A Case Study of the Implementation of Children's Literacy Success Strategy: The Perceptions of Principals, Literacy Co-ordinators and Teachers

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Statement of Sources

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to examine the perceptions of principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers on the implementation of Children's Literacy Success Strategy (CLaSS) as a literacy and professional development strategy and their insights for future literacy innovation. CLaSS is a whole-school and sector approach to literacy for the early years of schooling. Introduced in 1998 to Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, schools implementing CLaSS were supported by a professional development model throughout the implementation. CLaSS introduced to many schools a two-hour daily literacy block, data-driven instruction and the incorporation of professional learning teams within the professional development model.

Eleven participants from two Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne formed a case study for this research. The participants' perceptions were captured qualitatively and viewed interpretively based on a phenomenological approach.

The research had significant findings. Participants endorsed the literacy strategy and the professional development model as an effective approach. In particular, the findings identified that the professional learning teams played a key role in developing and maintaining a culture of learning within the literacy team. This culture of learning assisted in improving learning outcomes for their students. While there was an endorsement of CLaSS, the findings also showed that there were some significant issues raised by participants. This included issues in professional development and student achievement in the areas of comprehension and writing. The findings indicated that professional understanding and student improvement in these areas were not as developed as those for decoding words in reading. Participants also indicated that assessment of student writing was limited by the absence of sector-wide assessment of different genres and, therefore, they were not confident in measuring student improvement in writing.

The findings also identified some areas of difficulty within the professional development model, such as catering for individual learning styles and the addition of new team members to the literacy team. The findings indicated that for future literacy innovation, participants would prefer an approach that encompassed literacy and teacher development across the whole school.

Based on the participants' responses, the research also provided recommendations and suggestions for further research in literacy. The recommendations included examining ways in which oral language and new literacies could have more prominence in the literacy block and providing a sector approach to assessment and specific professional development on comprehension and writing. The recommendations also suggested further research could be conducted as to ascertain the extent to which teachers require further professional development in comprehension and writing, how oral language is developed in other schools, and whether leadership has been the significant factor in sustaining the success of the literacy strategy.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1   A Personal Perspective

International and Australian research, conducted throughout the 1980s and 1990s, supported the view that "If children have not achieved appropriate literacy and numeracy skills by the end of primary school, they are unlikely to make up the gap through the rest of their schooling" (DEETYA, 1998, p. 8). The research findings suggested that attempts to bridge this literacy gap between students would be better addressed through an approach that was whole school and sector wide in the early years of schooling.

In 1997, the Commonwealth Government announced a "National Literacy and Numeracy Plan" (DEETYA, 1998). The education jurisdictions in all States and Territories of Australia agreed to the Commonwealth Government plan for improving standards and meeting specific accountability requirements in literacy and numeracy. The agreement came into effect in all Australian schools in 1998 (DEETYA, 1998).

In response to the national plan, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) introduced a new sector strategy, "Literacy Advance" (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; CECV, 1997). The focus of Literacy Advance was to support effective literacy programs in Catholic primary schools that met the new requirements of the Commonwealth Government. During 1997, principals from Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne attended a briefing session on Literacy Advance (Pascoe, 2000). The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) informed principals, of whom I was one, of new Commonwealth Government requirements and research findings that supported programs or strategies with a whole-school approach for improving literacy standards. Each Catholic primary school principal in the Archdiocese of Melbourne had to nominate, for their school, one of the six options identified in Literacy Advance (CECV, 1997) as a suitable whole-school approach for literacy in the first three years of schooling (Pascoe, 2000). By nominating one of the six options, schools qualified for literacy funding that was available through Literacy Advance (CEOM, 1997; Pascoe, 2000). The options included four existing literacy approaches in

schools: "Early Years Literacy Program" (Department of Education, Victoria, 1997); "Western Australian First Steps" (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994); "ESL in the Mainstream" (Department for Education and Children's Services, South Australia, 1993); and "Reading Recovery" (Clay, 1994). Schools could also elect to have a school-based program referred to as an "Approved School Design". The sixth literacy option was "Children's Literacy Success Strategy" (CEOM, 1997), yet to be implemented in a school (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; Crévola & Hill, 2005b; Pascoe, 2000).

The Children's Literacy Success Strategy (CLaSS) option required the implementation of Reading Recovery as an intervention program for at-risk students (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). CLaSS had mandated components that identified it as a new approach to implementing literacy in the early years of schooling. These mandated components included: a two-hour literacy block each day; prescribed assessment activities; off-site professional development; school-based professional learning teams and literacy co-ordinators to work with teachers in the classroom and to lead school-based professional development (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

The discussion among principals at the briefing centred mainly on issues with the literacy and professional development approach in CLaSS, funding concerns and the requirements of Literacy Advance (CECV, 1997). The CEOM, while allowing the decision of the literacy option to be a school-based decision, preferred CLaSS as a sector approach for the following reasons.

Firstly, the CEOM particularly supported the CLaSS strategy as a sector approach as it was an evidence-based approach that developed from the "Early Literacy Research Project" (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; Crévola & Hill, 2005b; Hill & Crévola, 1999; Pascoe, 2000). The Early Literacy Research Project examined student literacy learning and development and its relationship to teacher skills and knowledge in literacy (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The CEOM supported schools implementing CLaSS through professional development. The data was analysed through the assistance of the University of Melbourne Research Team and the Australian Council for Educational

Research. The data collection involved a series of prescribed tests that teachers administered to students at different stages over a year (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; CEOM, 1997). The research and consequent development of CLaSS provided principals with some evidence that the elements of the approach could be highly effective in improving literacy standards.

Secondly, a strong professional development model supported CLaSS in the first three years of its implementation in a school. The CEOM believed that the professional development model in CLaSS built principal, literacy co-ordinator and teacher leadership capacity to implement change (Pascoe, 2000). An underlying principle of the professional development model was that effective teachers made a difference to student outcomes (Pascoe, 2000). The model included school-based professional learning teams and regular off-site sessions for all teachers involved in the implementation of CLaSS (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

Nevertheless, the cost of funding the strategy in their school was a concern for some principals. The provision of a literacy co-ordinator at a minimum of one day per week was a requirement in all programs under Literacy Advance (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). Schools considering the implementation of CLaSS required a 0.5 literacy co-ordinator as a minimum. Schools also had to cover the cost of a Reading Recovery teacher and attendance of staff at off-site professional development sessions (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). At the time, many schools did not have Reading Recovery teachers or literacy co-ordinators. My perception of this discussion was that the issue of funding the Reading Recovery teacher, the literacy co-ordinator and the professional development did influence some schools' decision as to whether to take up the CLaSS option or not in 1998. Schools in the first year of implementation were referred to as Intake 1 schools (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Schools with a high number of English as a second language (ESL) students were able to fund the appropriate staff required for the CLaSS strategy as these schools had a higher funding level provision for literacy and, therefore, were able to be part of Intake 1 (Pascoe, 2000). Some principals from schools with ESL students, however, voiced concerns that ESL students would be at a disadvantage in CLaSS, as they believed CLaSS did not include ESL strategies. Some of these

principals indicated they would not be interested in taking up the CLaSS option at their school. Until Literacy Advance, some Catholic primary schools did not receive any special funding for literacy. These schools would now receive limited funding to assist in the implementation of one of the six literacy options approved through Literacy Advance (Pascoe, 2000).

From my perspective as a principal of a school, I considered how the adoption of CLaSS as a whole-school program might impact on the school, teachers and student learning. I considered whether its introduction might result in some loss of local identity for school-based programs. I considered also the possible impact on teachers within the school who might have felt that CLaSS was just another innovation that would come and go. Consequently, the teachers in my school might not be very enthusiastic in embracing the change especially when the school had only the previous year reviewed its literacy approach. The school had already implemented Western Australia First Steps (First Steps) as a whole-school literacy program for Prep to Year 6. The change from this approach to CLaSS, I felt, could have a short-term impact on student learning. I recognized, however, that many aspects of the teaching and learning approaches in First Steps could be transferred to CLaSS. The process the school had undertaken to begin First Steps, however, meant that the teachers were aware of the advantages of implementing a consistent approach to literacy.

In addition, I had to consider the financial issues for my school that meant the provision of additional staffing, professional development and the resource materials required for students. The basic funding provision for my school proposed through Literacy Advance did not cover the additional staffing costs for CLaSS. The school could, however, minimize the cost of the off-site professional development through school closure days. The funding of a literacy co-ordinator and Reading Recovery teacher was a significant issue for the school and, therefore, a detractor in the introduction of CLaSS in 1998. Through the funding of Literacy Advance, the school had to provide a literacy co-ordinator one day per week for First Steps. The role of the literacy co-ordinator, however, was not prescribed. If the school commenced CLaSS, the literacy co-ordinator, due to the school size, would be fulltime and required to work

with teachers in the classroom and to assist with the school-based professional development through leading a professional learning team. The role of the literacy (or CLaSS) co-ordinator was an important change issue. Teachers at my school, at that time, generally did not engage in the level of intensive and continuous professional collaboration required within the CLaSS professional development model. The CLaSS data collection in literacy was also a challenging aspect requiring teachers to complete a series of tests with each student. The teachers at my school were not familiar with administering the tests that they saw as a time consuming practice.

At the time Literacy Advance was launched, my experience in primary education was over twenty years. Throughout that time I had observed, and used, a number of strategies which brought new insights into how students developed and attained literacy skills. There was, however, no systematic approach about literacy development that transferred to all schools. Certainly individual schools had developed whole-school approaches, such as programs that came from a whole language perspective or First Steps. This varied from school to school and, in some situations, from teacher to teacher within schools. The key question for me was whether a one-size-fits-all approach could provide better literacy standards than the literacy strategy that was already in place in the school. I also wondered whether a single strategy could be applied in all schools given the different socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural differences, resources and developmental learning needs of students across schools. Nevertheless, I felt that teacher understanding of literacy had reached a point where a sector approach, such as CLaSS, provided an umbrella of common experience for all schools. This common experience would provide an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of the strategies which teachers used and ways in which the variables many schools could be acknowledged and reduced as possible blockers to literacy development in all schools.

Despite a number of issues that needed to be worked through with my teachers, I was particularly interested in implementing CLaSS. Apart from its pedagogical approach, my heightened interest was based on the availability of a significant ongoing professional development program for teachers. The model of professional development

for CLaSS allowed teachers to engage in a critical evaluation of a wide range of teaching and learning strategies and their application. The professional development model was linked closely to the school situation through the professional learning team meetings. This model facilitated teachers working together, sharing ideas and challenges and reflecting on and evaluating literacy strategies (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). While this was not a new concept for teachers in 1997, in the CLaSS model of professional development it was a compulsory element.

I had a general concern about professional development based on past innovations. While teachers and schools participated in a variety of professional development activities, the effectiveness of the insights gained for participants was sometimes questionable. I had observed over time that the learning was not always successfully transferred to classroom programs or sustained. The ongoing nature of the professional development in CLaSS and the incorporation of professional learning teams at the school level seemed to me to provide a framework for producing better outcomes for students. I valued the approach that all teachers involved in implementing CLaSS participated in the professional development. This sustained approach to professional development, however, was also another major change for teachers at my school.

The school did not nominate to be part of Intake 1(1998) or Intake 2 (1999) as teachers at the school wanted a comfortable time span in which they could develop professional discussion about literacy and change management (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The teachers wanted the additional time to initiate aspects of CLaSS, such as the two-hour literacy block, and to evaluate what CLaSS offered as a literacy strategy for the school and as a sector approach. In 1998 the school continued to use First Steps, and teachers integrated more elements of CLaSS including a two-hour daily literacy block. As the school leader, I provided a financial directive that student resources in literacy be upgraded to the requirements of CLaSS. At the end of 1999, the teachers of my school made a commitment to commence CLaSS in 2000 and became an Intake 3 school for CLaSS. The CEOM also provided the school with a significant increase in literacy funding. The CEOM decided in 1999 that funding would not prevent schools

implementing CLaSS and, therefore, increased funding to CLaSS schools accordingly (Pascoe, 2000).

Throughout the three years of its implementation, I observed a range of benefits in relation to teaching and learning and professional development as a consequence of implementing CLaSS. I also experienced the challenge of maintaining such a high focus on literacy within the school. The school participated in the feedback process to the sector on data collection of student results. The results of the data analysis provided to individual schools identified the success of schools in improving the literacy standards for their students (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). Despite the challenges in implementing CLaSS, the teachers believed that the experience gained deepened their understanding of literacy in the first three years of schooling.

After the third year of implementation, the school moved into what Crévola and Hill (2005a) described as the institutionalization stage: the strategy was embedded as best practice. At that stage in my career, I had moved into a non-school educational setting. In looking back, CLaSS was a phenomenon in Catholic primary schools in that it imposed a certain structure in literacy and professional development and sparked much debate around effective literacy and professional development. In time, CLaSS became the preferred choice as literacy approach for Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne (Ainley & Fleming, 2003). As a school leader who experienced that phenomenon in the first five years, I was interested in researching the perceptions of other practitioners on the implementation of CLaSS. The focus of this research was to delve qualitatively into what it was like for the practitioners in other schools in implementing a whole-school approach to literacy and its linked professional development model rather than review the quantitative success of schools.

1.2 Literacy Change: Context of the Research

The context from which CLaSS emerged as a new approach to literacy included increasing interest of governments into the specific nature of school programs, greater demands on accountability and continual change towards a systemic approach to literacy. Since the 1980s, governments globally have been more actively involved in

decisions of curriculum content, accountability of teachers and schools, the role of teachers and the rights of parents (Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth & Dobbins, 1998). The context of education, since the 1980s, was one in which school communities were dealing with constant change and accountability (Whitaker, 1993). Globally, the increasing interest of governments in education placed a strong demand and expectation on schools for higher standards (Groundwater-Smith et al., 1998). School communities also required an education that provided skills in literacy and numeracy that allowed students to be flexible and adaptable throughout life (Groundwater-Smith et al., 1998). Rapid development of technology, increasing participation in a global economy and diversity in student and teacher quality were significant factors contributing to more demand in accountability for English and literacy in the 1980s (Cheng, 1996). Governments globally began to set goals for schools to achieve in literacy and numeracy. In 1990 for example, the United States of America (USA) held an education summit to develop a plan to improve student learning in literacy by 2000; an outcome of the summit was the establishment of six goals for American schools to achieve (Piper, 1997).

Similarly Australia had, by the 1990s, an increasing multicultural society with a visible connectedness to a global world in which more people within Australia were increasingly working in an international environment. As English was already established as a major language in the global environment, Australia understood that advantage in the global community. The advantage of the English language contributed to the renewed interest from Commonwealth and State Governments and the wider community to further improve the literacy levels of students (Australian College of Education, 2001). At the same time, the increase in multicultural diversity of the general and student population presented challenges for schools in demonstrating improved literacy standards among Australians (Armstrong, 2006).

In Australia from the early 1990s, employers revisited the issue that the literacy standards of school leavers were inadequate to meet the changing demands in the workforce (Masters & Forster, 1997). The strategy "Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools" (Literacy for All) (DEETYA, 1998) also voiced these concerns.

Central to the Commonwealth Government approach in Literacy for All was accountability or responsibility for education sectors and schools to further raise literacy standards. The Commonwealth Government argued that raising literacy standards would improve Australia's ability to compete in the global economy. It identified that schools played an important role in contributing to the prosperity of the nation. The Commonwealth Government strategy clearly linked literacy standards to economic growth and Australia's standing in the global economy (Piper, 1997). This connection between literacy and economic growth placed Australian schools under the microscope nationally and globally.

Previous to Literacy for All, the CEOM, in 1996, had mapped the provision and support of literacy in Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The CEOM concluded from this exercise that sector change would not occur by simply modifying existing teaching and learning practices (Pascoe, 2000). Literacy for All identified the early years of schooling as the most significant time in which the level of literacy standards had a significant influence in improving national literacy achievement. It required schools to provide intervention for at-risk students, development of assessment processes for plotting student literacy achievement against benchmarks, and provision of professional development of teachers to promote a better understanding of teaching and learning in literacy (DEETYA, 1998). Through the Literacy Advance strategy for Catholic schools in Victoria, the introduction of CLaSS into Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne was an example of a response to the requirements for literacy that were set by the Commonwealth Government in 1997 (Pascoe, 2000).

CLaSS was both a sector approach to literacy and a research program in the early years of schooling (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). It provided a new vehicle for change that the CEOM identified in the mapping of its literacy provision in 1996. CLaSS, as a whole school approach to literacy, reflected a number of significant understandings that had occurred since 1980 in the teaching of literacy. This research provides a window into the experiences and perspectives of principals, literacy

co-ordinators and teachers in implementing a literacy strategy that was developed to meet the needs of all primary schools as a response to an education sector need as well as the Commonwealth Government's direction to improve literacy standards for all students.

1.3   *The Aim of the Research*

Central to the research were the perceptions of principals, literacy co-ordinators and CLaSS teachers in the retelling of their experiences of CLaSS. The aim of the research was to identify: the strengths and challenges in implementing the literacy approach; ways in which CLaSS has contributed to participants' knowledge and understanding of literacy; their insights and views on the professional development model; and insights from their experience that can inform further literacy innovation.

1.4   *The Significance of the Research*

The implementation of CLaSS in Catholic primary schools was a significant commitment in teaching and learning and for resourcing each participating school and for Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The backdrop for this approach was not only the global economy; it was the pedagogical innovation context that CLaSS represented for teachers and schools in which many literacy approaches, that were shown to be promising, were often short lived. A professional development model supported teachers in developing effective pedagogical approaches and in sustaining their implementation. Crévola and Hill (2005a) argued that the research and development of CLaSS identified approaches that were effective in improving outcomes for all students in all schools and would enhance teacher professional knowledge and skills. They promoted CLaSS as a literacy strategy that was "best practice" and could be adopted in all primary schools (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The strategy, a one-size-fits-all approach, was intended to apply to all primary schools regardless of differences, such as socioeconomic or cultural factors, and was consistent with the Commonwealth Government guidelines (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; Crévola and Hill 2005a).

Crévola and Hill (2005a) purposely designed the prescriptive model of professional development to ensure sustained and active participation of principals,

literacy co-ordinators and teachers from Year Prep to Year 2 in off-site professional development and school-based professional learning teams. The CEOM also identified the professional development model in CLaSS as important in ensuring a common sector approach and understanding to literacy (Pascoe, 2000). The professional learning teams, a component of the professional development model, linked the learning from the off-site professional development directly to the school situation. The CEOM supported this model of professional development during the three-year implementation stage in a school (Crévola & Hill 2005a; Pascoe, 2000).

My research focused on the perceptions of principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers of a literacy strategy that had been designed to ensure that the outcomes for improving literacy set by the Commonwealth Government were met. The significance of this research was that it would provide insight into how, and to what extent, a one-size-fits-all literacy strategy for primary schools was effective in its classroom implementation and in developing teachers in professional skills and knowledge. My research also explored the participants' views on how their experience in implementing CLaSS provided insight for implementing further sector innovation in literacy.

1.5 Research Questions

CLaSS had mandated components which included a structured two-hour literacy block, provision of a literacy co-ordinator and Reading Recovery and participation in a professional development model that included off-site and school-based components (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The mandating of specific components in literacy was new to Catholic schools at the time and, therefore, the implementation of CLaSS as a literacy strategy had a significant impact on Catholic primary schools. The research focused on the perceptions of principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers on CLaSS as a phenomenon. Eleven participants from two Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne formed a case study. The participants' perceptions were captured qualitatively and viewed interpretively based on a phenomenological approach. The purpose of the research was to delve into participants' perceptions of the strengths and challenges of implementing CLaSS such as: implementing and maintaining the literacy approach; the

structure of the literacy block; the learning and teaching approach; the use of data; the professional development model; and their insights from the implementation of CLaSS for future classroom innovation in literacy. The research had an overarching question:

What were the perceptions of Catholic primary school principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers of implementing CLaSS as a literacy and professional development approach?

From the overarching question, three specific questions arose which were the basis of the research:

1. What were principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions of CLaSS as a school and sector approach to literacy?

2. What were principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions of the professional development model in CLaSS?

3. Having implemented CLaSS at their school, what did principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers believe as important issues or considerations for any future literacy innovation?

The next chapter begins the first of three chapters in the literature review. This chapter examines the historical context of English and literacy. The following two chapters examine pedagogy and research on literacy (Chapter 3) and professional development (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 outlines the theoretical framework and methodology. It describes the phenomenological approach to collecting and analysing the data. The findings of the research are divided into five chapters. Chapter 6 begins with a profile on the two schools and the eleven participants in the research followed by the participants' perceptions of various aspects of the implementation of the strategy (Chapter 7), their view of the approach to literacy (Chapter 8), professional development (Chapter 9) and future literacy innovation (Chapter 10). The final chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations of the research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: A Historical Context

Chapter 1 provides the background and context in which the development of the Children's Literacy Success Strategy (CLaSS) in the 1990s emerged as a phenomenon in literacy for Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. This chapter provides an overview of how literacy in primary schools changed between the 1960s and the present. It documents the change in literacy from an individual teacher or school approach to a sector approach adopted as whole-school approach. The following chapter provides detailed information on literacy strategies, and the research that fuelled local and global debate and increased accountability as the basis for developing CLaSS.

2.1   English and Literacy

There is no single definition for English or literacy. In Victoria, English was defined as an understanding a wide range of texts, such as novels, poetry and film, and how language works within texts, such as understanding grammar, language and sentence patterns, text structure, layout and presentation, nonverbal clues, and the impact of purpose, audience and context on texts (VCAA, 2005). Literacy was defined as "…intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing" (Department of Education and Employment, 1991, p. 5 as cited in DEETYA, 1998). This definition was used as the basis of Literacy for All (DEETYA, 1998). There are, however, other definitions that include the use of literacies or multiliteracies that took into account digital texts (DEETYA, 1998).

2.1.1   English before the 1980s.

In the 1960s, the "National Guide to Literacy Curriculum Reform" noted that there was a lack of relevance in the content of English (Piper, 1997). It also recognized that literacy teaching needed a more explicit structure within the curriculum (Piper, 1997). Up until the 1970s, drill and practice and an emphasis on phonics, which was considered good pedagogy, traditionally characterized the teaching of English in Australian primary school classrooms (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). The English

curriculum tended to be prescriptive through the use of syllabuses, and teachers did not usually link English content and activities to other subjects (McGraw, Piper, Banks & Evans, 1992; Murdoch & Hornsby, 1997). Textbooks often drove the subject content in English. Students in Victoria, from the 1960s, often learnt to read using government supplied readers and commercial texts, such as "Dick and Dora" (Anstey & Bull, 2004; Beavis, 1996). Teachers often taught reading by introducing new vocabulary using strategies, such as a phonic approach and sight words. During the 1950s and 1960s, however, Australia experienced an influx of migrants from non-English speaking countries (Green & Beavis, 1996). Teachers began to question the relevance of some approaches to teaching English to migrants. There were some signs of a movement towards using a *language-experience* approach that began to emerge towards the end of the 1960s. The teaching and learning approach in language experience centred on the learning interests of students and language development (Anstey & Bull, 2004).

2.1.2   English in the 1980s.

In the 1980s, the responsibility for curriculum development devolved from a central education department to schools (McGraw et al., 1992). This gave teachers the opportunity and power to develop individual curriculum programs using various strategies and models. The devolution of responsibility allowed curriculum design to be school based (McGraw et al., 1992). In 1988, the Victorian State Government produced "The English Language Framework P-10" (Framework) which reflected the practices of the 1980s. It was a framework for teaching rather than a syllabus (Ministry of Education, 1988). The Framework recognized teachers as the prime designers of curriculum content and emphasized that English language had to be relevant and engaging for all students (Ministry of Education, 1988). The Framework stressed that "Standard Australian English" was to be taught, and that language tasks for students were to be authentic. The Framework attempted to challenge teachers who set tasks that did not explicitly enhance student learning (Ministry of Education, 1988). The English curriculum in the Framework recognized the new demands on student learning. This included students having more opportunities to engage in co-operative activities, to choose their own books in reading and to discuss and write about texts (Ministry of Education, 1988).

Throughout the 1980s, primary teachers in Victoria experienced a significant exposure to varied approaches in the teaching and learning of English at a time when English was referred to as the "Language Arts" or "English Language" (Collerson, 1992). Primary teachers, using a thematic approach, made connections between subjects so that the content of English could be taught more meaningfully to students. In this approach, teachers linked a theme in the content of a unit of work to a number of subject areas (Murdoch & Hornsby, 1997). During this period, *process writing* (Graves, 1983) introduced to teachers and students the idea that producing a piece of writing involved a process which included drafting, conferencing and publishing a piece of writing. Spelling and grammar in process writing were treated within the context of samples of student writing (Graves, 1983). The end of the 1980s saw the emergence of *genre writing* (Christie, 1987) that exposed students to a wider range of writing demands in different subjects (Collerson, 1992). Teachers also used *whole language* (Cambourne, 1988; Goodman, 1986) an approach in which teachers encouraged students to learn words within a context rather than using a phonic approach only (Cambourne, 1988; Goodman, 1986; Pidgon & Woolley, 1992). There was debate on the strengths and weaknesses in the range of pedagogical approaches used in the 1980s with divided opinion as to which approach was more effective. In writing, there was a shift from focusing on narratives to a range of text types. Many teachers, however, drew on different strategies to provide a balanced approach (McGraw et al., 1992).

The proliferation of commercial materials available to teachers, such as textbooks and reading schemes, increasingly influenced the English curriculum. These materials also influenced the direction of learning in reading and writing tasks (McGraw et al., 1992). Reading schemes often included a range of books at different levels of reading ability. The texts within the reading schemes relied less on repeated patterns of grammar or sounds. At the same time, there was also some movement away from reading schemes through the use of strategies that made connections between the learner, text and language development (Antsey & Bull, 2003). Holdaway's (1979) research found that children who frequently engaged in reading and rereading of books at home came to school with an understanding of the relationship between print and words. He advocated *shared reading* in the classroom. Shared reading was modelled on

the process used in the home in which parents frequently read familiar stories with repeated word patterns, such as in fairy tales, and the child joined in reading familiar parts (Hill, 2006; Holdaway, 1979). Shared reading allowed students to consolidate concepts on print, use of picture cues, learn new words and sentence structures and practise prediction skills (Smith & Elley; 1997). Holdaway (1979) also advocated the use of graded texts to promote *independent reading*. In independent reading, teachers encouraged students to read texts independently at their own reading level (Hill, 2006; Holdaway, 1979). While the 1980s had widened teaching and learning practices in schools, education sectors gave responsibility and accountability to teachers to apply different approaches according to professional judgment and local needs. Overall, the English curriculum varied in each school and among teachers within schools (Anstey & Bull, 2004).

In the 1980s, the economic down turn contributed to increasing political interest in English. The wider community also linked economic prosperity to high standards in education (Marsh, 1994, Piper, 1997). State and Commonwealth Governments used terms, such as excellence and quality, for policy-based developments in education (McCulla, 1994). By 1989, however, State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education in Australia argued for a centralized approach to curriculum and more accountability for standards in education (McCulla, 1994). This push by the Ministers of Education highlighted the differences in skills and knowledge between education systems in Australia. This eventuated in the transition of curriculum designed by teachers to government-directed curriculum (McCulla, 1994).

2.1.3   English since the 1990s.

In the 1990s, increased interest of governments globally in literacy standards, which developed from political and social concerns emerging in the 1980s, continued to raise the profile of literacy. In 1983, a report in the USA, "A Nation at Risk" (National Commission of Excellence in Education), raised concern that students in the USA were performing lower than in other industrialized countries. Raising literacy standards then became a higher priority in the USA. In Britain, "The National Literacy Strategy" (Barber, 1997) was a response to concerns about the literacy standards of its students

(Ainley & Fleming, 2000). In Australia, there was growing recognition that there were different approaches to English, such as whole language and phonics, which often resulted in conflicting views about each approach. These different views questioned whether the multiple approaches to English assisted or hindered the raising of literacy standards nationally (DEETYA, 1998).

In 1994, the Commonwealth Government launched the "National Curriculum Statements and Profiles". Subjects were renamed as "Key Learning Areas" (Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education & Training, 1995). Each Key Learning Area, such as English, was divided into levels. The levels gave specific learning outcomes for the compulsory years of schooling. Outcomes were matched with indicators to assist teacher judgment with assessment (Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education & Training, 1995). The education sectors rejected the National Profiles as the prime curriculum statements. In 1995, the Victorian Government followed with the "Curriculum and Standards Framework" (CSF) (Board of Studies, 1995) as the Victorian version of the national statements. The CSF also included levels, outcomes, indicators and statements regarding teaching and learning. This resulted in comprehensive English programs for Victoria that would include a wide range of Australian and non-Australian texts. In addition, integrated curriculum, which incorporated a number of KLA outcomes within a unit of study, was in favour. This curriculum design focused on deepening student understanding of a concept through different KLAs. Teachers also had to monitor students' progress through a variety of learning and assessment contexts (Board of Studies, 1995).

By 1998, Commonwealth and State Governments in Australia articulated again the idea that the workforce of the future needed higher levels of literacy and knowledge and skills in technology. This demand did not just apply within Australia (Dimmock, 2000). English and literacy in the 1990s were strongly linked to participation in the global economy and national wellbeing. Global governments increased interest in literacy standards and began to closely monitor literacy. The concerns of conservative social forces played a role in the renewed importance of literacy, which Literacy for All (DEETYA, 1998; Snyder, 2008) expressed in the Australian context (Luke, 1993;

Wilkinson, 1999). In times of socioeconomic crises, literacy was often blamed for the general state of the economy. There was often a push for a return for traditional literacy approaches, such as phonics (Snyder, 2008). Some politicians, employers and popular media proposed that literacy skills affected one's status and opportunities in society (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998; Snyder, 2008). Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics also supported the claim that low literacy levels affected future employment prospects (Harrington & McDonald, 1999). Consequently, the level of literacy attained by a person was seen as part of that person's identity (Wilkinson, 1999). By 1998, literacy had, therefore, become a commodity or a saleable resource in the global economy (Wilkinson, 1999). It was in the forefront of government policy as a link to social change. Literacy was the critical toolkit for communicating and developing social relationships within the broader world (Haynes, 2002; Luke, 1993). It became a national and global concern that all citizens attained basic literacy skills. Government and employers believed that improving literacy standards would allow Australia and its workforce to be more adaptable and economically competitive at the global level (Luke, 1993).

The findings of the "Victorian Quality School Project" (Hill, Holmes-Smith & Rowe 1993) and the "1996 National School English Literacy Survey" (Masters & Forster, 1996) influenced the agreement of State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers in 1997 "…that every child leaving primary school should be numerate and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level" and the addition of a sub goal that "…every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years" (DEETYA, 1998, p. 72). The Commonwealth Government of Australia launched its new plan for literacy. The Commonwealth Government made available funding to support schools in developing whole-school programs for literacy (DEETYA, 1998). As part of the Commonwealth Government plan, all students in primary schools began to participate in literacy testing in Year 3 and Year 5 so that student achievement could be measured. The testing became part of a new level of accountability that was applied uniformly within schools, across sectors and states (DEETYA, 1998; Pascoe, 2000). *Literacy* became the buzz word.

Since the introduction of CLaSS in 1998, changes in English and curriculum in general have continued in Victoria. Rapidly changing technology and the global economy were two important factors for further curriculum reform. By 2000 in Victoria, however, CSF II replaced the CSF. It described literacy as "…active dynamic and interactive practices that involves making meaning from and constructing meaning through texts" (Board of Studies, 2000, p. 5). CSF II recognized the use of technological tools that had new and emerging literacy needs. There was an emphasis on benchmarks and standards, and English was understood as broader than the "Standard Australian English" of the 1980s (Board of Studies, 2000). It involved new contexts, such as global communication and information technology (Board of Studies, 2000). CSF II attempted a balanced approach to developing student knowledge and skills to encompass both the contentand process-centred approaches developed in the 1980s (Board of Studies, 2000). In 2004, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) developed the "Victorian Essential Learning Standards" (VELS) (VCAA, 2005). The VELS reaffirmed the priority of literacy in the first three years of schooling. There was a shift in English from a key learning area to a domain. As a subject, English connected with standards from other domains, such as personal learning, thinking processes, and civics and citizenship (VCAA, 2005). Change will continue in English with the announcement of a national curriculum for English (National Curriculum Board, 2008).

2.1.4   Changing literacy paradigms.

In the 1990s in Australia, the impact of technology, multiculturalism and awareness of the role of gender and culture on literacy learning brought forward changing literacy paradigms (Anstey & Bull, 2004; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1998; Snyder, 2008). In 1990, the "Four Resources Model" (Freebody & Luke 1990) emerged as a framework for teachers to promote critical literacy as a component of teaching reading (Anstey & Bull, 2004). This involved understanding that: teaching reading and assessment overlap and are equally important; literacy involves examining social practices, such as the use of texts in various contexts; reading went beyond print and paper medium; there were different ways to examine content of a text; and that teachers required a variety of strategies and

approaches (Anstey & Bull, 2004). Luke and Freebody (1998) described effective literacy as when students engaged in reading and writing activities in which they could: break the code of texts (understand and use alphabet, sounds, spelling conventions and patterns in sentence structure and text); participate in the meanings of text (understand and write text for different purposes and audiences); use texts functionally (understanding and acting on the different social and cultural functions of texts); and critically analyse and transform texts (understanding and acting on the different perspectives and ideas in texts). While the model encapsulated skills, cultural perspectives and critical literacy, it was not in itself a sufficient approach to teaching literacy (Louden et al., 2005). It did, however, encourage teachers to provide time for students to discuss the interconnectedness of the four processes (Durrant & Green, 2002).

By the mid 1990s, the term *multiliteracies* was used to describe the different modes and mediums in communication that sprang from increased globalization, technology and social and cultural diversity (Anstey & Bull, 2004). It also involved the multiple ways in which literacy was constructed and used (Anstey & Bull, 2004). As a term, multiliteracies was used to emphasize the change in the understanding of literacy, and in particular, recognized and consistent with Freebody and Luke (1998) that traditional print medium did not encompass all student literacy encounters (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The advent of the *knowledge society* led the move away from understanding literacy as basic skills and a fixed approach to the concept of multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Multiliteracies took into account the multiple kinds of texts, including digital texts, and ways of understanding them (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Similarly, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VCAA, 2005), through the Communication domain, recognized the importance of students learning the *literacies* of each subject and, therefore, developing language and discourse across the curriculum.

