affected their understanding of (and expectations for) the successful teaching of religion. This will in turn show the extent to which particular items, thought to be important for teacher professional development, actually figure in teachers' notions of what has influenced 'success' for them in the teaching of religion: for example, Diocesan guidelines, professional development programmes, tertiary study of religious education.

In any investigation, confidentiality is an important issue. In conducting this research, every effort will be made to ensure the anonymity of your contribution and that of other participants. Your name, the names of participants and their school/college will not be quoted in the research or in any subsequent publication of the results in any form. Records of any interviews and the completed questionnaires will be stored in a secured location and will be disposed of in an appropriate manner when it is ethically appropriate to do so.

You and all other participants are free to refuse consent altogether without having to justify that decision, or to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without giving a reason.

Any questions you have regarding this project should be directed to:

Mr. David Kenyon

dkenyon@trinitylismore.com

At Trinity Catholic College Lismore

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 Researcher has (have) not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Unit.

> NSW/ACT: Chair, HREC
> C/o Research Services
> Australian Catholic University
> Sydney Campus
> Locked Bag 2002
> STRATHFIELD NSW 2135
> Tel: 02 9701 4159
> Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate 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 Researcher.

Yours sincerely,

David Kenyon. M.Ed, M.Curr. Std, B.A., B.Ed   *Associate Professor Graham*
Rossister

                                                                                           Principal Supervisor

✠ **ACU National**

CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT:

The purpose of this study is to investigate:-

Secondary classroom religious education teachers' perceptions relating to:

- Their notion of successful religion teaching
- The perceived influences on their expectations and experience of success
- Their implied understandings of the nature and purposes of classroom religious education

NAME OF RESEARCHER:

MR. DAVID KENYON

I .... *(The participant)* have read (*or, where appropriate*, have had read to me*)* 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 (*or stipulate the deadline by when the participant may withdraw*). 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)

SIGNATURE.. DATE......................................

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER:..
                                  Mr. David Kenyon

DATE:...............................…...…………

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: ....
                                      Associate Professor Graham Rossiter

DATE:..

ACU National

School of Religious Education

Research questionnaire.

Researcher's Name: Mr. David Kenyon

Topic to be researched:

What do secondary teachers perceive to be 'success' in teaching religion in the classroom?   And what do they consider have been the influences on their thinking about this?

 Could you please take note of the following points:

- Please do not put any identifying markings on the questionnaire.
  Each respondent's completed questionnaire needs to be anonymous.
- The contents of the questionnaire are printed on both sides of the paper
- The questionnaire should take about 20 minutes to complete.
- All completed questionnaires will be processed and then stored in a secure location.
- A summary of the findings will be sent to you upon request.

Thank you for your co-operation

****

QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher background:
Please answer the following items by ticking the appropriate boxes:

A. **Sex:**
- ❏ Female
- ❏ Male

B. **Age group:**
- ❏ 21-25
- ❏ 26-30
- ❏ 31-35
- ❏ 36-40
- ❏ 41-45
- ❏ 46-50
- ❏ 51-55
- ❏ 56-60
- ❏ 61-65
- ❏ 65+

C. **Are you accredited to teach religious education?**
Yes (Go to D)
No (Go to E)

D **How did you gain your accreditation to teach secondary religious education? (You may tick more than one)**
- ❏ Undergraduate course (Eg. BEd or Dip Ed) with significant attention to Religious Education and Theology
- ❏ Foundations of RE course
- ❏ Diocesan Religious Education Certificate.
- ❏ University Graduate Certificate of Religious Education
- ❏ University Graduate Diploma of Religious Education
- ❏ Masters of Religious Education or Master of Education with a significant Religious Education / Theology component
- ❏ Bachelor of Theology degree
- ❏ Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma in Theological studies
- ❏ Masters of Arts in Theological Studies
- ❏ Other: (Please specify)………………………………………………

E. **How many years have you been teaching at the secondary level?** _____

F. **How many years have you been teaching religious education?** _____

G. **Please tick the boxes to show the levels at which you have taught religion.**

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- ❑   Year 7
- ❑   Year 8
- ❑   Year 9
- ❑   Year 10

Year 11 Studies of Religion
Year 11 Board Approved Course.
Year 12 Studies of Religion.
Year 12 Board Approved Course

H.   Have you taught religion in a primary classroom before? _____.
        If yes, for how many years? _____

I.   Have you ever held the position of :

(a)   Religious Education Coordinator(R.E.C.) and /o r Assistant R.E. Coordinator - _____.

(b)   If yes, secondary or primary? _____

(c)   If yes for how long?   (To the nearest year)_____

J.   Please tick the box below which best indicates your pattern of attendance at Professional Development / In-service sessions in Religious Education over the past three years:

- ❑   On average, three or more times a year.
- ❑   On average, twice a year.
- ❑   On average, once a year
- ❑   Other. (Please specify)_____
- ❑   None

****

K.   My perception of success in the classroom teaching of religion:

For each of the following statements , circle the number on the scale line that best indicates whether you '**strongly disagree**', '**disagree**', '**are uncertain**', '**agree**' or '**strongly agree**' with it.

I felt successful in teaching religion in the classroom when:

1.   Students shared personal insights with each other.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

2.   A number of students participated eagerly in discussing a topic.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

3.   Students were engaged in quality research and projects

1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

4.   Students displayed critical thinking in their written work.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

5.   Students showed evidence of critical thinking in discussion about the topic.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

6.   A large proportion of the lesson was taken up in discussion.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

7. My students were relaxed and I did not have to subject them to the sort of academic pressure that they experience in other areas of the curriculum.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

8. The assignment / homework task I had allocated was taken up enthusiastically.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

9. The topic was perceived by students as relevant to their lives.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

10. Students listened to my systematic verbal presentation on the topic.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

11. Students asked interesting questions about the topic.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

12. I taught religion as an academic subject.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

13. Students prepared and conducted good para-liturgies.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

14. There was the opportunity to discuss the teaching of a current unit both before and after it was taught with colleagues.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

15. Students participated well in a classroom prayer session.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

16. I presented a video that students found interesting.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

17. Students were challenged to think critically by stimulus material (Eg. Handout, video etc.)

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

18. There was an opportunity for prayer or prayerful reflection during or after the lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

19. Students showed they were giving thoughtful attention to contemporary spiritual and moral issues.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

20. Students showed they were learning good Catholic theology.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

21.   I was able to share my personal faith and beliefs with the students.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

22.   Students showed an interest in Scripture.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

23.   Students showed an awareness of the shaping influence that culture can have on people's beliefs and attitudes.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

24.   Students were able to see how the creative arts are linked with religion.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

25.   Students saw themselves as belonging to the Catholic Church?

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

26.   Students expressed an interest in Catholic teachings.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

27.   Students showed some critical interpretation of Scripture in the light of modern Scripture scholarship.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

28.   Students were responsive to spiritual or moral insights that I gave them.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

29.   Students responded to me as a person and not just as someone in charge of them?

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

30.   Students indicated that the lesson had an influence on the development of their personal faith.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

31.   Students enjoyed the viewing of a film or video.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

32.   Students showed an interest in discussing one or more social justice issues.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

33.   Students appeared to enjoy a meditation or quiet reflection session.
1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

34.   Students were enthusiastic to act on a social justice issue.
1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

35.   The students completed all the set work for the lesson.
1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

36. The students appeared to enjoy my lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

37. Students remained focused on the topic of the lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

38. Students were occupied quietly for a lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

39. Students worked together cooperatively on group tasks.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

40. Students showed they were well informed about contemporary issues.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

41. Students learned set answers to a set of religious questions.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

42. Students showed a good capacity to interpret scripture critically.
1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