As the social and cultural perspective of literacy was recognized in literacy, such as Cope and Kalantzis (2000) and Freebody and Luke (1998), gender issues within literacy development were also identified. While in the 1980s teachers became more

aware of specific strategies for improving outcomes for girls, the 1990s showed that some groups of boys were not performing well (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). The "1996 National School English Literacy Survey" (Masters & Forster, 1996) found that overall girls' achievement in literacy was higher than that of boys. Some educators suggested that the low number of male teachers in primary schools and the teaching approaches adopted in literacy were not inclusive of preferred learning styles or interests of boys (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). Other educators, however, argued that it was important to improve outcomes for males and females rather than focusing on gender differences (Snyder, 2008).

2.2   *Catholic Schools: Literacy Advance*

Literacy for All provided a new context in which literacy strategies were implemented in Catholic primary schools in Victoria. The requirements of Literacy for All placed before the Catholic education community the central question as to what was an effective literacy approach for improving literacy standards. The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria commenced Literacy Advance in 1998 as a sector response to the Commonwealth Government changes in funding requirements for literacy (Pascoe, 2000). Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, in choosing one of the nominated approaches outlined in Literacy Advance, were required to each appoint a literacy co-ordinator and participate in sector monitoring of literacy progress in schools (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; Pascoe, 2000). The CEOM, through Literacy Advance, provided primary schools with additional funding to assist with the literacy approach for the early years of schooling. The implementation of literacy approaches in Literacy Advance were monitored and evaluated through the "Literacy Advance Research Project" (Ainley & Fleming, 2000).

The design of CLaSS was consistent with a sector responsibility to Commonwealth Government guidelines to raise literacy standards in the early years of schooling. Within that context, CLaSS was promoted as a literacy model which had a number of principles that Crévola and Hill presented as "…a new orthodoxy of educational reform" applicable to all Catholic primary schools (Crévola, 2002, p. 1). This new orthodoxy of educational reform involved a development of specific teacher

attitudes, teaching and learning strategies and requirements for assessment and accountability. There was focus on teachers expecting high standards in literacy from all students, development of students' deeper conceptual understandings and alignment of assessment and learning. It involved teachers working collaboratively in developing a shared literacy curriculum and developing indicators of student learning. It also involved teachers and schools being accountable for students reaching specified targets regardless of school, leadership and locality type (Crévola, 2002). The aim of the innovation was a move towards a significant and measurable improvement in literacy outcomes across the Catholic sector within a uniform approach (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). Since 1998, Catholic primary schools have increasingly implemented CLaSS as a literacy strategy (Crévola & Hill, 2005a; Pascoe, 2000). School and sector accountability and the support schools received in implementing CLaSS increased the prominence of CLaSS in the Archdiocese of Melbourne (Ainley & Fleming, 2003). Ongoing data collection from all Year 1 students in Catholic schools in Victoria showed that, where CLaSS was implemented, a higher proportion of students reached the established minimum standards for literacy within the first two years of schooling. This evidence also contributed to schools implementing CLaSS (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

When CLaSS began in 1998, it was in the context of literacy improvement and sector and school accountability. The ability to participate in national and global competition, which came from a flexible workforce that had high levels of literacy competence, framed Australia's economic growth. Government and the wider community linked the economic wellbeing of the nation with improved literacy standards. This presented one layer of accountability. The Catholic sector provided another layer of accountability and chose to participate in data collection and analysis. In accessing funding from Literacy for All, the Catholic sector in Victoria accepted accountability as part of government financial support and school improvement. In the next layer of accountability, teachers in schools became experts in data-driven instruction through basing literacy strategies on evidence, professional dialogue and evaluation and reflection. With its introduction it brought change, critical evaluation of past and new approaches to literacy and a formalized approach to professional

development and learning in literacy. Within that context, CLaSS became a phenomenon for literacy in the early years of schooling in Catholic primary schools.

While this chapter provides a historical context for the focus of literacy in the early years of schooling, the following chapter maps the key learning and teaching approaches in literacy that shaped much of the debate around literacy development and standards for governments, locally and globally, and the wider community. It also provides examples of whole-school approaches to literacy, including CLaSS.

Chapter 3 Literature Review: Pedagogy and Research

Before the introduction of CLaSS into Catholic primary schools in Victoria, there were a number of approaches for specific aspects of literacy. These approaches often formed a toolkit of different strategies that teachers, particularly those with experience, developed and used. The strategies described in this chapter demonstrate some typical approaches that teachers used before the introduction of CLaSS and will provide a useful context from which to view the approaches adopted within CLaSS. The strategies evolved from theories and teacher observation on how students learnt. In the past, these strategies were used by individuals or teams of teachers; some schools wove them into an individual school-based approach. This meant that, within and among schools, different teachers or different year levels had different approaches to literacy (Beck & Juel, 1994).

3.1   Reading and Writing Approaches

3.1.1   Reading.

Researching past approaches to literacy revealed many different theories or methods that were developed on how students best learnt to read. Many past strategies used by teachers in the classroom, however, did not necessarily assist in the development of reading skills for all students (Beck & Juel, 1994). Phonic approaches characterized the range of theories for reading at one end of the spectrum, while whole language characterized those at the other end (Anstey & Bull, 2004).

In the past, these two opposing positions often provided the fuel for debate on how to teach reading. Many classroom teachers, however, drew on both approaches as well as other strategies for developing reading skills in students (Anstey & Bull, 2004; Snyder, 2008). It should be noted that since the 1990s educators and the wider community have often used the word *phonics* as a general term in the literacy debate to describe a reading approach in which students developed an understanding of the relationship between sounds and symbols in language. Incorporated into a phonic approach were other aspects, such as the development of *phonemic awareness*

(understanding the sound structure of words), *linguistic awareness* (awareness of the structure of language), and *graphophonic awareness* (understanding the patterns of language and the sounds they represent) (Hill, 2006; Winch, Ross Johnston, March, Ljungdahl & Holliday, 2005).

Before the 1930s, phonic approaches in which students learnt rules and practised spelling the words accordingly dominated the teaching of reading. The 1930s saw the introduction of a "Look, Say" approach (Anstey & Bull, 2004; Marsh, 1994). It was thought that students learnt to read through exposure to words rather than the parts of the word (Beck & Juel, 2002). This approach recognized that learning to reading could not be developed through just the application of phonics (Beck & Juel, 1994). This approach remained until the 1950s when there was a push for a return to a phonic approach that incorporated explicit and implicit strategies (Anstey & Bull, 2004). An explicit strategy focused on students learning individual letter sounds while an implicit strategy encouraged students to draw out the sounds from within words (Beck & Juel, 1994). While there was no one single method or strategy for teaching phonics, the *alphabetic principle* (the skill of understanding the relationship of alphabetic symbols to sounds) was the basis of a phonic approach (Byrne, 1998). Byrne (1998) believed that the application of the alphabetic principle was an essential skill for reading. The alphabetic principle was often a benchmark by which other methods were measured and evaluated (Byrne, 1998; Reid & Green, 2004). A number of studies supported this position.

Clay (1979) showed that students who missed out on an understanding of phonic patterns in the first few years of schooling did not catch up later on even if the students were intelligent. The study also showed that students who did not make adequate progress in the early years of schooling had difficulty in hearing the sound sequences of words (Clay, 1979). Juel, Griffiths and Gough (1986) in their study showed that students with little phonemic awareness had difficulty with sound/symbol relationships and spelling. Juel (1988) conducted a longitudinal study that tracked students' reading levels from first grade to fourth grade. The results of the study showed that students who had poor decoding skills by second grade did not achieve the average

level of decoding expected in the fourth grade; it also demonstrated that underachieving students often developed a dislike for reading and a sense of failure within the first four years of schooling (Beck & Juel, 1994). Longitudinal studies, such as by Lundberg (1984) and Maclean, Bryant and Bradley (1987), showed that there was a correlation between the level of achievement in linguistic awareness of word and phonemes in the first grade and reading achievement later in sixth grade (Beck & Juel, 1994).

A phonic approach in reading promoted the importance of the decoding stage in the first two years of schooling (Chall, 1983); advocates of a phonic approach maintained that early attainment of decoding skills was important because early skill development in decoding predicted later skills in comprehension (Beck & Juel, 1994). They maintained that students who did not learn to decode early in school did not have the ability to access a wide range of books that were required to broaden their literacy growth (Beck & Juel, 1994). While not all educators viewed a phonic approach as best practice for reading development, there was general agreement that developing fluency in reading was important for literacy growth (Samuels, Schermer & Reinking, 1994): educators recognized that reading posed a difficulty for any student who was not fluent in the reading process (Samuels et al., 1994). Students who had little difficulty in word identification and comprehension were considered fluent in reading (Samuels et al., 1994).

Fries (1965) stated that there were two stages in the reading process: decoding and comprehension. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) argued that there was a relationship between the two stages and student attention. Beginning readers gave their attention to decoding the words and not until they mastered this skill to a competent level were students able to focus on comprehension: once students were competent at decoding, then their attention was drawn to comprehension (Samuels et al., 1994). Extended practice in learning to decode printed words lessened attention to the decoding, shifting the attention to comprehension; the skill of decoding became automatic through practice, and fluent readers were able to decode and comprehend simultaneously and with less effort (Samuels et al., 1994). Zimmermann and Brown (2003) believed that though phonics was important in reading, phonics only took a student so far in early

reading development. They believed that phonemic awareness was not as good a predictor for reading ability as were comprehension levels.

Developments from the 1950s in understanding how students learnt, such as the work of Bloom (1956) and Smith (1978), contributed to a further understanding of the role that comprehension played in reading. These developments recognized that comprehension exercises that were based on literal questions ignored other elements of reading, such as identifying the purpose or empathizing with a character in the story (Smith & Elley, 1998). Rosenblatt (1983) argued that there were different comprehension skills for fiction and non-fiction texts and that the reader brought their own beliefs, culture and experiences into reading to create a new meaning. Efferent reading involved seeking information, while aesthetic reading involved interpreting texts on multiple levels (Rosenblatt, 1983). Smith (1978) identified four dimensions of comprehension: literal; interpretive or inferential; critical and creative. These dimensions did not include the social and cultural interpretation that influenced understanding of the meaning of the text (Smith & Elley, 1998). Other research (Rivalland, 2000) showed that gaining meaning from texts was strongly linked to reading development.

Critics of phonic approaches maintained that too much emphasis on the explicit teaching of phonics resulted in a curriculum for reading which used a series of drill and practice. They believed that in phonic approaches students did not have the opportunity to synthesize the learning as a whole; rather, teachers expected students to learn from narrow examples and apply that learning to a broader range of skills. It was felt, that through the application of phonic approaches, the curriculum was in danger of being reduced to simple definitions and examples and thinking skills would not be effectively developed (Wilkinson, 1999). While phonics provided an approach to decoding words, reading schemes often became the contexts from which teachers developed reading programs.

Commercial reading schemes progressively became part of reading programs from the 1950s and the early schemes reinforced a phonic approach (Anstey & Bull,

2004). Reading schemes developed in the 1980s, such as "Young Australia Series" (1983) and "Reading 360" (1984), incorporated a number of high-frequency words that became word banks of sight words (Anstey & Bull, 2004). Teachers used word banks to develop students' core sight-reading words. Sight words also included pronouns and contractions of words. Teachers exposed students to a list of words in which they reinforced the learning through constant use of techniques, such as requiring students to glance quickly at a word and then guessing how to spell it. Advocates believed that when students were able to master the relevant sight words for a text, they would develop independence in reading the text (Spencer & Hay, 1998). Advocates for phonic approaches maintained, however, that sight words should only be taught when a word was un-codeable and within context (McGuinness, 1997). Many critics of a phonic or sight-word approach from the 1980s onwards often favoured a philosophy called *whole language*. Before discussing whole language in reading, it is necessary to first examine approaches to writing that developed from the 1960s to the 1980s.

3.1.2 Writing.

Up until the mid 1960s, writing in primary school was usually called composition. The teaching and learning approach to composition was that teachers generally provided students with a suitable topic from which students composed their writing. Students then handed it back to the teacher who highlighted the errors. Teachers expected that students would improve their writing skills through learning from errors. Teachers mainly taught reading and writing as separate skills with an emphasis on writing as a production, and writing was not emphasized in the primary school until students had mastered a degree of skill in spelling and handwriting. Students usually engaged in writing or a composition activity once a week in which the writing piece was completed (Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons & Turbill, 2003).

By the 1970s, there was a significant shift to seeing students as the authors of their writing. Many teachers viewed writing as a process, which consisted of three stages, rather than a production. The "Bullock Report" (Department of Education and Science, 1975) in England influenced this change. The report recognized the importance of modes of language and the role that language played in life (Harris et al., 2003). This

process for writing mirrored the way educators believed adult writers created writing pieces. In the prewriting stage, teachers discussed with students the topic and ideas for the writing. In the drafting stage, students developed their ideas, and the writing did not need to be perfect and could be refined and modified. The last stage, rewriting, was when students improved the text through incorporating changes identified in the drafting stage. The Bullock Report also made a connection between speaking and writing (Harris et al., 2003). This connection led to the resurgence of language experience that had emerged in the 1960s. "Breakthrough to Literacy" (Mackay, Thompson & Schaub, 1970) was an example of a language-experience approach (Anstey & Bull, 2004). It had its genesis from the work of Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963), in New Zealand, who found that many books had little relevance to Maori students. She then developed word cards that were relevant to these students' writing (Hill, 2006). In a language-experience approach, characteristically students participated in an activity, such as an excursion and talked about their experiences to teachers and classroom group, before developing the direction of the writing piece (Anstey & Bull, 2004; Harris et al., 2003). In a typical writing activity, teachers set the scene through discussion, pictures and stories before students applied the writing process. The tenor of these changes meant that writing moved from a composition to a creative writing style.

In Australia, Walshe (1982) promoted the idea that writing was a craft in which students learnt by doing, and, therefore, he expanded on the process developed in the 1970s. The prewriting stage involved exploring a problem or experience by way of discussion, stories and pictures and development of a writing plan; in the writing stage, students drafted, revised and edited their text a number of times before moving onto the post writing stage. The post writing stage included the publication of the writing into a book for the class library. Teachers often asked the readers of the published stories to respond to the writing and to the writer's attitude (Harris et al., 2003). Throughout the writing process, students regularly engaged in conferences in which teachers discussed with students the writing and its development. Process writing recognized that sufficient time was necessary for the writing process to be effective and, therefore, teachers engaged students in writing each day. Students had ownership of the writing through the selection and development of their own topics. At the drafting stage, teachers

encouraged students to "invent spelling" rather than slow the writing process down through constantly checking words. As students revised their work, they corrected any spelling errors (Harris et al., 2003).

Donald Graves (1983), from the USA, became very influential in process writing. Graves put forward the importance of teachers modelling writing to students. He proposed that teachers should write when students write to allow students to make the connection that teachers viewed writing as an important activity. Graves suggested that teachers use large sheets of paper or an overhead projector to model the process to students (Graves, 1983). Graves emphasized the importance of students recognizing themselves as authors and, therefore, students were encouraged to write drafts like an author (Graves, 1983). Process writing also introduced individual student writing folders, anecdotal records, recording outcomes of conferences, mapping student progress in skills and sharing the students' development with parents through the use of samples of student writing (Graves, 1983). Graves also believed that the role of assessment was important and needed to be continuous. He advocated that teachers needed to constantly observe student writing development and use conferences to better inform students about their writing. Graves (1983) and Cambourne (1988) also pushed the idea that students, in order to develop writing, had to be engaged and immersed in books long before they mastered spelling.

While process and conference had become key components of writing in the 1980s, criticism of process writing grew. This criticism was directed at the types of writing that were evident in this approach (Wray & Lewis, 1997). In the 1990s, genre theorists, such as Christie (1987) and Cope and Kalantzis (1993), advanced the notion of different genres in writing. They believed that student writing, such as in the approach developed by Graves, was too personal and too much centred on the process. Using process writing, students often wrote personal and fictional stories rather than being immersed continuously in a range of text styles and forms in the classroom. Genre theorists believed that through process writing not all students developed an understanding of different styles or genres appropriate for different contexts and settings. While there were different ways of categorizing writing genres, genre theorists

believed that students needed to develop different styles of writing including narratives, reports, explanations, expositions, recounts and procedures, along with others, such as letters, poems, play scripts, posters and advertisements (Harris et al, 2003; Wray & Lewis, 1997). Genre theorists believed writing was an activity with ritualized patterns for different social purposes (Wilkinson, 1999).

The genre approach placed a focus on the teacher modelling different types of writing for students; scaffolding in writing became important as teachers modelled the different genres, constructed the writing with students and provided opportunities for independent writing (Wray & Lewis, 1997). In a genre approach, teachers planned explicit teaching sessions rather than seizing the opportunity to teach a skill. Genre theorists, however, believed that a writing process, such as developed by Graves (1983), was important in that it complemented their view that writing was an integrated process: genre writing involved both the process and the product. Using a writing process to experience and develop different genres, genre theorists believed that students developed an understanding of the relationship between text and content (Harris et al., 2003).

3.1.3   Spelling.

Linked to writing, was the development of spelling. Before the emergence of whole language, which advocated immersion, modelling of language and experimentation of letters to develop spelling skills, many students learnt to spell through a phonic approach and sight-word lists (Anstey & Bull, 2004; Cambourne, 1988). Teachers often used the "Schonell's Essential Spelling List" (Schonell & Schonell, 1965) which was derived from adult writing (Bouffler, 1997; Griffiths, 2004). The "Dolch List" (Dolch, 1936) of basic sight words first emerged in 1936 and contained high-frequency words that appeared in student reading materials (Hill, 2006). When whole language emerged in the 1980s, a major area of criticism in this philosophy of learning was whether students acquired appropriate spelling skills. Whole language did not generally support the learning of long-established phonetic and sight-word lists; it was often criticized for encouraging invented spelling and not having a proper strategy for students to learn words (Anstey & Bull, 2004).

The debate on spelling, however, was a contentious issue long before the development of whole language (Griffiths, 2004). In 1891, the ability to spell was not a strong point in students in Australia or other English speaking countries (Griffiths, 2004). The Norwood Report (1941), in Britain, identified that one critical aspect of education, which had failed, was the development of effective spelling skills in students. In 1948 in New South Wales, the chief examiner reported that spelling was an overall weakness in students (Brock, 1997). Some educators recognized that the learning of spelling lists aided by spelling rules was dependent on short- and long-term memory skills (Hill, 2006). Standard lists did not always allow for the evolving needs of students to use words beyond standard lists; spelling lists developed from words that students used in their own writing were often more effective (Hill, 2006; Winch et al., 2005). Central to the debate on spelling was whether students learnt to spell incidentally through immersion in text and writing, such as through whole language, or systematically through explicit teaching of phonics and learning spelling lists (Griffiths, 2004). First Steps viewed spelling as a thinking process in which students developed strategies during different stages of schooling (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994). Bouffler (1997) suggested that spelling was a complex skill that involved the understanding of both written and oral language as well as phonic and morphemic knowledge. Some teachers, parents and the wider community, however, often held the ability to spell lists of words as one of the benchmarks of good literacy (Griffiths, 2004).

3.1.4   *Oral language.*

Oral language plays significant role in the development of reading and writing skills (Graves, 1994; Smith & Elley, 1998). Literacy for All (DEETYA, 1998) recognized that students could be disadvantaged for life if they failed, in the early years of schooling, in reading and writing as well as in speaking and listening. The important role of oral language in enhancing both reading and writing development has long been identified (Hill, 2006; Louden et al., 2005; Smith & Elley, 1998; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Winch et al., 2005). The development of effective oral language skills is a precondition for developing literacy (Hill, 2006; Snow et al., 1998). As students first learn to read they use oral language as a starting point for word/symbol relationships

and language structure. As students engage in oral language they expand their knowledge of language structure, vocabulary and information skills (Hill, 2006; Smith & Elley, 1998; Snow et al., 1998; Watson, 1993). The role of play in the development of oral language was also important (Hill, 2006). Research (Rivalland, 2000) identified that oral language activities developed an awareness of sounds, language form and structures, and built a range of vocabulary and knowledge of the world. While oral language is important in the development of literacy, reading and writing are the key elements in the literacy debate since Literacy Advance (Crévola, & Hill, 2005b).

3.2   *Whole Language*

In the 1980s, whole language had prominence in Australian primary schools (Snyder, 2008). Whole language is an immersion approach that was used for both reading and writing. Underlying whole language was a theory of how learners acquired language. Educators saw viewing, reading and writing as a cognitive and sociological process (Anstey & Bull, 2004). Cambourne (1988) and Goodman (1986) emphasized a focus on acquisition of language through immersion in literature and writing: a principle belief was that students learnt to develop literacy skills through being immersed in language rather than through explicit teaching (Andrews, 1993). In building new ideas, learners constructed meaning through immersion and prior knowledge and, therefore, learning was a social process as teachers provided students with opportunities to work on their own and with others. It encouraged the learner to construct meaning from text through drawing on context; their understanding of the complex meaning of language; rules; and phonological and grapho phonic systems to create and read print (Church, 1996).

The process writing models of Graves (1983) and Walshe (1982) provided a model for the writing process in whole language: immersion in books; demonstration by teachers; and expectations that all students could write and take responsibility for developing writing topics. It also allowed students to experiment with language through invented spelling. Students took their writing to a production stage, and as writers, engaged in and responded within the process. Advocates believed that when teachers empowered learners, learning was made easier (Berghoff, Haste & Leland, 1997;

Cambourne & Turbill, 1987). This philosophy of learning saw the emergence of individual schools developing a recognizable whole-school approach to all aspects of literacy within the school. This did not, however, ensure that the approach was implemented in the same way and to the same extent in each classroom within a school (Snow et al., 1998). Whole language rejected the part-to-whole approach of literacy development that was common in a phonic approach. In whole language, reading and writing were integrated into learning experiences (Goodman, 1993).

Process writing and whole language contributed to the rise of a focus on literacy in that both movements stressed the importance of students seeing themselves as both readers and writers. It was important that students were able to model themselves on the behaviours of adult readers and writers (Graves, 1983; Harris et al., 2003). Advocates held the view that whole language encouraged enjoyment of reading and writing through the stimulation of children's choices and interests. Teachers allowed the learning to unfold through the direction of the learner. Whole language "…envisaged reading as primarily a linguistic rather than visual exercise" (Heppenstall, 1999, p. 8). Essential to the approach was an environment that surrounded students with a variety of reading materials. One noted influence of whole language was the development and presence of *big books* in the primary school classroom. Big books developed from Holdaway's (1979) research on shared reading. Teachers used big books to promote shared reading experiences for the whole class (Anstey & Bull, 2004; Church, 1996). They had rhythm, rhyme and repetition built into the text so that students learnt natural language patterns. Within whole language, some teachers incorporated literature-based programs that polarized views around the use of high-interest texts and basal readers (Hill, 2006).

Advocates of whole language considered approaches that explicitly concentrated on decoding skills unnatural and did not allow for development of understanding of the text (Andrews, 1993). They believed that an emphasis on decoding slowed down the reading process and did not necessarily develop effective comprehension (Jackson & Coltheart, 2001). Advocates regarded that extensive learning of phonics was unnecessary and could be detrimental to reading development

(Goodman, 1988). In contrast to phonics, teachers encouraged students to use prediction skills for unknown words within the context of the information. While some educators using whole language still included some phonics, the majority used phonics to aid the identification of a letter or two to assist in prediction (Heppenstall, 1999). In whole language, if a study of phonics was part of a reading program it was only important to understand minimal cues, such as consonants. Whole language advocated the idea that students could decipher words without knowledge of vowels and build a better understanding of phonics due to exposure to, and by focusing on, phonics in the context of reading and writing (Weaver, 1990).

Whole language did not encourage the sole use of a standardized test for assessment, as such testing reduced whole language to posted-skill gains; teachers assessed students using a variety of assessment approaches, such as student work samples, observation, anecdotal records and student self-assessment (Goodman, 1994). Advocates of whole language argued that reading tests did not provide the whole picture of student achievement though some tests were better than others (Jackson & Coltheart, 2001). Critics of whole language argued that students required explicit teaching to learn how to be readers. Advocates argued that "…explicit teaching occurs when a teacher structures a literacy event so that students were consciously focusing on part of the whole, and were developing their ability to talk and think about that part as a metalevel" (Wilkinson, 1999, p. 8). While critics claimed that students pursued their own learning with little direct instruction, advocates maintained that through observation, teachers were able to "…seize the teachable moment" (Weaver, 1990, p. 15). Critics also raised concerns that students did not learn the basics of phonics, spelling and grammar, while advocates of whole language argued that the teacher fostered learning attitudes for a technological world (Church, 1996; Weaver, 1990).

Whole language as a literacy approach had no developed structure that was pre-packaged in a commercial sense. Teachers were seen as professionals who fitted resource materials to the needs of students. It was a philosophy of learning in which teacher judgment, knowledge and experience played an important role in developing an appropriate learning environment and providing experiences for the students (Weaver,

1990): this was thought to have some bearing on the outcome of the approach for inexperienced teachers or teachers who had not maintained professional development in literacy (Berghoff et al., 1997; Wortman & Matlin, 1995). Teachers who used the philosophy of whole language expected that all students would develop skills in reading and writing, though not necessarily at the same time. Teachers encouraged students to take risks in reading and writing, develop a flexible number of strategies, understand and use accepted conventions and understand the purpose of different texts and audiences (Berghoff et al., 1997; Wortman & Matlin, 1995).

3.3   *Literacy Research*

Up until the 1960s, educators often saw reading, writing, listening, speaking and spelling as separate entities that had little or no developmental links to each other: the 1970s began to see that these areas were part of a developmental process. By the 1980s, educators began to develop an understanding of literacy related to forms and structures that needed to be explicitly taught to students. As explored in Chapter 2, in the 1990s the development of effective literacy teaching became a global focus (Winch et al., 2005).

The different approaches in schools for developing students' reading and writing skills contributed to the debate about literacy that arose in the 1990s (Ewing, 2006; Shanahan, 2002). This debate focused on global interest in the need to improve literacy standards and whether there was a "right approach" (Luke, 1998; Rivalland, 2000; Wilkinson, 1999). Governments in countries, such as the USA, Britain, and New Zealand, questioned whether whole language was an effective approach to literacy (Smith, 1997). In the USA, there was a rise in the use of direct instruction approaches (Brock, 1997). Direct instruction approaches emphasized explicit teaching of sounds and letters using controlled vocabulary in graded readers which allowed for constant reinforcement of phonics and sight vocabulary (Hill, 2006). In Britain, "The National Literacy Strategy" (Barber, 1997) directed primary schools to abandon whole language and to concentrate on the explicit teaching of phonics in reading. A criticism of whole language was that teachers did not appear to intervene sufficiently with at-risk students. Students with reading difficulties required more explicit instruction than those without

reading difficulties, while the former also needed interesting and engaging texts (Hill, 2006). In New Zealand, whole language was often blamed for poor results in standardized tests rather than the value and purpose of standardised tests (Smith, 1997). A study of the top and bottom twenty schools in New Zealand, however, revealed that the top achieving schools used whole language and the bottom achieving schools used a decontextualized phonic approach (Elley, 1992).

Before the introduction of CLaSS, there were two major theories on literacy programs. Each approach had its limitations. A top-down approach, such as whole language, was based on the view that literacy was built on existing knowledge and developed within a context built upon what the reader brought to print. These approaches were student-centred and focused on how learners build on and expand knowledge (Rowe, 2007). A bottom-up approach, such as a phonic approach and direct instruction, relied heavily on analysing letters and words, and focused on decoding through explicit teaching and, therefore, was a teacher-directed approach (Andrews 1993; Rowe, 2007; Winch et al., 2005). Research informed the teaching profession that literacy development was more complex. Other factors, such as a particular view of how students learn, were just as important. Jackson and Coltheart (2001) and Saxby (1993) found that an important factor in developing literacy was students having appropriate access to literature. Students needed exposure to literature so that there was development of oral vocabulary and verbal knowledge (Jackson & Coltheart, 2001). Brown (1998) and Hiebert (1998) found that students needed a variety of texts that had a balance of high-frequency words and prediction. Students at bottom levels of literacy rarely read other than what was given to them and, therefore, their literacy process was slowed by their lack of motivation to read (Johnston, 1997).

Rereading of favourite literacy texts was an important approach in developing literacy skills in the early years (Holdaway, 1979; O'Toole, 1993); students did not necessarily have to progress through new books as quickly as possible as a basis for establishing accuracy of reading (Holdaway, 1979; O'Toole, 1993). Studies showed that often students formed strong beliefs about literacy in the early years of schooling (Watson & Badenhop, 1993). Students sometimes saw themselves as readers and not

good writers or vice versa. They had notions of what constituted "good" books compared to those which were considered *"babyish"* or not worthy of reading; these early beliefs either helped or hindered literacy development. Differences in student skills were differentiated by end of first year of school (Watson & Badenhop, 1993). Effective literacy strategies took into account a wide range of classroom factors, including a range of language abilities and cultural diversity (Edwards-Groves, 2003). Teachers with a broad skills base and knowledge of reading and who applied strategies that suited and engaged students, rather than adopting one method of reading for all students, were more effective (Reid, 1996). There was often division between views on catering for individual needs in literacy: inclusive teaching within the classroom allowed students to have a connection to the classroom learning, while withdrawal programs program focused explicit teaching outside of the classroom.

In Australia, a longitudinal study on mapping the literacy progress of 100 students began in 1996 (Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivalland & Reid, 1998). The study tracked student progress from beginning school to the age ten. It identified some features that were important considerations for developing literacy programs and monitoring student progress and informed the national plan for literacy (Hill, 1999). The study found there was a wide difference between students' range of achievement in the first year of schooling, though there was only a slight difference in the literacy levels before commencing school. There was also a relationship between success in early literacy and later school success. Students required different literacy strategies at different stages of schooling, and not all students followed a predictable path in literacy development. The study identified that literacy approaches which included data-driven teaching strategies and built upon students' home experience were effective. The study also found that there were differences in the levels of student engagement with literacy in school and out of school (Comber & Barnett, 2003; Hill, 1999; Hill, Comber et al., 1998).

The "Victorian Quality School Project" (1992-1994) concluded that as early as Year 3, the gap between high and low achievers was wide and may not be bridged in later years of schooling (Crévola & Hill, 2001). "The 1996 National School English

Literacy Survey" also found that 30 % of Australian primary students failed to reach benchmark standards in reading and writing. This difference between high and low achievers was identified as the "learning gap" (Masters & Forster, 1997, p. v). The term "Matthew effects" (a term based on the parable in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer in the Gospel of Matthew) described the learning gap in which poor readers continued to lag behind while good readers continued to do better (Stanovich, 1986). The survey showed that that there was a difference of five levels between the top ten percent and the bottom ten percent of literacy achievement in students (Masters & Forster, 1997). The survey, in highlighting the learning gap in literacy attainment by Year 3, increased awareness of the need to improve literacy attainment for all students in the first years of schooling. The Matthew effects between good and poor readers also continued to widen beyond the first years of schooling (Beck & Juel, 1994).

3.3.1   *Literacy for All.*

The Literacy for All (DEETYA, 1998) policy identified elements that were important for developing literacy approaches. It acknowledged that within any beginning group of school students there was a wide range of experiences and understandings about literacy; it noted that exposure to print before coming to school was helpful for students in the acquisition of reading and writing. The policy recognized that the role of the school was to build upon, or to provide, the necessary experiences for all students to obtain adequate literacy levels. The early years of schooling, that is the first four years, were identified as a crucial time for students, particularly for at-risk students. The "window of opportunity" to intervene successfully was the early years of schooling so that in later years the levels of literacy attainment between the top and bottom group were not as great as in the past (DEETYA, 1998). Literacy for All identified the importance in the early years of schooling of parental involvement and family literacy programmes, ensuring attendance and participation of students in literacy, and providing adequate time for literacy teaching (DEETYA, 1998). Literacy for All (DEETYA, 1998) stated that "…the variety of children's experience of literacy-related activities prior to school entry, and in their individual dispositions to learning, means that no single approach to teaching literacy will be appropriate for all learners".

This acknowledged that teachers required skills and knowledge in an extensive range of learning and teaching approaches. Literacy for All called for the provision of intervention strategies for at-risk students; emphasized the importance of measuring student achievement against national benchmarks; the need to improve teacher professional development; and to develop partnership links between school and home (DEETYA, 1998, p. 10). Significantly, Literacy for All acknowledged a number of central issues in the early years of schooling. It identified the complexity of the role of teachers and the variations in literacy teaching and learning. It also acknowledged that factors, such as classroom grouping and organization, added to the challenge (DEETYA, 1998).

While Literacy for All recognized that there was no single common approach to teaching literacy nationally or within states, effective pedagogy in literacy was necessary to achieve and measure national goals (DEETYA, 1998). It gave recommendations about uniform requirements which included: literacy should be a priority in all schools; students should be assessed in literacy at the earliest possible time in the early years of schooling; a more consistent time allocation for literacy teaching was required; and professional development needed to focus on expanding the repertoire of learning and teaching strategies of teachers (DEETYA, 1998). Consequently, all students in primary schools began to participate in literacy testing in Year 3 and Year 5 so that student achievement could be measured. The testing became part of the accountability that was applied uniformly within schools, across sectors and states.

A new definition for literacy in school curriculum to be used across Australia was developed: "Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing" (Department of Education and Employment, 1991, p. 5 as cited in DEETYA, 1998). This significantly broadened the understanding and application of literacy that then placed new demands or standards on schools. Literacy for All, however, had its critics.

Although Literacy for All provided an integrated strategy for literacy, some educators criticized it for its reductive notion of literacy and its strong emphasis on measurement and reporting (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001). While this criticism acknowledged the importance of developing literacy skills in the early years of schooling, educators believed Literacy for All failed to recognize the complexity of literacy pedagogy for the twenty-first century (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001). Studies in literacy, such as Anstey and Bull (2004), Christie and Martin (1997) and Lo Bianco and Freebody (1997), supported this criticism. These studies recognized the complex nature and purpose of literacy, including different types of literacies, and focused on the complexities involved in developing literacy skills for all students. Some educators supported the teaching of basics skills as part of an effective literacy program (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001). Rowe (2007) argued, however, that while the different approaches were important and were part of an effective literacy program, teachers needed to ensure that there was sufficient explicit or direct instruction before students engaged in learning activities that were based on a top-down approach.

3.3.2   *A balanced approach.*

Literacy for All captured a central educational debate that had, in the past, divided professional opinion of how best to implement literacy within the classroom (Snyder, 2008). Reid and Green (2004) described the debate over reading as a "Hundred Years War". Chall (1996) though an advocate of a phonic approach felt that there were some practices of whole language that should be used to support the reading process. While Stanovich (1994) felt that some educators over-used the phonic approach, he believed that some students, who were exposed only to whole language, did not develop the alphabetic principle simply through an immersion in books (Stanovich, 1994). Wilson (1997) believed that in whole language, teachers, who understood the value of proficiency in phonics and punctuation, intervened with focused or explicit instruction.