43. I helped students learn how to think critically.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

44. Students did well in assessment tasks.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

45. I felt confident in my teaching of the set topic.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

46. I followed the lesson plan provided.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

47. I kept to the programme's time schedule.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

48. Understanding Scripture had a prominent place in the lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

49. I survived the lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

50. I used a lot of worksheets in the lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

51.   A strategy learned from an In-service Course worked well.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

I felt unsuccessful teaching religion in the classroom when:

52.   I perceived that students did poor work on research or projects.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

53.   A majority of my students did not achieve a good result on an assessment task.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

54.   Students were uninterested or unimpressed with the material in a film or video.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

55.   I was not able to give witness to my personal faith.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

56.   Students did not work at the same level of rigour as in other academic subjects.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

57.   Students did not demonstrate any critical thinking regarding any of the material presented in a lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

58.   Students were very critical of the Institutional Church.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

59.   The students indicated that the topic was not relevant to their lives.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

60.   Many of the students did not participate in the class discussion.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

61.   Students showed a low level of research skill.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

62.   Students were uninterested in the content of the lesson.
1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

63.   Students were not able to develop and articulate arguments with evidence.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

64. Students understood little of the theological complexity in the material presented in the lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

65. I didn't encourage any critical reflection of the material presented in my lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

66. Students showed they were uninterested in the Institutional Church.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

67. It appeared that my students' faith development was not furthered.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

L.   Effects of resources on my experience of success in teaching religion:

For each of the following statements , circle the number on the scale line that best indicates whether you '**strongly disagree**', '**disagree**', '**are uncertain**', '**agree**' or '**strongly agree**' with it.

I felt more successful in teaching religion in the classroom when:

68. I was given good resources by the Religious Education Coordinator.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

69. I used the teaching strategies specified in the school Religious Education program.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

70. I consulted the Diocesan Religious Education Guidelines in planning lessons.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

71. My worksheets seemed to be used effectively by students.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

72. The library was used effectively by my students.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

73. Students were able to use computers to produce work.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

74. A video was used as informative stimulus material.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

75. I used the set textbook regularly.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

76. Students reported information they found on the Internet.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

77.   There was an interesting guest lecturer.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

78.   I used another teacher's worksheet given to me just prior to my lesson.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

I felt less successful in teaching Religion in the classroom when:

79.   I showed a video without previewing it first.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

80.   Information technology was not used appropriately.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

81.   The library was not extensively used.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly agree

M.   Thinking about Religious Education that has affected my experience of success in the classroom teaching of religion:

For each of the following statements, **indicate to what extent you consider these ideas have affected your experience of success in the classroom teaching of religion**.   Circle the number on the scale line that best indicates whether you think this had '**No effect whatever**', '**Little if any effect**' '**Uncertain**', '**Some effect**', or '**A strong effect**'.

82.   Imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith tradition.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever   Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

83.   Teaching religion as a ministry of the Catholic Church.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever   Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

84.   Helping students to become well informed and critical thinkers.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever   Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

85.   An opportunity to communicate the teaching of the Universal Catholic
Catechism.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever   Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

86.   Educating students in their Catholic faith and in spiritual/moral issues.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever   Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

87.   Providing catechesis (an education in faith for believers).

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever   Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

88.   Following the Shared Praxis approach.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever   Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

89.   Increasing the religious literacy of students.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever   Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

90. Discussion is more important in religion class than in other subjects.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

91. Getting back to good traditional Catholic theology.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

92. Providing an opportunity for students to learn study and research skills in religion.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

93. The religion teacher being a witness to Catholic beliefs and values.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

94. Students get involved in 'theologising'.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

95. Promoting students' questioning about religion in a positive way that enhances their spiritual development.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

96. Helping students look at issues related to meaning and purpose in life.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

97. Providing the opportunity for students to do some social action?

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

98. Developing students' familiarity with Catholic religious practices.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

99. Helping students share their personal faith with others.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

100. Religious Education should be as challenging academically as any other subject.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

101. Evangelising the students (advocating the good news of Jesus Christ to invite students to Christian personal faith).

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

102. Informing students about world religions.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

103. An opportunity for informing students about contemporary spiritual and moral issues

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

104. Giving students the opportunity to experience their Catholic faith. Eg. Having Mass, Reconciliation etc.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

105. Getting students to become regular church-going Catholics.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

106.   Giving students guidance in exploring their own spirituality.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

107.   The religion teacher as a spiritual role model for students.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

108.   Helping students discover and consider adopting Gospel values.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

109.   Helping students know the Christian story and see the challenges it presents.

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
No effect whatever Little if any effect   Uncertain   Some effect   A strong effect

N.   Background influences on my experience of success in the classroom teaching of religion:

For each of the following statements, indicate **how helpful each item has been in relation to your experience of success in the teaching of religion.**   Circle the number on the scale line that best indicates whether you think this was '**not applicable**', '**very unhelpful**', **'unhelpful**', '**unsure**', '**helpful**', or '**very helpful**'.

110. Professional development events that allowed me to explore my spirituality.

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Not applicable   Very unhelpful   Unhelpful   Unsure   Helpful   Very helpful
 Please name the most helpful events or topics:
 _____

111.   Professional development events that were practically oriented to improving
        classroom practice.
0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Not applicable   Very unhelpful   Unhelpful   Unsure   Helpful   Very helpful

 Please name the most helpful events or topics: _____

112. Whole program of religious education study at university or through another organisation Eg. C.E.O. (Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters programs, Certificate of Religious education.)

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Not applicable Very unhelpful Unhelpful Unsure Helpful Very helpful

Name of Program: _____ **Name of Institution:_____**

113. Particular units in a university course or program.

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Not applicable Very unhelpful Unhelpful Unsure Helpful Very helpful

Name the most helpful unit(s): _____

114. Professional reading of books: Eg. A teacher text in Religious Education or Theology or a resource book on religious education

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Not applicable Very unhelpful Unhelpful Unsure Helpful Very helpful

Name of Book(s):_____

115. Professional reading of journals: Eg. Journals on Religious Education or Theology

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Not applicable Very unhelpful Unhelpful Unsure Helpful Very helpful

Name of Journal(s):_____

116. The set student text book(s):

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Not applicable Very unhelpful Unhelpful Unsure Helpful Very helpful

Name of the book(s):_____

117.   Diocesan religious education guidelines

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5

Not applicable Very unhelpful Unhelpful Unsure Helpful Very helpful

118. Interaction with fellow teachers in curriculum planning and lesson preparation.

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Not applicable   Very unhelpful   Unhelpful   Unsure   Helpful   Very helpful

119. Departmental meetings of the school Religious Education staff

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Not applicable   Very unhelpful   Unhelpful   Unsure   Helpful   Very helpful

120. On the job experience of teaching religion.

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5
Not applicable   Very unhelpful   Unhelpful   Unsure   Helpful   Very helpful

O.   Please answer briefly the questions below

121.   Professional development events:
Have these contributed in a noticeable way to my successful teaching of religion in the classroom?   (Briefly explain your view.)

_____
_____
_____
_____

122.   Please comment on any other factors that may have contributed to your
          successful teaching of religion?

_____
_____
_____
_____

123.   Are there any influences or factors that you think have inhibited your success
          in the classroom teaching of religion?   If so, please elaborate:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

124.   Can you recommend any particular teaching/learning procedures that you
          think you have used successfully in the classroom teaching of religion?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

125.   Do you agree that discussion is more important in religion classes than other
subjects?   _____

Comment:_____
_____
_____
_____

****

Typology of aims and purposes for classroom religious education in Catholic schools ……………………………………………………*G. Rossiter 3/6/05*

Note: This is a short outline version of the typology showing the main categories without the detailed development of sub-items

Grids A and B

A. Focus on Students:

Classification of aims for religious education related to changes intended or hoped for in students.