Literacy for All identified that much of the debate centred on the use of literacy strategies, such as phonics and whole language. It identified that the different approaches were part of a balanced and wide repertoire of teaching strategies that were required by teachers to deliver effective literacy programs in which reading and writing

were linked (DEETYA, 1998). A balanced approach in literacy incorporated the strengths of both top-down and bottom-up strategies including effective teaching and learning strategies drawn from a range of approaches which teachers used according to the needs of students (Crévola & Hill, 2005b; Snyder, 2008; Winch et al, 2005). Within a balanced approach, teachers recognized the need to use a variety of strategies, such as explicit or focused teaching, and modelled, shared and independent reading and writing activities (Crévola & Hill, 2005b; Snyder, 2008; Winch et al., 2005). Louden et al. (2005) also found that while there was evidence to support the teaching of specific elements of reading, such as the alphabetic principle, development of comprehension, fluency and vocabulary instruction, an effective reading program had a balanced approach which incorporated both bottom-up and top-down approaches to reading and writing. It also included development of oral language and effective classroom practices, such as explicit and focused instruction on phonics and comprehension, and regular assessment that guided planning and interesting learning experiences.

Since the introduction of CLaSS in 1998, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) in Australia released two reports on reading. Early 2005, DEST released, "In Teachers Hands" (Louden et al., 2005). This report looked at effective literacy practices in the early years of schooling and advocated a balanced approach that included both the explicit teaching of phonics and whole language. Later in 2005, DEST released the report on a national inquiry into reading, "Teaching Reading" (DEST, 2005). The report recognized the tension between phonics and whole language that had continued as a critical debate between educators and the wider community. This report, though recognizing the importance of appropriate strategies that met student needs, advocated that a whole-language only approach to reading was not in the best interest of students, and that the teaching of reading was a highly developed professional skill. The report provided a number of recommendations one of which advocated a systematic and explicit approach to the teaching of phonics (DEST, 2005). A criticism of this report was that it focused on the difficulties in improving student reading levels and not on celebrating the success in improving reading levels (Armstrong, 2006). Both DEST reports, however, recognized the importance of teacher effectiveness; teacher skills and knowledge of literacy development impacted on student

learning. In the United Kingdom, Rose (2006) emphasized that students in early years of schooling, within a rich and engaging literacy program, were best supported through systematic teaching of phonics. Rose (2006) stated that the acquisition of skills in phonics was essential for decoding, comprehension and spelling. Conversely, Snyder (2008) argued that a balanced approach had wider school and community support than a single approach to literacy, such as phonics.

3.4   Whole-school Approaches to Literacy

Whole-school approaches were literacy strategies or programs that were implemented across a whole school or a specific number of year levels, such as Prep to Year 2, and were often supported as a sector approach. Whole-school approaches incorporated many of the elements identified in research from the 1980s and 1990s and included assessment and monitoring of student achievement based on evidence; they also had a continuous and multilayered professional development model. In the 1990s in the USA, there were a number of whole-school approaches that developed around *design elements* that went beyond teachers implementing a program into classrooms (Hill & Crévola, 1997a, 1997b). The design elements incorporated a holistic school approach to deal with the range of influences that impinged on student learning within and outside the classroom. "Success for All" (Slavin & Madden, 2000) was a whole-school approach that incorporated design elements: the design elements in Success for All provided a starting point for the design elements of the "Early Literacy Research Project" (Crévola & Hill 1997) in Victoria. The outcomes of the Early Literacy Research Project also influenced CLaSS (Hill & Crévola, 1997a; Hill & Crévola, n.d). In Australia, there were a number of literacy strategies, such as "Western Australia First Steps" (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994), "Early Years Literacy Program" (Department of Education, 1997) and "Children's Literacy Success Strategy" (Crévola & Hill, 2005a), that implemented a whole-school approach to literacy and included specific design elements.

3.4.1   Success for All (SFA).

Robert Slavin developed "Success for All" (SFA) in the USA; a school in Baltimore trialled it in 1987. As more schools used the program, further research was

carried out which reaffirmed the results of the trial school. In Australia some primary schools used a modified program of SFA called "School Wide Early Language and Literacy Program" (Slavin & Madden, 2000). Slavin promoted SFA as an approach supported by educational research that showed that it was effective in assisting struggling or at-risk students (Hurley, Chamberlain, Slavin & Madden, 2001). Educational research on effective schools in the USA influenced Slavin on the development of SFA. That research noted that effective schools had a number of factors: clear priorities and goals for learning; a positive culture that valued learning; and high expectations for all students. Effective schools also allocated sufficient resources to support the agreed priorities and there was a strong commitment and professional capacity by staff (Hurley et al., 2001). SFA had a teaching and learning approach based on direct instruction, which was an explicit and highly structured teaching approach. Educators sometimes criticized direct instruction for producing short-term rather than long-term improvement in student literacy outcomes (Fullan, Hill & Crévola, 2006).

SFA was a whole-school approach to literacy that incorporated a particular set of design elements. Tutors worked one-to-one with at-risk students. Teachers used co-operative learning strategies for reading and writing and tested students every eight weeks; they used the test information to inform teaching strategies and to assist with grouping students into same ability groups. SFA placed an emphasis on schools developing home-school links through a family support team. The family support team assisted with parent education; monitoring of student attendance; behaviour and welfare issues and co-ordination of parent assistance in the classroom (Slavin & Madden, 2000). Each school appointed a facilitator who co-ordinated the program, assisted teachers with strategies and professional development and in the management of assessment tasks. Before a school could commit to SFA, 80 % of teachers at the school had to vote positively for its introduction (Slavin & Madden, 2000).

3.4.2   Western Australia First Steps (First Steps).

In 1988, the Education Department of Western Australia introduced First Steps as a literacy resource to cater for all students, and in particular, to assist schools in

meeting the needs of at-risk students (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995). In 1998 when CLaSS first began, some Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne also used First Steps (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). Prior to its development, the Education Department of Western Australia had noted that the experience of schools involved in the Early Literacy In-service Course (Education Department of South Australia, 1984), highlighted the need for a whole-school approach and more professional development for teachers in the area of literacy. While other innovations for literacy were implemented in schools across Western Australia, which involved a more holistic approach to language, improvement in student learning outcomes in literacy was dependent on individual teacher skill and enthusiasm (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995). Research into effective literacy strategies influenced the design of First Steps. First Steps had key underlying principles: all students were active learners who could be successful learners; students learnt more effectively when they interacted with adults, peers and their environment; there was an overall pattern of growth and development in literacy, in which individual differences could be accommodated; indicators of language and literacy development could be identified; and effective developmental strategies assisted students to reach their potential (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995).

First Steps had four components: reading, writing, spelling and oral language that formed an integrated approach to literacy. A critical tool in First Steps was the *developmental continuum* that described milestones and strategies for different points in a student's literacy development (Australian Council of Educational Research, 1993; Western Australia Department of Education, 1995). While the Education Department of Western Australia later refined First Steps, the developmental continuum remained the foundation of the approach (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995). The continuum for each component provided not only a developmental map for each student, it allowed teachers to use the continuum to diagnose students' learning, monitor progress, and select appropriate strategies to assist in developing skill levels.

First Steps recognized that effective teaching practices were embedded in the school culture and, therefore, was a whole school approach. Before a school was

accepted into the First Steps program, there were a number of principles that schools needed to endorse. There had to be a school commitment to literacy as a priority area; and all teachers within the school needed to support its introduction. In the beginning of its implementation, the Education Department of Western Australia gave priority to schools from low socioeconomic areas. Parents at participating schools became involved through information meetings. The recommendations from the First Steps project team found that one-off and smorgasbord approaches to professional development were not sufficient to implement change. Based on research, professional development needed to be continuous over a period of time and allowed teachers to trial and explore strategies and approaches (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995). The professional development model incorporated training of Focus Teachers to support school implementation. This was based on key theoretical assumptions that: the learning took place through interactions in meaningful events rather than through isolated language activities, and that language learning was holistic (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995).

3.4.3   *Early Years Literacy Program (Early Years).*

The Department of Education in Victoria and The University of Melbourne first developed the "Keys to Life Early Literacy Program" (Department of Education, 1997) that was later referred to as "Early Years Literacy Program" (DEET, 1999). It developed from a trial program for the "Early Literacy Research Project" (ELRP), which was an initiative of the Victorian Department of Education and the University of Melbourne (Crévola & Hill, 1997; Hill & Crévola, n.d). The ELRP involved 27 primary schools trialling the literacy program in 1996-98 (Crévola & Hill, 1997). It also involved another 25 reference schools (Crévola & Hill, 1997; Winch et al., 2005). This program used a whole-school approach designed to bring about dramatic improvement so that 98 % of students were at a minimum level of reading at the end of Year 1. The design elements of programs used in the USA, such as SFA and research into effective schools, influenced the development of the whole-school approach in ELRP (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; Crévola & Hill 1997).

Early Years drew on research findings into effective teaching, such as the ELRP (Crévola & Hill, 1997, DEET, 1999; Hill & Crévola, 1997a, 1998), Edmonds (1979) Scheerens and Bosker (1997) and Vygotsky (1978). The research from the ELRP supported the position that there differences in the quality of teaching and learning between schools and also noticeable differences between classes within a school (Crévola & Hill, 1997; Hill & Crévola, 1998). The ELRP also established that effective literacy included in the daily program specific strategies: oral language; reading to children, language experience for reading and writing; shared book; guided reading; independent reading; modelled writing; shared writing; interactive writing; guided writing; and independent writing (Crévola & Hill, 1997; Hill & Crévola, 1997a). The ELRP also identified the importance of design elements that outlined the key beliefs and understandings of a literacy strategy and the establishment of professional learning teams within schools (Crévola & Hill, 1997; Hill & Crévola, 1997a). Edmonds (1979) stressed the importance of teachers having: high expectations so that students did not fall behind minimum standards; the need for frequent monitoring of student progress; strong instructional leadership; and the development of an appropriate school climate for learning. Scheerens and Bosker (1997) also influenced the idea of time on task and minimizing interruptions to a literacy session, use of continuous assessment to inform future learning and specific teaching strategies adapted to students' needs. Vygotsky's (1978) understanding of how students progressed in their learning played a role in shaping the approach to improving learning in both Early Years and CLaSS. Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning constituted knowledge in which the levels of learning led to further development and that learning could not be separated from its social context. He also believed that each student had a zone of proximal development: students had a level of development in which they could achieve independently within the context of the classroom. Each student had a higher level of potential achievement to be reached through explicit assistance from the teacher. The distance between these two levels was the zone of proximal development.

Consequently, Early Years stressed the importance of providing students with focused teaching to raise the level of achievement within the zone of proximal development (Hill, 2006). In addition to research, teachers, literacy consultants and

academics also provided input into the development of teacher resources for Early Years along with Carmel Crévola and Peter Hill who were the directors of the ELRP 1996-1998 (DEET, 1999). Early Years had four design elements: the structured classroom program; parent participation; additional assistance; and professional development for teachers (DEET, 1999). The design elements were included in each of the teacher resource materials. These design elements were further informed by the nine design elements developed by Crévola and Hill (1997) and also incorporated into CLaSS.

3.4.4   *Children's Literacy Success Strategy (CLaSS).*

The "Children's Literacy Success Strategy" (CLaSS) was an initiative of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria in conjunction with Peter Hill and Carmel Crévola and The University of Melbourne (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). This initiative was based on research from the "Early Literacy Research Project" (ELRP) (Crévola & Hill, 2005a; Hill & Crévola, n.d). It was a first wave approach to literacy in that it was a strategy to adequately address 80% of students in the early years of schooling, ensuring that these students were on their way to achieving effective literacy standards. A second wave approach was an intervention strategy for at-risk students while a third wave approach involved special assistance or referral of students to other experts (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). As it was developed from the ELRP, many of the key principles and characteristics of CLaSS were also similar to that of Early Years (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; CEOM, 1997).

CLaSS had expectations and requirements, which had to be met by each participating school in the first three years of implementation. Each school had to demonstrate a commitment to early literacy and CLaSS. There had to be agreement across the school and within the school community to undertake CLaSS. Both CLaSS and Early Years included one-to-one intervention for at-risk students. Schools selecting CLaSS had to include Reading Recovery as the intervention (second wave) approach for at-risk students (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Reading Recovery was chosen for CLaSS because educational research showed that Reading Recovery was highly effective (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Although Reading Recovery was recommended as an

approach for schools adopting Early Years, it was not compulsory (DEET, 1999). While Reading Recovery as the intervention strategy was a significant component of CLaSS, the present research did not specifically examine participants' perceptions of it. Schools also had to establish a home-school-community action team that developed individual learning plans for at-risk students (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

As well as providing Reading Recovery, each CLaSS school had to provide a fulltime literacy co-ordinator who was released to assist teachers and to coordinate CLaSS and literacy across the school (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The introduction of CLaSS also required schools to examine the number of hours that were specifically devoted to literacy in a given week. Schools had to provide two hours as a literacy block each day. This mandatory two hours was introduced because there was some evidence to suggest that while sufficient time was allocated for literacy, the actual time students focused on literacy was significantly less (Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk & Seltzer, 1994). A national survey of primary principals in 1998 (Hill, Hurworth & Rowe, 1998) showed that the average time allocation per week for literacy was nine hours in the early years and eight hours in the final years. The survey showed there that there was pressure to devote more time to the broader curriculum, which could result in literacy time being reduced (Hill, Hurworth et al., 1998). CLaSS introduced for many Catholic primary schools the mandated two-hour block for literacy for each school day, which preserved adequate time for literacy in the early years of schooling. Within the daily literacy block, teachers had to include a minimum of four flexible teaching groups, develop learning centres and use task management boards to organize teaching organization and focus within the literacy block. The time allocation meant that the activities needed to be highly focused on literacy and, therefore, some changes in the structure of the teaching of literacy were required in the primary classroom (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Research showed that focused literacy activities also reduced classroom management problems (Rowe & Rowe, 1999).

Teachers adopted a "whole-group-whole" teaching strategy for the reading and writing hour (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Reading strategies included shared reading,

language experience, guided reading, independent reading and reading to students (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The reading hour began with a whole-class focus on a shared-reading activity directed by the teacher. Focused-group sessions followed in which students either participated in learning centres (or learning encounters) or were involved in a focused-reading group session with the teacher. In the learning centres, students participated in independent reading, while in the focused-learning group the teacher concentrated on reading to students and incorporating language experience and guided reading. The reading hour concluded with a whole-class focus in which individual students articulated what they learnt in the reading sessions, and teachers encouraged the development of their oral language through questions and discussion (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). As a requirement, schools had to ensure adequate provision of graded texts for Years P-2.

The strategies for the writing hour included modelled writing, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing and language experience (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The writing hour began with a whole-class focus in which the teachers directed modelled or shared-writing sessions. The focused-group session followed in which students either participated in learning centres or were involved in a focused-writing session with the teacher. In the learning centres students participated in independent writing. In the focused-learning group with the teacher, students were involved in writing workshops, language experience, guided writing or interactive writing. The writing hour concluded with a whole-class focus in which individual students articulated to the class what they learnt in the writing session. In this session, teachers encouraged the development of students' oral language (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). While there were different instructional strategies for writing within the writing hour, the writing process was divided into two aspects: authorial and secretarial. The authorial aspect involved the planning, composing and revising of the writing. The secretarial aspect involved recording the ideas and the publishing process (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Teachers in CLaSS drew on effective strategies used in bottom-up and top-down literacy approaches including explicit teaching (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

In addition, there were also requirements for formal data collection. These included: collection of data from prescribed tests at the beginning and end of each semester; use of daily Running Records; providing the sector important student background information that may impact on assessment; evaluating literacy change in the school and classroom; collection and analysis of student writing; and providing a spelling analysis (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Parents had to be informed regarding the nature of the testing program and their right to withdraw their child from this requirement. Schools also had to ensure the confidentiality of student data (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

In developing the classroom literacy program, teachers planned lessons daily rather than in advance or as a unit of work. This was different to past approaches to English or literacy and to the planning of other subject areas. Teachers assessed student progress at the beginning and end of the year through a series of prescribed assessments and throughout the year by regular "Running Records" (Clay, 1967, 1969; Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Other assessment data collection included the "Observation Survey" (Clay, 1993), "Record of Oral Language" (Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton & Salmon, 1983), "Burt Word Reading Test" (Gilmore, Croft & Reid, 1981), a writing analysis process and spelling analysis (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). An integral part of CLaSS was data-driven instruction which involved a series of data collection through different types of testing (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). Teachers had in the past used similar tools to monitor students. The difference in the data collection used in CLaSS was that all schools used the same data collection methods and reported to the sector at given intervals. The CEOM had the data analysed and provided schools with information within the context of the sector (Ainley & Fleming, 2000).

Teachers also used data to inform the daily classroom program. The use of evidence-based practices in literacy was consistent with research, such as a recommendation from the longitudinal study of mapping 100 students, which proposed the use of assessment to drive better teaching and learning (Comber & Barnett, 2003; Hill, Comber et al., 1998). At the school level, data-informed instruction or

evidence-based assessment were better descriptors of the purpose of the data collection. Together with traditional teacher practices, such as anecdotal evidence and teacher knowledge and experience, standardized data contributed to inform teaching and learning in CLaSS. The collection of text level data across the Catholic sector as part of the sector accountability in literacy began to show improvement in literacy levels in schools that implemented CLaSS (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria also reported literacy progress through Literacy Advance (Ainley & Fleming, 2000, 2003).

The reporting of student text levels was an example of the common data collection. Reading texts were classified into finely graded text levels from Level 1-28 based on Reading Recovery levels. The purpose of the graded levels was to demonstrate growth in students' reading development as they moved from one level to the next (Hill, 2000). At the end of Prep, the target for schools was that 80% of students were to reach Level 5+, while at the end of Year 1 and Year 2, 98% were to reach Level 20 + and Level 28 + respectively. While this represented the overall target for Catholic education in Victoria, the specific targets were sometimes modified to meet individual school contexts (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Schools that implemented CLaSS in 1998 (Intake 1) generally had higher levels of educational disadvantage. These schools previously had higher funding levels for ESL students. This funding was maintained initially when Literacy Advance began (Pascoe, 2000). In 1998 the minimum standard for the end of Year 1 was Text Level 15. Results for Intake 1 schools showed that, at the beginning of 1998, only 13.3 % of students in Year 1 were at the minimum standard of Text Level 15 while non-CLaSS schools had 34.0 % at minimum standard at the beginning of Year 1 (Crévola & Hill, 2001). At the end of 1998, 75.1 % of students in Year 1 at Intake 1 schools had reached the minimum standard while only 66.6 % of non CLaSS schools reached the minimum standard (Crévola & Hill, 2001). The results shown in this data, no doubt, encouraged other schools to implement CLaSS. Pascoe (2000) also noted that many of the principals in Intake 1 schools became advocates for CLaSS as a result of the improved literacy results in their schools.

The literacy team, consisting of principal, literacy co-ordinator, Reading Recovery teacher and CLaSS teachers, attended professional development days and weekly professional learning team (PLT) meetings (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Schools also took an undertaking not to participate in professional development outside of that provided through CLaSS or implement other literacy programs or strategies without discussing with the CLaSS Facilitator (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). At team meetings, teachers discussed teaching strategies, such as why a particular strategy should be adopted. In the classroom program there was emphasis on a balanced approach to teaching strategies that incorporated both content and process-orientated skills in literacy (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). Other features of CLaSS involved specific requirements for principals and parents: principals were expected to regularly visit classrooms during the literacy block and provide feedback to teachers. This was referred to as the *principal's walk*. The principal was recognized as the instructional leader who played an important role in ensuring that the change process and vision of the literacy strategy were implemented (Glatthorn & Fox, 1996; Leithwood, 1990; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Research suggested that effective instructional leadership improved student learning outcomes (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds 1979).

CLaSS also recognized the importance of parents as the first educators of their children and the importance of effective home/school partnerships for literacy development (Ollila & Mayfield, 1994). Parents attended a program before being able to assist in the classroom. In the classroom, parents were under the direction of teachers. While students were encouraged to work independently in the learning centres, parents supported students as appropriate. Parental assistance enabled teachers to direct their attention to the focused-group sessions. Links between home and school were important. Each school had to provide parent information sessions and ongoing information on literacy in the school newsletter and to ensure that student welfare processes addressed absenteeism and other issues that affected student learning (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

Schools were required to implement design elements that characterized the strategy. At the core of CLaSS design elements were central beliefs and understandings.

According to the CLaSS strategy, success in literacy required high expectations of teachers. This included good classroom teaching that met the needs of individual students, and sufficient and focused learning time in order to achieve success for all students (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The beliefs and understandings gave shape and direction to the other eight design elements which were: leadership and co-ordination; standards and targets; monitoring and assessment; classroom teaching strategies; professional learning teams; school and class organization; intervention and special assistance; and home, school and community partnerships (Hill & Crévola, 1997a, p. 9).

Both CLaSS and Early Years included the two-hour literacy block and incorporated specific teaching and learning elements within the structure. There were, however, some notable difference between Early Years and CLaSS. Early Years had a different professional development model in which the literacy co-ordinator attended training modules and then led professional development sessions in the school context (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). The following chapter examines the professional development component in Early Years and CLaSS. Early Years was referred to as a program or resource while CLaSS was referred to as a strategy (Crévola & Hill, 2005a; DEET, 1999). CLaSS was a strategy for improving school and sector outcomes for literacy (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). It was not a program or resource in the sense that it did not provide detailed teacher manuals on how to implement it or even a series of learning sessions. Research, professional development sessions and PLT meetings were the drivers for the shape of how the strategy was implemented in each school. It encouraged schools to examine their own focus points through evidence-based assessment, such as improving comprehension or writing. The use of the term "strategy" focused attention to these drivers. At the same time there were components, such as the literacy block, that were instigated in each school (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). While CLaSS and Early Years had similar components, such as professional learning teams and a two-hour literacy block, the components in CLaSS were clearly mandated for any school accepted into CLaSS (Ainley & Fleming, 2000).

Literacy for ALL (DEETYA, 1998) noted that there was no single approach appropriate to all learners. The study by Hill, Comber et al. (1998) also indicated that

students did not follow a predicable path in literacy development and required different strategies at different stages of schooling. These findings recognized that literacy was a social and developmental process (Bloom, 1956; Hill, 2006; Holdaway, 1979; Smith, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978) that had many different pathways. CLaSS represented a literacy strategy as a response to a sector pressure for literacy improvement. CLaSS was a one-size-fits-all approach in that schools had to implement all the requirements. It incorporated prescribed learning strategies, such as guided and shared reading and writing and language experience. These strategies were based on research findings from the ELRP (Crévola & Hill, 1997, DEET, 1999; Hill & Crévola, 1997a, 1998) and drew on effective practices that could be adopted to suit individual needs (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Hill (2006), however, argued that the challenge was to inspire students in literacy and that literacy could not be reduced to a set of strategies. Importantly, strategies ought to be adapted to context of the learning and the learner (Hill, 2006).

The professional development model focused on raising teacher capacity to implement the strategies and determine different levels of teacher support to students. The instructional strategies that teachers might use were drawn from top-down and bottom-up approaches (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). At the same time, the use of evidence-based assessment determined the individual focus for each school. Hill, Comber et al. (1998) identified in their study that literacy approaches that included data-driven instruction and built upon students' home experiences were effective. Research by Louden et al. (2005) found that effective literacy teachers had a sound knowledge base, were able to be explicit in their teaching and provide a rich environment for literacy. Teachers also needed a broad range of teaching strategies that they used to suit the requirements (Louden et al., 2005). The CLaSS approach was, therefore, purposefully developed to incorporate what had been identified through research as effective components for literacy teaching.

Literacy for All also suggested that the "Four Resources Model" (Freebody & Luke, 1990) was an effective framework in which to evaluate strategies used in reading (DEETYA, 1998). The reading component in CLaSS, however, focused on print-based text from which literacy progress was measured against Reading Recovery levels

(Crévola & Hill, 2005a). This approach to reading generally did not take into account other developments in the understanding of literacy, such as critical literacy and multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). It also replaced the need for specific programs, such as those developed for ESL students. Literacy for All (1998), however, emphasized that literacy approaches needed to take into consideration the needs of ESL students. The data collection in CLaSS, however, allowed schools to track specific student groups, such as boys and girls or ESL students and non ESL students (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

The Literacy Advance strategy provided the top-down mandate for schools to commit to the literacy strategy within given parameters and clear expectations (Fullan, 2000). The external pressure to choose CLaSS came from the availability of funding for schools to take up this option and professional incentive to be part of a new sector initiative that was supported by the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. Fullan (2000) noted that large-scale reform did not come from local school reform unless there was top-down pressure and mandates: mandates alone did not bring commitment and educational reform.

Educational reform involved those at the local levels working with the mandate through understanding the complexity of the change. Educational change, such as CLaSS, involved three phases: initiation, implementation and institutionalization (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). In initiating change, "… the quality of the innovation, access to information, the level of support and the extent to which the administration is seen as adopting a problem-solving orientation" were important (Ainley & Fleming, 2000, p. 12). At the initiation phase in CLaSS, schools had the opportunity to develop an understanding of the relationship between the external initiative and the internal direction of the school (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). Part of the commitment to CLaSS meant that the principal, literacy co-ordinator and teachers had to participate in professional development as prescribed in CLaSS. The initiation phase in CLaSS allowed staff to understand the issues through clarifying how teachers applied the theory behind CLaSS to the classroom (Leithwood et al., 1999). Shared vision became a driving force for the process of change and consequently assisted in the implementation

being successful (Whitaker, 1993). Teachers needed to understand how the program impacted on them, the classroom and school organization. The initiation phase assisted schools to explore the issues and challenges before implementing the program, though did not necessarily resolve them. In all schools that began CLaSS, there had to be consensus among staff that the CLaSS approach offered a strategy for significant improvement in the literacy outcomes of their students.

In the initiation phase, research highlighted the importance of the role and impact of teachers. The research suggested that an innovation, such as CLaSS, could be implemented successfully if teachers were prepared and had the ability to teach literacy in ways different from the past (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). Once accepted into CLaSS, the school was supported through further professional development that the designers of CLaSS believed would allow teachers to understand and take control of the implementation process (Crévola & Hill, 2001). The prescriptive nature of the professional development model in CLaSS provided frequent and compulsory professional development in literacy. The incorporation of professional learning teams, in particular, placed an emphasis on co-operative professional development and learning that occurred weekly within the school setting. The institutionalization stage applied after the three-year implementation phase. In this stage, the design elements were embedded into the literacy practices of the school (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

CLaSS, however, was a literacy strategy that met the requirements of Literacy Advance for the early years of schooling. Part of the requirements of Literacy Advance was the provision of professional development that supported teachers' understanding of literacy development and implementation. The next chapter of the literature review examines the importance of professional development and its relationship to improving student outcomes in literacy. It also examines different models of professional development including the model for CLaSS.

Chapter 4 Literature Review: Professional Development

This chapter of the literature review will examine research on (a) the relationship between professional development and improving student outcomes in literacy (b) the characteristics of effective professional development (c) different models of professional development including whole-school approaches to literacy and (d) the CLaSS model of professional development for literacy. Prior to the 1990s, professional development generally included informal professional development, collaboration and mentoring, appraisal and evaluation, as well as formal award courses (Fullan & Hargraves, 1992). The emphasis since the 1990s has been to refer to "professional development" as "professional learning" (McRae, Ainsworth, Groves, Rowland & Zbar 2001). Reference to professional development in this research also encompasses professional learning which includes personal, group or team and whole-school learning development (McRae et al., 2001).

Professional development in the 1980s was an area in which governments had become more interested as a way of ensuring continual teacher education was part of accountability for schools (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989). There was community and government awareness that as the nature of schools was changing, teachers required effective professional development to keep pace (Collins, 1991; Elmore 2002). Elmore (2002) said that there was an assumption held by educators and others that teachers gained the required professional knowledge through pre-service education and through teaching experience in the classroom. Changes in technology and the social fabric of society along with increasing government accountability meant that the nature of knowledge and the role of schools was changing and, therefore, challenged some assumptions about teacher professional development (Collins, 1991).

Increasingly, since the 1990s, the global community recognized that lifelong learning was an essential element for both schools and teachers to meet the challenges of a significantly changing world: teachers needed to be engaged in a process of continual development (Chapman & Aspin, 1997). As a consequence of the drive to obtain better learning outcomes for students, educators and governments recognized that

professional development was as an increasingly important activity for teachers to undertake.

4.1   *Improving Student Outcomes*

Research, established in the 1960s and 1970s, showed that there were a number of factors that affected student learning. Factors outside the control of the school, such as socioeconomic status of parents, made the biggest impact on student progress (Beare et al., 1989). A number of research studies in the Great Britain, USA and Australia supported the view that the home background was a good predictor of academic achievement. The 1959 Crowther Report and the 1962 Robbins' Report, both from Great Britain, showed that occupation and socioeconomic status of parents were good predictors of school academic achievement; similarly the Coleman Report in the USA in the 1960s found that home variables explained the differences in student achievement (Beare et al., 1989). In Australia, a study by the Centre for Research in Measurement and Education, completed in New South Wales in the 1960s and 1970s, supported this view. This research showed that parental attitudes towards the school affected the children's satisfaction with school and their motivation to complete school beyond Year 10 (Beare et al., 1989).

Further studies in the 1970s examined why some schools made differences in student progress despite factors outside the school's control. This research initially focused on understanding the effectiveness of schools in improving student learning. Edmonds (1979) in the USA looked at identifying factors that demonstrated school effectiveness. The findings from the study highlighted the importance of strong instructional leadership; high teacher expectation that students did not fall below minimum standards; frequent monitoring of student progress; and appropriate school climate (Beare et al., 1989; Edmonds 1979). Edmonds concluded from the study that the characteristics of schools had the biggest impact on student achievement and that differences between the skills of teachers were an important factor in different learning outcomes for students (Beare et al., 1989; Edmonds 1979). He challenged the view that lower expectations should be set for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Further research in England and USA in the 1970s was based on the principle that effective schools had a significant role in bringing about improvement in student learning. Research found that effective schools had a number of elements such as: an effective learning culture; high level of collaborative decision making among staff; clear policies on teaching and learning; and high quality educational leadership (Beare et al., 1989). Research also found that at the heart of effective schools were effective teachers (Beare et al., 1989). In England, the Rutter Study (1979) found that schools were effective when teachers worked and planned together; provided constant feedback to students; and encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning (Beare et al., 1989). In the USA, Weber (1971) and Brookover and Lezotte (1979) identified some characteristic of effective teachers. Weber (1971) showed that, in effective schools, teachers had high expectations of students and a climate for learning was evident. Brookover and Lezotte (1979) found that principals who were curriculum leaders and led teachers in evaluating student progress were important in developing an effective school.

In the USA, Slavin (1985) reported that the skills of the teacher were a major factor for improvement rather than factors such as students' socioeconomic background. In Australia in the 1980s, research also found that the quality of teacher knowledge and skills had an impact on student results (McGraw et al., 1992). The "Victorian Quality Schools Project" (1993) noted that effective schools had effective teachers (Hill et al., 1993). Cuttance (2001) later showed that there was a gap of up to 60% variation in student achievement that could be attributed to the differences between schools and between teachers within schools. In reviewing the evidence as to what makes a difference in student achievement, Hattie (2003), in New Zealand, confirmed that while the correlation between student ability and achievement accounted for 50 % variance in achievement, teachers accounted for 30 % of that variation. The remaining 20 % was attributed to school and home factors. This study showed that the effectiveness of teachers had a significant impact on student learning (Hattie, 2003).

Research conducted since the 1990s also supported the link between effective professional development and improvement in student outcomes in literacy. Research

into appropriate class sizes had shown that smaller classes were only effective if students were taught by a teacher who had good professional development (Sparks & Hirsch, 2000). In the USA, studies were undertaken to establish the effect of small-scale professional development on student learning outcomes. Harwell, D'Amico, Stein and Gatti (2000) found that students in classes where teachers engaged in professional discussions over literacy approaches had a higher average score in reading than students whose teachers had not engaged in such activities. Similarly, Caulfield-Sloan (2001) in a study that looked at the effects of teachers participating in professional development found that these teachers improved student outcomes. Studies, such as Harwell et al. (2000) and Caulfield-Sloan (2001) found that professional development could change teaching and learning when it was relevant to the teacher's job and to students; involved small groups of teachers; and was driven by a theory of change and communication (Achilles & Tienken, 2005). "Changes in teacher behaviour can lead to changes in student outcomes, but change in student outcomes cannot be assumed without prior teacher change" (Achilles & Tienken, 2005, p. 313). Achilles and Tienken, (2005) believed that "PD [sic] must have two measurable levels of impact: (a) to improve participants' observed teaching performance and (b) to improve measurable student achievement" (p. 314).

4.2   Characteristics of Effective Professional Development

Research studies, such as Edmonds (1979, 1982) and the "Victorian Quality Schools Project" (Hill et al., 1993), contributed to the recognition that to improve student learning in literacy it was necessary to improve the quality of teaching. This was supported by the findings of Coulter and Ingvarson (1985):

> If children are not able to access the skills of lifelong learning, then their gap in knowledge acquisition and skills will widen. Similarly, if teachers are not lifelong learners then their ability to be effective will contribute to this gap (Coulter & Ingvarson, 1985, p. 143).

While professional development took place in many forms, it did not always result in sustainable change in teaching practices (Fullan & Hargraves, 1992). The

degree to which teachers embraced new learning or skills varied significantly. The findings of these studies questioned the effectiveness of various approaches in professional development. In Australia, a number of reports, such as the Karmel Report (1973) and Coulter and Ingvarson (1985), found that the connection between innovations and professional development was often weak. It was found that the relevance of the content to the participants at the professional development session was important in developing professional knowledge and teacher understanding of approaches for different contexts within an innovation (Brophy, 2002). Though finally recognized in its role in improving student outcomes, professional development provision was not always successful as economic reformers criticized it as being unco-ordinated and ineffective (Beare et al., 1989). Achilles and Tienken (2005) also found that there were a number of studies, such as Guskey (1997, 2003), Tienken (2003) and Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon (2001), conducted on professional development for school and student improvement in which no empirical evidence was found that the programs made gains in teacher development or student learning.