B. Focus on the Religious Tradition:

Paralleling each of the categories in A, indicating how the aims for students may be linked with the Religious Tradition

A. Focus on intentions to promote change in students	B. Focus on how the religious tradition figures in the intended change.
a) Qualities, components and characteristics of student personal development	a) Place of Catholic religious tradition within personal development; what this aim implies from the perspective of the faith tradition.
1. Knowledge and understanding (cognitive dimension)	1. Of the Catholic faith tradition 2. Of Catholic theology 3. Of Catholic teachings.
2. Affective dimension (emotional, aesthetic, and creative)	
3. Experiential dimension	
4. Volitional dimension (including action)	
5. Faith dimension: (overlaps with volitional)	1. In the context of the Church's faith
6. Virtues: Habits and dispositions to think and act in morally virtuous ways.	
7. Personal expression (including discussion groups)	
8. Personal change (the intention of promoting personal change in students in particular dimensions, and in combinations of dimensions involves a number of the above dimensions.	
9. Personal relationship with God	1. The Trinitarian God 2. Jesus Christ
10. Other relationships	
11. Prayerfulness. Readiness to pray as a part of personal life.	1. Informed by Catholic religious spirituality
12. Spirituality (ways of thinking and acting in relation to the spiritual/moral dimension to life).	1. Drawing on Catholic religious spirituality
13. Meaning and purpose in life (includes other dimensions listed above)	1. Drawing on Catholic world view
14. Identity:	1. A personal identity with a religious component informed by Catholic traditions
15. Participation in a parish	1. Membership in a parish
16. Attendance at Mass	1. Sunday Mass attendance
b) Personal orientation and skills	b) Relationship with the Catholic religious tradition
16. Critical thinking skills.	
17. Research and study skills in religion.	
18. Theological skills – helping students to 'theologise'	
19. A prayer orientation in the student	
20. Liturgical skills	
21. Moral maturity and morally responsible (development of moral code and morally responsible behaviour).	
22. Moral decision-making skills.	
23. Sensitivity to spiritual and moral issues	

24. A social justice orientation in the student	
25. Capacity for critical evaluation of culture	

C. Metaphors, themes and constructs for describing and interpreting the process of religious education from the perspective of the teacher

Metaphors, themes &constructs
a). Knowledge, understanding and experience of the religious tradition
1. *Knowledge and understanding* of the religious tradition
2. *Handing on* or *communicating* the religious tradition
3. Informed about cultural *religious heritage*
4. Giving students *access* to the religious tradition
5. First hand *experience of religious practices* Eg Liturgy, Prayer, Sacraments.
b) Experiential dimension and life experience
6. *Experiential learning* experiences in the classroom
7. Connection of learning to *students' life experience*; attempts to make learning 'relevant' to their lives.
8. *Spiritual and religious experiences* in the classroom
c) Promoting spiritual and moral development
9. Promoting growth in *personal faith*
10. Promoting *faith development* (use of this construct)
11. Developing *spirituality*
12. Developing *personal identity*
a) construction of *personal identity* in relation to cultural identity resources.
b) development of a *personal religious identity*, drawing on religious identity resources.
13. Helping students find and construct *meaning and purpose* in life
14. How the *faith tradition* provides meaning and purpose
15. Development of personal *values*
16. Development of a personal *moral code and ethics*
17. Religion and development of *moral decision-making*
18. *Conflict resolution*
d) Expression and communication
19. Student expression (in class and discussion groups)
a) expression of *views and understandings.*
b) expression of *critical thinking.*
c) expression of *personal views*
d) expression of personal views including reference to *personal beliefs and commitments*.
e) expression through the *creative arts*
20. Educative function of discussion (in class and discussion groups)
a) *academic discussion*, or *informed debate*; analysis, interpretation and evaluation while personal views not required; *critical thinking*; personal views accepted and valued when offered.
b) explicit aim is for personal discussion; *sharing personal views*.
c) explicit aims is 'faith sharing'; sharing personal beliefs and commitments
d) *teacher* expected to share *personal beliefs* and commitments.
e) Exhortation process
21. Exhortation by the teacher.
f) Evaluative approach
22. Develop the *capacity for critical thinking* about religion.
23. Informing about *spiritual and moral issues*
24. *Critical evaluation of the culture*
25. *Evaluation of religion*
26. Helping students seek 'the truth' (may involve evaluation of religious claims and focus on search for personal meaning)
g) Social justice orientation
27. Developing *sensitivity to social justice issues*
28. Occasions for follow through to some *committed social action*.

h) Orientation toward prayer and developing prayerfulness
29. Regarding the religious education process primarily as a prayerful one   a) classroom religious education considered as a type of prayerful experience – praying whenever possible.
30. Linking in prayer experience with classroom religious education in a selective way, while not regarding the educational process as primarily a prayerful one.
i) Community service orientation
31. Experience in community service activity
j) Liturgical orientation of the process
32. Religious education process strongly oriented towards liturgy.
k) Key religious constructs
33. Catechesis
34. Evangelisation
35. Inculturation
l) Educational themes
36. Developing *religious literacy*
37. Exploring the *place of religion in culture*; interrelationships between religion and culture
38. Studying *world religions* and world views
39. Studying *religious themes* across world religions
40. *Subject orientation*. Teaching religion as a subject along the same lines as other regular subjects.
41. Developing students' *research and study skills* in religion.
m) Religious and psychological development
42. Studying how religion can be involved in the *construction of personal meaning*
43. Studying how religions can be involved in the *construction of identity*
44. Psychological and sociological *aspects of religious development*.
45. Initiating young people into *religion as a mode of knowledge and awareness*
46. To understand how religions can serve as a *source of and reinforcement for moral values* for individuals.
n) Particular identified approaches, themes or pedagogies
47. Shared praxis
48. Phenomenology (description of religious phenomena)
49. Typology (Phenomenological typology)
50. Studies of Religion (Religion Studies) approach
51. Contextual religious education (helping young people construct their own meaning and purpose in life by making use of selections from religious meanings they find helpful. European and UK)
52. Hermeneutic and communicative competence (Lombaerts)
53. Concept development in religion
54. Religious competence (European)
55. Sharing personal narratives; and dialogical (Erricker)
o) Learning environment
56. Supportive *religious ethos* in the school
57. Favourable *classroom learning environment*
p) Additional themes for interpreting the teacher's role
58. Participating in the *mission* of the Church
59. Exercising *ministry* in the Church

60. *Witnessing* to the faith
    a) Overt witnessing: Teacher reveals his/her own beliefs and values with the idea of being a role model for young believers
    b) Overt witnessing: Teacher considers that his/her own interpretation of the faith is principal content.
    c) Implicit witnessing: Teacher considers that being professional and respecting and caring for students implies witnessing and role modelling, without making this an overt activity as in a and b.	

61. Making religious education *relevant* to students' lives	
62. *Educating* young people in religion	
63. *Political education*	
64. *Mentoring* young people	
65. Serving as a *role model*	
66. Opportunity for *counselling* students	
67. Opportunity for *spiritual direction* of students	
68. Developing *good personal relationships* with students	

D. Focus on issues in theory and practice where there is a polarity in expectations

Issues that affect the orientation of classroom religious education; in many of the instances, there is a polarity showing the different and conflicting interpretations of what is appropriate for classroom religious education.

Some of the processes listed above in C above may be considered as having a polarity or range of positions and could be entered as additional issues in Grid D.

Issues affecting interpretation of the appropriate role and processes for classroom religious education	Polarity or range of positions that can be taken on the issue
1. Subject orientation	1. Subject orientation 1a Teaching religion as a subject like other academic subjects. 1b Learning environment for religion similar to that of other subjects (Eg. Formality, assessment, outcomes etc.) 2. Non-subject orientation 2a Avoiding the teaching religion in the way other subjects are taught. 2b Making the classroom environment as personal and 'friendly' and relaxed as possible – to contrast with the formality of the rest of the curriculum (Eg. Informality, no assessment, no outcomes specified etc.)
2. Emphasis on authoritative teachings vs more open inquiry	1. Didactic, authority orientation 2. Open inquiry orientation
3. Expectations of what students should believe	1. Expectation of belief 2. Belief is not so much an expected outcome but a 'hope' and a matter for students' freedom
4. Focus on personal change	1. Direct focus on personal change in pupils – religious education regarded as a personal change process. 2. Direct focus on rational inquiry with an indirect potential for occasioning personal change
5. Relative emphasis on knowledge, rational skills, emotions, aesthetics	1. Main emphasis on knowledge, understanding and rational skills, with minimal attention to the affective 2. Contextual emphasis on rational inquiry as the most appropriate classroom learning environment in which the affective dimension can be addressed 3. Equal emphasis on the cognitive and affective dimensions in a holistic way 4. Emphasis on the affective and creative with minimal attention to rational inquiry
6. Personalism in the classroom and respect for students' freedom and privacy	1. Expectation of student contributions at a personal level 2. Contributions at a personal level are not expected
7. Faith responses and personal witnessing	1. Expectations of 'faith responses' and 'witnessing' in the classroom 2. 'Faith responses' and 'witnessing' not expected in the classroom (but these can be accepted and valued if students wish to make such contributions.)
8. Role of discussion in the educative	1. Expectation of class or group discussion as 'faith-sharing'

process.	2. 'Faith sharing' is not the goal of discussions, but is valued if it occurs 2a. Discussion is 'academic' in orientation; discussion based on informed positions – like informed debate; discussion based on critical thinking. 2b. Students free in discussion to explore diverse views in a 'zone of freedom' provided by the aim of rational inquiry. Personal views and commitments may be offered but are not required.
9. Faith development	1. Faith development stressed as the purpose of religious education 2. An educational study of religion that might foster the development of faith
10. Religious/faith experience in the classroom	1. Religious experience, faith experience 2. Educational experience in exploring religion and faith
11. Religious education as a prayer experience	1. Classroom religious education intended as a type of prayerful experience. 2. Classroom religious education not intended as a prayer experience but as an educational exploration of religion. 2a qualification of 2; the study may move towards prayer and/or paraliturgy at the end of a class or unit of work as a conclusion. 2b position 2 allows for designated periods of prayer E.g. at start or end of lesson, or as an organised part of the lessons, while the overall orientation is 2 and not 1.
12. Spirituality	1. Expectation of directly changing and enhancing students' spirituality 2. An educational exploration of spirituality that may eventually affect students' spirituality
13. Preparation for active church membership	1. Strong expectation and presumption regarding Church membership 2. Avoiding strong expectations and presumptions of Church membership
14. Attempts to make the content in some ways relevant to the needs and life experience of students.	1. Attempts to choose topics that are of interest to students or that are *relevant* to their lives and life experience. 2. Attempts within pedagogy to explore links between content being studied and the experience and needs/interests of students. 3. While acknowledging the desirability of 'relevance' of content, this is not the only criteria for content selection. 4. No consideration is given to attempts to find 'relevant' content or to try to make study of content 'relevant' for the students.
15. Teacher talk and student inquiry/research	1. Emphasis on teacher talk and teacher presentation 2. Balance between teacher talk/presentation and student inquiry/research with more time given to the former 3. Balance between teacher talk/presentation and student inquiry/research with more time given to the latter 4. Emphasis on student inquiry
16. Place of teachers' views and commitments	1. Teachers' beliefs and commitments given a special emphasis 2. Teachers' beliefs and commitments a useful but not a dominant source of content 3. Teachers' beliefs and commitments excluded from the classroom
17. Personal search for meaning vs study of religious traditions	1. Focus relatively exclusively on helping students develop their own personal meaning – the religious traditions as such tend to be disregarded, except for providing segments of contextual meaning for the student's construction of meaning. 2. Attention given to students' construction of meaning, but this does not compromise attention to religious traditions as worth studying in their own right. 3. Relatively exclusive attention given to study of religious traditions as entities with little or no attention to the idea of students constructing personal meaning.
18. Integrity of religious traditions in the study process.	1. Religious traditions important for study in their own right as comprehensive world views. 2. Relevance of religious traditions as meta-narratives is questioned; therefore they tend to be regarded in a more relativistic way; study of religions only of instrumental value to student learning and development of personal meaning.

19. Religion and cultural postmodernity	1. With presumed postmodern uncertainty about personal knowledge and truth, religious truth claims are questioned and regarded as contextual – meaning in a particular context only. 2. Acknowledging that the truth (and God) is too large to be covered exclusively by one religion, then religions can be seen as 'connecting' with absolute truth, but not containing 'all' of the truth. 3. Emphasis on the absolute truth of religious claims.

E.   Classification of content areas

Content areas		Further qualifying details. Elaboration of content, points of special emphasis, issues related to teaching in these areas
1. Scripture		.1 Types of interpretation: Literal, symbolic/theological, ecclesiastical/church/community, personal/spiritual. .2 Salvation history. .3 Relationship with history and the function of myth.
2. Hebrew Bible		
3. New Testament		.1 Period of formation of the New Testament.
4. Jesus and Christology		.2 Distinguishing the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith.
5. The Church		
6. Church history		.1 Understanding how and why the Church has changed over the centuries.
7. Mary		
8. Prayer		
9. Sacraments		
10. Liturgy		
11. Spirituality		
12. Morality and ethics		
13. Moral decision making		
14. Social justice		
15. Spiritual & moral issues		
16. Critical evaluation of culture		.1 Appraising the spiritual and moral influence of film and television.
17. Values and relationship with religion		.1 Understanding the nature of values. .2 Use of values clarification process. .3 Critique of the values clarification process
18. Place of religion in culture		
19. World religions		
20. Non religious world views		
21. New religious and spiritual movements		
22. Religious conflict		
23. Personal development (including elements of sex education)		
24. Social sciences		
25. Religion and psychological development		
26. Philosophy		

F.	**Classification of pedagogies and teaching/learning strategies**

Pedagogies and teaching/learning strategies
1. Teacher talk
2. Teacher presentation
3. Exhortation
4. Answering questions from class
5. Student research
6. Research project
7. Analysis, presentation and discussion of results of research
8. Poster presentation of results
9. Research from a text book
10. Internet research
11. Group research projects
12. Student reading
13. Reading from a text book
14 Students work alone
15 Students work in groups (collaborative learning)
16. Student presentations to class
17. Teacher dictating notes for students
18. Use of a catechism with students
19. Learning answers to questions off 'by heart'
20. Student discussion
21. Idea of 'faith sharing' discussions in groups
22. Idea of informed debate
23. Mixture of expectations of discussion
24. Teacher discussion with whole class
25. Audio-visual presentations
26. Presentations primarily for information giving
27. Presentations as stimulus material
28. Videos and DVDs etc.
29. Feature films
30. Stimulus activities
31. Role playing
32. Scripted drama (student plays etc.)
33. Values clarification type activities
34. Computer-based learning programs
35. Use of the Internet
36. Student writing
37. Student presentations
38. Preparation of liturgy and participation in liturgy
39. Preparation and presentation of paraliturgies
40. Use of art, drawing and creative activities
41. Cartoon drawing
42. Work on student worksheets
43. Preparation and conduct of prayer segments
44. Meditation exercises
45. Time and opportunity for student quiet reflection
46. Guest lectures
47. Excursions
48. Use of the school library for reading and projects
49. Community service (required and or as volunteers)
50. Homework
51. Use of a personal journal to record ideas, personal reflections etc.
52. Assessment tasks
53. Written assignment
54. Cooperative group projects
55. Oral assessment
56. Answering questions in text books
57. Examinations
58. Engagement of parents in some ways

Diagrammatic summary of focus on student change and student learning:
In addition to the 6 grids a diagrammatic summary is provided.