In 1998, when Literacy Advance (CECV, 1997) was implemented in Catholic primary schools in Melbourne, a number of research studies, such as Edmonds (1979), Slavin (1985) and Weber (1971), identified the characteristics of effective professional development. These characteristics included commitment to continual learning; constant evaluation of student progress through collaboration and professional dialogue, and improving teacher knowledge and skills through making connections between the professional development and the classroom (Blandford, 2000; Dockett, Perry & Parker, 1998; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Continuous professional development during the implementation period of a new innovation, using a variety of formal and informal components, was important as these provided opportunities for teachers to confront firmly held beliefs and assumptions through a learning process over time (Fullan & Hargreaves 1992). Studies on how past innovations were successfully implemented showed that teachers could not simply be forced in their teaching and learning to comply with change (Cole, 2004). For any change to be effective, teachers required appropriate skills, goals and commitment. Guskey (2002) advocated that asking teachers

to trial a strategy in the classroom and then discuss its effectiveness in professional development sessions was more effective as a driver for teacher change. Approaches that recognized the teacher as the school's most important resource, and acknowledged professional development as a developmental process, assisted in continuous development of students' literacy skills (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1994).

Wood and Thompson (1993) identified some effective characteristics of professional development: teacher development needed to be continual; teachers learnt from the interaction of learning teams and observation of peers; teachers needed assistance in transferring learning from a professional development activity to the classroom; and inspiring presenters did not necessarily motivate teachers once back in the classroom (Achilles & Tienken, 2005). It was also found that teachers preferred professional development activities and practical ideas ahead of theory (McRae et al., 2001). While educational research identified the elements of effective and ineffective professional development, there were other considerations put forward by some educationalists, such as the application of adult learning principles (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998; Stoll & Fink, 1996), the different career stages of teachers (Marsh, 1996; Scott, 1997) and the learning styles of teachers (Huberman, 1995; Marczely, 1996), which were also thought to impact on the effectiveness of teacher professional development. Adult learning principles were effectively applied to professional development through providing opportunities for teachers to pursue their own learning needs as well as whole-school needs (Stoll & Fink, 1996). Applying adult learning principles to the professional development program allowed teachers opportunities to analyse experiences within the context of the school (Knowles et al., 1998). School policy played a central role in determining direction and content; and provided sufficient resources for professional development to succeed in being effective for whole-school and individual needs in sustaining change (Blandford, 2000).

While continuous development and learning that was connected to the classroom context was important, effective professional development also took into account the varying needs of teachers at different stages of their career (Marsh, 1996; Scott, 1997). Teachers generally passed through stages of development throughout their

career in which professional development needs could be different: teachers in their early career often had different professional development needs from those who had been teaching for more than 20 years. The stages were also related to the personal dimension: for example, self esteem and teaching experience were an important consideration in the way teachers engaged in, and transferred, the learning into the classroom. The personal dimension, which included multiple intelligences of teachers, needed to be considered in any approach to professional development in educational change (Scott, 1997).

Educators recognized that there were different learning styles for students. Teachers also had preferred learning styles and thus effective professional development included catering for teacher learning styles. This included a variety of approaches, such as observation and practice of teaching and learning strategies, understanding of theory and analysis and interpersonal and collaborative tasks (Whitaker, 1993). Professional development that allowed for self-directed learning catered for teachers' different learning styles (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Approaches that built on teacher talents and professionalism in implementing change, rather than concentrating on weaknesses or deficiencies, contributed to effective professional development (Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1994). Approaches that built on the skills and knowledge already acquired by the teacher were also important in professional development (Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1994). Teachers also needed to see a connection between the purpose of the professional development activity undertaken and the practices and programs of the school (Fullan, 1999).

Fullan (1992) argued that a problem for effective professional development occurred when teacher development and school development did not go hand in hand; in the past this resulted in professional development which lacked both appropriate planning and follow up to support school teams and curriculum change. This meant that some teachers were not adequately prepared to implement a change or innovation. Ineffective professional development programs were sometimes detrimental to teachers' continuing participation in professional development (Collins, 1991). Effective professional development required an interaction between teacher development and the

implementation of the school curricula and, therefore, a connection between professional development, innovation and classroom practice. During the implementation period of an innovation, the professional development needed to be continuous and involve a variety of formal and informal components (Blandford, 2000; Fullan, 1992; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

4.3   *Models of Professional Development*

During the 1950s and 1960s, the model for professional development often focused on training teachers how to teach. In the 1970s and early 1980s, professional development was often referred to as in-service education. During this period there was awareness of, and catering for, the different learning needs of teachers. In the late 1980s to 1990s, the model emphasized professional development for both individual and school development (McRae et al., 2001).

In the past, professional development in literacy, or English, was focused heavily on individual development through offering programs that targeted a specific need, such as spelling strategies or whole language. Research showed that it required a team approach to implement change (Collins, 1991). Effective professional development that led to school improvement in any curriculum area, such as literacy, was linked to whole-school requirements (Collins, 1991). A criticism, however, of linking professional development to particular school requirements was that it could limit teacher choice and did not necessarily promote individual discretion or empowerment in continual development (Day, 1999). Effective school improvement included school policies related to the management of learning, people and resources (Blandford, 2000).

Schools that had effective professional development had a whole-school policy that took into account both individual and school needs; it also allowed local control of the types of professional development activities undertaken and the link to a culture of continuous professional development within a whole-school context (Blandford, 2000). In such schools, professional development was planned collaboratively giving a clear link to school and individual professional development. This acknowledged the

interdependent relationship between the school and the individual (Fullan, 1999). Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis (2005) argued that in effective schools, school policy identified adequate resources, such as financial support to professional development, to ensure professional development was sustained.

Past approaches linking professional development to a whole-school innovation, such as literacy, did not necessarily ensure change, and approaches to school improvement often neglected this important area (Fullan, 1999). Models of professional development that sent a teacher out or brought in a guest speaker were not necessarily sufficient. Teachers needed to be sustained throughout their career so that professional education allowed for growth and support (Collins, 1991). Teachers learned best when they were able over time to identify their own problems, allowed to experiment, observe, reflect, discuss and evaluate learning and teaching in literacy (Dwyer, 1993). Teachers needed to develop a strong professional view on imposed innovations, so that the value of the programs was assessed and evaluated for what it was (Dwyer, 1993). It was found that teachers, in implementing an innovation, were often not adequately supported by professional development (Fullan, 1999). Successful change was supported by a systematic approach to change and professional development (Fullan, 1999).

There were some models for professional development in literacy before the implementation of CLaSS. The model of allocating teachers to a professional development activity located off site was an *outside-in model* (Hoban, 1997). This model centred on the idea of having an expert outside giving information to teachers within a school. The strength of this model was that it provided teachers with new information from an expert (Hoban, 1997). This model, however, assumed that teachers believed in the information provided by the expert (Hoban, 1997). Fullan (1992) asserted that this model did not take into account pre-existing beliefs, and may have resulted in some teachers resisting new information. Professional development conducted in settings away from the school provided ways for teachers to develop new ideas and discuss these ideas with teachers from a number of schools. This, however, did not always result in teachers integrating ideas back into the classroom. Cole (2004)

argued that this type of professional development often focused on understanding the rationale and content of change rather than the participant's capacity to improve learning and teaching within the participant's school context; while it allowed participants to learn about new ideas, policies, or programs, it did not necessarily bring about change in individual or school practice.

Effective professional development was certainly about developing new ideas about knowledge and thinking which had to go beyond what was known in the local context (Putnam & Borko, 2001). These one-off activities and courses, however, were characteristically without follow-up support during implementation and did little to assist teachers and schools in dealing with change in literacy. This model did not necessarily establish a link between professional development and student learning (Ingvarson, 1999). The practice of sending one or two teachers to short courses was not likely to promote lasting change in learning and teaching as this approach limited the capacity of the participant to influence others to embrace a strategy or program (Cole, 2005; Showers & Joyce, 1998).

School-based professional development was another model, which drew on the expertise of those within the school. The assumptions or perspectives of the experts limited this model and sometimes failed to challenge current teaching practices. Its strength was in building on teacher collaboration within the school (Hoban, 1997). Professional development conducted on the school site had strengths: it provided teachers with instructional practices that were tried and discussed within their own setting (Putnam & Burko, 2001). Based on the school context, the educational theory was more likely to be transferred to its practical application than that learnt in an outside-in model (The Council of Nordic Ministers, 1995). Cole (2005) argued that school-based learning opportunities assisted in developing a learning culture that included risk taking and collaboration between teachers, and which fostered learning teams, coaching and peer mentoring and team learning through modelling of teaching strategies. The weakness in this model was the limitations within the setting to explore new ideas or different ways of thinking (Hoban, 1997). Another category was the *inside-outside* model (Hoban, 1997). This drew both on an outside expert and on

teachers within the school integrating theory and practice. This was still dependent on whether a significant number of teachers within a school were involved in the activity so that team knowledge was developed and sustained (Munro, 2005).

4.4   *Whole School Models of Professional Development*

In the 1980s, there were some programs, such as the Early Literacy In-service Course (Education Department of South Australia, 1984), which did promote professional development in a more sustained approach (Crévola & Hill, 2001). These programs showed that teachers needed support over time that allowed for learning new skills, reflection and practice. The success of these programs depended on the follow-up in the school and how this was sustained within this setting (Collins, 1991). Another model for sustaining and providing a whole school approach to professional development was the *train-the-trainer* model (Showers & Joyce, 1998; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Schools sent a representative or group to learn about a new innovation. The training was generally over several sessions. There was a procedural process or handbook that assisted the participant to implement the training back at the school. The participant became the expert assisting teachers in the school context. The convenience of this model was that the training could be implemented with all school staff in time frames that suited the school. Many training programs also allowed the trainer in the school context to observe colleagues in the classroom to provide feedback, and to act as a peer coach (Showers & Joyce, 1998; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). The advantage of this approach was that it was cost efficient, and the professional development sessions could be conducted within a school context (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). A criticism of these programs was that skills learnt through this approach were often not implemented in the classroom (Showers & Joyce, 1998). Early Years and First Steps used train-the-trainer approaches while CLaSS used a prescribed *inside-outside* model for professional development.

4.4.1   *Western Australia First Steps (First Steps).*

The 1990s saw the development of programs that focused on continuous whole-school development. Western Australia First Steps (First Steps) provided an example of a continual professional development program that consisted of off-site and

school-based professional development. The program commenced in 1988 and was aimed at improving early literacy and mathematics, though later developed as an approach for all primary year levels. This program accepted the view that effective professional development had to be for a sustained time, that it allowed for teachers to trial and discuss ideas, and that during the learning phase teachers needed to be supported (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995).

At the commencement of First Steps, it was proposed that the professional development model be based on alternating three weeks of professional development with three weeks of classroom teaching implementing the learning. Adviser teachers supported the school-based learning. This model was later adjusted to allow for further linking to the classroom and for managing the professional development effectively, as more schools implemented the program. In 1994, the model of professional development involved each school having an on-site facilitator who attended a "Training of Trainers" professional development (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995). The onsite facilitators at each school then led the professional development in each component of First Steps. The facilitators also attended a learning network to continue with further professional development. Part of the school-based training program involved all teachers at the school implementing First Steps, coming together through the training sessions, and discussing the implementation (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995).

A report developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (1993) indicated, "The professional development and support operations carried out by First Steps have improved literacy standards because they have improved the quality of teaching" (p. 44). As a result of participating in the professional development model, the report identified strategies that teachers were implementing, such as aligning teaching to meet the needs of students.

4.4.2   *Early Years Literacy Program (Early Years).*
While Early Years had the same design principles as CLaSS, which included professional development and professional learning teams, the professional

development model was developed differently (Ainley & Fleming, 2000; Department of Education, Victoria, 1997). The Department of Education of Victoria provided training for the school-based literacy co-ordinators who implemented the professional development program in modules in the school setting for the Early Years literacy team. The modules on the different aspects of Early Years included videos and focused discussion and sharing of ideas and issues. As a component of the professional development model, the literacy co-ordinator also modelled teaching approaches, mentoring and conducting literacy team planning meetings that included opportunities for teachers to share their experiences of the implementation. The school-based professional development was supported by off-site professional development sessions and conferences that could be attended by the literacy team (Department of Education and Training, 1999).

4.4.3   *Children's Literacy Success Strategy (CLaSS).*

Chapters 2 and 3 established the connection between accountability and improving literacy outcomes. Part of the accountability for Literacy Advance was the provision of professional development. In the implementation of CLaSS, Crévola and Hill (2005a) proposed that the professional development component was a non-negotiable element in which literacy teams were required to participate. At the core of the CLaSS strategy were beliefs and understandings, which directed the nature of the design elements of CLaSS, including professional development. The central beliefs and understandings of CLaSS were: the need for teachers to be open in challenging their existing beliefs and understanding of how students learnt; that all students made progress given sufficient time and support; and the need for high expectations of student achievement regardless of other factors outside of the control of the school that potentially impinged on student progress (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

Underpinning these beliefs and understandings were a number of principles which provided a context for professional development. One principle was that good teaching made a difference to all students. Tied to this was a further principle that students needed programs that were tailored to the individual needs of students and that teachers were committed to not *giving up* on students (Crévola & Hill 2005a). Crévola

and Hill (2005a) recognized that while teachers had different levels of literacy knowledge and skills, professional development challenged their beliefs through scrutinizing strategies against data on student achievement. The professional development program made explicit the shared beliefs of teachers within a school through the model provided in CLaSS. This drew on research into effective schools and models of professional development provided in the past.

Hill and Crévola (1998) believed that professional development in the past was generally based on a number of models that became identified with professional learning for teachers that were not necessarily connected to whole-school and systemic change. They believed that traditional professional development models could wear teachers out by being constantly bombarded with new ideas. CLaSS had a professional development model in which effective implementation of the literacy strategy was an important factor (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). CLaSS drew on the strengths of past models used to deliver professional development such as those described by Hoban (1997) (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). As the basis for developing a professional development model for literacy that would be more effective than past models, Crévola and Hill (2001) also drew on research, such as that by Hargreaves and Fullan (1991). They found that effective professional development: allowed teachers to reflect on their learning; provided theory as well as a practical component; involved the commitment of the school to the change; valued the knowledge and experience of teachers and what they bring to any professional development program; provided spaced learning, so that teachers had time to practise new understanding before taking on further development; and challenged teachers in their held beliefs and understanding.

The literacy team, including all teachers in Years Prep to 2, the literacy co-ordinator, the principal and the Reading Recovery teacher, attended professional activities in the implementation stage. The professional development program also provided targeted sessions for co-ordinators and principals (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The CLaSS model provided sustained off-site activities that were linked to the school context through the professional learning team (PLT) and other school-directed activities, such as observing peers in the classroom and in other schools.

Crévola and Hill (2005a) strengthened the inside-outside model (Hoban, 1997) through the school-based professional learning teams that developed teacher capacity in literacy including leadership, professional learning, collaboration and reflection. Crévola and Hill (2005a) also included five elements in the professional development program that they believed distinguished CLaSS from other models of professional development. The five elements included: the use of data or data-driven instruction to inform teaching and learning strategies; a strong focus on the beliefs and understanding of teachers for effective teaching; development of a whole-school design for professional learning; provision of a systemic model of change through recognizing the centrality of student learning and the acknowledgement of the importance of teachers in bringing about change; and the inclusion of professional learning as the school-based agent for change (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

The linking of school-based professional learning teams to the off-site or within-school professional development sessions was consistent with research findings. Rosenholtz (1989) found that teachers had more impact on student learning when they were supported by opportunities for collegial interaction on a regular basis, such as teacher networks and collaborative discussion groups around student learning (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Darling-Hammond (1996) identified the importance of the provision for structured time for teachers within a school to share teaching and learning strategies and challenges, and to have opportunities to observe each other within the classroom and provide feedback fostered professional learning communities. The collective learning of a team was important and created opportunities to reflect on team learning (Senge, 1990). Similarly, Wenger (1998) stressed the importance of collaborative learning of a team or an organization. He identified that learning was a social rather than an individual process in which *communities of practice* developed through engagement in learning from which shared practices and strategies become the culture of the team or organization. Members within a community of practice constantly negotiated the focus and direction of the learning (Wenger, 1998). Hord (1996) highlighted five elements required for effective professional learning teams: supportive and shared leadership; collective creativity; shared values and vision; and supportive conditions; and shared personal practice. Johnson and Scull (1999) believed, however, that the important link

between outside professional development and school-based professional development was the establishment of professional learning teams. Professional learning teams provided a mechanism for continuing support within the school setting (Johnson & Scull, 1999). Johnson and Scull (1999) stated that professional learning teams were more effective when there was purpose and reason for learning and direct links to student learning outcomes. This was further enhanced when the learning took place in and outside of the workplace.

Hargreaves (2003) believed that professional learning communities (or teams) assisted to sustain change over a period of time because teachers, through the professional learning communities, built the capacity to sustain change. There was evidence to suggest a link between teachers involved in professional learning communities and educational change and improvement in student learning (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Crévola and Hill (2005a) proposed that the CLaSS model provided an effective school and sector approach to professional development in literacy. They argued that professional development needed to be supported through professional learning teams that promoted collaboration within a supportive school environment. This approach emphasized that change, such as improving literacy outcomes for students, was also dependent on a team effort within a school and across the sector, not just the efforts of an individual or individuals. The model of professional development developed for CLaSS involved presenting theory on literacy that was well researched and current, and included a number of different school literacy teams attending together off-site sessions. The school-based professional learning teams allowed teachers to reflect on the practical application in the classroom of the literacy theory explored off site (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). The purpose of the professional learning teams was to encourage teachers to work through issues and understanding within a supportive school team. Within the professional learning team, the learning opportunities were focused on developing collaboration between teachers in sharing ideas and critical reflection of teaching and learning approaches (Wood & Thompson, 1997; Knowles et al., 1998). The vision behind the professional learning teams was to allow for the development of personal and team strengths and to confront the challenges in developing skills and understanding in literacy teaching and learning (Stoll & Fink, 1996). The professional

learning teams were also springboards for further development of self-directed learning activities, such as action research (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990).

The professional development model became an important component of CLaSS. It meant that the literacy team, attended as a whole, professional development sessions on a weekly basis. This approach was a requirement in all schools implementing CLaSS. My research focused on the participants' perceptions of this model. The following chapter outlines the research methodology for which the data from these perceptions were collected, analysed and reported.

Chapter 5 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework and methodology used to conduct the research and develop my report on the research questions. The theoretical framework for this research was located in qualitative research. This research, however, could have been conducted using either a quantitative or a qualitative approach. In using a quantitative approach, the research might have involved collecting data through a survey sent to a large number of schools. Respondents to such a survey would have indicated their answers to a number of questions using a survey instrument, such as a Likert scale (Borg, Gall & Gall, 1993; Flick, 2002; Neuman, 1997). The data would have been statistically presented in graphs and analysed according to the frequency of each variable in the research data. It might have also included some descriptive comments from respondents (Borg et al., 1993; Flick, 2002; Neuman, 1997).

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research usually involves a smaller sample of participants or groups of participants (Neuman, 1997). Qualitative research does not generally seek to plot a trend through a numerical recording of data. Surveys, however, can be part of qualitative research and can include some quantitative data. Qualitative research can attempt to capture a range of detailed perceptions from the research participants. Using a qualitative approach, the research design allows participants to tell their stories, raise questions and analyse their experiences with the researcher, and thus, the perceptions become a source of rich descriptive data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Wiersma, 1995).

As noted in Chapter 1, when first introduced CLaSS provoked high level conversation and polarization of views about literacy. It placed literacy at the forefront of teaching and learning like no other approach in my experience. CLaSS was so defining that schools that adopted it became known as *CLaSS schools*. Schools implemented CLaSS within set parameters and conditions and the Catholic education sector collected data. In general this data focused on statistical information and was made available through reports for schools and the wider community. These reports,

such as "Five Years On" (Ainley & Fleming, 2003), indicated that students in CLaSS have made increasing gains in literacy attainment since its implementation.

The purpose and motivation of this research was not to examine CLaSS quantitatively, such as examining measurable numerical data used to define its success as a literacy program for students, schools or sector. Rather, I was interested in researching qualitatively what the implementation of CLaSS was like for practitioners. Central to the research data collection and analysis were the participants' perceptions of their experiences. Qualitative research values the social context and reality that also shapes each participant's perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Neuman, 1997; Wiersma, 1995). Each participant in the research had their own social context and reality which was influenced by factors such as teaching experience, personal disposition, literacy knowledge and school context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Neuman, 1997; Wiersma, 1995). The research captured the similarities and differences of their perspectives in implementing CLaSS. Though specific to participants within the study, the data collected provided a historical retelling of their perceptions of implementing CLaSS (Neuman, 1997).

The aim of this research, therefore, was to explore the nature of the experience for the practitioners rather than interrogate the data of literacy attainment. The research had an overarching question: What were the perceptions of Catholic primary principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers of implementing CLaSS as a literacy and professional development approach? From the overarching question, three specific questions arose which were the basis of the research:

1. What were principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions of CLaSS as a school and sector approach to literacy?
2. What were principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions of the professional development model in CLaSS?
3. Having implemented CLaSS at their school, what did principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers believe were important issues or considerations for any future literacy innovation?

Having established that the research was taking a qualitative approach, the remainder of the chapter explicates the details of the theoretical framework and methodology. It identifies the ontological and epistemological viewpoints shaping the research; the research design, data collection, data analysis and the limitations of the research.

5.1   Theoretical Framework

5.1.1   Interpretive social theory.

The research drew on interpretive social theory as a theoretical framework for the development of the research methodology. Interpretive social theory developed from the work of Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey (Neuman, 1997; Wiersma, 1998). The purpose of this theory was to study how people construct meaning and, therefore, a reality within their own social setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 2005; Neuman, 1997; Schwandt, 2000). Reality is constructed through the understandings the participants in the research attach to experiences (Borg et al., 1993; Neuman, 1997). The role of the researcher is to seek and understand the systems of meaning as participants construct or interpret the social world around them (Neuman, 1997).

There are a number of interpretive approaches that guide qualitative research. Each approach has specific beliefs "…about the world and how it should be understood" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). The approach used shapes the nature of the reality being studied and the data collection and analysis (Creswell, 200; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Each approach "…makes particular demands on the researcher, including the questions the researcher asks and the interpretations he or she brings to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22).

5.1.2   Phenomenology.

The research adopted a phenomenological approach to viewing and analysing the participants' experiences in implementing CLaSS. Phenomenology developed by Husserl (1970 as cited in Holstein and Gubrium, 2005) explicates the idea that

experiences plays a role in the formation of human consciousness. He argues that, "consciousness… is always consciousness-of- something" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 484). As experiences form part of consciousness, phenomenology is centred on the *lived experiences* (Creswell, 2007, p. 57) from the perspective of the individual (Borg et al., 1993; Creswell, 2007; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2007) defined phenomenology as describing "…the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 57). The purpose of a phenomenological study is to "…reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence" (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). It seeks the underlying meaning of an experience through identifying the essential experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

Using the definition provided by Creswell (2007), CLaSS was a *phenomenon* in education when it was introduced. As already noted, because it was different to other innovations that I had experienced, it impacted in a significant way on literacy, professional learning and school organization. Initially in planning the research design, I was interested in how it affected various teachers, depending on whether they were experienced or inexperienced, the literacy co-ordinator or the principal. As I went further into the research design, I felt there were essential experiences of the phenomenon to be explored regardless of the participants' role in implementing CLaSS.

The process in a phenomenological study involves collecting data from participants who have experienced a specific phenomenon and developing a "…composite description of the essence of the experiences for all individuals" (Creswell, 2007, p. 59) in the study. A phenomenological study, therefore, describes the textual (what) and structural (how) meanings of the experiences of the participants in the research (Creswell, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Polkinghorne (1989) suggested that a phenomenological study should involve 5 to 25 participants who have all experienced the phenomenon. The personal experiences of two school principals, two literacy co-ordinators and seven teachers in the research study provided the data from which the *essence* of the experience of the phenomenon of CLaSS was described and analysed.

In-depth interviews and multiple interviews often form the basis of the data collection in phenomenological research because this approach is focused on participants describing the meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Through interviews, the 11 participants in this research study were able to recount the everyday lived experience of CLaSS. The participants brought out specific elements and experiences which characterized the phenomenon for them. These experiences were described rather than explained and drew on personal knowledge and, therefore, the participants were subjective in their account of how the phenomenon was perceived (Creswell, 2007). Participants in the research each brought out a unique perspective on the same social action of CLaSS through describing the unfolding social reality for themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Neuman, 1997; Schwandt, 2000).

Participants through a phenomenological research study explore the experiences of the phenomenon from an inter-subjective relationship with the researcher. The participants in the research study interpret their own and others' actions which, through discussion with me, as the researcher, reconstruct the objective meaning of the lived experience in implementing CLaSS (Creswell, 2007; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). The researcher enters a relationship with the participants about the phenomenon. Through the interviews the researcher collaborates with the participants and in understanding the participants' perspective (Borg et al., 1993; Seidman, 1998). In addition, the researcher links and interprets the perceptions and the reality of the findings of the research (Flick, 2002; Kvale, 1996).

The reality for the research becomes an understanding of the common reality between the participants and the researcher (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). An emphatic understanding of people's values and beliefs, referred to as *verstehen*, is central to this interpretive perspective (Neuman, 1997, Sarantakos, 1998). The participants' values and beliefs in the research form a subjective reality (Neuman, 1997, Sarantakos, 1998). Schutz (1970 as cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 262) advocates that researchers *bracket* (or put aside) their own experiences or understandings of the phenomenon (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). The purpose of bracketing is to allow the researcher to

view the phenomenon objectively. It is important that the researcher acknowledges their own bias in their understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

In Chapter 1, I bracketed my experiences as I retold my perceptions of the introduction of CLaSS (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). Before the commencement of each interview, I also bracketed my experiences in implementing CLaSS. In interviewing the participants, my own experiences did at times influence the direction of the discussion and I informed the participants of my experience in relation to the comment or question. It is acknowledged, however, that bracketing (or putting aside) the researcher's perception of the experience may be difficult (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). In interviewing participants in the research, it was sometimes difficult not to guide the interview with a question based on my own experiences or views. As stated, researchers can only be aware of possible biases and make their experiences explicit. My role as the researcher was to dialogue with participants about their perceptions in implementing CLaSS as a literacy strategy, drawing out the how and what of their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Nueman, 1997; Patton, 1990).

5.1.3   *Viewing the phenomenon through case study.*

Case study involves a single, or multiple numbers of, participants who come together as a case or cases to illustrate a specific event, issue or problem (Creswell, 2007; Eisenhardt, 2002; Stake, 2005). Cases are set within a *bounded system* in that there are specific criteria for the context or setting of each case that is studied (Stake, 2005). Case study therefore, provides a specific context or setting for a qualitative approach to the collection of data (Creswell, 2007; Eisenhardt, 2002; Stake, 2005; Verma & Mallick, 1999). Stake (2005) argues that case study is a "…choice of what is to be studied" (p. 443) and "… a product of that inquiry" (p. 444) rather than a method of research. This means that case study is an investigation of an issue or problem rather than a method of approach to the investigation. Creswell (2007) however, describes case study "…as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry" (p. 73). This research on CLaSS reflected

Stake's (2005) view on case study as defining what was studied as well as the product of the research.

In this research, the perceptions of the participants from the two schools were generally interpreted and presented as a report of the data which formed a case study of the implementation of CLaSS (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). The two schools met the criteria that bounded them as a case study. Each school had implemented CLaSS for at least three years and were continuing to use CLaSS as a literacy strategy in the early years of schooling. Both schools also had teachers implementing CLaSS who were at different stages of their careers and students from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Central to the case study was each participant's experience of the phenomenon of CLaSS. The case study was based on an understanding of what it was like for the 11 participants to implement a specific literacy strategy. This phenomenological exploration was the central focus. The research did not seek to develop a theory about the implementation. As noted earlier, there are different interpretive approaches. A grounded theory approach would move beyond the descriptive style of phenomenology to generate theory around the implementation of CLaSS (Creswell, 2007). Whilst the participants in the case study put forward their perceptions of implementing CLaSS, participants' perceptions could be tested later in a larger study using grounded theory or quantitative methods (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000).

There are, in general, three types of cases: intrinsic, instrumental and collective case study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2005). An intrinsic case study is focused on particular interest in a single case (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2005). An instrumental case study provides an "…insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization." i.e. it examines an issue to draw out an understanding or to make a modified understanding based on a previous generalization of an issue (Stake, 2005, p. 445). A collective case study is used to study a "…phenomenon, population or general condition. It is instrumental study extended to several cases" (Stake, 2005, pp. 445-446). In a collective case study of a phenomenon, the participants are chosen to represent typically the phenomenon at large and provide the opportunity to "…learn the most" (Stake, 2005,

p. 451). The data in a phenomenological case "…seeks what is *ordinary*" (Stake, 2005, p. 453). Participants are able to recreate experiences, which allow the researcher to explore the interactions of the processes involved in an experience, and its importance within a context and time (Eisenhardt, 2002; Stake, 1995).

Each participant in the research study described a personal insight into the experience. Each participant's perceptions could be viewed as an instrumental case study. As an instrumental case, each school provided some insight into a site-specific example in the phenomenon of CLaSS (Stake, 1995). While the experiences from each school could form a separate case, there arose understandings that were common among the participants, regardless of the school and, therefore, formed a collective case study. This allowed for data to be viewed from a phenomenological perspective, as the research provided a retelling of the essential understandings from the data in implementing CLaSS (Creswell, 1998).

5.2 Data Collection Methods

5.2.1 Purposeful sampling.

The perceptions of the participants in this research were explored from the perspective of the unique reality of each participant, in accordance with interpretive social theory guided by the research approach of phenomenology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Neuman, 1997; Schwandt, 2000). In essence, the telling of the perceptions from each participant provided a tapestry of data in which to understand the implementation in each school. The data collection was designed using a *purposeful sampling* (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998*)*. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select appropriate participants and sites that best inform the research and defines the case (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2005). In purposeful sampling, the researcher develops criteria for selection of sites and participants, and the form of the data collection. This allows the researcher to best gain specific information on a phenomenon from a sample that reflects the focus of the research (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). The criteria for selecting two schools included: schools that had implemented CLaSS beyond the implementation phase; and that there would be involvement of principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers in the

research study at various career stages. School profile factors such as socioeconomic background and school size were also important.

The two Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne that participated in the research are referred to in the research as School 1 and School 2. Both schools had implemented CLaSS for at least three years, and there were individual participants at each school who had been involved in the CLaSS program for at least three years. The participants included graduate teachers, teachers with breaks in their careers and experienced teachers. Though the schools were located in adjacent areas of Melbourne, their profiles were different in overall school size, number of class groupings in Prep to Year 2, their literacy approaches before they implemented CLaSS and the cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of students. It was important in the research to have data from two different school profiles as CLaSS was designed to be successful in all schools regardless of school and teacher profile (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Although the research was not concerned with judging whether CLaSS achieved this goal, it was interested in the participants' perceptions of this.

In commencing the research process, I contacted several schools that I selected according to purposeful sampling based on the criteria. This was initiated by contacting the principal. Some principals declined to participate from the outset. The reasons given were: concern for additional workload for teachers; teacher negativity towards participating in any research studies; and the school having new staff in the literacy team. Some principals were interested, and I was invited to discuss the research further with them.

After School 1 agreed to participate, I presented an outline of the purpose of the research to the staff, and how the data would be collected. School 1 was quite supportive of being involved. The principal, literacy co-ordinator and two classroom teachers nominated to participate. School 2 also agreed to participate and thought the research was worthwhile. The principal, literacy co-ordinator and five classroom teachers nominated to participate in the research. At the time of collecting the data from School 1, some of the other teachers in Years Prep to Year 2 were new to the school and

to implementing CLaSS. They declined to participate, believing they did not have the breadth of experience to provide deep insights. School 2 had more teachers with experience in CLaSS. The differences in the participant numbers from the two schools reflect these differences in teacher experience in CLaSS, and the fact that School 2 had more student groupings in Years Prep to 2.

5.2.2   School and participant profile.

A detailed profile is provided for each school and participant in the next chapter. School 1 and School 2 are coeducational Catholic primary schools (Prep to Year 6) within the Archdiocese of Melbourne. They are located 15 kilometres from the central business district of Melbourne. At the time of the data collection, School 1 had an enrolment of over 500 students. Most students were second and third generation Australians from a European background. Some students had parents who had recently migrated from the Asian region. The school commenced implementation of CLaSS in 2000 (Intake 3).

School 2 had an enrolment of over 440 students. There were over 40 different ethnic backgrounds represented in the student profile. A small number of students were born overseas and approximately 30% of students were identified as ESL students. Some students had parents who had recently migrated from the Asian region. The school commenced implementation of CLaSS in 1998 (Intake 1).

Participants from School l

Teacher 1 School 1

- 15 years experience as a classroom teacher
- Previous experience as a Reading Recovery teacher.

Teacher 2 School 1

- Graduate teacher at the school in 2000 when CLaSS began.

Co-ordinator School 1

- Five years experience as a classroom teacher

- Previously a LOTE specialist before becoming the literacy co-ordinator.

Principal School 1

- Experienced principal in two schools
- Principal at School 1 when CLaSS began in 2000.

<u>Participants from School 2</u>

Teacher 1 School 2

- Six years experience as a classroom teacher
- Commenced at school in 1999 as a graduate in the second year of implementation.

Teacher 2 School 2

- Over 25 years experience as a classroom teacher in a number of primary schools
- Experience in implementing CLaSS at previous school.

Teacher 3 School 2

- Over 30 years classroom experience
- Implemented CLaSS at School 2 since 1998.

Teacher 4 School 2

- Qualified as teacher 30 years ago and has had some breaks in teaching career
- Has taught at School 2 for 11 years and has implemented CLaSS since 1998.

Teacher 5 School 2

- 15 years teaching experience
- Teaches part time.

Co-ordinator School 2

- 20 years experience as a classroom teacher in a number of schools

- Began as literacy co-ordinator for CLaSS in 2003 though had no previous experience in implementing CLaSS.

Principal School 2

- Principal for extended periods in two schools and a brief stint in another
- Principal at School 2 when CLaSS began in 1998.

5.2.3   *Design of data collection.*

In my research study, the data collection was initially designed to have two stages: questionnaire survey and interviews. The questionnaire was designed as a qualitative survey. A sample of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix D. The questionnaire was organized around the three stages of CLaSS: initiating, implementation and institutionalization. The questions were open-ended and broad so that the questions did not overly influence the direction of the responses (Wiersma, 1995). The questionnaire related to the overarching question in the research: What were the perceptions of Catholic primary principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers of implementing CLaSS as a literacy and professional development approach?