Table for locating aims/purposes for Religious Education (mainly in terms of student learning processes & student change)

Dimension or perspective	Components		Direct focus of classroom process or indirect influence		Profile for constructs/ approaches or special emphasis	
					Conceptual development	
Cognitive	Knowledge, understanding	Knowledge and understanding of the students'/school's sponsoring religious faith tradition			Faith development	
		Knowledge and understanding of a number of religions			**Spirituality**	
					Confessional or non-confessional	
		Emphasis on descriptive details of religion			Phenomenology	
		K &U of spiritual and moral issues			**Typology**	
	Analysis	Analysis of content			**Identity (personal religious and cultural)**	
	Interpretation and meanings	Interpretation of meanings	Articulating own personal meanings	May help with the articulation of personal meaning outside the classroom	**Religious Literacy**	
	Evaluation	Evaluation (making evaluative judgments)	Direct focus	Indirect; May help eventually.	**Religious competence**	
					Contextual RE	
	Reflection	Personal reflection on meaning and implications	Direct focus of teaching	Indirect; no pressure or requirement	**Shared Praxis**	
					Dialogical	
	Student research	Involves all of the above (student centred)			**Experiential**	
Emotional / aesthetic / affective	Emotions	Emotions	Direct focus	Indirect; may help eventually	**Personal narrative**	
	Aesthetics	Aesthetic dimensions			Search for meaning	
	Creativity	Creativity and originality				
Volitional	Personal religious faith	Personal faith (usually within a particular religious tradition)	**Direct** focus on students' personal lives; **Students to engage in** the clarification and articulation of personal beliefs etc. as part of the educational process	**General** focus on these dimensions and not on students' personal lives; Study may **contribute towards** students' clarification and articulation of personal beliefs etc	**Teacher talk & Student activity**	
	Beliefs	Personal beliefs (religious and non-religious)			**Critical interpretation of culture**	
	Values	Values				
	Ethics (and moral code)	Ethics; personal moral code				
	Attitudes/dispositions	Attitudes and dispositions (across other dimensions above)				
	Commitments	Commitments				
Experiential	Religious and spiritual experience		Direct attempts to have religious and spiritual experience in classroom	Indirect study of religious experience.		

Personal expression	Expression of personal views/understandings etc.	Expression of personal views/understandings etc.		Expectation that students should '**share**' personal views; Direct focus on students' personal lives.	Personal views not expected or required (but accepted if offered); general focus, leaving personal implications and personal expression up to the students	
	Expression of personal religious faith	Expression of personal religious faith				
	Expression through creative arts	Expression through creative arts				
Personal/social relationships	Relationships with:- Self; Others Environment Transcendent			Direct focus; relationship development in the classroom	Indirect focus; may contribute in the direction of development of relationships	
Personal and social action	Flow into personal and social action.	Committed action; Action for justice		Personal & social action a part of the educational agenda	No requirement or expectation of personal action; but the study may contribute towards this .	

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Summary of statistics for Questionnaire Items:

a.   Basic statistics for items 1 to 81.

Item on Questionnaire	Mean	SD	% Agree	% Disagree	% Uncertain
001-sharing insights	4.23	.722	93.4	4.1	2.4
002-eager in discussion	4.44	.655	95.9	2.4	1.6
003-engaged in quality research	4.24	.736	91.1	3.2	5.7
004-critical thinking (Written)	3.36	.770	91.1	3.2	5.7
005-critical thinking (Discussion)	4.41	.651	92.7	0.8	6.5
006-Discussion takes up most of period	3.51	.978	57.7	19.5	22.8
007-No academic pressure	3.36	1.072	51.2	26.8	22.0
008-assignment/homework task	3.66	.919	69.1	14.6	15.4
009-topic relevant to student lives	4.08	.902	81.3	8.9	9.8
010-listen to teacher presentation	3.47	.944	57.8	18.7	23.6
011-students asked interesting questions	4.20	.720	91.8	4.9	3.3
012-religion taught as academic subject	3.11	1.042	40.6	31.7	27.6
013-good paraliturgies prepared + run	3.79	.915	74	10.5	14.6
014-discuss with colleagues.	3.66	1.013	66.7	15.4	17.1
015- students participate in class pray.	3.95	.734	82.1	5.7	12.2
016-video found interesting	3.88	.685	83.8	5.7	10.6
017-critical thinking from stimulus stuff	4.28	.608	91.5	0.8	5.7
018- opportunity for prayer/reflection	3.71	.866	69.1	11.4	19.5
019-students on spiritual/moral issues	4.14	.761	87.0	4.9	8.1
020-learning good Catholic theology	3.37	.881	48.8	17.9	33.3
021-share personal faith	3.52	1.011	60.1	19.5	20.3
022-show interest in Scripture	3.66	.745	70.7	10.6	18.7
023- awareness of culture's influence	4.00	.724	80.5	3.3	16.3
024-link creative arts with religion	3.24	.960	43.1	20.4	16.3
025-students see themselves belonging to	3.14	1.003	42.3	32.5	25.2
026-interest in Catholic teachings	3.58	.788	67.5	13.0	18.7
027-critical interpretation of scripture	3.63	.960	65.1	14.6	19.5
028-responsive to teacher's insights	3.93	.755	80.3	6.5	12.2
029-respond to teacher as person	4.10	.773	86.2	5.7	8.1
030-lesson had an influence on faith	3.94	.908	73.2	7.3	19.5
031-enjoyed viewing of film/video	3.57	.942	65.1	16.2	18.7
032-interest in discussing social issues	4.44	.575	97.6	0.8	1.6
033-enjoy meditation/reflection session	4.11	.876	83.0	5.7	11.4
034-act on social justice issue	4.37	.762	87.8	2.4	9.8
035-completed all set work	3.38	.954	56.1	24.4	19.5
036-enjoyed my lesson	3.93	.721	78.9	4.1	17.1
037-remained focused on lesson	3.95	.651	82.9	3.3	13.8
038-occupied quietly for lesson	2.78	1.083	32.6	47.2	20.3
039-worked co-operatively in groups	3.97	.789	82.9	6.5	10.6
040- well informed on issues	3.59	.886	65.1	15.4	19.5
041-learned set answers to questions	2.33	.994	16.2	65.1	17.9

042-capable to interpret scripture critically	3.70	.872	72.3	11.4	15.4
043-learn to think critically	3.97	.782	77.2	4.9	17.9
044-did well in assessment tasks	3.67	.765	69.9	10.6	19.5
045-confident in my teaching of topic	4.24	.659	89.4	0.8	8.9
046-followed the lesson plan provided	2.64	.942	22.7	56.1	21.1
047- kept to program's time schedule	2.71	1.014	26.9	52.0	21.1
048-Understanding scripture	3.28	.926	45.5	22.7	31.7
049-survived the lesson	2.77	1.378	33.3	47.9	17.9
050-used lots of worksheets	2.13	.898	9.7	74.0	14.6
051-strategy from in-service worked well	3.78	.796	78.9	9.7	10.6
052-poor work done on research	3.35	.958	55.3	26.0	18.7
053-poor results achieved	3.26	.999	51.2	30.1	18.7
054-unimpressed with film	3.42	.984	57.8	24.4	17.9
055-unable to give witness	3.11	1.082	31.7	45.5	22.0
056-not work at same rigor as other subj.	3.18	1.025	44.9	33.3	22.0
057-no critical thinking	3.80	.902	73.2	11.4	15.4
058-critical of institutional church	2.37	.899	13.0	68.3	18.7
059-topic not relevant	3.11	1.015	44.7	39.0	16.3
060-no participation in discussion	3.50	.900	65.0	20.3	14.6
061-low level of research skill	3.06	.994	38.2	38.2	23.6
062-uninterested in lesson content	3.63	.880	71.5	13.8	14.6
063-didn't develop/articulate arguments	3.12	.972	39	34.1	26.8
064-understood little of theology	2.89	.930	33.3	43.9	22.8
065-no encouragement of critical thinking	3.59	.886	66.6	14.6	18.7
066-uninterested in institutional church	2.58	.887	20.3	58.6	21.1
067-faith development not furthered	3.01	.945	34.2	37.4	28.5
068-good resources from REC	4.23	.945	92.7	4.1	3.3
069-used teaching strategies in program	3.33	.733	51.2	25.2	23.6
070-consulted CEO guidelines	2.71	.989	27.7	12.2	34.1
071-worksheets effectively used	4.07	1.051	94.3	0.8	4.9
072-library effectively used	3.99	.621	86.9	3.3	9.8
073-use computers	3.61	.937	64.2	16.3	18.7
074-video used as stimulus material	3.97	.677	86.9	5.7	7.3
075-text used regularly	2.78	1.060	30.1	47.1	22.8
076-report info from internet	3.59	.856	61.0	10.6	27.6
077-interesting guest lecturer	3.81	.863	76.4	8.9	13.8
078-used another teacher's sheet	2.57	.943	21.9	47.9	26.8
079-didn't preview video	3.48	1.103	62.6	25.2	10.6
080-I.T. not used properly	3.50	.972	64.3	20.3	14.6
081- library not widely used	3.07	.948	38.2	31.7	29.3

- Please note that item 1 to 81 were used for Factor Analyses K and L.

b....Basic statistics for items 82 to 109

Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Strong/ some effect	Little/ No effect	Uncertain
082-impart knowledge of Catholic faith	3.99	.683	87.8	5.7	6.5
083-Teaching RE as ministry	3.93	.851	76.4	8.1	15.4
084-Help students to be critical thinkers	4.41	.6	95.9	0.8	3.3
085-communicate teaching of Catechism	3.00	.975	35.7	25.2	32.5
086-educate kids in Catholicism + issues	4.24	.678	91.1	2.4	6.5
087-provide catechesis	3.39	.955	50.4	16.3	33.3
088-shared praxis approach	3.05	.982	31.7	21.9	44.7
089-increse religious literacy	3.76	.725	75.6	8.1	16.3
090-discussion more important in RE	4.20	.853	71.7	7.3	20.3
091-good traditional Catholic theology	2.64	.916	19.5	47.1	33.3
092-learn study and research skills in RE	3.84	.833	79.6	10.6	9.8
093-witness to Catholic beliefs and values	4.37	.738	93.5	3.2	3.3
094-theologising by students	3.21	.880	39.9	19.6	40.7
095-Promote questioning	4.37	.682	93.5	2.4	4.1
096-meaning and purpose in life	4.54	.548	97.6	0	2.4
097-do some social action	4.38	.621	95.9	1.6	2.4
098-familiar with Catholic religion practices	3.84	.736	81.5	8.2	11.5
099-share personal faith	3.99	.794	82.9	7.3	9.8
100-RE to be academically challenging	3.65	1.101	63.4	18.7	17.9
101-Evangelising students	3.54	1.034	58.5	13.8	27.6
102-inform students about world religions	4.17	.636	91.8	2.4	5.7
103-inform about spiritual and moral issues	4.41	.612	95.1	0.8	4.1
104- experience Catholic faith	4.16	.762	87.8	4.9	7.3
105-regular church goers	2.55	1.010	20.3	54.5	25.2
106-guidance to explore spirituality	4.21	.668	89.4	1.6	8.9
107-RE teacher as spiritual role model	4.17	.765	86.9	3.2	9.8
108-discover and adopt Gospel values	4.22	.752	87.0	3.3	9.8
109-know Christian story	4.19	.665	91.0	2.4	5.7

- Please note that item 81 to 109 were used for Factor Analyses M

c.   Basic statistics for items 110 to 120

Item on Questionnaire	Mean	SD	Helpful	Unhelpful	Unsure
110-PD events that explore spirituality	3.87	.811	77.2	4.1	13.8
111-PD events that explore Class practice	3.85	.741	82.2	3.3	7.3
112-Training in RE	2.42	.952	44.7	7.3	19.5
113-Particular units in degree/program	2.02	.952	43.0	6.5	13.0
114-reading of books	3.20	.782	64.2	4.1	17.9
115-reading of journals	2.39	.771	43.1	4.9	25.2
116-set text books	3.32	.825	67.5	0.8	13.8
117-diocesan RE guidelines	2.89	.845	44.7	11.4	31.7
118-interaction with fellow teachers	4.37	.518	96.7	2.4	0.8
119-departmental meetings	3.92	.731	81.3	4.9	13.8
120-on the job experience	4.40	.617	96.8	0.8	1.6

Please note that item 110 to 120 were used for Factor Analyses N

Paired Sample T Test Results

a. Comparison of Means for items 20 and 91:

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	020 successful when students learned good Catholic theology	3.37	123	.881	.079
	091 experienced success by getting back to traditional Catholic Theology	2.64	123	.916	.083

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	020 successful when students learned good Catholic theology & 091 experienced success by getting back to traditional Catholic Theology	123	.248	.006

Paired Samples Test For Items 20 and 91:

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	020 successful when students learned good Catholic theology - 091 experienced success by getting back to traditional Catholic Theology	.732	1.102	.099	.535	.928	7.364	122	.000

b. Comparison of Means for items 75 and 116:

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	075 successful when teacher used the text book regularly	2.83	112	1.039	.098
	116 use of the set student text influenced success	3.74	112	.825	.078

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	075 successful when teacher used the text book regularly & 116 use of the set student text influenced success	112	.285	.002

Paired Samples Test For Items 75 and 116:

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	075 successful when teacher used the text book regularly - 116 use of the set student text influenced success	-.911	1.127	.107	-1.122	-.700	-8.548	111	.000

Choice of Test:

The pairing was effective, as r was positive and the p value was small for both cases. This means that the two groups are significantly correlated, so it made sense to choose a paired test.

a. Hypothesis:
H_O: There is no significant difference between the means of the two variables.
H_1: There is a significant difference between the means of the two variables.

The T value = 7.364 which is above the critical value of 3.37 for $p < 0.001$, result is highly significant.

b. Hypothesis

H_O: There is no significant difference between the means of the two variables.
H_1: There is a significant difference between the means of the two variables.

The T value = |-8.548| which is above the critical value of 3.37 for $p < 0.001$, result is highly significant.

The results present a strong case to accept the alternative hypothesis.

\Source - Creative search systems http://www.surveysystem.com/signif.htm recovered from site on August 15th 2009