The specific questions in the questionnaire were:

1.   Initiating Stage: Decision-making process
- What was your role and input into the decision making process?
- What did you see as the benefits for the school in participating in CLaSS?
- What did you see as the perceived difficulties or challenges?

2.   Implementation Stage
- What did you see as the benefits in the implementation for: (a) the school (b) students and (c) yourself?
- What were your expectations of the implementation stage? How were these met?

- What were the main issues that arose during the implementation stage? How were the issues addressed?

3.   Institutionalization Stage

- Have the changes been sustained in the classroom program? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- What modifications were made in the classroom program? If so, why?
- Has your approach to teaching and learning in literacy changed since your involvement in CLaSS? If so, how?

4.   Other comments

Before developing the questionnaire, I discussed the data collection methods with practitioners who would not be involved in the research. This group felt that there may be some hesitation for schools and teachers to participate in the research as CLaSS was a major investment in resources and reputation for the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. The consensus from this discussion was that a questionnaire, before any interview, would allay any fears that the purpose of the research did not involve justifying or revealing literacy standards in the school or include issues that might force them to criticize the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. The research was also not judging them as teachers or their ability to implement literacy. The questionnaire was, therefore, designed to allow them to understand the parameters of the research and assist them to begin the process of recounting their experiences. The purpose of the survey was also to provide participants with an opportunity of nominating to take part in the second phase of the data collection; to provide some insights into the research for both the participants and the researcher; and to assist in formulating the type of questions or issues which could be further explored in the interviews (Neuman, 1997). It was intended that the responses could just be short responses or noting of some critical points.

The data for School 1 were collected first. Though they filled and returned the questionnaire, their responses generally were not very detailed. The participants said

they felt that the questionnaire was useful for the interview, providing a context in which to think about the implementation. They also felt comfortable knowing beforehand the focus of the interview. In the data analysis the questionnaire information was not used, as the brevity of the responses did not provide insights into the experience of CLaSS. They preferred to respond in depth through conversation because there was so much to be said about the implementation of CLaSS that could not be captured in any survey. I interviewed School 2 a year after School 1. Participants at School 2 wanted to use the questionnaire as a source of reflection. Three returned the questionnaire with some reflections. They also said they preferred to provide the depth of their reflections through the interview. They felt that they had a conversation or experience that could only be told orally.

The second stage of the design of the data collection involved interviewing each participant. Creswell (2007) suggests that in a phenomenological approach, the interview begins with two broad questions: "What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?" and "What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?" (p. 61). As participants begin to describe their perceptions of a phenomenon, the researcher may also include open-ended questions to draw out the textural and structural description of the experience (Creswell, 2007).

In this research, the purpose of the interviews was to delve into the individual perspectives on their everyday experience with CLaSS as a literacy strategy (Creswell, 2007; Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 1996; Seidman, 1998). The interviews allowed for an exchange of experiences and opinions between me as the interviewer, and the participants (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1998). The interviews allowed for further exploration of the overarching question: What were the perceptions of Catholic primary principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers of implementing CLaSS as a literacy and professional development approach? The interviews also focused on what insights they gained from implementing CLaSS that had implications for further innovation in literacy. Participants were able to refer to written records, such as anecdotal notes or diaries to assist with their reflections. This material was not part of the data collection. Participants were informed that the interviews would be no longer than an hour in

duration with the option for participants to participate in a second or follow up interview, if required. This option was taken up by four of the participants. Participants were able to have a follow up interview if they felt they wanted to raise further issues or wanted to discuss the transcript from their interview. Participants nominated appropriate times and venues to hold the interviews. Three were held in the evening and eight within the school day. Participants were provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview and were contacted regarding any issues arising.

Before collecting data from School 1, I invited a teacher from a school not involved in the sample to be interviewed as practice for myself in interviewing the actual participants. This assisted in gaining an understanding of how to structure or include open-ended questions, participate in the conversation and the amount and depth of conversation that could be covered in a one-hour interview. This interview was not recorded. The teacher then also gave feedback on the experience of the interview.

Each interview began with two broad questions: Would you like to talk about your experiences in implementing CLaSS? What were some of the strengths of the approach and challenges that you experienced in implementing the literacy strategy? Participants usually asked at what stage of the implementation or issue they should begin. They selected the starting point for their retelling of their experiences. While I included open-ended questions when required, I often let the language and content of the interview raise further questions. I had prepared some open-ended questions based on the key elements of CLaSS, such as, how they found implementing the structure of the literacy block. These questions were often modified when used for each participant. Consistent with a phenomenological approach, participants unfolded their story. The same questions were not necessarily used in each interview because the focus of some questions had come up from another focus.

5.2.4   *Recording of data.*

The collection of data for this research involved collecting qualitative information from the interviews. The interviews were recorded through taping from which a transcript was made. Participants were informed beforehand that the interviews

were to be recorded and that any identifying material would be excluded. The transcripts were generally verbatim with some modifications, for example, where real names were used in the interview a generic one was substituted; or a not commonly-known acronym was used in which case the full name was inserted. There were some instances where the participant, in describing a situation during the interview, requested that a scenario be re-written in more general terms, as they felt that they had given details that could be identified by a broader audience. A verbatim transcript from an interview, however, presented some difficulties (Merriam, 1996).

Translating the interview verbatim did not necessarily reveal the emphasis or tone or the hidden understandings that the participant and I, as the researcher, understood from the conversation, nor did a single interpretation of an interview reveal the essence of the conversation (Merriam, 1996). At the time of the interview the personal state of mind of the participant could have affected the perceptions that were revealed at the time of the interview (Merriam, 1996). To counter the possibility that participants presented a point of view, which they saw as not sufficiently accurate, a copy of the transcript was made available to each participant for any clarification or refinement. The participants generally made only minor refinements, such as adding in an explanatory phrase or adding a clarifying sentence to the text. Where participants had requested a specific modification at the end of the interview, they confirmed on reading the transcripts that the alterations captured the essence of what they had said.

5.3   *Process for Analysing Data*

The process for analysing data from the interviews, though integrated, had three parts. The first part of the process for me, the researcher, was transforming the experiences of the participants into written texts that then became the starting point for the analysis. The second component was the interpretation of the experiences into themes embedded in each participant's narrative (Flick, 2002, Kvale, 1996). The interpretations arose from the meaning that I had constructed from each participant's text. In the final phase, these interpretations were then constructed into a report on the case study which described the essential experiences of the what and how of the implementation of CLaSS (Flick, 2002; Kvale, 1996).

Seidman (1998) stated that data collection and analysis should be separate processes and that analysis should not begin until all the data has been collected. This is to avoid channelling interviews based on the analysis of a previous interview (Seidman, 1998). While I believe some influence is inevitable, delaying the analysis did assist in reducing the effects of channelling on the interviews. Equally my own experience in CLaSS would have contributed to some channelling even though I bracketed my experiences with the participants. Though there was a 12-month lapse between the gathering of the two schools' data, I did not begin the formal analysis of each participant in School 1 until I completed the data collection so not to unduly influence the outcome for School 2. While the research approach provided large amounts of data, not all of it was relevant to the research. The data analysis involved three processes: data reduction; data display and conclusion; and verification (Silverman, 2000).

5.3.1   *Data reduction.*

Data reduction in this research involved decisions about which data provided information on the research questions (Silverman, 2000). This allowed the data to be sorted into themes and sub themes that addressed various aspects of the research focus (Merriam, 1998). The data reduction could have been assisted by the use of electronic software, such as NVivo (Bazeley & Richards, 2000) that would sort the information systematically (Tesch, 1990). In the initial stages of my data analysis, NVivo was used as a data coding and categorization system. Data from School 1 were placed into the software with the purpose of using the coding system to identify the different themes. This process of using NVivo was valuable in understanding the process of sorting and grouping information and raising issues about the process of working with data. I found, however, that using specialized software was not sufficiently sensitive to creating themes, or my need to be able to see all the information at once in order to classify and move the data into different themes.

More useful was undertaking an initial scan of the data on a hard copy, making notes on the side margin and identifying key statements, concepts or issues and writing comments. Though this followed the same process as the NVivo (2000) software, I found it more useful to undertake an initial sort on the hard copy. This allowed me to

lay out all the documents, and move my reading between each one by laying them side by side. In doing this, my approach was consistent with Seidman (1998) who stated that there were advantages in sorting on paper before sorting electronically, as the researcher is able to view all the information. Seidman (1998) argues that in a phenomenological study it is desirable to keep data from each school separate and read and analyse the individual stories first. After I completed reading all transcripts and identified a range of themes emerging, I further sorted the data for each participant from School 1 into sub themes by cutting up the hard copy. The themes, which came from the participants' reflections, were broad concepts such as 'professional development' and the sub themes were components within the themes. For the theme of professional development, for example, sub themes included the "professional development model", "learning teams" and "off-site professional development". I then proceeded to follow the same process for School 2 and found that the data had a number of similar themes and sub themes. I then sorted themes and sub themes under the different research questions.

Sorting data through cutting up hard copy, however, had its limitations when aspects of the data belonged in several questions, themes or sub themes. For the next part of the process, I used an electronic cut and paste method using "Microsoft Word" (2003) to mirror my previous steps in sorting the data. I made "bold-type face" inserts into the electronic transcript that identified initial themes that arose in each participant's transcript. The following extract from the transcript for Teacher 1 School 1 demonstrates this part in the process:

> Sometimes, the challenges in it were, for some, they didn't see the value in it. I was very excited about it. I had just come back into teaching. I was always see [sic] the value in teachers gathering, someone presenting something, and even if you say I didn't like her [refers to Carmel Crévola] saying it. [**different views on relevance of pd**]

> There is still value in that discussion. Even if they loved it …[or] hated it. They are still going to talk about it. Yes. It will come back to the PLT [professional learning teams]. I love the fact that everybody

was there together working, learning, and as I said in there, with their eye on the same ball. You might all think you are doing that same thing, but until you discuss it, you are not going to create that new learning within yourself, or within any body else. So it created the discussion. **[collegial, knowledge creation]**

I loved the fact that people were putting it forward and were all having it at the same time. Obviously we all hear something slightly different, but pretty much we were trying to keep along the same lines and the PLTs sorted it out for us in our school. **[message, school context]** I remember doing a Year 3 to 4 PLT, a 3 to 4 in-service. One person in the school said we all have to start with reading and we are all going to eventually get into the writing. She said, "But at our school, our kids can't even speak". And I said to her, "Then at your school, you should be starting with speaking and listening". And you need to spend that time because those kids couldn't speak a language. They really needed to modify. They really needed to modify it so that they were attending to what they need**. [identifying student needs/flexibility]** With us, we started with reading. And this is my fifth year in the school, and I don't think we have ever really actually got into the writing thing. And I think that's really sad**. [writing not developed]**

The next step involved developing an electronic template to sort the themes and sub themes that emerged in each participant's transcript under the research questions. The template was divided into four sections representing each of the research questions. Each section of the template was further divided into two columns and a number of rows. The left column listed all the themes and sub themes identified at that point of the data analysis against a specific research question. The appropriate verbatim comments from each participant were placed in the right column. In some instances at this stage of the sorting, appropriate data evidence was not necessarily identified for each theme or sub theme. The following is an extract for Teacher 1 School 1 of this template. The bold-type face inserts in the right column indicate further analysis of the

text. The extract from the transcript for Teacher School 1 relates to the third specific question in the research: What were principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions on the professional development model in CLaSS?

New teachers in teams (sub theme)	Because the first two years we did the reading and that was what you were supposed to do and then they said, "We're going to give you writing, we're going to give you writing, we're going to give it to you, the writing." So, we had a really on-the-ball co-ordinator. She would go out to other schools and say, "What are you doing for the writing, show us." So she started to feed it to us. **[leadership]** So we were trying to get it there. We wanted it. We were so energetic. We wanted to be able to do it all at once. We understand now why we are still trying to that reading right. But they gave us the writing, and we still did it and then some of the team changed. "Oh, look we'll get into the writing, but we really need to concentrate on the reading again". So you sort of slump.
Impact on the development of writing (sub theme)	But now the team has changed again and my lament is, we're not getting back to the basics now. We go into a team meeting, whereas we used to do a bit of professional reading and then we would discuss it, and then we would move on to other things, we're not. We are no longer learning with the team…

The advantage of this electronic sorting meant that data could be easily cut and pasted under a number of theme and sub theme headings. In constantly refining the classification of the data, some headings were merged and new theme headings evolved (Seidman, 1998). The documents could also be printed so that the text could be viewed horizontally across participants and schools.

5.3.2   *Data display.*

Data display was the part of the analysis process in this research that allowed the information to be clearly organized through examining the data that had been coded in order to establish patterns, so that conclusions were drawn (Silverman, 2001). To achieve this part of the process, I then used a print copy of the participant's template to read across each theme, indicate additional sorting, collapsing or changing of themes and sub themes into new groupings and identifying any other data that was relevant. I then refined the data electronically (Seidman, 1998). After further reading and minor revisions, I separated the data under theme headings. For example, for comments regarding "co-ordinators", the data for School 1 was identified with the responses for each participant onto a Microsoft Word document. If there was no data for a particular participant, then this was shown as a blank so that it was easier to identify the essence of the data i.e. whether the data for a sub theme related to some or all of the participants. The same process was then completed for School 2. This allowed me to identify the general and specific comments around the themes or sub themes and any similarities and differences between participants and schools. A hard copy of this final categorization was printed. In this process the data was further reduced and essential understandings on the experience emerged (Creswell, 2007, Seidman, 1998).

The following is an extract for this stage from participants at School 1 around the theme of "co-ordinators". At this stage of the process, a unique font was used to identify each participant. This allowed the data from an individual to be identified when placed into different themes and sub themes electronically For the purpose of this explanation, I have also inserted at the end of each paragraph the participant's name identifier, for example, Teacher 1 School 1.

Please discern that this is not a criticism of people, but I think it is what happened when getting into the sixth year. It's okay now but because we have a new co-ordinator, and the new coordinator is having meetings with, I think the very new ones and doing that meeting there.(**new co-ordinators/role**) That's good, but at the same time and maybe it's a time issue, I think we can all be affirmed. (**need for affirmation**) From the revisit, but at the same time, time as revisiting the basics. We need to move beyond- Do you understand how you can do that. Yes we have to look at these basic things, let's look at that a bit together let's create and open discussion. **(constantly visiting basics)** (Teacher 1 School 1)

We had one came down from the seniors, one had grade 6 in another school and so didn't have CLaSS there, but whatever version they may have done with their seniors, but I don't think so because on the very first day the co-ordinator had to sit with her while she was doing the testing. Then we had a couple come from other schools, but they didn't have it there. **(new teachers)** … (Teacher 1 School 1)

Initially, that was a bit daunting, like especially in my first year as a graduate. I spent 4 years at Uni with someone sitting in that back of the classroom, so when I finally got a classroom of my own, it was fantastic not to have anyone there. And then after we went to the first sort of class day of that year and then they started doing principal walks and that sort of thing, I thought they are checking up on me again. (role of co-ordinators) But what was really good, was at that time the principal and the co-ordinator were both really enthusiastic and wouldn't comment on what was going on but would get in there and become a part of it. (leadership) (Teacher 2 School 1)

Creswell (2007) suggests developing a list of statements that identify the experience and then grouping the information under themes connected to these

statements. Throughout the sorting of data key sentence or phrases were used to assist identify themes and sub themes. Once the data was sorted, then I developed key statements about the themes and sub themes and then checked data groupings against them. The final analysis then provided the statements and accompanying themes and sub themes to develop the report on the research.

5.3.3   *Verification and conclusions.*

The process of data analysis led to decisions about which data was used in the research and, therefore, which data informed the conclusions (Silverman, 2000). Verification involves checking the data so that it is free from biases that may colour the conclusions (Flick, 2002; Silverman, 2000; Stake, 1995). In developing the findings of the research, the data was constantly checked. This was done by checking data on a particular theme for a school and then checking whether further data about that theme was embedded in another theme or sub theme. This involved multiple readings of the data. The initial categorization was refined to verify the meaning of the data that had been placed under a particular heading. In that way, the researcher checks the essence of what the participant was saying. Through a cycle of collecting, analysing, reducing data and data display, understandings from the research were developed and formed understandings about the phenomenon (Eisenhardt 2002; Seidman, 1998). Through constant checking, some themes and sub themes that emerged in this research were confirmed to be consistent in both schools and others were identified as particular to one or two participant or to one school (Seidman, 1998).

Triangulation of the research data is a process that allows for the data to be checked and verified (Flick, 2002; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Silverman, 2000; Stake, 1995). In phenomenological research, it provides greater scrutiny of the data through analysing the multiple ways participants' viewed the phenomenon (Flick, 2002; Neuman, 1997; Silverman, 2000; Stake 1995; Wiersma, 1995). In the research, this was achieved through checking data from the different participants involved in the research. The initial source of the data was the interview transcripts that were checked with the participants. The responses were grouped into themes and the data were checked against different participants, within a school, and between the two schools data. The sorted

data were also checked against the original interview transcript. The data themes were also checked by two others not involved in the research. Each person read the data for each sub theme to verify the connectedness of the data and whether there were any different sub themes that appeared to be present. Through using this strategy some of the statements were modified and sub themes were renamed and consequently data groupings were modified. This also assisted in clarifying the essence of the experience through discussing the interpretation of the data.

5.4   *Ethical Issues*

The research was conducted in accordance with the policies of the Australian Catholic University Ethics Committee. As the participants in the research were principals and teachers in Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne permission was sought from the Director of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Participants were informed of their rights as voluntary participants in the research. The participants were given a letter inviting them to become involved in the research which outlined that their involvement was voluntary, they could withdraw at anytime, their identity would be protected, confidentiality would be assured and no harm would come to them as a result of their involvement in the research.

In the discussion of the data reference to the school was necessary to provide the context for participants' experiences and, therefore, the schools were named School 1 and School 2. Each participant was given a code number, such as School 1 Teacher 1 for anonymity. All records of the interviews including notes, audio tapes, transcripts and other relevant material were secured in a locked filing system and the access was available only to me as the researcher. Any information collected which that might reveal the identity of the participant and their school was not used in this research.

5.5   *Limitations and Delimitations*

The limitations of the research are acknowledged. The scope of the research was limited by its focus on principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers in two Catholic primary schools. Due to its sample and size, the research was particular rather than general in that it did not necessarily relate to all primary literacy co-ordinators,

principals, and teachers or primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Though checking the data with the participants enhanced the validity, the data represented only the participants' understanding of the research questions as interpreted by the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Neuman, 1997). The research provided a descriptive insight from the participants that was focused and, therefore, limited to the key areas identified in the research. This restricted the scope of the study. The research reported here did not include all issues that may have been raised during the research process and did not represent all views in Catholic schools on the implementation of CLaSS. The conclusions and recommendations were based on the research data. A more extensive study of schools implementing CLaSS may not produce the same conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions and recommendations from this research, however, could form the basis of further research (Silverman, 2000).

Chapter 6 Finding: Schools' and Participants' Profiles

The previous chapter provides a brief outline of the schools and participants in the research. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a detailed understanding of each school context and participants' background when they first implemented CLaSS. The findings of the research are then divided into four chapters: implementation of the strategy; literacy; professional development; and further literacy innovation.

6.1   School 1 Background

School 1 is situated within a suburb within a 15-kilometre radius of the Melbourne Central Business District. The suburb was settled after World War II and has areas of light industrial as well as residential. At the time the school participated in the research, the school had an enrolment of over 500 students. There were a number of students who were second and third generation European as well as students whose parents had recently come from the Asian region. The Principal of School 1 commented that a very small number of students started in Prep without English language skills. The focus for school improvement was literacy as well as incorporating an inquiry approach in a learning-centred curriculum. Parents were active in a range of school activities.

School 1 began CLaSS because the principal believed that student literacy outcomes were not at an acceptable level in the school. School 1 commenced CLaSS in 2000 as an Intake 3 school. In the first year of implementation CLaSS was implemented in Years Prep to 1 and then extended to Year 2 in the second year. The school has since extended a literacy program modelled on CLaSS into Years 3 to 6.

This research was focused on the implementation in Years Prep to 2, though some participants also made reference to its implementation in post Year 2. I was able to interview two classroom teachers, the literacy co-ordinator and the principal. At the time, many of the teachers in Years Prep to 2 were new to the school and had not implemented CLaSS before and felt that they did not have enough experience to participate in the research.

6.2 School 1: Participants' Profiles

6.2.1 Teacher 1 School 1.

Teacher 1 School 1 had over 15 years teaching experience, and, in addition to classroom teaching, had also been a Reading Recovery teacher. She was involved in the implementation of CLaSS from 2000 as the Reading Recovery teacher and then as a classroom teacher in Year 2. She recalled that that there was much excitement when CLaSS began and that the teachers "…certainly wanted to do everything, do it now. If we were supposed to have it done by June, we had it done by March" (Teacher 1 School 1).

6.2.2 Teacher 2 School 1.

Teacher 2 School 1 was a graduate teacher when he commenced at School 1 in 2000. During his university course he had some training in Early Years. He said this was at least some, if not more, experience than other teachers when the school first implemented CLaSS. He commented, "…. to a certain extent, they looked for me for a few questions, and I did the best I could to answer, but I felt very intimidated being a graduate and having older people asking my opinions and things like that" (Teacher 2 School 1).

6.2.3 Co-ordinator School 1.

Co-ordinator School 1 had five years teaching experience before implementing CLaSS. Previous to being the CLaSS co-ordinator, she was a language other than English (LOTE) teacher and had also worked as an emergency teacher. She recalled when School 1 decided to begin CLaSS:

> The principal had come in…, and our literacy results were really low, and he decided that we are going down that path [to commence CLaSS]. So we went down that path. I found it really exciting because I didn't know any different. So what I'd really learnt from emergency teaching and university, which had been five years earlier,

and I knew no different. So for me it was exciting. (Co-ordinator School 1)

6.3.4   Principal School 1.

Principal School 1 commenced at the school in 1999 after being a principal in another Catholic primary school for a number of years. He recalled that at his previous school he was not interested in implementing CLaSS as student outcomes in literacy, he considered, were at a good level. He described his attitude at the time as "…relatively complacent and didn't think that I needed to do too much with literacy at that school". When he came to School 1 his attitude changed. He decided that the school would implement CLaSS, and that there were some non-negotiable aspects for the school in the implementation. He said some teachers were not ready or unhappy in implementing CLaSS and, therefore, some teachers requested not to teach in the lower year levels.

> So at the beginning of 2000 CLaSS came on board. I appointed X
> [name deleted] as our CLaSS co-ordinator, and she was a full time
> CLaSS co-ordinator. So she had no other responsibilities other than
> co-ordinating CLaSS. The one thing that I said at the beginning was,
> "There are some non-negotiables in CLaSS, and they are in my terms
> totally non-negotiable". (Principal School 1)

In providing resources to implement the strategy, he said:

> I would give them [teachers] resources to do their job. For example,
> every teacher at this school was offered a lap top computer to do all
> of their planning, all of their testing, all of their recording. They
> would also have things like three hours and twenty minutes of time
> release from face to face teaching in a block, with a curriculum
> co-ordinator leading them through to ensure that they were as good as
> they possibly could be. (Principal School 1)

6.3   School 2 Background

School 2 is situated in a suburb within a 15 kilometre radius from Melbourne CBD. Settled in the 1970s, the suburb consisted of people from highly diverse ethnic backgrounds. In 1998 when School 2 began CLaSS, there were 49 different ethnic backgrounds in the school. Approximately 60 % of the students where identified as students with English as a second language (ESL). Though many spoke a language other than English at home, many students had parents from two different ethnic backgrounds and, therefore, English became the common language spoken in the home. Only a small number of students were born overseas. In 2006 when School 2 participated in the research, there was an increase in the number of parents from Asia and fewer parents from Europe or the Mediterranean. There were still more than 40 different ethnic backgrounds. The number of students identified as students with English as a second language had fallen to approximately 30 %. Only a small number of students were born overseas. Many of the parents from Asia spoke English as well as the language of their country of origin. There has been a drop in student numbers since 1998 with just over 440 students enrolled. Parents were active in a range of school activities.

Principal School 2 believed that, after attending a briefing on CLaSS in 1997, the strategy had potential for the school and discussed it with the staff. She also commented that the school also had funding and other resources that allowed the school to be in the first intake. Since 1998 School 2 has continued with the implementation for Years Prep to 2 and in 2006 extended the approach into Years 3 to 4. Some of the participants have also implemented CLaSS in post Year 2 and, therefore, responded in their reflections from this added experience. I was able to interview the principal, the literacy co-ordinator and five classroom teachers.

6.4   School 2: Participant's Profiles

6.4.1   Teacher 1 School 2.

Teacher 1 School 2 commenced at the school as a graduate teacher and had been there for seven years. She started teaching in Prep and in the last two years had

been teaching in Year 6. When she commenced teaching, School 2 was in the second year of implementation, and her only knowledge of CLaSS was from teaching rounds during her undergraduate course. Teacher 1 described her introduction to CLaSS:

> Well I started CLaSS in 1998. That was the first year that writing was introduced. I came in as a graduate. So I came from Mercy [university], which was very daunting. Not much was done from university with CLaSS. So it was sort of more of a thing happening in primary schools that you only saw in your teaching experience. So they [university lecturers] didn't do a lot of that concept at university and the study of it. So it was a bit of a total awakening once you became a graduate in your classroom and you had to pretty much set it up [CLaSS]. So coming into a school that was one of the first CLaSS schools was quite interesting.

She remembered CLaSS as being a tag for the school:

> …it was such a big thing throughout so many Catholic schools. And if you were a CLaSS [sic] school, you were known as a *CLaSS* school and you'd use that to emphasize to parents "Hey look! We are a CLaSS school". So I suppose …the tag to your school. (Teacher 1 School 2)

6.4.2   Teacher 2 School 2.

Teacher 2 School 2 had taught for over 25 years in Catholic primary schools. She recalled that at her previous school they decided to implement CLaSS because the school felt that the funding for resources and training would be beneficial. Some teachers were not necessarily happy about it:

> They were keen to do that because as a new school it was going to be beneficial in resources and setting up. So that was another reason they sort of went with it. It was quite good. There was a lot of staff

who were negative. I suppose it happens everywhere. A lot of staff
were very…I think shaken by this thing [implementing ClaSS].
Everyone seemed to think it was such a huge change. (Teacher 2
School 2)

She found the transition to School 2 easier after implementing CLaSS in her
previous school.

I knew that you have to have your learning centres geared towards the
needs of the children, but it's easier now because you know that any
reading opportunity or word matching opportunity is going to help the
children with their skills. So you kind of get the big picture now.
(Teacher 2 School 2)

6.4.3   Teacher 3 School 2.

Teacher 3 School 2 had over 30 years teaching experience in Australia in
which she had taught in two schools. When she first commenced CLaSS she taught
Year Prep. Since then she has taught CLaSS in Years 1 and 2. Her early recollection of
the school commencing CLaSS was that many of her colleagues felt apprehensive. "We
didn't know what to expect or what to do. It was daunting. …Sooner or later we'd have
to do it [ClaSS]. So we felt we'd get in and get started" (Teacher 3 School 2).

6.4.4   Teacher 4 School 2.

Teacher 4 School 2 completed her initial teacher qualifications over 30 years
ago. She taught for three years before having an extended break to raise her family and
returned eleven years ago to full time teaching at School 2. She recollected that some of
her colleagues were cynical: "This is just another new thing. Here we go and a year later
it will be something else" (Teacher 4 School 2). She also remembered, "…we took it on
and said we're prepared to be part of it. It was made out to be this exciting scheme and
people were really keen" (Teacher 4 School 2).

6.4.5   Teacher 5 School 2.

Teacher 5 School 2 had taught at School 2 for last six years in a part time capacity. Her teaching experience spanned more than 15 years in which she had had some periods of leave. When she started CLaSS she felt that she was disadvantaged in that she had missed out on the initial professional development:

> They were at the finishing stage. They were four or five down the
> line… So I had missed out on the whole group, whole thing
> [understanding of the literacy block]. So this school was obviously in
> the first phase. They took off and we weren't where I was in the
> previous school. So when I came to this school I was like, "Okay!
> What is CLaSS?" I had no idea! (Teacher 5 School 2)

6.4.6   Co-ordinator School 2.

Co-ordinator School 2 had taught for over 20 years in a number of schools. She had commenced at School 2 in 2003 when she took up the position as literacy co-ordinator for CLaSS. She felt that the literacy approach at her previous school did not meet the learning needs of the students and so was very excited at the chance to be involved in CLaSS at School 2:

> I think I was at point where I needed something. I felt that where I
> came from, I felt like, I was literally pulling out my hair. I felt very
> frustrated with what I knew because I didn't feel like it was meeting
> the needs of the children that I was teaching at that particular school.
> When I came to this school I was really excited by it. (Co-ordinator
> School 2)

Co-ordinator School 2 first learned about CLaSS because her own children were attending School 2. She had asked principal at her previous school whether the school could commence CLaSS:

But our Principal made it clear that we weren't going to just jump on
the bandwagon, and she wasn't prepared to stop what we were doing
as a school… I don't remember negotiating anything with her. It was
a decision she had made and that was it. And that's how it was.
(Co-ordinator School 2)

6.4.7   Principal School 2.

Principal School 2 had over 30 years experience as principal in three schools.
She was principal of School 2 when the school commenced CLaSS. She recalled that
she had attended a briefing and felt that CLaSS "…had enormous possibilities". She
then decided to discuss with the teachers the possibility of introducing CLaSS at School
2:

I lifted Carmel Crévola's presentation and did [presented] it to the
staff. And said it had to be a whole school decision because it made
differences as to when people got their release times because of the
uninterrupted two-hour block at the beginning of the day. And the
staff accepted that we would go ahead with it, but it was "…not in my
back yard" though. So in the junior school I had a couple of refugees
who decided to teach in the middle school. So that was sorted out and
we got started. (Principal School 2)

Principal School 2 considered the funding requirements for CLaSS. The school
had ESL funding which could be used to assist in the funding of the literacy
co-ordinator and the Reading Recovery teacher. She said, "We had some of the
conditions that would allow us to think about it because we had an ESL teacher whose
funding we could convert to help with that" (Principal School 2).

The next chapter provides the research findings on the perception of the
implementation of the literacy block, and it impact on students and parental
involvement. It also examines the role of the principal and literacy co-ordinator.

Chapter 7 Findings: Implementing The Strategy

This chapter presents the findings on the participants' perceptions of the implementation of the strategy in relation to the literacy block and the role of leadership. It focuses on the themes that arose from the participants' perceptions. These themes include "implementing of the literacy block", "students", "parents", "principal" and "literacy co-ordinator". Within each of the themes are a number of sub themes. Throughout this and the following chapters of the findings, participants' perceptions and discussion on each of the themes are presented first followed by the analysis.

7.1   Implementing the Literacy Block

7.1.1   Drilled like Pavlov's dogs.

"Regimented", "flustered", "daunting" and "drilled like Pavlov's dogs" described how the participants felt when they initially implemented the literacy block and focused more on the components of the literacy block rather than the quality of the literacy sessions. Teacher 2 School 2 said, "People found it very difficult to regiment themselves into it". Teacher 5 School 2 said she "…was so flustered! Where do I fit everything in? The two hours flew!" Teacher 4 School 2 recalled that, initially, implementing CLaSS was "…a bit daunting. We even had egg timers and watches… We even had to have prayer time moved and everything. It was just so strict!" Teacher 2 School 2 commented that it was a similar experience at her previous school, where the Literacy Co-ordinator would walk into their classroom and "…if you were still at the big book at a certain time, she'd say, 'You should be doing groups now! You shouldn't still be doing the big book'". Teacher 1 School 1 commented, "It is great at the end of the week, that you know you have done all those things…but when you are locked into it, sometimes the panic is… 'Am I keeping to the timetable?'" Teacher 1 School 1 further commented:

> I would work with a little buzzer with that group next to me for the 20
> minutes, and it would go off, and the kids would know that that was

when they had to stop. You're pretty much drilled like Pavlov's dogs.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Looking back, that's sort of how it was!

7.1.2   Faithful to the structure.

Maintaining the routine and structure of the literacy block was seen as an essential aspect in ensuring the success of the literacy strategy. While on occasions modifications were made, the routine and structure generally remained unchanged from when it was first implemented. Principal School 2 commented that the understandings of literacy behind CLaSS "…wasn't anything new, but it was the structure and the discipline that the program required". Principal School 2 said that in implementing the structure, "There was a fair degree of taking the laissez faire out of what the classroom teacher could do in CLaSS, and really getting into being in a model, in a structure". Teacher 4 School 2 agreed, "It never changes. The routine is there every day. Unless we have Mass. Mass is about the only thing that changes CLaSS [routine]". Co-ordinator School 1 said, "I love the structure, it's so honed in to the children's learning and the sessions are so short and sharp that you really are able to keep their attention". The recognizable structure and routine of the literacy block provided a common professional understanding of CLaSS. "Any school that claims to be a CLaSS school, you'll walk in, and you'll know what's going to be happening" Teacher 2 School 2 confirmed, "You were known as a CLaSS school and you'd use that to emphasize to parents: 'Hey look! We are a CLaSS school'".

7.1.3   Modifying the literacy block.

With experience, participants said they became more adept at implementing the literacy block and were able sometimes to modify it. Teacher 1 School 2 said, "It is a big time commitment thing, but once you get in a routine, you become good at it and quicker at it". Teacher 2 School 2 noted that after implementing the structure for some time, "…[she] was better able to contribute more of …[her] own experience into the structure, because there wasn't as much pressure from outside to conform to a particular structure". Some participants commented that they could even turn the buzzer off. Teacher 5 School 2 explained:

That's my professional judgment, and I think my shared reading

doesn't have to go for ten minutes. It can go a bit longer. I don't have

to stop there on the buzzer. And the buzzer doesn't dictate what I do.

If I want to go on longer, I can.

Principal 2 School 2 confirmed, "They are less hung up on it being there. But they are very faithful of sticking to it. Because this lot of children need it as much as the ones five to seven years ago did". The following comment from Co-ordinator School 2 summarized the views among participants:

Because once you start taking too much structure away, then you're

back to where you were. I think it's crucial that many components of

what we learnt initially are still there. So your whole and small-whole

are still there. I truly believe that. But I think flexibility with your

pull-out groups. You can vary that.

7.1.4   *Being organized and putting in extra time.*

In the initial implementation putting in extra hours and being highly organized were emphasized. The daily implementation of literacy block organized their teaching. The following comment summarized their views:

If we were supposed to have it done by June, we had it done by

March. We were working very hard at it. Getting in there. Putting in

hours. Putting in lots of hours, putting in lots of time doing it… Yes,

they did want to perfect it. (Teacher 1 School 1)

For me it helped, like at being right at the beginning of the teaching it

helped to organise me in terms of, "Okay I have a structure to work

with". So I don't have to worry about how do I fill in my day, how do

I fit everything in. It is organised for me. (Teacher 2 School 1)

I couldn't probably see going back to the old way. I feel that I'm pressured to do reading and writing now. Whereas then, I'd say, "Oh**,** I'll go and do sport"**.** It wasn't so much structure. Whereas now, it's morning sessions, and it's this for a full two hours. (Teacher 5 School 2)

And it was the amount of work you had to do. Like, to do CLaSS you definitely had to put in! You had to be more goal-oriented. You had to be more focused. You had to be more organized. You had to be willing to take work home…. So it was a fair bit of pressure on you to perform and to achieve. It was good in a good way too, like making you more focused. You can't afford to sit back and think, "Well, what shall we do today*?* Let's write a story of what you did on the weekend!" It wasn't that sort of experience. (Teacher 4 School 2)

We had a co-ordinator and she basically came in and told me, "Concentrate on reading. You'll get reading down pat in probably two to three years". And I thought "Goodness gracious! How hard is this!*"* …It was you know, a lot more structured and there was a lot you had to follow through. (Teacher 5 School 2)

A feature of the CLaSS strategy was the student learning activities, sometimes referred to as learning encounters, which were tailored for the students' daily activities within the literacy block. Participants commented that in the early implementation stage, teachers spent many hours developing resource activities. Teacher 2 School 2 indicated that this requirement was different from previous literacy approaches, and that prior to starting CLaSS "…resource-wise we were pretty well set up, but in the process we had to create a lot of resources to suit our activities…so it was time". Teacher 4 School 2 also commented, "You had to be more organized. You had to be willing to take work home. Especially in the early days, as I said, 'We were making so many aids"'. Co-ordinator School 1 commented, "We had money, we were buying books, but I didn't have enough activities. 'How are we going to get them unless we made them?'"

Teacher 1 School 2 commented that the resources were stored centrally, and "I can get a board game and log it out…A lot has been put into that area which has been good. I wish it was back then!"

7.1.5   Order of the day.

As literacy was a high priority, interruptions were not allowed. This caused some conflict with teachers in higher year levels. Co-ordinator School 1 said, "We really try to have that uninterrupted time: no messages at all on the PA [public address system], children aren't allowed to come with messages and that sort of business". Teacher 4 School 2 commented:

It got to be a standing joke after a while. Where someone would come to the door, and you would just do this [demonstrated an action]. And notes were placed on the door "Do Not Interrupt! CLaSS is in Session" And some of the other grades took umbrage like, "Why are you so important more than what we're doing?" CLaSS was the order of the day.

Teacher 2 School 2 said, "Birthdays had to be done at a certain time. Parents weren't allowed to come in…It did break it. The children lined up outside and the parents weren't allowed to come into the corridor in the mornings". Both principals also agreed that CLaSS would not work properly unless there was a total commitment to not interrupting teachers and students during the literacy block. Principal School 2 noted, "You just don't go over the microphone unless it's an emergency to interrupt it". Principal School 1 explained, "We are going to do it as it is set out. There are going to be no interruptions. We are going to have that full two hour block".

7.1.6   Professional judgment.

Participants commented that prior to CLaSS, they felt they had more professional freedom to arrange the time for literacy activities according to their own discretion and needs that arose on a daily basis. Teacher 2 School 2 commented, "Whereas before, if we felt like doing writing in the mornings we did it, and if not, we

did it later on". The comments of Teacher 3 School 2 illustrated the difficulties participants had in exercising some professional judgment, when they first began implementing CLaSS:

> Now we're told, we put in an hour of reading and an hour of writing. Whereas before, if I thought writing was interesting, and I wanted it to go for an hour and a half, I'd do it. But now I have to stop. And that made it a bit difficult. (Teacher 3 School 2)

Teacher 2 School 2 found, however, that implementing the structure was sometimes stressful and limited her ability to respond to the spontaneity of the students:

> Particularly with junior kids, because you knew that if a child brought in something really exciting, like they wanted to bring in their puppy or whatever, that could be the basis of your writing for that day, because it was an experience that they could write about. …We managed to jig it a little bit to have some of those things. We did lose so much of the spontaneity of teaching, and you know, if the child threw up in the classroom, instead of being sympathetic, you almost felt like, "Oh my god! I've got to get my teacher group done!" It was stressful from that point of view. (Teacher 2 School 2)

The co-ordinators from both schools commented, however, that teachers often sought permission from them to affirm their professional judgment in modifying elements of the structure, such as lessening the time for one group and lengthening the time for another. Co-ordinator School 1 felt, "Some people took everything as gospel which is good in one way, but bad in another". She also said, "I thought they were teasing me [when she suggested they could change the routine]… I said, 'I am giving you permission…and some people didn't cope'" (Co-ordinator School 1).

7.1.7   Teacher expertise.

While the design of the literacy block required a disciplined and focused approach to literacy, it also allowed teachers to be creative in incorporating different strategies and their own style of teaching within the structure. Teacher 2 School 1 found that once he had developed a good routine, "…the focus then switched on to, 'Okay what are you doing in your whole-small-whole?'" Principal School 2 explained the structure had potential to be creative for teachers in that "…you can actually incorporate all kinds of things into the design, and it's still literacy, and it's still beneficial. But that depends on the inventiveness and the creativity of the teacher". Principal School 2 acknowledged that some teachers only saw the routine of the structure rather than the potential that the structure provided for creative approaches to literacy teaching. She said, "They were so bound up in getting the structure right and those things, perhaps some of the things that we used to do, like language theory and junior teaching, didn't get used as much". She further commented, "I think there are very few teachers who have got to the very extent of making the most of that model. Some of them, like Teacher Q [name deleted] probably did, and the young ones [graduate teachers] just fit into it".

Teacher 2 School 1 stated initially some teachers at his school believed that individual teaching styles were not fostered. After they implemented the structure, it "…changed a few peoples perceptions of what were the real factors of CLaSS. It just wasn't the rules and regulations. It was better outcomes for kids". Teacher 2 School 1 said:

> They were all really apprehensive about how well these things are all
> going to be mandated, how is that going to work for me, where is all
> the individual differences going to fit in and what about my teaching
> style, doesn't that count, and doesn't what works for me count? So
> there were a lot of apprehensive people beginning the journey.

Principal School 2 said, "We talk about the structure but it's the implementation by the actual staff members who feel good about what they're achieving

with kids because they know that they're doing a professional job". Teacher 1 School 1 said, "Now we can best use those other strategies that we have always had…. That was the best thing about CLaSS". Co-ordinator School 2 stated the structure of the literacy block "…gave me direction as a teacher". While this was a common view among the participants, they also acknowledged "…sometimes you think you're in handcuffs. You're locked in and you can't get out of it" (Teacher 1 School 1).

7.2 Students

7.2.1 Don't knock the system.

Participants thought that the structure was beneficial for the students, in contrast to other literacy approaches, as the students had a routine that they expected from Prep to Year 2. Teacher 2 School 1 said, "They know what to do, where to go, they can go and look at a task management board and they understand the structure of the class [literacy session] as well as the time structures". Teacher 4 school 2 commented, "They're very organized. They know what's going to happen". Further comments were:

> They knew what they were doing from day to day. They knew what
> to do at their tables. They knew how to read the task board. They
> knew how to direct themselves with little input from me, and they
> also knew that they had that special time with me, as a focus group.
> (Co-ordinator School 2)

> The ones that I have got this year have been CLaSSed [sic] from the
> beginning, so they don't know anything different. So they don't really
> knock the system at all. They just accept that this is the way literacy
> works, this is, what we do for the first two hours of the day. This is
> how it runs. And I think they thrive on knowing what's going to
> happen and have got boundaries. (Teacher 2 School 1)

If for some reason the literacy block did not happen on a particular day, Teacher 3 School 2 said the students would keep asking, "Why aren't we doing activities today?" Principal School 2 noted that, in contrast to previous literacy approaches, there were also higher expectations for students, even in Prep. She said, "…being in class [the classroom] at a certain time is required. Just being a Prep [student] and it doesn't matter much… It does matter! And the missing days of school. That kind of thing". She noted, however, that it did have its down side in that, "Everybody gets so cranky about what kids have to do that sometimes a kid needs a day home from school" (Principal School 2).

7.2.2   *Feeling better about their learning.*

Participants said there was a noticeable improvement in student behaviour as students enjoyed the routine and were more aware of their own learning and goals for improvement and working in groups. Teacher 4 School 2 said, "They probably have greater awareness of their abilities and where they are". Co-ordinator School 1 said, "The children do stay engaged because it's only 20 minutes …the activities are so engaging". Further comments were:

> They probably have a greater awareness of their abilities and where they are. They can turn to a book and say Oh I'm onto [level] 24 now. Where I don't think they would have been aware of the range of their abilities. (Teacher 4 School 2)

> One of the things that we did have a strong emphasis [on] was that we wanted the kids to be able to articulate what their learning was. So we wanted them to be able to say, like if they were Preps, "What are you doing today? Prediction! Okay what's prediction?" (Principal School 1)

Participants commented that the students particularly liked the big books and having the different learning activities in the group sessions. Teacher 1 School 2 said, "They're happy to work in their groups and you can see that kids really learn from small

groups". Though Teacher 1 School 1 felt sometimes students wanted to move onto a different activity rather than revisit an activity in depth.

Participants commented on the improved behaviour of the students in classroom during the literacy block. This was credited to students being engaged in appropriate activities and having a routine each day. Principal School 2 reflected that there was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that, "After we'd been a couple of years at this program, the level of problems and social problems in the junior yard diminished, because kids were feeling better about their learning".

7.3   Parents

7.3.1   Parental involvement.

Participants stressed that having parental help with the group activities was invaluable. Co-ordinator School 1 said, "I have a parent who is just fabulous and we've taught her some free reading, she actually comes in three times a week". Participants also stated that when parents were unable to assist, it was sometimes difficult implementing all the different activities. Teacher 5 School 2 commented that, "They [the activities] also needed explaining [to students] at times and you didn't always have the mothers. At first we did, when it was new. But more mothers started working. So unless you had that parent helper it really made things hard".

Participants found in initially implementing CLaSS, parents and teachers sometimes had difficulty in adjusting to the expectations that the school had for parents, such as not having informal chats with the teacher once the sessions began and being more directed in what they were required to do when assisting in a class or group activity. Teacher 1 School 1 said, "They wanted ownership of the teachers too. So that's where I found it most difficult…They wanted you to go and have a little talk and I was concentrating on the task with the children". Teacher 1 School 2 commented:

Like in the mornings when you've got those parents who want to talk, and you've got lots happening, or why they're upset…All those

things…You just feel like you're brushing them aside and you just do
it at the end of the day.

Both schools had a good level of parents assisting in the literacy block when they first commenced CLaSS. Teacher 5 School 2 commented that initially she found, "There were more adults in the room than children". Parental involvement in the literacy sessions significantly decreased over time. Participants did not have a clear reason as to why this had happened, though participants mentioned factors, such as more mothers in the school returning to work, which may have been influential in the decrease of available parents. Another factor in the decrease in parental involvement may have been a consequence of what Teacher 1 School 2 described as "…brushing parents aside".

While parents in the classroom were important in the development of literacy, teachers found it was not always easy to incorporate parents. There were some issues raised about parental involvement in the literacy block, such as feedback on students, confidentiality, and whether parents had the necessary skills to assist teachers:

You can have your problems whereby you don't want the parents to
go back out into the community and telling them what other kids are
at…So you just have to pull that parent aside and say, "What happens
in here, you need to just focus on your own child and you're just here
to help and not to go out and communicate what is going on about
where other children are at". (Teacher 1 School 2)

It was hard with parents in there because until they really got the hang
of it, parents expected to be looked after. And didn't realise they had
a responsibility there [their student group] and the teachers had the
responsibility to that group of kids and they will only work with them.
(Teacher 1 School 1)

Participants found that because the parents were working with the students, it was important to have feedback from the parents on particular students. Participants sometimes found this difficult when trying to juggle the structure and time requirements for the components and staying focused on the group work. The nature of the parents' assistance raised concerns about whether the parents were equipped to assist students in their learning in all instances. Teacher 4 School 2 commented:

> You got into your problems with parents because if they were given a worksheet, you had to make sure that the parent was there to explain it. Half the time the sheet might have been easy enough to do, but it needed that explanation".

Teacher 1 School 2 commented:

> So you'd have that double whammy: they're all wanting to see what you're like as a teacher and they're all wanting to come and help out at CLaSS because it's the idea of being in there and being a part of it…which is fabulous. And I think here they have a great parent community that do get behind the teachers and help them.

7.3.2   Higher expectations.

Participants believed that parents often enrolled their child on the basis that the school had the literacy strategy CLaSS, and that parents were more aware of different literacy programs and the importance of literacy for future success. Parent helpers began to understand how individual students were progressing. Teacher 5 School 2 explained, "But some parents will say, 'How come my child is only doing 10 and Johnny is doing 20, and they're in the same class?'" Principal School 2 commented:

> Parents know their kids much better. But I also think young parents know a lot more too. They know what they're looking for. It's a more literate society. The decline of employment [in some jobs such as those not demanding high levels of literacy] in the future that [people]

used to be able to go onto has put more expectation on parents, because they realize that their children, if they are going to make a place in life, need to have achieved [well in education] up to secondary school. There are very few parents who don't have an ambition for their child only to Year 10. Where as that wasn't quite the case in the past.

7.5   Principal

7.5.1   Role of principal.

The leadership styles of the principal in the two schools were different. Principal School 1 had a more direct hands-on approach. Principal School 1 explained to his staff that in implementing the structure "…we are going to do it like it's a mirror image of what CLaSS should look like. We are not going to debate or quibble at the fringes. We are not going to stuff around in anyway". He also wanted only teachers who were happy to commit to CLaSS:

> My real desire was to sort the wheat from the chaff, get the people
> that wanted to work with me and promote them as much as I could.
> The people that didn't want to work with me and didn't want to
> engage in the process that I had, I wanted them to choose to leave. In
> fact, I specifically targeted thirteen people who I thought should leave
> because their skills and expertise no longer matched the requirements
> of education I thought [matched those] at School 1. The one thing that
> I said at the beginning was there are some non-negotiables in CLaSS,
> and they are in my terms totally non-negotiable. (Principal School 1)

In the beginning, he regularly did the *principal's walk* (Crévola & Hill, 2005b). Teacher 1 School 2 said:

> He really got into the role and did his principal's walk and was, I
> suppose, what he could offer in terms of "I'm the leader of the school,

I've got responsibilities at head office but I can also come down to
your level and I can still work with the kids. So yes I'm interested in
what you are doing and I can be of some help and that I value what
you are doing". Like it was affirming.

The principal's walk had become less frequent over the years. Teacher 2
School 1 said, "It was something that has faded off in the last few years, the role of the
principal's walk and the co-ordinator to a certain extent". He directly spoke to teachers
in regard to analysis of data and was active in team meetings.

It was really good, that for a majority of the off site PD [professional
development] our principal came with us. Maybe not the majority, but
a large number of the sessions. He came along and he came to every
PLT [professional learning team meeting] and was a physical member
of the CLaSS team during school time as well. So that was helpful,
but he expressed that look, you know you are learning something new,
it is going to take you a while, go back to the classroom and try it.
(Teacher 2 School 1)

Principal School 2 saw her role as mentor and supporter to the literacy
co-ordinator rather than the enforcer of the requirements. Principal School 2 said that in
providing supportive leadership in the first year, "We used emergency teachers all the
time… we started them off with the best conditions to make it work". While there was
no mention of doing the principal's walk, Principal School 2 regularly discussed the
overall literacy implementation and issues with the co-ordinator and allowed the
co-ordinator generally to deal with the difficulties of developing teacher knowledge and
skills and aspects of the strategy:

I keep saying to the co-ordinator when she feels like tearing her hair
out. "You've got five teachers who are on track. Just one person who
is not quite picking it up. But then that person is coming along. Focus
on who you are succeeding with!" (Principal School 2)

The principals felt that their role was firstly to support the co-ordinator, and secondly, to provide the necessary resources to ensure that CLaSS could be implemented appropriately:

> We [principal and co-ordinator] would go through each of those points [beliefs and expectations of CLaSS] every week and say, "How do we think we are going in this? How do we think we are going in that?" We would work our way around the model so that there was nothing left to chance. We just didn't want the program to fail. I felt as though, at some stage, we were like zealots to the model of CLaSS and we were probably zealots, but when you are zealots you can't afford for it not to succeed. (Principal School 1)

7.5.2   *Valuing involvement of principal.*

Participants valued the principal being involved and enthusiastic about the school implementation. The classroom teachers and co-ordinators felt that the principals provided supportive leadership by attending the professional development days and having meetings with the co-ordinators. The following comments illustrated how they valued the principal actively supporting the strategy:

> I think that the beauty of it was the principals had to attend with the co-ordinators. Because I think they're sending the same message. And I think that was a planned thing and it was probably well done. Because so many principals are not ready to be that involved. (Teacher 1 School 2)

> There would be some schools saying how hopeless it is but it is all a matter of management. And the most important thing when we very first started is that the principal actively believed in it. Didn't just say go and do it. (Teacher 1 School 1)

It was very strict [implementing the literacy block] and even the
principal said, "No. You have to start at a certain time…CLaSS is
CLaSS". (Teacher 5 School 2)

I can actually remember the principal in the staffroom, saying that
there is this new scheme coming in [CLaSS] and she was really keen
for us to join it and be in it. (Teacher 4 School 2)

7. 6   *Literacy Co-ordinator*

7.6 1   *Role of literacy co-ordinator.*

The literacy co-ordinator was seen as very influential in how well CLaSS was
implemented, and what became the focus or priority in their school. "The particular
co-ordinator can completely change what CLaSS is to a school or a teacher",
commented Teacher 1 School 1. Teacher 5 School 2 commented:

We've gone from a co-ordinator who has said, "You're not allowed to
say prayer in the morning. You're not allowed to even do the roll in
the morning! You have to go out there and you start at 10 to 9:00 and
you have to finish at 10 to 10:00 and then you have to do writing".
…and now it's very fairly much, you do your roll and you can say
your prayer and have a little chat with the kids and then off we go
with the big books. So it's fairly structured. So it depends on the
co-ordinator.

Participants stated that they appreciated co-ordinators who understood what it
was like to be in the classroom, were encouraging and knew what had to be done. The
following comments illustrated their perceptions:

It's just making sure you've done everything you need to do. But
most of them [co-ordinators] are pretty much laid back and they've
been classroom teachers. So in a sense they've got that idea of what

it's like, the normality of being in a classroom. It all doesn't run

smoothly and perfectly. (Teacher 1 School 2)

A couple of times I just made the comment. "Well I have to throw out

20 years of teaching experience!" And she'd [the co-ordinator] go,

"Oh no, no, no! You don't have to do that!" And I thought, "Well

you're telling me that I have to do this, and this, and this…And it's

not foreign, but it's not the way I feel works best". (Teacher 2 School

2)

I think the literacy co-ordinator's role is to make sure that those

people do know what they're doing. (Teacher 2 School 2)

She'd never say, "You are not doing it right". So if you needed any

help or you weren't doing something right she'd do it for you or later

on tell you. (Teacher 3 School 2)

They thought that the co-ordinator had the big picture focus on CLaSS, while

the classroom teachers were focused more on the immediate needs of the program, such

as the daily activities and understanding the routine. It was also suggested by

participants that without a committed and skilled literacy co-ordinator, teachers would

probably not implement the components according to the requirements. The teachers

felt that it was the co-ordinator's role to keep them on track. Co-ordinator School 1

commented:

I'm finding people think they know everything when we don't and the

really hard thing is to move everyone along without being the ogre;

it's not in me to be an ogre. It's not in me to say you have to do it this

way but I had to learn to do that.

Participants, who were classroom teachers, also regarded the co-ordinator as

the literacy expert who could model appropriate strategies, assist them with resources,

and facilitate professional development. They also saw that the co-ordinator was responsible for informing the principal as to how CLaSS was going.

7.6.2   Another adult in the room.

Many of the participants, however, found it difficult when the co-ordinator came into their classrooms to see how they were going in the early stages of implementing CLaSS. Teacher 5 School 2 said, "I felt quite threatened, because not knowing CLaSS I'd go 'Oh here we go! I'm back at school [university] and my lecturer is coming out to see me!'" Teacher 1 School 1 commented, "Teachers were not just used to having another adult there". Further comments were:

I spent four years at university with someone sitting in the back of the classroom, so when I finally got a classroom of my own, it was fantastic not to have anyone there…Then they started doing the principal's walks, and I thought they are checking up on me again. (Teacher 2 School 1)

But in the beginning, because it was a learning time you didn't mind other teachers coming in. Like I liked to go to other classrooms in other schools, so I was prepared to have other people come in and watch me because it was new and everyone was learning it at the same time. Yes, then having someone come in [from outside of school] and it was as if you were being assessed in your ability. (Teacher 4 School 2)

Teacher 2 School 2 commented on the role of the co-ordinator:

I feel that co-ordinators have a greater responsibility to be aware of what's happening and to be able, not to report back to the principal, but to share with the principal what is happening to keep them on the ball. Not to pick out faults, but to say this is what's happening with literacy at the moment to keep them in the loop.

7.6.3   *Difficult and rewarding role.*

The two co-ordinators saw their role as assisting teachers, though they did not always regard themselves as experts. They felt that they facilitated other experts, such as teachers in the literacy team, or through visiting other schools when they felt they did not have the expertise. While they sometimes found the mentoring role difficult, it was also rewarding. Their role was sometimes difficult because teachers who were more experienced than them sometimes felt that the co-ordinators were checking up on them:

> Most of the people, like half of the group are older than me… one of the younger [inexperienced] teachers who's older than me said, "You're younger than me. You're in that position"…It was that whole hierarchy thing…So it's been really, really interesting… how the room works and keeping track of everyone and everything. It's been difficult but rewarding. Just seeing things come together. (Co-ordinator School 1)

> I think it's a huge amount of pressure, but I'm kind of on the other end where I'm talking to people about "Okay this child hasn't made progress in the past six months. He's still on the same reading level. What is it that we can do that's different?" I feel awkward sometimes even saying that because I was there not that long ago. … I have to be so careful so that person is not walking away feeling awful about themselves because they're great teachers. They're very tender. They work very hard. Even going in and saying, "I'd like to sit in on your lesson" is very difficult…I suppose classroom teachers are thinking, "I hope she doesn't come into me." They're not thinking from your perspective: "I hope they don't mind me coming in!" (Co-ordinator School 2)

> I find that really hard! Because I don't have the answers to everything! I really feel that sometimes people even take advantage of

that: "Well she doesn't know. Why do we need to know?" And it's

not about me knowing everything. (Co-ordinator School 2)

7. 7   Analysis

7.7.1   Change process.

In implementing the structure and routine of the literacy block, participants' comments illustrated some of the issues involved in the change process. As part of the change process in CLaSS, participants were moving away from a teacher or school-directed program to one that was a sector-designed approach; it mirrored the transition of teachers as prime designers of curriculum to government-directed curriculum (McCulla, 1994). The principals in this study indicated that some teachers within their school chose not to be part of the literacy change and elected to teach in higher year levels or move to another school. The comments showed that initially teachers sometimes found the change challenging, and in that process, they were more focused on the technical aspects of the literacy block, for example, completing the group session within the specified time. Comments such as "drilled like Pavlov's dog", illustrated that the initial implementation of the structure of the literacy block was outside their past experience, and they were intent on implementing the structure correctly. Principal School 1 felt that the structure removed a laissez faire approach to literacy. This was also reflected in the comments from Teacher 2 School 2 who said that sometimes in the past, they did literacy activities in the afternoon to meet other priorities in the morning. At the same time the strictness of the implementation of the literacy block caused conflict with teachers in higher grades who felt that the teachers implementing CLaSS were more important than they; these teachers may have been some of the "refugees" referred to by Principal School 2 in Chapter 6.

From their comments, the impact of literacy block in CLaSS has reinforced for teachers the place and priority of literacy in the early years classroom. The literacy block was designed to embed effective approaches that included adequate and sustained time being spent on literacy, and was a school and systemic approach (DEETYA, 1998; Hill, Hurworth et al., 1998; Winch et al., 2005). The findings from the Literacy

Advance Research Project confirmed what the participants in this study indicated: that the most significant change was the implementation of a two-hour literacy block and limiting disruptions to the literacy session (Ainley & Fleming, 2000).

In the initial implementation of the literacy block, participants noted some disempowerment, as professionals, in implementing literacy. While this disempowerment was partly attributed to not being adept at the management of the literacy block, the literacy block also imposed on their professional approach to literacy as well as classroom and school organization. Practices such as celebrating birthdays, parents having a chat with the teacher, school messages and announcements were no longer acceptable in the literacy session.

While participants found this a difficult adjustment, it also confirmed other studies, such as Pinnell et al. (1994) and Literacy for ALL (1998), which found that being focused on literacy for two hours was not the usual practice in schools prior to CLaSS though schools may have designated adequate time in the programming of literacy sessions. Pinnell et al. (1994) found, while schools allocated time for literacy, the actual time students focused on literacy was significantly less than that allocated. Literacy for All (1998) also noted that many schools did not provide adequate time for literacy, and that time spent on literacy was frequently interrupted by other classroom and school concerns. The Early Literacy Research Project (Crévola & Hill, 1997) stated that students in the early years of schooling required a two-hour uninterrupted literacy focus for sustained improvement in literacy outcomes for students (Crévola & Hill, 1997). My study found that participants believed that sustaining the uninterrupted literacy block was an important factor in improving literacy standards.

If participants were highly organized, they found that the literacy block still allowed them to incorporate their own teaching styles and a variety of strategies. Overall, participants found that once they became adept at implementing the literacy block, there was flexibility for professional judgment within it. There was, however, a sense of caution from participants in being too flexible. In the end they valued the prescribed structure of the literacy block and felt the need to be true to the structure.

This caution about straying from the structure was also reflected in teachers asking permission from the co-ordinator to vary the literacy block. Participants, for example, Teacher 2 School 1, commented that learning outcomes for students had improved which was consistent with the view of some educators that instructional strategies, such as incorporated in CLaSS, were essential elements for an effective approach to literacy (Hill, 2006; Smith & Elley, 1998; Winch et al, 2005).

7.7.2   Resources.

Central to CLaSS was the notion that the learning development of students in literacy was monitored daily. CLaSS teachers had to plan activities that were driven by the daily individual needs of the students rather than delivering a teacher-directed program that was planned in advance (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). Participants stated that teachers developed a bank of literacy resources for the literacy block. In the beginning, these resources were developed to meet the learning needs of individual, and groups of, students. As time passed, the schools had a resource bank for the literacy activities. Based on the responses of the participants in the research, it was not clear whether they continued to develop more resources to further meet the needs of individuals and groups, or the availability of resources from the resource bank became the driver for the learning activities. Their comments implied that the selection of learning activities was student driven. Participants noted student behaviour improved along with student literacy levels. This was consistent with research by Rowe and Rowe (1999), which showed that students' attentiveness to reading activities improved with their own ability to read, and therefore, reduced classroom management problems. While participants noted improvement in student behaviour, they did not specify whether this related to either genders or group of students (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). The improvement in student behaviour may have also added to their caution in veering away from the intended structure of the literacy block.

7.7.3   Students.

Participants stated that while as professionals they sometimes struggled with the notion of always having a structured literacy block, students seemed to accept the routine willingly, or as Teacher 2 School 1 expressed it, students "don't knock the

system". This was further expressed as the students being "CLaSSed". These comments indicated that for students, routine is of some importance in the learning process. Participants also indicated that students were more aware of, and positive about, their own learning achievement which they related to the structure of the whole-group-whole. Studies into effective literacy provision, such as Hill, Hurworth et al. (1998), indicated that students required set minimum time allocation for literacy. Crévola and Hill (2005a) indicated that as a result of a minimum time requirement, activities needed to be highly focused within set components. The responses from participants provided an indication that students benefited from the routine of the literacy block.

7.7.4   *Parents.*

Parental assistance, though there were sometimes issues, was helpful. This finding was consistent with a 1999 teacher questionnaire for the Literacy Advance Research Project (Ainley & Fleming, 2000) in which Year 2 Catholic primary teachers commented on the operation of the classroom literacy program. Teachers in the questionnaire commented that literacy sessions were more effective with parental assistance, and when parents were not available, teachers had to sometimes modify activities (Ainley & Fleming, 2000).

Participants also found that parent involvement was declining. This was consistent with the findings of Ainley and Fleming (2003). In 1998 and 1999, the first two years of Literacy Advance, data showed that there was an increase in parental involvement in Year 1 classroom literacy sessions. The data noted that schools that adopted CLaSS or the Early Years Literacy Program generally had moderate to extensive inclusion of parents in the literacy sessions compared to other approaches (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). The monitoring of parent involvement in literacy sessions, however, from 1998 to 2004 in Catholic schools showed, overall, there was decreasing involvement of parents from Prep to Year 6 (Ainley & Fleming, 2003). Parents no longer being available due to work commitments was a reasonable explanation for the decrease, however, comments from the participants indicated that parents were not necessarily skilled or able to take responsibility for group sessions and this may have affected their participation.

Participants suggested that parents were very aware of the importance of literacy and whether the school implemented CLaSS. Participants said that parents in their school saw CLaSS as having credibility as a literacy strategy. The implementation of CLaSS was a critical factor in choosing to send their children to the school. This was consistent with Wilkinson (1999) who argued that literacy had become a saleable commodity by the school and wider community.

7.7.5 Leadership.

Participants focused on the role of principals and co-ordinators as important to the implementation of the literacy strategy. Though the two principals had different styles, participants felt that the principals supported CLaSS as a literacy strategy and them, the teachers, as implementers of the strategy. No participants commented that their principal's leadership style should be different or impacted negatively on the implementation. Research into effective schools confirms their perceptions that principals had a powerful role in leading schools through change (Edmonds, 1979). Research found principals were effective when they: provided strong support to staff; emphasized instructional leadership; engaged in collaborative decision-making; communicated clearly the vision and led the institutionalization of that vision; defined the values of the school, such as that of the literacy approach; and created the culture of the school as a learning community (Beare et al., 1989; Edmonds, 1979; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Glatthorn & Fox, 1996; Leithwood, 1990; Stoll & Fink, 1996). This was indicated by the participants in this research through comments that highlighted the principal's role in being part of the literacy team. Though research argues there are many types of leadership styles, it also suggests that it is important to develop a diversity of leadership styles throughout the school (Beare et al., 1989). In School 1, the principal was more direct and hands-on while in School 2 the principal acted more as a mentor to the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator in School 1 complemented the principal by mentoring teachers, while the co-ordinator in School 2 mentored teachers. She also provided leadership in the way strategies were to be implemented in that school. While it could be implied that the gender of the principals may have some bearing on the leadership styles, my research is too small to draw appropriate conclusions (Beare et al., 1989).

The co-ordinators were very aware that they were not necessarily the literacy experts. This sometimes caused conflict or confusion when teachers expected them to know all the answers. This dependence on the co-ordinator was consistent with the findings of First Steps (ACER, 1995). In First Steps schools had Focus Teachers who had a similar role as the literacy co-ordinator in CLaSS. Research for First Steps also found that teachers depended on the Focus Teacher to be the expert (ACER, 1995).

Co-ordinators sometimes felt awkward in discussing teacher effectiveness with their colleagues in the literacy team. Likewise, teachers also found it difficult when a co-ordinator came to watch them in a literacy session. The comments provided an insight into the interactions of teachers and principals prior to CLaSS. According to participants in this study on CLaSS, teachers had not regularly watched each other teach and given critical feedback and analysis for improvement. From the comments in this study, it would seem that CLaSS had contributed to teachers becoming more involved in modelling and evaluating their teaching strategies with their peers.

Though both schools have moved past the implementation stage, the schools have continued to implement the literacy strategy and the professional learning teams according to the vision of the strategy. This demonstrated that leadership which included the literacy co-ordinator and the principal was important in sustaining the strategy beyond the first three years. The comments indicated that the instructional leadership in the two schools had literacy as a high priority and, therefore, the strategy was sustained, with or without outside assistance. Participants' comments in this chapter focused on formal leadership of the principal and literacy co-ordinator. The following two chapters illustrate the informal leadership that developed through participants implementing the strategies of the reading and writing hour and participation in the professional development model.

Chapter 8 Findings: Literacy

This chapter of the findings focuses on the themes connected to the research question: What were principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions of CLaSS as a school and sector approach to literacy? The themes in this section were derived from the participants' responses and include "reading", "writing", "oral language", "data collection and analysis of student progress" and "expert teachers of literacy". Within each theme were a number of sub themes.

8.1   Reading

8.1.1   Decoding.

In the first three years of implementing CLaSS, participants commented that students were very strong in decoding words, that is, reading words using phonics. Teacher 1 School 2 said students' ability to decode "…was fantastic… the children learned all the strategies of how to decode words and actually how to read". Teacher 2 School 1 said, "We have Grade 2s borrowing "Harry Potter" from the library, and they are reading senior school novels without any problems in terms of decoding". Co-ordinator School 2 commented, "I think that we're very good at teaching the kids how to decode and blend words". Teacher 2 School 2 said, "The Grade 2 teacher, who had something like 30 years experience in the classroom, was saying that these kids are the best seven year old readers that I have ever had in my teaching career…". Co-ordinator School 1 said, "We've found that we get to the end of Grade 1 and the beginning of Grade 2 and our children are doing really well at the decoding".

8.1.2   Barking at print.

Participants believed that while student ability to decode had improved, comprehension levels of students did not to appear to have improved after two to three years of implementation of the reading hour. Teacher 4 School 2 said, "CLaSS in the beginning was too much just decoding". "We found comprehension was really lacking", summed up Co-ordinator School 2's perspective. "Barking at print" which referred to students reading words accurately without understanding the sense of what the text was about, was also a common response from participants in relation to student reading.

"The biggest thing that we could comment on would be 'Oh! They are just barking at print'" (Teacher 5 School 2). Teacher 2 School 2 further explained that while the Grade 2 students were decoding well, "…they don't know what they are reading, and they can't answer simple questions". Teacher 2 School 1 commented, "We are only letting them decode the text. We are not challenging them to actually understand what they are reading. And so what they could read "Romeo and Juliet"! They have no idea of the subject content". Teacher 1 School 1 said, "They could read, read, read beautifully…but there was absolutely no comprehension".