Factor Analysis K: Commonalities for Items

Questionnaire Item	Initial	Extraction	Questionnaire Item	Initial	Extraction
001 Successful when students share personal insights	1.000	.772	031 successful when students enjoyed viewing of video.	1.000	.780
002 Successful when students participate eagerly in discussion	1.000	.653	032 successful when students showed an interest in discussing social justice issues	1.000	.670
003 Successful when students engage in quality research	1.000	.766	033 successful when students appeared to enjoy a meditation session	1.000	.639
004 successful when students display critical thinking in writing	1.000	.807	034 successful when students were enthusiastic to act on social justice issues	1.000	.762
005 successful when students showed evidence of critical thinking in discussing	1.000	.735	035 successful when students completed all set work for lesson	1.000	.714
007 successful when students experience non academic climate	1.000	.577	036 successful when students appeared to enjoy my lesson.	1.000	.732
008 successful when allocated assignment/homework done enthusiastically by students	1.000	.655	037 successful when students remained focused on the topic of lesson	1.000	.715
009 successful when topic perceived by students as relevant to their lives	1.000	.633	038 successful when students were occupied quietly for lesson.	1.000	.725
010 successful when students listened to my verbal presentation	1.000	.656	039 successful when students worked co-operatively on tasks.	1.000	.649
011 successful when students asked. interesting questions	1.000	.750	040 successful when students were well informed about issues.	1.000	.712
012 successful when religion taught as academic subject	1.000	.728	041 successful when students learned set answers to set of religion questions.	1.000	.673
013 successful when students prepared and conducted good paraliturgies	1.000	.693	042 successful when students able to interpret scripture critically	1.000	.687
014 successful when there was opportunity to discuss teaching of unit with colleagues	1.000	.483	043 successful when teacher helped students how to think critically	1.000	.787
015 successful when students participate well in class prayer	1.000	.712	044 successful when students did well in all assessment tasks.	1.000	.670
016 successful when teacher showed video that students found interesting	1.000	.726	045 successful when teacher felt confident in teaching of topic.	1.000	.673
017 successful when students were challenged to think critically	1.000	.694	046 successful when teacher followed the lesson plan	1.000	.677
018 successful when there was an opportunity for prayer & reflection in lesson	1.000	.679	047 successful when teacher kept to program's time schedule	1.000	.732
019 successful when Students were attentive to spiritual and moral issues	1.000	.744	048 successful when understanding scripture had prominent place in lesson	1.000	.711
020 successful when students learned good Catholic theology	1.000	.695	049 successful when teacher survived the lesson	1.000	.769
021 successful when teacher able to share personal beliefs with students	1.000	.767	050 successful when teacher used a lot of worksheets in lesson	1.000	.668
022 successful when students were interested in scripture	1.000	.669	051 successful when a strategy from in-service worked well	1.000	.610
023 successful when students gained an awareness of how culture shaped peoples' beliefs	1.000	.618	052B successful when teacher perceived students did quality work on research	1.000	.757
024 successful when students were able to see how creative arts are linked to religion.	1.000	.533	053B successful when a majority of students achieved a good result on task	1.000	.716
025 successful when students saw themselves as belonging to catholic church	1.000	.798	054B successful when students were interested in video	1.000	.724
026 successful when students expressed an interest in catholic teachings	1.000	.702	056B Successful when students work with the same rigor as other subjects	1.000	.694
027 successful when students showed some critical interpretation of scripture	1.000	.728	057B successful when students demonstrate critical thinking	1.000	.700
028 successful when students were responsive to spiritual insights that teacher gave them	1.000	.685	062B successful when students were interested in lesson	1.000	.645
029 successful when students responded to me as person.	1.000	.683	063B successful when students backed up arguments with evidence	1.000	.674
030 successful when students indicated that the lesson had an influence on development of their personal faith	1.000	.688	065B successful when teacher encouraged critical reflection of material	1.000	.640

Component Matrix for Factor Analysis K of Questionnaire items

	Component															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
043 successful when teacher helped students how to think critically	.641							-.402								
022 successful when students were interested in scripture	.622															
020 successful when students learned good Catholic theology	.613			.337												
040 successful when students were well informed about issues.	.609															
019 successful when Students were attentive to spiritual and moral issues	.604									.338						
027 successful when students showed some critical interpretation of scripture	.597			.428												
004 successful when students display critical thinking in writing	.590						-.313									
015 successful when students participate well in class prayer	.590										-.350					
003 Successful when students engage in quality research	.571															
013 successful when students prepared and conducted good paraliturgies	.561									-.389						
042 successful when students able to interpret scripture critically	.552			.321												
017 successful when students were challenged to think critically	.551															

	Component															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
008 successful when allocated assignment/homework done enthusiastically by students	.547															
034 successful when students were enthusiastic to act on social justice issues	.535								.431							
028 successful when students were responsive to spiritual insights that teacher gave them	.531											.378				
011 successful when students asked. interesting questions	.529			-.317												
030 successful when students indicated that the lesson had an influence on development of their personal faith	.527	-.307							.400							
005 successful when students showed evidence of critical thinking in discussing	.508						-.410									
048 successful when understanding scripture had prominent place in lesson	.506										-.388					
023 successful when students gained an awareness of how culture shaped peoples' beliefs	.504															
045 successful when teacher felt confident in teaching of topic.	.489									.301						
014 successful when there was opportunity to discuss teaching of unit with colleagues	.485															
033 successful when students appeared to enjoy a meditation session	.476					-.304										

	Component															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
039 successful when students worked co-operatively on tasks.	.470						.333									
037 successful when students remained focused on the topic of lesson	.470				.370		.367									
044 successful when students did well in all assessment tasks.	.461	.349							.318							
032 successful when students showed an interest in discussing social justice issues	.447					-.412			.304							
002 Successful when students participate eagerly in discussion	.444		.319	-.308												
009 successful when topic perceived by students as relevant to their lives	.431	-.376														
012 successful when religion taught as academic subject	.428															
018 successful when there was an opportunity for prayer & reflection in lesson	.404							-.302	-.315					-.322		
036 successful when students appeared to enjoy my lesson.	.393						.342								.392	
024 successful when students were able to see how creative arts are linked to religion.	.388											-.331				
051 successful when a strategy from in-service worked well	.360					-.307										
046 successful when teacher followed the lesson plan		.695														
041 successful when students learned set answers to set of religion questions.		.686														

		Component													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
047 successful when teacher kept to program's time schedule		.676														
050 successful when teacher used a lot of worksheets in lesson		.629														
038 successful when students were occupied quietly for lesson.		.625				.409										
049 successful when teacher survived the lesson		.573						-.363							.324	
010 successful when students listened to my verbal presentation	.377	.458														
031 successful when students enjoyed viewing of video.	.343	.447		-.391	-.361											
035 successful when students completed all set work for lesson	.328	.427											-.354			
056B Successful when students work with the same rigor as other subjects			.651													
054B successful when students were interested in video			.577									.354				
052B successful when teacher perceived students did quality work on research			.577													
063B successful when students backed up arguments with evidence	-.382		.543													
053B successful when a majority of students achieved a good result on task	-.434		.529						-.301							
062B successful when students were interested in lesson			.514					-.317								

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	Component															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
057B successful when students demonstrate critical thinking	-.420	.454	.470													
001 Successful when students share personal insights			.398									-.343	.300			.356
065B successful when teacher encouraged critical reflection of material		.319	.394													
016 successful when teacher showed video that students found interesting	.406			-.476												
025 successful when students saw themselves as belonging to catholic church		.312		.431							.344					
026 successful when students expressed an interest in catholic teachings	.400			.422								.368				
029 successful when students responded to me as person.	.320				-.535											
021 successful when teacher able to share personal beliefs with students		.327			-.411									.320	-.400	.378
007 successful when students experience non academic climate			.335	-.340	-.354											

Total variance explained for Factor Analysis K questionnaire items

Components	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Totals	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	10.922	18.831	18.831	10.922	18.831	18.831
2	5.044	8.697	27.528	5.044	8.697	27.528
3	3.743	6.454	33.982	3.743	6.454	33.982
4	2.513	4.332	38.314	2.513	4.332	38.314
5	2.193	3.781	42.095	2.193	3.781	42.095
6	1.970	3.396	45.491	1.970	3.396	45.491
7	1.813	3.126	48.617	1.813	3.126	48.617
8	1.722	2.969	51.586	1.722	2.969	51.586
9	1.644	2.835	54.421	1.644	2.835	54.421
10	1.508	2.599	57.021	1.508	2.599	57.021
11	1.428	2.461	59.482	1.428	2.461	59.482
12	1.276	2.199	61.681	1.276	2.199	61.681
13	1.209	2.085	63.766	1.209	2.085	63.766
14	1.169	2.016	65.782	1.169	2.016	65.782
15	1.118	1.927	67.709	1.118	1.927	67.709
16	1.062	1.831	69.540	1.062	1.831	69.540
17	.990	1.706	71.246			