8.1.3   *Teacher expertise.*

Participants stated a variety of reasons why they thought comprehension levels had not developed at the same rate as the level of decoding in the first two to three years. Participants suggested that expertise in teaching comprehension was an issue. Teacher 2 School 2 explained, "There are a lot of teachers in school, working very hard, doing great stuff, but they weren't resourced [professional knowledge] well enough to provide focused teaching in comprehension". Teacher 2 School 1, however, provided another perspective as to why comprehension levels had not improved. He stated that in the first few years of implementing CLaSS teachers were so focused on the routine; they would "…worry less about the actual activities that you do, but get into the routine". He felt that by the third year they focused more on comprehension, and less on the routine. Principal School 2 said, "… because they were so bound up in getting the structure right and those things, perhaps some of the things that we used to do, like language theory and junior teaching, didn't get used as much". Teacher 1 School 1 also felt, while teachers were very busy implementing the routine, she was sometimes frustrated when she attempted to put into place strategies for developing comprehension. She described a situation in which she explained at a professional learning team (PLT) meeting how she had conducted a session on comprehension during the reading hour in which she used a novel, rather than a big book:

> I was reading a little novel, and that was the shared reading time, and
> the comment came from one of the members [of the PLT] who said,
> "But you should have a big book, and they should be reading the

print." And I said, "My kids are, two thirds are at level 28+, and they
need comprehension. They can, every single one of my kids can
decode. It doesn't matter if they are at Level 14 or whatever, they
need comprehension". (Teacher 1 School 1)

8.1.4   *Explicit teaching of comprehension.*

In time, each school developed approaches to improve the comprehension
levels of students. Co-ordinator School 1 said, "We get to the end of Grade 1 and the
beginning of Grade 2, and children are doing really well at the *Burt Word Score*…, but
we found comprehension was really lacking". School 1 attempted to address this issue
by emphasizing explicit teaching of comprehension in the professional learning team
meetings (PLT). In the PLT, teachers discussed and reflected on the different strategies
and skills required to develop student comprehension.

Participants also looked at ways in which teachers used terminology with
students, such as in developing prediction skills. Teacher 1 School 1 explained, "We
have skilled ourselves by using the terminology and passing that terminology onto the
kids. And saying: 'This is prediction'". They also reviewed the games and activities,
they used in the reading hour and found, "That the students were only doing decoding,
and maybe, looking at the features of a sentence" (Teacher 1 School 1).

Co-ordinator School 1 explained that they developed individual student
learning plans in comprehension, and this strategy assisted in focusing on the targeted
activities for the learning encounters. They also looked at the available texts for
students, and "…started with guided reading sets at the various levels with issues and
different things in them. Just to give a bit more guts with what they were doing".
Participants also found articles in newspapers to use as shared and guided reading texts.
Comprehension was targeted in the reading hour on Wednesdays in School 1 as part of
the routine. "We have sort of made Wednesdays comprehension focused and so our
shared reading activity and our literacy encounters are directed at improving and
developing children's comprehension and understandings (Teacher 2 School 1)".

Principal School 2 commented that, "The comprehension coming from Grade 2 to Grade 3 wasn't any worse that it used to be". The difference since they implemented CLaSS was students "…could come to teachers reading, then their [referring to teachers] disappointment was that they didn't understand what they were reading. Well get in and teach them" (Principal School 2). School 2 began to address improving student comprehension levels by examining appropriate skills and strategies.

In evaluating strategies, School 2 looked at how they incorporated big books into the reading hour. After reviewing their approach, they explicitly used the big books to assist student comprehension. Teacher 3 School 2 said before reviewing their practice, they used the big books for decoding and looking at aspects of punctuation, and found "…you didn't really look at all the little components. So it's taught them [students] a lot more about comprehension through looking at the big book". They also reviewed the types of activities students were exposed to in the learning encounters and found that many of the games were focused only on decoding. They found that "…a lot of the games that we played, had a lot of decoding elements and sounds and blends" (Teacher 5 School 2). They then included activities in the literacy sessions to develop comprehension skills, such as identifying the main ideas in a passage, making predictions and hypothesizing. They also included *reciprocal reading* (Hill, 2006) and a greater variety of fiction and non fiction texts. After implementing a more explicit teaching and learning approach to comprehension, participants believed there was an improvement in student comprehension levels. Teacher 2 School 1 commented on a response from a teacher who was on leave from the school when the school had reviewed their approach to comprehension:

> She was amazed to see how much, and how many children were
> actually aware of the opinion being expressed, and aware they could
> actually say that, and that questions are inferential comprehension
> questions because that is reading between the lines.

Teacher 2 School 1 also said, "They have been doing that sort of reading in their independent reading time and at their free time at home. So it shows that they are

doing it of their own free will, so they must be enjoying it". Teacher 3 School 2 confirmed, "The comprehension has got much better. And as the years have gone by we've [the teachers] gotten better at it too".

8.1.5   *Comprehension tests.*

Participants acknowledged that there were different levels of comprehension for fictional and non-fictional texts for individual students. They recognized the need to develop different comprehension strategies for different text types. The comments on decoding and comprehension raised issues surrounding the availability of suitable standardized tests for determining comprehension levels for students. Co-ordinator School 2 said, "We don't have any tools to measure comprehension. That's the problem. So we can't really say 'Okay they're at Level 3 on comprehension but Text Level 24". The targets for reading levels for CLaSS were based on student levels for decoding and not comprehension. Participants expressed the view that there seemed to be little guidance within the CLaSS strategy as to what type of standardized test they should use to determine comprehension levels and monitor progress. School 1 experimented with a number of standardized tests, and:

> …decided on the "Torch Test" as the most effective, and was the
> easiest to sort of break down the results and say, "Okay, they are
> really only answering literal comprehension questions and they don't
> have an idea of inference". (Teacher 2 School 1)

School 2 decided to use reading benchmarking kits and developed their own questions for different levels of comprehension. Co-ordinator School 2 explained:

> With the benchmarking kits there are questions, different levels of
> questions. And we'll work something out where, if they can answer
> one question, they're not at Level 20 [Reading Recovery level].
> We've got to go back and get them to read something. And when they
> can answer four out of five of those questions, then they might be at
> true Level 15. But not to push them forward. Because we know they

can read, but there's no point in having guided reading, because they don't understand what they're reading. (Co-ordinator School 2)

8.1.6 *Pressure to achieve text levels.*

Participants said there was pressure to ensure that students reached the standards and targets set for levels of reading for CLaSS at the end of Prep, Year 1 and Year 2. Teacher 5 School 2 explained, "The biggest problem was there was this huge pressure to get everyone to Level 28. Everyone had to get to Level 28". Participants believed that students generally in Years Prep to 2 were reading texts at a much higher level than before the introduction of CLaSS. This meant that the schools constantly had to provide more interesting and varied texts. They solved this issue in part by providing more non-fiction texts.

The increased level of decoding skills in students caused some problems in finding suitable reading materials. Teacher 2 School 2 said, "Because their decoding has become that much better, it has become a challenge just to find interesting material". Teacher 5 School 2 commented:

> But you'd really have to say even if they're reading at Level 23 or 24
> [referring to Reading Recovery levels], let's look at comprehension
> with it so that they're sort of moving the same. So the two different
> skills are going hand-in-hand. (Teacher 5 School 2)

Participants acknowledged that while they focused on comprehension, they had concerns as to whether the materials were suitable for students. The following characterized their comments:

> It is a difficulty because students are learning to decode, and they're
> decoding words that you probably wouldn't have given a Prep child to
> read anyway! But now they're got the skills to decode, but of course
> they're not going to comprehend because they're not, I don't think

they've got the mental capacity to comprehend at this stage. (Teacher
2 School 2)

The texts they use at 20 [referring to level in Reading Recovery], there
is just no way that a child can relate to that and even comprehend it
because they haven't had that experience. They're not exposed to that
language and will they ever be? (Co-ordinator School 2)

8.1.7   Different climate.

Principal School 2 summarized the changes that CLaSS had made to reading
development:

I think now, we have a totally different climate, where there is a really
genuine belief that every child will read. Whereas I don't think that
existed quite so emphatically with the old approaches…I also think
that learning to read is one of the trickiest, most complex things that
we have in teaching.

8.2   Writing

8.2.1   Flexibility.

Participants confirmed that they had implemented the writing according to the
whole-group-whole structure. They felt that in the initial three years, there was more
flexibility for them in implementing the writing hour in contrast to the reading hour.
Teacher 2 School 1 explained, "I think there's more scope in the writing hour for
teachers to show creativity, to show flair, to develop, because there are less encounters
to organize, and you have got more time in the shared writing to go places".

8.2.2   Wanting more direction.

Participants said that while there was more flexibility, they were not always
sure how to effectively develop the writing session. There were different viewpoints
among the participants on the development of the writing hour: most participants

thought that they were not given enough direction and time in the professional development session to develop it. The following comments outlined participants' perspectives:

> Writing has become weak in that time because, there aren't enough people who have had that pre-existing core of knowledge around what writing is all about…we have got people who have been through the reading component and can do it well but we are now spending an hour a day on something that we don't know enough about…They [the presenters at the professional development days] only really supported what you were doing in reading. (Co-ordinator School 1)

> So we really focussed on to the reading, and everyone grabbed hold of the reading really well, but didn't grab on [to] the writing really well. Even though we had the same intentions coming into writing. (Teacher 1 School 1)

> Writing I think just didn't get the direction from Hill and Crévola, and as a consequence, it became a bit more of a something that schools have to do themselves. And they were waiting for leadership. Didn't get it from CLaSS co-ordinating team [reference to literacy advisors from Catholic Education Office Melbourne], so now the realization has come that they have to do it themselves. (Principal School 2)

Teacher 1 School 2 said that it was an advantage that, "Everyone was on the same level in terms of the playing field, which was good". She further elaborated:

> We were all starting new and bouncing off each other. Again, it took a while for all that to get set up. So for the writing to actually take place there was lots of professional development and lots of time put into

that with meetings and so on. It was very structured. (Teacher 1 School 2)

8.2.3 Reviewing and developing strategies.

After the initial year of implementation of the writing session, participants identified and implemented different strategies in the writing hour. The strategies included: developing explicit teaching moments on phonics to aid reading as well as writing; grammar and different genres; encouraging more oral language opportunities; implementing a process for drafting and publishing written pieces; developing writing outside the writing hour in inquiry units of learning in other areas of the curriculum; and placing more emphasis on teacher modelling of writing to students. Participants said they organized students in mixed and same ability groups. Participants also attended outside professional development and brought in an expert to work with teachers on strategies in writing. Teacher 2 School 1 explained that an overall strategy was to draw on aspects of past writing approaches as teachers "…recognized that there was some good work in writing and process writing and things like that. That [these past approaches] had been producing better quality writers than readers". He added that teachers who had "…been teaching for a long time, had processes in place that they were comfortable with and they thought were successful" (Teacher 2 School 1). Participants discussed student writing and looked at strategies for specific areas. Teacher 5 School 2 explained:

> We were saying in their writing they're not using punctuation, they're
> not using expression, they're not using talking marks, they're not
> doing script writing…So we've introduced dictation. Today I gave it
> to them and said, "I'm not going to tell you where the talking marks
> are. I'm going to change my voice so that you know where it is and
> that's how you're supposed to do it with your script writing". Looking
> at their work now you go, "Wow! They can do it now". Whereas in
> the beginning of the year they had no idea.

8.2.4   Genres.

Co-ordinator School 1, though valuing the role of free [choice] writing explained the use of the genre approach. "We have I think, we feel this year we've moved a bit away from just the whole free writing. We still do free writing, but differently. " She elaborated:

> Free writing is still advocated where the children have the chance to explore or do whatever sort of writing they want, and that's great, but you still need to teach different styles of writing in order to choose free writing. So that's where we really feel we were teaching different styles of writing, but we weren't unpacking them so much. (Co-ordinator School 1)

Teacher 2 School 2 also found that the writing hour was more difficult to implement, as she had to be more directive, than in past approaches, of the type of genres that students engaged in:

> You were directing them to do what you wanted them to do. If you wanted them to write a story, they had to write a story. They couldn't just write anything. So if you are doing reports, they had to write a report. Previously you'd say, "Go and write some sentences". But now if you were doing a story, they had to actually go and write a story for you. (Teacher 2 School 2)

8.2.5   Measuring improvement.

Participants said there was no measure, except teacher observation, to monitor writing. Principal School 1 said that through the implementation of the reading hour, teachers noticed an improvement in reading that was measured against the Reading Recovery text levels. These text levels became the accepted school and sector indicator of progress for students in reading. He felt the difficulty of measuring improvement in writing was, "There hasn't been any measure, that I am aware of, that has been put up for writing so you could say that we are doing well with writing".

8.2.6   Spelling.

Spelling was an aspect of writing that both schools examined after the initial implementation of the writing hour. The importance that teachers placed on developing student skills in spelling in the writing hour varied among teachers at both schools. Teacher 5 School 2 commented, "I found in this particular school some people believe in doing spelling. Some people believe in not doing spelling". Teacher 2 School 1 also said:

> A lot of teachers think they can't teach spelling in CLaSS, but I don't know why, but within our school, and a fair amount of other schools that I know of, there are people who think that you are not allowed to teach spelling during the CLaSS writing sessions.

He added, "You can't have a focus on spelling words. It is something we weren't focusing very much on. Spelling, other than those frequently used words lists initially … was sort of incidental" (Teacher 2 School1). Both schools had an initial focus on word lists, including high-frequency words, as the main strategy for spelling when they first implemented CLaSS:

> There was a big focus in the junior school on the most used words… like 100 most used words and 101 to 200 and up to 800. They sort of used that as a marker of how well the kids are progressing in spelling. (Teacher 2 School 1)

> If a child is really having a lot of difficulty, we select maybe the top 10. Gave them the top ten words, and there might be 100 most used words. We just gave them 10 depending on how much they can cope with. (Teacher 5 School 2)

8.2.7   Spelling strategies.

After implementing CLaSS for two to three years, both schools commenced using a variety of other strategies through focused teaching as a school approach to

develop students' skills in spelling in the writing hour. Teacher 5 School 2 explained one such strategy as, "We do the method where we tick the correct letters, and we might leave a space, and the child has to go back and find out what the letter is". Other strategies used in both schools included: spelling games; individual word lists; grouping words into word families; using teaching clinics to address spelling issues for individual or groups of students; using spelling processes, such as "Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check"; and looking at letter blends and difficult sounds in words.

8.2.8 *Better spellers?*

While participants said that, in general, the level of student writing had improved, they had some concerns as to whether the spelling levels had improved. Teacher 1 School 2 said she "…had about five children now who are below what's expected for their age in spelling". Teacher 3 School 2 said, "I think the kids are better readers, better writers. Those are the strengths. I don't know about spelling….I think spelling the old way is better". Teacher 2 School 1 said that spelling was an area often complained about, "They can't spell as well as when I was at school…We get that all the time." Teacher 2 School 2 said:

> Most of the Preps are understanding the 'th' and 'sh' so they are well
> on their way. But it's making sure of that progress and combinations,
> as they move through. Because that's the only way they're going to
> become competent spellers. There was a teacher who brought in a
> piece of writing. He said, "I don't know what to do with him! Look at
> his writing. It's just terrible. Look at all the spelling mistakes". We
> looked at it. There were marks on it. And we said, "Read it to us".
> Well! It was an awesome story and we all went, "Oh my goodness!
> Look at that child write! It's absolutely fantastic!" So we talked about
> how far we had come. And we looked at these ideas.

8.3   Oral Language

8.3.1   Explicit teaching.

In the whole-group-whole structure of CLaSS, oral language was developed throughout the reading and writing hour. Both schools, after the first two years, saw the need to emphasize the role of oral language in developing reading and writing skills. Co-ordinator School 1 explained that they noticed that students with lower reading results had poor oral language skills as well. After implementing explicit activities for developing oral language, "We're finding our lower group in Grade 1, as we have been pushing the oral language activities; their reading is slowly starting to improve. They are still lower than the others are, but we're really seeing a big improvement" (Co-ordinator School 1).

At the end of both the reading and writing hour, teachers encouraged students to explain what they had learnt in the literacy session. Teacher 1 School 2 said that some students had difficulty in explaining orally what they had learnt. "The key [was] to get them [the students] to go over what it was they did learn. I did this activity, and I had to write the words. That kind of thing" (Teacher 1 School 2). She identified, "It's such a hard concept to articulate what you [referring to students] did learn" (Teacher 1 School 2). She felt the shared time was an important strategy for both oral language and writing development. Principal School 2 said that the reading and writing hour involved, "…all the techniques of good infant teaching: language experience… and those sorts of things". Teacher 2 School 2 summarized the importance of oral language for the development of reading and writing:

> I think a big emphasis needs to be on oral language and getting to
> understand the structure of sentences correctly. So they're getting
> some meaning out of spoken words, and once they get that, if you're
> reading it, hopefully they can make sense out of that and make that
> connection between the spoken and written. And it all has meaning. I
> think it's a process.

8.3.2 Spontaneous oral language and play.

Participants stated the two-hour literacy block impacted on their capacity to respond spontaneously to experiences, such as a student wanting to talk about a particular event and opportunities for students to be engaged in self-directed play activities. Participants said that some teachers in their school were concerned about this issue and tried to address this through bringing more toys into the literacy room. Participants incorporated play sessions into the group activities from time to time. This was not quite self-directed play, though as explained by Teacher 3 School 2, "You still needed the parents there to guide them into what you want them to do in play. You couldn't just say to them, 'Go and play!' You wanted them to actually learn something from that play". Participants also used other times in the school program for children to discuss areas of interest that arose on a daily basis. They scheduled times in the afternoon when students could bring in or talk about items of interest, and they informed parents of times for these *show and tell* sessions.

Teacher 1 School 1 elaborated that teachers implementing CLaSS "…no longer know the music of our children and the art of our children". Often when she was on yard duty, her students came up to her, and she found out what was happening in their lives. In the literacy program, she had to be "…focused on task the whole time" (Teacher 1 School 1).

8.4 Data Collection and Analysis of Student Progress

8.4.1 Initial challenges.

A significant element in implementing CLaSS was the collection and analysis of data. The data collection was used for analysing student progress, informing future learning, and for school and sector accountability (Ainley & Fleming, 2000). Participants spoke about the initial difficulties in collecting data that were represented in the following comments:

You did the pre-testing, but you didn't fully appreciate what the information gave you. And you weren't sufficiently trained to use the

information, that it gave you properly anyway. It was just a learning

process. "Okay do it, because you will learn from it and you will be

better next year". (Teacher 2 School 1)

Initially I didn't really understand CLaSS, and I was more in the first

few years feeling, "Oh my god! I have to do all this testing! I've got to

finish by a certain time!" And it was a lot of pressure not knowing the

reasons why you were doing it or how to use these results. You would

come to the professional learning team and other teachers would say,

"I've finished my verbs. Or I've finished dictation". And I would go,

"Oh I'm only half way through". It would be like a panic thing.

(Teacher 5 School 2)

8.4.2   *Value of data collection.*

As the participants learnt more about the purpose of the data collection, they

valued the data collection and analysis process. The following are representative

comments:

I learnt the value of analysis of the actual running records, the value of

running records themselves. Even though it was something that I had

done across the years on my own, having it where you could share

them like a set language with somebody else is far more beneficial.

(Teacher 1 School 1)

The data collection was very useful because ….you were able to

gauge what a student is able to do and use that as a focus of your

teaching. If some were very low in their record of oral language, then

we had to do more listening skills. (Teacher 4 School 2)

Teacher 2 School 1 said, "That it was probably not really until our second year

that we got more directed in terms of what we did with our data". Once having

understood the purpose of the data collection, Teacher 4 School 2 said, "It certainly

showed us the students were capable of a lot more than they were doing pre-CLaSS. Pre-CLaSS they were doing the spelling like rat, sat, pat and sat, and now they are doing such difficult words".

8.4.3 *Under the microscope.*

While participants recognized that the collection and use of data did have its benefits, participants raised anxiety about situations in which the data showed no or poor improvement in student literacy levels; or the possibility of this occurring. Teacher 1 School 2 described from a teacher's perspective the use of data in literacy as "…you're always under the microscope to see how you're performing". Teacher 2 School 1 explained that this type of situation had the potential to be isolating for the teacher. He added:

It would stand out a lot because we have had situations this year
where CLaSS data has been used against teachers. In open forums and
as a basis of comparison of teacher performance, and it was an
uncomfortable situation to be in. I was just glad I wasn't that teacher.
It was turned against them, like they collected their data on their
students, and that was compared to previous year's data of the same
time period and things like that. So it definitely can be used to
highlight teachers. (Teacher 2 School 1)

Co-ordinator School 1 reflected on her feelings and the role of data, and their possible relationship to poor student performance:

Would I get the sack? I wonder. Look, data is not always going to be
fantastic. It would stress me out. I'm not going to pretend it wouldn't,
but in the end data isn't the be all and end all. You would have to look
at a lot of things. You would have to look at the staff. You would have
to look at why isn't the data any good, what were the underpinning
things that were happening at the same time, and go from there. And
you would have to look at your pre-imposed [targets] because the data

may be crappy [sic], but the child may have made really good progress, or that group really good progress. Or two out of three may have, and you would have to look at that third one and reassess the whole situation. Or it could be me as the co-ordinator, but I don't think though the co-ordinator could have that much influence.

Principal School 1 said that the advantage of a continuous collection of data was that it formed the basis for discussing different approaches with individual teachers. "Your performance levels are here, and other kids in other classes are there. It's not that your kids are dumber, it is not anything. CLaSS proves that the cohort has minimal impact. What is the problem? It's your teaching" (Principal School 1). Teacher 3 School 2 said, "You have just got those kinds of kids [sic] and teach them a bit more. Some are going to get it, some won't. You can only do your best. We try every avenue". Teacher 2 School 2 also said:

Statistics are random and static. Today they might mean something, but tomorrow they mean nothing. And so it's just a guide. We take them seriously, but I don't think we're going to get hung up if we've got a couple of kids who don't get there. We just think, "Okay, what do we need to do?"

Teacher 2 School 2 raised concerns about pushing students along to meet the targets set for literacy levels at the end of Prep, Year 1 and Year 2:

Even in early December we had kids that looked like they weren't going to get there. We were told that we had to focus on them totally and really bump them along. And I just felt is that really worthwhile? Is it better to accept that that's where they finished the year and start again next year?

She elaborated further:

I don't think it was personally attributed, like you're not doing the
right job. But on the other hand it wasn't a case of, "Well we've done
what we can this year. Let's earmark those children and make sure
that they're focused on this year…" It wasn't that way. It was, "What
are we going to do now to get them going?" And it was a real mad
panic to push these kids along. And you felt if they hadn't got there
through the normal structure, pushing them isn't going to help. It
might get them up for a week or two, but they're not going to retain it.
(Teacher 2 School 2)

8.4.4   *Meeting individual needs.*

An important part of CLaSS was the targets set for school and sector
accountability in literacy (Ainley & Fleming 2000). The targets were based on Reading
Recovery levels (Hill, 2006). Participants said that the use of data in literacy provided
teachers with a guide as to where students were in different aspects of literacy, enabled
teachers to plan and implement explicit teaching sessions for individual and groups of
students, provided justification for the literacy strategies and approaches used with
students, assisted in grouping students for activities and informed teachers of individual
strengths and weakness in literacy. The use of data also assisted teachers in the early
identification of at-risk students who required intervention strategies. Co-ordinator
School 1 explained:

So what has happened is that we have gotten better at identifying
those needs in the classroom ourselves having done this for a number
of years now. We are better able to identify which kids have similar
problems to ones we have had before and have had referred on. And
we are doing more referrals ourselves now. With the amount of
referrals and the amount of kids that are coming back with various
results that need attention and support. And so they are seeing that it is
the way that we go about it. It is effective.

Principal School 2 also felt that the improved use of data by teachers within the school was significant in identifying students with genuine learning difficulties:

It enabled us to identify children who had genuine learning difficulties much earlier, and so now…30 of them are on intervention programs. We've got a large number diagnosed with severe-language disorders who would have just drifted through, because once you do your testing at the end of Prep and the Reading Recovery, and still some kids aren't coming on, you've got to do the next lot of assessments, whereas [in the past] those kids drift through and just get lost. So in about Grades 3 and 4 people used to say they are very naughty and not concentrating in class. Or perhaps, if they were lucky, something would have been done.

8.4.5   *Celebrating success.*

Teacher 2 School 2 explained, "You celebrate the ones that get there. We're quite proud that in our two Preps, all the kids are on texts. That's quite an achievement. Whether or not they're on target [meeting the text levels set for the year level] is irrelevant". Teacher 1 School 1 explained, "I'm thinking back to when I taught that [when] there was no data so to speak that everyone got to read, so no one ever knew if I was making progress with my Preps or not". Teacher 5 School 2 said that before the introduction of CLaSS, students often received the same spelling words, where as, "Now it's more, 'These are their needs, and let's take them that way…'I think my class has definitely changed overall, and how I divide my time and the sorts of activities that the children are doing'". Co-ordinator School 2 summarized how the data collection had assisted teachers in literacy. She said, "You're looking for more answers: 'Why isn't he reading? Why isn't he recognizing the sight words…' And you're constantly asking those questions because the data is showing that nothing much is happening. That's why I value data because it has forced me to do that".

8.5   Teachers of Literacy

Participants spoke strongly of their own improved ability to be explicit about student learning in literacy. Participants believed that, having implemented CLaSS, they were more skilled in identifying where students were "at", and what was necessary to move students to further learning. This improvement was attributed to having professional learning teams where they engaged with colleagues in regular discussion, reflection and analysis of student learning and through data. Implementing learning and teaching strategies that were more explicit also assisted improvement. Teacher 1 School 1 expressed a new sense of professionalism in literacy that came from being more explicit when she explained to a team of doctors the learning difficulties of a particular student:

> We sat around the table as professionals. I remember not long after that the principal got us an actual big table rather than teachers sitting around at little tables and chairs. And we looked at ourselves as professionals and [thinking], "Okay. This is what we are". (Teacher 1 School 1)

Principal School 2 expressed this sense of professionalism as, "We talk about the structure, but it's the implementation by the actual staff members who feel good about what they're achieving with kids, because they know that they are doing a professional job". Participants said that the strategies, such as shared reading and modelled writing outlined in the CLaSS strategy, were very helpful in understanding student progress in literacy. Co-ordinator School 2 reflected the responses:

> A lot of it before CLaSS was really hit and miss. There wasn't a lot of focus teaching-small group focus teaching. If I felt that there was a child that struggled, okay, I hear them read a bit more. Or I'd organize parents to come in and hear them read. But as far as strategies go, I felt that the strategies were really hit and miss. Now I know that I want to do a session with a child. I know why I'm doing it. I know what strategy to use.

8.6   Analysis

8.6.1   Reading.

Participants affirmed the findings of reports (Ainley & Fleming, 2000, 2003) that CLaSS as a literacy strategy had made an improvement in student ability to decode words. Clay (1979) and Juel et al. (1986) affirmed the importance of phonics and decoding skills as the foundational skills for reading in the early years of schooling. While participants valued decoding and the need to explicitly teach it, their experiences in implementing CLaSS raised issues about comprehension.

There was concern as to what level of decoding the students should reach in the first three years of schooling. In early implementation participants said that comprehension in students was weak despite strong decoding skills. Participants said that increasingly higher text levels meant that often students read texts that were significantly beyond their comprehension or interest levels. They also identified different comprehension levels for fiction and non-fiction books that students reached. This was consistent with Rosenblatt (1983) who identified differences in comprehension levels for different text types.

Participants recognized the role of decoding and comprehension in the two stages of reading development. They said students tended first to develop skills in decoding and then developed comprehension (Fries, 1965). While a number of studies (Beck & Juel, 1994; Byrne, 1998; Chall, 1983, 1996; Samuels et al., 1994; Snow et al., 1998) demonstrated the importance of students being able to decode words in the early years of schooling, participants found phonics only took a student so far in early reading development. This was consistent with the findings of Zimmermann and Brown (2003) who advocated that comprehension skills were a better predictor of reading skills. Significantly, the comments suggested that the interaction of the Freebody and Luke's (1990) four components to reading was not effectively implemented in the instructional practices incorporated into the literacy block.

Participants experienced a professional tension in the definition of successful reading when defined in terms of text levels that indicated ability to decode (Ainley & Fleming, 2000, 2003). Participants noted improvement in comprehension when together with their colleagues they focused on teaching strategies. They were, however, not convinced that a narrow focus on decoding skills was helpful for the development of comprehension skills.

8.6.2 *Expertise in comprehension.*

Participants said that their own expertise in teaching comprehension was not as effective as in teaching phonics and decoding. There was a realization by participants that they were not confident, or at least explicit, in the teaching of comprehension prior to CLaSS. This may have occurred, as suggested by Beck and Juel (1994), because many past strategies used by classroom teachers did not develop effective reading skills in all students. Participants evaluated a number of strategies they had been used in the past for comprehension. This evaluation assisted them in understanding when and why to use a strategy more effectively. Constant evaluation of student progress helped them to establish what strategies and levels of student support were required. They identified strategies that Louden et al. (2005) found are effectively used by excellent teachers, such as giving feedback, effective questioning techniques and clarity in explanations. Snow et al. (1998) found that student comprehension levels could also be improved through emphasis on vocabulary instruction, repetition, and exposure to vocabulary. Participants, however, did not highlight this strategy. It can, however, be inferred from their comments about oral language development that they were developing word vocabulary through strategies, such as the language-experience approach (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

The comments from participants demonstrate the journey that they had undertaken in their own professional development in reading. Initially, they were focused on teaching phonics. Participants attributed this focus to the pressure of implementing the routine of the reading hour and ensuring that student reading matched the text levels that were set for each year level. As Louden et al. (2005) found,

participants said they became more effective when they improved their own ability to teach comprehension.

Louden et al. (2005) investigated effective practices in teaching reading in the early years of schooling. Louden et al. (2005) found that while effective teachers ensured that phonics was taught, they also focused on text level features and comprehension of texts that were incorporated with top-down approaches. They found that less effective literacy teachers were frequently observed to teach phonics as an isolated activity. Less effective teachers also provided poor explanations in teaching the elements of reading, and had little emphasis on the comprehension of the text (Louden et al., 2005). Freebody and Luke (1990) suggested that an effective reading (and writing) approach engaged students in breaking the code of texts, participated in the meaning of text, used text functionally and critically analysed and transformed texts. Participants' comments suggested there was not a strong focus on this interaction.

8.6.3   *Writing.*

Overall participants said that there was more flexibility in the writing hour than the reading hour. At the same time they said there was not enough direction in what they were expected to do in the writing hour. As in comprehension they addressed this issue by evaluating different strategies. Participants were engaged in a practice of self-directed action research through trialling, reflecting, and evaluating the writing hour. They were also focused on genres in writing and ensuring that the different types were developed. Participants indicated, however, that initially they gave students more opportunities for free writing rather than genre writing.

8.6.4   *Spelling.*

The comments on spelling indicated that participants had implemented a number of strategies. Participants identified that students also required a classroom climate where they were encouraged to take risks with spelling in order to develop writing skills (Winch et al, 2005). Participants had various views on the use of spelling lists and whether student' spelling levels had improved. Their views mirrored debates about the use of spelling lists. Smith and Elley (1998) identified that high-frequency

words were essential words for students to learn in the process of learning to read and write. Traditional spelling lists have been identified as unhelpful and even regressive for some students, while lists developed from a student's own writing contributed to improving student spelling (Smith & Elley, 1998; Spencer & Hay, 1998). Like the participants in the research study, Brock (1997) cautioned that traditionally some teachers and the wider community believed the myth that spelling, along with other aspects of literacy, was always better in the past. Participants found, like Bouffler (1997), that learning to spell was a complex process, which involved proficient knowledge of both oral and written language.

8.6.5   *Oral language.*

Participants said the development of oral language was essential in enhancing both reading and writing development. (Hill, 2006; Louden et al., 2005; Smith & Elley, 1998; Snow et al., 1998; Winch et al, 2005). Hill (2006) said the way teachers interact with students through talking was important as students required opportunities and time to express ideas and personal thoughts as part of their literacy development. Students also learnt more effectively when they interacted with adults, peers and their environments (Department of Western Australia, 1995). While participants said that some aspects of literacy, such as self-directed play and show and tell sessions for developing oral language were not sufficiently addressed in the literacy block, it highlighted that not all literacy development in CLaSS was necessarily contained within the literacy block: literacy continued to be developed in other learning areas throughout the day. Participants commented on the importance of play in developing oral language Similarly, Hill (2006) noted that when students engaged in play they were, "…often experimenting with words, rules, and ideas while also engaging in risk taking, and this leads to achieving higher levels of cognitive functioning" (p. 41).

The profiles on the two schools showed that there were a number of students from an ESL background. Oral language development was recognized as a foundation for literacy (Snow et al., 1998). Participants did not comment on whether the development of oral language for ESL students had a bearing on literacy outcomes, particularly in comprehension or writing.

8.6.6   Standardized testing.

Linked to the challenges of comprehension and writing was the lack of available sector tests for measuring progress in comprehension and writing. As described in the literature review, a range of tests, such as the "Observation Survey" (Clay, 1993), was used in CLaSS to monitor student progress in a range of literacy skills, though not for comprehension or writing. The testing of decoding skills, rather than comprehension, in CLaSS mirrored the opinions of some educators that decoding skills were a predictor of later skills in comprehension and overall reading ability (Beck & Juel, 1994); though other educators argued that comprehension level was a better predictor for reading (Zimmermann & Brown, 2003). It could be inferred that the strategy designers for CLaSS only saw decoding as essential for sector-wide testing.

While each school developed their own solution, the sector effectiveness of CLaSS may have been weakened by not having a common comprehension test in which progress was assessed against a standardized measure. Smith and Elley (1998) believed, however, that it was difficult to produce a standardized test to reliably measure a range of text types for silent reading comprehension. Jackson and Coltheart (2001) found that some tests were better than others in providing specific information on comprehension development.

The assessment of writing progress was an important issue and from the participants' perceptions remained unresolved. At the sector level, the testing of writing progress in CLaSS had limitations in effectively measuring the literacy success. Graves (1983), however, advocated that rather than standardized tests teachers needed to constantly observe student writing and analyse writing samples to inform students about their writing and measure their improvement.