Rotated Component Matrix for Factor Analysis L   **Appendix J**

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
080 unsuccessful when information technology wasn't used appropriately	.886			
079 unsuccessful when showed a video without previewing first	.823			
081B successful when the library was extensively used	-.686			
076 successful when students reported about information they found on internet		.829		
073 successful when students were able to use computers to produce work		.729	.337	
074 successful when teacher used a video as informative stimulus material		.629		.487
069 successful when teacher used teaching strategies specified in RE program me			.778	
068 successful when given good resources by REC			.719	
070 successful when teacher consulted Diocesan Religious Guidelines in planning lessons.			.596	
075 successful when teacher used the text book regularly		.317	.574	
077 successful when an interesting guest lecturer was used				.778
072 successful when library effectively used by students.		.362		.667

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Total variance explained for Factor Analysis L

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	3.117	22.265	22.265	3.117	22.265	22.265	2.090	14.932	14.932
2	2.110	15.071	37.336	2.110	15.071	37.336	2.067	14.763	29.695
3	1.557	11.120	48.455	1.557	11.120	48.455	2.037	14.553	44.249
4	1.166	8.326	56.781	1.166	8.326	56.781	1.618	11.556	55.804
5	1.042	7.441	64.222	1.042	7.441	64.222	1.179	8.418	64.222
6	.931	6.650	70.873						
7	.793	5.663	76.536						
8	.720	5.140	81.676						
9	.599	4.282	85.957						
10	.515	3.677	89.634						
11	.439	3.135	92.769						
12	.399	2.848	95.616						
13	.346	2.471	98.087						
14	.268	1.913	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

	Initial	Extraction
082 experienced success by imparting knowledge of Catholic faith	1.000	.774
083 experienced success by teaching religion as ministry of Church	1.000	.635
084 experienced success by helping students to be critical thinkers.	1.000	.638
085 experienced success in having an opportunity to teach the catechism.	1.000	.649
086 experienced success from educating students in their Catholic faith	1.000	.626
087 experienced success by providing catechesis	1.000	.609
088 experienced success by following shared praxis approach	1.000	.595
089 experienced success by increasing religious literacy of students	1.000	.651
091 experienced success by getting back to traditional Catholic Theology	1.000	.594
092 experienced success in providing an opportunity for students to learn study and research skills in RE	1.000	.555
093 experienced success by being a witness to Catholic Beliefs.	1.000	.632
094 experienced success when students get involved in theologizing	1.000	.616
095 experienced success by promoting positive questioning about Religion to enhance spiritual development	1.000	.626
096 experienced success when teacher helped students look at issues related to meaning in life	1.000	.744
097 experienced success when teacher provided an opportunity for social action	1.000	.580
098 experienced success by developing students familiarity with Catholic religious practices	1.000	.510
099 experienced success by helping students share personal faith with others	1.000	.610
101 experienced success through evangelising students	1.000	.622
102 experienced success by informing students about world religions	1.000	.714
103 experienced success by providing an opportunity to inform students about contemporary issues	1.000	.610
104 experience success by providing an opportunity for students to experience their faith	1.000	.508
105 experienced success by getting students to become regular church goers	1.000	.577
106 experienced success through giving guidance to students to explore their own spirituality	1.000	.678
108 experienced success by getting students consider adopting Gospel Values.	1.000	.819
109 experienced success through helping students know Christian story and the challenges it presents	1.000	.703

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix for Factor Analysis M **Appendix M**

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
096 experienced success when teacher helped students look at issues related to meaning in life	.797						
106 experienced success through giving guidance to students to explore their own spirituality	.719					.315	
095 experienced success by promoting positive questioning about Religion to enhance spiritual development	.699						
084 experienced success by helping students to be critical thinkers.	.613	.329					.308
099 experienced success by helping students share personal faith with others	.599			.448			
103 experienced success by providing an opportunity to inform students about contemporary issues	.584					.388	
097 experienced success when teacher provided an opportunity for social action	.563						-.307
108 experienced success by getting students consider adopting Gospel Values.	.320	.782					
109 experienced success through helping students know Christian story and the challenges it presents		.657				.351	
101 experienced success through evangelising students		.599	.451				
083 experienced success by teaching religion as ministry of Church		.598	.382				
085 experienced success in having an opportunity to teach the catechism.			.716				
088 experienced success by following shared praxis approach			.712				
087 experienced success by providing catechesis			.608				
105 experienced success by getting students to become regular church goers				.705			

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
104 experience success by providing an opportunity for students to experience their faith				.664			
091 experienced success by getting back to traditional Catholic Theology			.321	.608			
098 experienced success by developing students familiarity with Catholic religious practices				.518	.443		
082 experienced success by imparting knowledge of Catholic faith					.812		
086 experienced success from educating students in their Catholic faith	.360				.691		
093 experienced success by being a witness to Catholic Beliefs.		.442			.494		-.363
102 experienced success by informing students about world religions						.788	
089 experienced success by increasing religious literacy of students			.422			.632	
094 experienced success when students get involved in theologising							.679
092 experienced success in providing an opportunity for students to learn study and research skills in RE							.649

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Total variance explained for Factor Analysis M   **Appendix N**

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.492	25.967	25.967	6.492	25.967	25.967	3.576	14.303	14.303
2	2.443	9.772	35.739	2.443	9.772	35.739	2.451	9.804	24.107
3	1.661	6.643	42.382	1.661	6.643	42.382	2.328	9.310	33.417
4	1.586	6.346	48.728	1.586	6.346	48.728	2.216	8.863	42.281
5	1.402	5.606	54.334	1.402	5.606	54.334	1.885	7.539	49.820
6	1.194	4.777	59.110	1.194	4.777	59.110	1.715	6.859	56.679
7	1.098	4.393	63.503	1.098	4.393	63.503	1.706	6.825	63.503
8	.975	3.901	67.404						

Communalities for Factor Analysis N   **Appendix O**

	Initial	Extraction
110 influenced success - professional development events allowed teachers to explore their spirituality	1.000	.642
111 influenced success - professional development events that were orientated to improve class practice	1.000	.747
112 influenced success - tertiary study of religion	1.000	.683
113 influenced success - particular units of study in an university course	1.000	.741
114 Professional reading of books influenced success	1.000	.688
115 professional reading of journals influenced success	1.000	.584
117 Diocesan Religious education guidelines influenced success	1.000	.551
118 Interaction with fellow staff in planning + lesson preparation influenced success	1.000	.740
120 On the job experience of teaching Religion influenced success	1.000	.553

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix for Factor Analysis N   **Appendix P**

	Component		
	1	2	3
113 influenced success - particular units of study in an university course	.855		
112 influenced success - tertiary study of religion	.779		
115 professional reading of journals influenced success	.643	.327	
111 influenced success - professional development events that were orientated to improve class practice		.859	
110 influenced success - professional development events allowed teachers to explore their spirituality		.762	
117 Diocesan Religious education guidelines influenced success	.466	.516	
118 Interaction with fellow staff in planning + lesson preparation influenced success			.793
120 On the job experience of teaching Religion influenced success			.729
114 Professional reading of books influenced success	.564		.606

Total variance explained for Factor Analysis N   **Appendix Q**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.393	37.705	37.705	3.393	37.705	37.705	2.385	26.502	26.502
2	1.340	14.893	52.599	1.340	14.893	52.599	1.851	20.565	47.067
3	1.195	13.281	65.880	1.195	13.281	65.880	1.693	18.813	65.880
4	.807	8.971	74.851						
5	.671	7.458	82.310						
6	.512	5.688	87.998						
7	.425	4.720	92.718						
8	.399	4.438	97.156						
9	.256	2.844	100.000						

Participant Feedback Group Recording Sheet   **Appendix R**

Participant Feedback Group Number:_____

Venue: _____   **Date: _____**

Number of Participants: _____ Males: _____ Females: _____

Topic No.	Topic raised	Points made by teachers	Notable teacher comment	M/F	No. Agree	Code