8.6.7   Using data.

Data collection was an important feature in CLaSS. The comments from the participants supported the importance of data-driven instruction (Crévola & Hill, 2005a) or fine-grained knowledge of each student that teachers constantly used to inform

classroom practice (Louden et al., 2005). Harris and Muijs (2005), through case studies, identified that where schools engaged in data collection and analysis, they were able to inform future student learning and contribute towards establishing best practice within the school. Best practice for literacy, was described by Louden et al. (2005) as teachers who "…find out what children know and what they need to learn so that instruction can be targeted at individual points of need" (p. 121). The comments on data suggested that participants found that they were more attuned to student needs than they were prior to CLaSS and that the data analysis constantly informed further teaching practices. This was consistent with one of the key beliefs in CLaSS: that for students to improve, teachers required high expectations of all students (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). This belief was linked to the idea of the zone of proximal development in which "…effective teachers also make a habit of monitoring their students' progress so that they can ensure that each student is always working within his or her level of challenge" (Crévola & Hill, 2005a, p.12). The comments demonstrated that the data analysis assisted teachers in maintaining high expectations and effective teaching of literacy. Louden et al. (2005) noted that less effective teachers did not clearly link learning and assessment.

Participants said that the use of evidence-based assessment had increased their skills in identifying students who needed further intervention at an earlier stage. Participants said the data collection, though, had its downside. Participants were concerned that if the results for their own students were not good, it potentially identified them as ineffective teachers and consequently could be professionally embarrassing. Participants implied that the professional learning environment was not always supportive which was in contrast to the elements required for the formation of an effective learning climate (Hord, 1996). Studies, such as Edmonds (1979) and Hattie (2003), however, indicated that effective teachers made a difference to student learning outcomes. The participants' comments demonstrated the need to provide a supportive environment that also challenged their beliefs on literacy.

8.6.8 *Expert teachers of literacy.*

The strategies that were incorporated into the literacy session demonstrated that participants had a wide range of strategies, such as genre and process writing, explicit

teaching, and other student directed learning approaches. This demonstrated that participants had also increased their level of expertise as teachers of literacy in some areas. The research data overall showed that in areas, such as comprehension and writing, the improvement was not as significant and consequently, participants were not as confident. This was consistent with the research of Louden et al. (2005). Their research found that effective teachers of literacy used a range of strategies directed by student needs. Harris and Muijs (2005) also identified factors that were consistent with the strategies participants used in implementing literacy. These factors included focusing on student improvement through scrutinizing learning and teaching approaches, collecting and reviewing data, and engaging in professional dialogue and development. Muijs and Harris (2005) contributed these factors to higher levels of professionalism or teacher knowledge of literacy.

Overall, participants reflected that the different requirements for literacy in CLaSS had contributed to improving their own literacy teaching and their understanding of how and when strategies should be employed and that data assisted them in effective teaching. While there was no data collected within the research to suggest that the spelling, writing or comprehension levels had improved it indicated that through the literacy strategy participants were involved in informal school-based action research (Guskey, 2002; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). They tried strategies, evaluated them and then became more proficient in that aspect as teachers of literacy. Participants commented, however, that with new members coming into the team, they were constantly revisiting reading, and never really developed or understood the writing hour. The issues surrounding new members in the literacy team was a recurring issue in the responses from the participants in the study. New members, whether experienced or inexperienced in CLaSS, presented problems in the implementation of the literacy block. This issue is further explored in the next chapter that looks at participants' perceptions of the professional development model in CLaSS.

Chapter 9 Findings: Professional Development

This chapter focuses on the second question in the research: What were principals', literacy co-ordinators', and teachers' perceptions on the professional development model in CLaSS? The participants' responses provided the themes that arose. The themes were "off-site professional development", "professional learning teams", "synergy within the model" and "beyond implementation". Within each theme were a number of sub themes.

9.1   Off-site Professional Development

9.1.1   Shared vision.
Participants said that literacy teams were initially enthusiastic about the professional development component of CLaSS particularly the off-site sessions. This enthusiasm came from the recognition that the literacy team was part of a new vision for literacy. Teacher 2 School 1 commented, "I think one of the really strong points for us in the beginning was that we had a completely new team, all learning together, none of us had done CLaSS before".

Participants felt that attending the off-site sessions allowed the team to develop a shared vision about literacy in their school. Teacher 1 School 1 said, "I love the fact that everybody was there working together…with their eye on the same ball". Teacher 3 School 2 commented, "Instead of trying to come back and explain to those that didn't go what it was like. I think it's better that all the teachers involved go to the professional development". Co-ordinator School 1 explained that the off-site session were worthwhile because:

> You're hearing the same things and coming back then with the same
> understanding. You would get excited together because as you sat
> there and listened, "Oh we could take that and do that and those sorts
> of things".

Participants valued developing a shared vision through the team experience, though there were sometimes, as Teacher 5 School 2 acknowledged, different interpretations of the key messages between the team members. One advantage of the whole team attending the professional development, she felt, was that it allowed the team to further clarify the key messages:

> It's really hard when you're talking to people on a one-on-one, I think. People interpret things in a way that they want to interpret things. But when you hear it in a group, you have an opportunity to say, "What did they say? And what do you think they meant?" (Teacher 5 School 2)

9.1.2   *Gathering and sharing ideas.*

Teacher 1 School 2 said that the off-site sessions were, "…very full on and you walked away with so many ideas". Participants also commented that despite the intensity of the sessions, there were a number of aspects that they enjoyed about the off-site sessions, such as gathering ideas about literacy strategies. Co-ordinator School 1 said, "You had small group stuff [sic]. You went off and really learnt the different reading strategies and got to unpack them and work with them, and we had a lot of time". Teacher 3 School 2 found, "We took a lot of ideas and people shared their difficulties, what worked and what didn't work. That was helpful". Teacher 4 School 2 commented that the sessions helped her to understand how different strategies could be implemented:

> They had videos and things that showed – it was a bit… you were coming away thinking, "Eww! [sic] this is going to be a lot of work!" But it was good in the way that they conducted a lesson as you would conduct it, and we gained a lot through seeing it in practice, and we thought that that was a lot better than reading it from notes on what was expected. (Teacher 4 School 2)

Teacher 2 School 1 said that while the content of the sessions was not always useful, discussing ideas with teachers from other schools made the sessions worthwhile, "…because we could talk to them, ask them, 'Do you use this? Do you actually do this in the classroom? What they are talking about now. Have you any experience of that?' And so forth".

Teacher 5 School 2 said the off-site sessions would have been strengthened if there had been sufficient allocation of time for the literacy team to discuss the ideas presented in order to develop the collective learning of the team. Participants' shared views on this issue were that while the information presented was interesting, they preferred the interaction with each other which allowed them to discuss literacy strategies and ideas that were relevant to their own school context:

> And it was sit and listen, sit and listen. Interesting to hear the
> statistics, because Carmel [Crévola] would quote the statistics at us,
> and that was all well and good. And I used to say that's fantastic,
> obviously it works. But any focus teaching does work. And she
> proved that. She's putting people in the position where they have to do
> it. Stop telling us about the statistics, and give us sessions where
> you're giving us hands on resources and models that we can use.
> Because by the time we get to the afternoon, we'd have a really great
> session with someone, but you'd only have that short time in the
> afternoon to get your head around it, because the morning was taken
> up by keynote speakers and statistics. We're here because our school
> has accepted that we're doing this. "We're here to learn. So don't
> throw statistics at us!" You'd go out for a whole day, and you'd come
> back, and you'd feel that you'd only gained a little information.
> (Teacher 2 School 2)

Teacher 2 School 2, though not totally convinced of the importance of data and statistics in literacy, showed that her understanding of statistics from the off-site session had made some impact on implementation in the classroom:

We have that information [reference to school data on literacy] just before our Prep Information Night for this year a couple of weeks ago. It was just saying where we stood in relation to other schools, and our results were very positive in light of those. I think from a teaching point of view they're worthwhile in that, you're seen as, "Yes, the kids are up there". With the way education is going with this State criteria and levels and standards, you want to be seen, and see that, "Yes, we're up there". And if not, you need to make changes to your planning and programming to help the kids move up. (Teacher 2 School 2)

9.1.3   *Trialling strategies.*

As part of the off-site sessions, teachers were sometimes required to trial strategies back at the school. Participants described this component of the sessions as valuable team learning experiences. The following is a comment on this aspect of the off-site sessions:

I think we were expected to trial it [a strategy]. And then come back and they'd go: "How did you go trialling it?" Which was very useful. The more that you'd practise doing something the more often you would do it. (Teacher 1 School 2)

Participants commented that, at times, not all teachers were receptive to evaluating strategies because they felt that their participation in the literacy strategy had been forced on them:

I think we found when we went to off-site PD [professional development]; a lot of the teachers that were there had already put up a brick wall before they sat down. They were very confident in their own abilities and very stuck in their ways in a lot of cases, and, "Look, we are only doing this because we are getting funding. We have to be here. Our principal sent us, and it is not our choice. And we

are choosing not to respond". And their focus became more on what food they would bring to the day, and not what the day was all about. (Teacher 2 School 1)

Co-ordinator School 2 suggested that if the theory presented in the off-site sessions did not match where the school was in their implementation, then it was difficult to trial ideas suggested from the theory. She said, "They say, 'Go back to your school and have a try at doing this…'. We're not ready to do that, so I'm not ready to do some of the things they ask. I can't. I go back and feel unprepared for the session".

9.1.4 *Preferred learning styles.*

Participants had different preferences as to what they liked about the off-site sessions. Teacher 1 School 2 thought, "It's so good just to get out and see how other people are coping with it as well. And again, you'd be writing notes of ideas that you hadn't thought of". Teacher 5 School 2 liked to choose workshops and made the following comment:

They are very much up there with professional talking. I'd like to see more workshops. I'd like to own things. I've been to a few workshops where they've had the guest speaker talking, and they've just come from America, or whatever! And they've told us the latest. But I liked it when you go to a workshop, and you can choose the workshop that you want to go to. And you get different ideas from the other teachers. You can take ideas back to another school that you've seen. I found that really important. (Teacher 5 School 2)

Teacher 5 School 2 said that generally when you went to a professional development session that you often received materials. She preferred a demonstration of a strategy and then to be engaged in professional discussion around it, before implementing the strategy in the classroom:

Unless it was something I could use in the classroom, a game or something that they had got and I thought it was fantastic, I could probably guarantee 99% of the time I didn't use it. It just ended up going into a file and saying , "I'll look at that later". If they were a friend, you'd share something. But I found, for me, the most valuable way of learning was to go out there, myself, with others. …I think you really have to go out and see a school or go out and do a hands-on thing instead of having someone come in and say, "I went to an in-service and here are the hand outs". If someone was to go out, and they were going to show a video, then the staff would need to talk about it and have a bit of a discussion. I don't really just want to know that John has gone on an in-service and had a day off. To me, "Lucky you! What about it?" (Teacher 5 School 2)

Principal School 1 further illustrated this. He said that the professional development sessions lacked planning and focus and suggested that teachers preferred action research and less input from theory:

And their model of design for presentation of PD seems to have been divided at an ad hoc basis rather than a specific design over the three years of the project. It was always a bit weak. To me I always thought that they didn't nail it …But they were dependent on the availability of people and all of those sorts of things, but they should have done the professional development as an action inquiry, an action research, rather than more and more input. (Principal School 1)

Co-ordinator School 2 said that while the professional development for co-ordinators was quite good; there were some issues with catering for different needs:

And it's really hard because even at the cluster meetings, you've got new schools. And you've got schools that have been in there from the beginning. And not only that, co-ordinators too! Co-ordinators have

changed over the years, so they're at different stages of their learning. But I think it's been good to have the PD just to network and have a look at what they're doing. (Co-ordinator School 2)

9.1.5   *Relevancy of the content.*

There were differing views from the participants about the relevancy of the actual content of these professional development days. Teacher 2 School 1 said that while it was good to have sessions removed from the school environment, "…as we went through we [participants] were sort of … more and more critical not of the model of the professional development, but of the content". He further elaborated:

We found that perhaps the content lacked the quality that we were expecting, but the actual fact that we went off-site, that we were immersed in with a whole group of other teachers of similar situations, was helpful. (Teacher 2 School 1)

Teacher 1 School 1 said while she valued the content in the off-site sessions, she observed that not all teachers valued it:

Sometimes, the challenges in it were, for some, they didn't see the value in it. I was very excited about it. I had just come back into teaching. I was always seeing the value in teachers gathering, someone presenting something, and even if you say, "I didn't like what she was saying".

The principals had different views on the value of the content. Principal School 1 said, "My teachers would come away, the ones that had been there in say year three [third year of the implementation], would say, '…that was awful, I could have done better myself'". He elaborated that some presenters were not strong in literacy and that there was a constant change in the team of presenters from the Catholic Education Office Melbourne:

> If you expect teachers to learn, you need to teach them by modelling
> the process you want them to use, and if you lecture at them or
> someone else talks to them, how do you expect them to learn that
> process? I don't think that all those people were as strong in literacy,
> as they could have been …And they had a significant turnover in that
> team too…And they had lots of changes in leadership too.

Principal School 2 also acknowledged that not every teacher from her school was positive about the professional development. She thought that there was benefit in reinforcing key ideas about the literacy strategy even if some teachers felt it was too repetitive:

> The support from the system [reference to Catholic Education Office
> Melbourne] in terms of PD, there has been a real commitment in terms
> of resources put into it. Some people don't like it because they see it
> as fairly repetitive. But it's sticking to the structure and that kind of
> thing. Teachers would come in and say, "They talked about the design
> brief again!" But there was really good reasons for that reinforcing,
> reinforcing and reinforcing. The research shows that you've really got
> to go over and over things. (Principal School 2)

The value of the off-site session can be further ascertained from the participants' reflections on the school-based professional learning teams. Teacher 2 School 2, however, indicated that there was a change in the style of the off-site sessions further into the implementation. She commented that as they attended more off-site sessions, "…we were finding that they were providing us with a lot more hands-on and better approach to it than any one we've done in the past" (Teacher 2 School 2).

9.2   *School-based Professional Learning Teams*

9.2.1   *Valuable form of learning.*

The professional learning team meetings were described as "exciting", "valuable" and where "real learning" happened. As part of the professional development model, teachers, co-ordinators and sometimes principals attended weekly school-based professional learning teams (PLT). In the initial three-year implementation, School 1 held the PLT meeting during the normal school day. They found that "…everyone there was willing and excited and interested" (Co-ordinator School 1). After the initial implementation School 1 had the meetings after school. Participants, however, were still positive about participating in professional learning teams though found it harder to attend after school:

> It was seen as being so valuable that it was done in school time. That went to after school, which still works. And I still think it is really valuable, but it was easier when in was in school time. (Co-ordinator School 1)

School 2 always held their professional learning team meetings after school. While they found the participation in PLT initially difficult, in time they adjusted and began to value it:

> I used to say that PLT [meetings] were a drag after school. But I felt that PLT were a real learning thing. They were PD at school! Because there were lots of things that people had to share. And that the literacy co-ordinator would say, "Mary, I saw you do this in your classroom. Can you come to PLT next Wednesday and be ready to share it?" And you would come, and there would be no expectation that it had to be whiz-bang. (Teacher 2 School 2)

Co-ordinators from both schools affirmed that the teachers valued the professional learning team meetings. Co-ordinator School 1 commented that teachers still attended meetings even when she was unavailable to attend:

Even last week, I wasn't there, and they still had a PLT and wanted to have it. And I had only left something little for them to do because we started testing this week. They went for the whole hour. And did other things, that I hadn't left, that they chose to bring up and discuss. Which is great, because it means that they do value it, and want to do it, and I don't need to be there.

Co-ordinator School 2 said that while some teachers did not like going, the PLT brought teachers together to share ideas in a forum that allowed for different experience levels in CLaSS and learning styles:

I think PLT is great because you have to attend whether you like it or not. Let's face it. Some people don't like coming because they think they know it all, and there are people…are at different levels of learning. But at the same time, we've got to be patient with each other and support one another. There are teachers that are more experienced or less experienced. And I think everyone brings something to it. There are different levels of learning. There are people that have been there from the beginning. There are people that have been there for a year. There are graduates in there! It really varies. So the PLTs are really fantastic because it gives you that forum to discuss. And in an intimate group. It's not a big staffroom forum where people are a bit frightened. (Co-ordinator School 2)

9.2.2   *Professional learning strategies.*

Strategies identified in the off-site sessions were incorporated into the team meetings, or as part of the follow on of the discussion of the team meeting, such as teachers demonstrating a literacy aspect during a teaching session in the classroom.

Strategies included watching videos, evaluating past strategies, professional reading and discussion on literacy issues and approaches, examining student work and analysing the work as a team and demonstrating a strategy to a colleague. Participants also commented that the professional learning team meetings were valuable in identifying student learning needs, implementing appropriate strategies and working towards a common goal. Teacher 1 School 2 said, "If I had one child that didn't fit into one of my groups who could go into another classroom and that teacher would help and share the load". The following comments illustrated their reflections on discussing, reflecting and evaluating strategies in the PLT meetings:

> We used to have a few videos that she would run, but you'd have your discussions and you'd think, "Oh! It wouldn't work in my classroom". But when you actually sat down and did it with the other teachers, and had a chuckle or a laugh, you would realize you weren't the only one struggling with the writing. That was really good for me. I learned a lot from the hands-on sessions with the co-ordinator running them. (Teacher 5 School 2)

> It gave a sense of ownership to the whole team of children in the classroom, rather than just that teacher being responsible for that child's improvement. I think it was one of the strongest aspects of the whole thing, of CLaSS itself. (Principal School 1)

> We talk about when was the last running record. We look at the running record and analyse it. What isn't the child doing that they should be? And giving each other ideas, on how to strengthen our teaching, to encourage that child to move on with their reading. (Co-ordinator School 2)

9.2.3 Sharing expertise.

Participants also described the professional learning team meeting as satisfying because there were opportunities to share ideas in a professional way. Teacher 1 School 2 explained:

I suppose that was something that CLaSS did start when it first came in, and we would share kids, and we'd bounce ideas off each other as to how to help each other. And I've got this problem: "Who can share an idea on that?" And Teacher X [name deleted], who did Reading Recovery back then as well, would give us strategies of how we could move the kids along, and that kind of stuff as well. But I loved that idea of sharing ideas. Because you just get so many ideas bounced off each other that, "Oh! I hadn't thought of that! Or that's such a great idea! Can I take that? Can you do that for me?" (Teacher 1 School 2)

Co-ordinator School 1 said, "I think they are great. They're invaluable, they help the team building, and you share information". Teacher 1 School 1 commented, "You might all think you are doing that same thing, but until you discuss it, you are not going to create that new learning within yourself or within any body else so it created the discussion". Teacher 1 School 2 commented on the way in which PLT assisted in sharing professional expertise:

I think the team in essence is the key to it all. Everyone is working a common goal and sharing the kids. We are used to saying, "If I had four kids on Level 0 [Reading Recovery level] and the girl next to me had two, we'd become one group". So we'd share that for the week, I'd have them every day for the week, and the next week she'd have them every day. So you can target the kids who you knew needed that extra little move along. And you'd help each other.

The following comments described the typical team meeting at both schools, which included professional reading, discussion on different students and sharing of ideas:

> We would start off with professional reading, and we would spend ten minutes in professional reading. We would have five minutes talking about that. Then we would bring along some samples of work of an individual child so that the team had a responsibility of every child in the team. We would talk through what happened in there, in relation to what that child could do, there would be written samples of what that kid could and couldn't do, so we would list all of those things, the kid [sic] can and can't do. Then what we would try and do, is identify a strategy so that the classroom teacher who owned that kid…so that they would take them to the next step. We were all trying to move the kids quickly through to that next step. (Principal School 1)

> But we were talking about kids, sharing problems, sharing ideas. It was a good way just to group and sort of figure out what to do next. You'd watch Reading Recovery, do a reading record, and show the different strategies that you hadn't seen before. So it was always a way of broadening your own skills and working on strategies that you might not be as well as someone else at. It was a chance to get ideas and nitpick at that person: "Tell me how you did this?" (Teacher 1 School 2)

Participants also valued, as part of their professional learning, sharing ideas with teachers from other schools. Other teachers sometimes visited them and discussed literacy or participants visited other schools. Teacher 3 School 2 said, "CLaSS is CLaSS. The structure is the same. But just to see how other teachers do their groups and see their activities…And we've had teachers come and watch us as well". Further comments were:

It's nice, it's really nice to go out and visit a school…I always say to them, "I want you to make sure you see three things. I want you to see something new, and that's really exciting and you say, 'Great, I'm going to take that back and use it'. I want you to see something that you're doing, and that we're doing, and you can say, 'Hey that's something we're both doing'. I want you to see something that we're doing that you know you can do better, and you can say, 'That's great, but I know I can do it better'". I think they get shocked when I say that, but it's important to be able to see all three. (Co-ordinator School 1)

It was good to see how other teachers operate. The structure is the same. We went to different schools. We visited different schools that were doing quite well, whether it was a writing session or, we visited certain year levels and saw how the schools had their boxes or their learning centres set up. That was really terrific because you could sit down and ask or have a look at teachers' programs, and just see the whole process in action. And that was really good, because you could talk to the children or the co-ordinator, and have a look at what the children are doing, and how they're doing it. "Where do these games get stored? And how does everybody else have access to it?" It was good. That part of it was very, very good, to have a look at hands-on schools that are doing it really well. (Teacher 4 School 2)

9.2.4   Working as a team.

While participants described the professional learning team meetings as rewarding, there were some difficulties that arose from time to time in working as a team of teachers. Teacher 3 School 2 said:

Everything is hard at the start isn't it? It was a bit difficult, but it got easier. The sharing of ideas was alright. We all did that. If something

worked in the past we brought it back to PLT and shared it with the
group (Teacher 3 School 2)

Principal School 2 commented that, "…by about May [referring to first year of
implementation], the juniors [teachers] were feeling very put-upon. They were having
two meetings a week, and everybody else was only having one…And it was a lot of
hard work". Teacher 4 School 2 commented on the different personalities and changing
members of the team:

> But for us, in particular, we had nine in our PLT groupings. …so
> you've got all those personalities and all that programming. In the
> beginning, we all had to write it up the same. There was no give or
> take. And then a change of co-ordinator and different people coming
> and going. Which was hard for us.

The comments from indicated that though there were moments of difficulty,
they worked through these and worked towards a more open and collaborative approach
to issues. Participants said it was crucial for teachers to be willing to share and discuss
ideas. "I think if people weren't prepared to share the ideas at PLT, the structure would
have fallen down because you really needed to have the support of your peers to get
through it", commented Teacher 2 School 2. Teacher I School 1 said that one potential
problem for the team meetings was that if teachers did not put forward issues about
students, then this would be a disadvantage:

> If you are not brave enough or noisy enough, if you don't put your
> child forward, then your child misses out. And we have to make sure
> and ensure that everybody in that team does that. So, we say that we
> have ownership, but we only have ownership if, if you [the others in
> the PLT] know about the kids I've got.

9.3   Synergy within the Model

9.3.1   Culture of learning.

Participants believed the CLaSS professional development model made a significant impact on developing a culture of continuous learning within the literacy team. Teacher 1 School 2 said that that the professional development components (off-site and school-based) allowed teachers the opportunity to understand why they needed to further learn and change:

> We as teachers are unfortunately too often locked into our room. …
> you can only learn, if you think you need to change. When somebody
> else observes you, and then speaks to you about it, then you can learn
> because you see you need to change. (Teacher 1 School 1)

The principals agreed that the CLaSS professional development model contributed to "…a culture of people willing to learn. We perceive themselves as lifelong learners" (Principal School 1). Principal School 2 said, "Probably within our system it [CLaSS] led the way of teachers having to be continuous learners". Principal School 2 suggested that some teachers felt that their initial teacher education was sufficient in giving them skills to make decisions in literacy and therefore resisted further learning opportunities. She said, "Whereas there are a few people who think 'I've done teacher's college, I know what to do'" (Principal School 2).

The principals also commented that the culture of learning among the teachers also raised the expectations about what schools expected from teachers: higher expectations for students meant higher expectations for teachers. The following comments illustrated these expectations:

> I think it [PLT] may in fact be classed as the biggest imprint, but
> professional learning has now a new dimension to it. We now demand
> more from it than what we ever have before. We know what quality is,
> and as a consequence we expect it. (Principal School 1)

It has also led to a lot of other demands on teachers. It's led to
demands on record keeping, doing frequent running records, not just a
test before you do reports. All those sorts of things. And it has made
teachers lives more demanding. Busier. Teachers are working far
harder. The teaching system used to be able to tolerate mediocre
teachers who were just entertaining kids [sic]. That's not happening
any more. (Principal School 2)

Participants felt that despite some concerns about the off-site professional
development this enhanced the learning in the professional learning teams. After
attending the off-site sessions, Teacher 4 School 2 said "…when you came back the
co-ordinator had their goals of where they had to be in a certain time and expectations
of them". Co-ordinator School 2 noted, "PLT is very focused in what we do, following
up the PD (professional development), most of it anyway". Teacher 2 School 1
summarized the relationship between the off-site professional development and the team
meetings:

It was from the professional development days, were kind of like the
theory, and our PLT and our school-based work was kind of like the
practice. So the professional development day only really made sense
when you went back and you debriefed, and you explored, and you
practised. What worked well for us was we said, "Okay, we will go
through it", if we learnt about guided reading or language experience
at the professional development day. In our PLT we would go back
through and say, "Okay, this is exactly what it is supposed to contain.
Is there anyone here who is comfortable, who has done this
previously, who has used this?"

9.3.2   *New team members.*

The strength of the off-site sessions was exposing teachers to new information
and opportunities to discuss the information in professional learning team meetings.
New members or changed roles in the literacy team provided challenges. This challenge

was also noted in the previous chapter on the participants' perceptions of literacy. Some participants came later into the team and did not have all the professional development experienced by the rest of the team. They felt they were at a disadvantage. Participants described the off-site sessions as sometimes "difficult", "information overload" and did not cater for their gaps in learning. This also impacted on the PLT. The following comments from the participants in each school suggested that the off-site sessions were a one-size-fit-all rather than a personalized approach to the content. Teacher 5 School 2 in describing her first professional development days said, "It was a bit difficult because they would be introducing…Like the schools that had been in the process for quite some time they were all quite experienced". Teacher 5 School 2 commented that, as she commenced at the school after the first year of implementation, she found that the professional development days did not cater for the gaps in her understanding of some of the components of CLaSS:

> And me, coming into a session like that, was kind of like, "Oh! This is the next phase we're in". So the Presenter would present the next part of CLaSS. And I would be thinking, "Hold on a minute! I'm still getting used to the previous sessions". I found them informative, but for myself, I was more concerned initially with just getting the classroom running, getting the children interacting and performing, and extending the ones that needed extension. So I was given things that I probably wasn't ready for at the time. But they were useful.

Likewise, when Teacher 1 School 1 became a class teacher implementing CLaSS, she felt that she had specific professional development needs, even though she had previously been part of the literacy team as the Reading Recovery teacher and had attended professional development in that capacity. She said that while she had learnt to use particular strategies in a context, such as in Reading Recovery, she felt that she "…needed to be taught within this context [as a CLaSS teacher]. You need to teach me. I need to be part of it" (Teacher 1 School 1). She commented that the off-site component was scaled down for new teachers when she became a classroom teacher.

Consequently, she was not included in further professional development days and this was difficult for her even though she had some experience in CLaSS. Teacher 1 School 2 found that while many aspects of the off-site sessions were useful, such as discussing different literacy strategies, the sessions sometimes overloaded her with too much information:

> But for us, sometimes I think it was information overload. Because you'd just be writing down all the ideas and different ways that they would show you how to do something, and then you look at your notes, and then it was, "Right! Which one do I start with?" So it was eliminating what you didn't feel as though was the best one and then trialling. As long as you came out of it with something, I think that was the main aim. (Teacher 1 School 2)

There were some challenges in maintaining the learning in the off-site sessions and within the professional learning team meetings when there were new members to the literacy team. "We've had our ups and downs. We've had changes of staff", commented Principal School 2. The following comment illustrated further their views:

> And at different PLTs you'd pick out different things and what we felt we were deficient in, and we'd zero in on them. And that was the constant…not a problem, I guess. Well it was a problem! We had teachers changing every year. So there was always someone coming in who had to be explained in what we had to do. So you were always going over those issues. But there is no way around that. That's just part of the program. Because it was new. There were all these changes, all the time. (Teacher 4 School 2)

She further elaborated:

> Because when we had nine at the beginning, and someone would leave the next year. And then you'd have a new person in. And the

new person sometimes had never had the experience of CLaSS, and

they had to be taught all over again. So for someone that's been there

from the beginning, and have done their shifts, that was a bit taxing as

far as professional attitudes go. And people decided, "Well I don't

want my programs to look like that!" So there were physical problems

like that. And you'd get the few that didn't want to tow the line, so

they would kind of say "That's not my problem". (Teacher 4

School 2)

9.3.3   *Back to step one.*

Participants felt that one of the difficulties was that when they had new team members, they spent considerable time reviewing the approaches that they already had in place. Teacher 2 School 2 explained, "…because you are constantly going back to step one and you might race through the steps a lot quicker but you are still going back to step one". This impacted on the professional learning:

> Yes, they have to go and learn what language experience is, and we
> might have an understanding of what language experience is. We
> might have a way of approaching it and be comfortable in using it in
> certain situations in the classroom but I know there is always room for
> improvement, and that doesn't hurt to refresh things, but to a certain
> extent, you feel like you are covering the same ground and you aren't
> growing the same way that you were. (Teacher 2 School 1)

Co-ordinator School 2 commenced as a CLaSS teacher after the implementation phase at the school and did not participate in the off-site sessions before becoming the literacy co-ordinator. She gained her professional learning through the team meetings and through a co-ordinator modelling strategies in the classroom:

> I actually didn't have PD. Perhaps one time we went out as a team
> back then. There wasn't PD offered, because they had gone through
> all the PD. So new teachers that came to the school, there wasn't

really an induction program. There wasn't a whole level PD. PD was conducted during PLT. I think that's where I think, I gained the most during PLT time, where I had the opportunity. And I did ask lots of questions. I came back after I tried things, and said how it was in my classroom and what does it look like in your classroom? So I actually enquired a lot to get some understanding about CLaSS. I asked a co-ordinator to come in and model to me and show me things, and work with small groups and show me different strategies. I wasn't shy. (Co-ordinator School 2)

Teacher 4 School 2 taught part time and also had little access to professional development and was not able to attend team meetings. She felt it was her professional responsibility to learn about what was discussed at team meetings and relied on a colleague to keep her informed:

Sometimes you have to be…Like my partner is very good. So she brings me up to date with what they've said. But it's normal sometimes you miss things along the way, and you think, "Oh! They must have done that at PLT". So I guess it's up to your …It's my responsibility professionally to keep up and find out what's going on. I get a copy of the meetings put in my pigeon hole, so it's up to me to read it and keep abreast of what's going on. (Teacher 4 School 2)

The PLT also had potential to impact on the implementation in the classroom as teachers were at different stages in their ability to implement the different components of the literacy block thereby highlighting the differences between teachers in schools:

With the writing, as I said before, most of the other teachers were like fairly well advanced in the reading. So when we used to have our PLT a lot of the discussions were around writing…whereas I was still trying to feel my way around reading. (Teacher 5 school 2)

9.4   Beyond the Implementation Phase

9.4.1   Fewer professional development sessions.

After the three year implementation phase, participants commented that they attended fewer or no professional development sessions and that off-site sessions were available mostly to new teachers to CLaSS. Teacher 2 School 2 commented that this provided the experienced teacher of CLaSS with a challenge in sustaining professional learning:

> And sort of the professional development model when you are going away for four days a year stops, and it is …sustaining CLaSS where your new teachers might get a little bit of off-site PD, but your existing teachers are left to continue as best they can in the classroom, and so in a way their own professional development becomes the PLT. And they're not getting it from the PLT, if they are just reiterating things that they have experienced, learnt, have knowledge of. Then it becomes a little bit monotonous.

While participants valued the role of the co-ordinators, they did not generally identify or discuss this specific role in relation to sustaining their own professional learning. Although, Teacher 5 School 2 was an exception. She said:

> The co-ordinator would take us through processes in writing so that we all had an example on how to run a session when we went back our classrooms. And I found that the most informative of our PLT, it really was. Because you had the hands-on. So it was really good, because this particular co-ordinator would get us to demonstrate a session where we'd have our "texta colours", and we'd be sitting down and writing a passage. And the teacher would be doing the hard words and the students would be doing the easy words. Then it would be that we were the students, and we'd realize how hard it was to do a session like that. And then we'd reverse roles. It was fantastic because

we were actually doing the activities and asking questions as we were going along. Like "What do we do here? And what do we do if a child asks us this?" (Teacher 5 School 2)

9.4.2 Monetary issues.

Teacher 1 School 2 felt that after the initial implementation, the off-site sessions were not as frequent and that impacted on further professional development. Co-ordinator School 2 felt it was a monetary issue that professional development was not maintained at the same level as in the implementation phase:

> And I know that there are some reading ones done but it's not as intense as it used to be. And I know that there are in-service things for new teachers to CLaSS…but the emphasis now is on maintaining rather than developing. (Teacher 1 School 2)

> As a team they haven't been able to go off-site and have a whole day together. They haven't been able to have that on-site except for our PLT. I think it is a really valuable thing to be able to go off together, learn together and come back implement it and celebrate it together. It's money too, they are not ever going to be able to do that again because of the money. (Co-ordinator School 1)

Co-ordinator School 2 explained that it was important to continue with the model of professional development in CLaSS, despite the cost. Importantly, the model supported teacher learning in literacy through discussion within the literacy team:

> It's not about going off-site. It's about having rich conversations. And whether it's done by a co-ordinator, your curriculum, your maths, your literacy, whatever. It's about having that conversation. Being open and honest and trusting one another. And PD as a team, instead of one person going off. That doesn't happen a lot. It's expensive! But that's what works. (Co-ordinator School 2)

All participants believed that while the CLaSS approach to professional development was expensive, it was worthwhile. Teacher 1 School 2 felt that the professional development model assisted in the effectiveness of CLaSS as a literacy strategy through "…everyone getting that PD. And as you know the cost and that kind of thing. There are so many issues with it all, but it is so valuable that everyone gets PD".

9.5   Analysis

9.5.1   Developing the vision.

All participants said that the development of a shared vision was important for both the formation of a learning team and for school improvement in literacy (Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994; Blandford, 2000; Fullan, 1993). Teacher 5 School 2 suggested that hearing about and discussing the vision in the off-site sessions helped to clarify understanding. Participants stated that while not all team members developed the same understanding of the vision, being together in the off-site sessions helped with defining the vision among the team. Participants believed that the professional learning teams meetings (PLT) assisted in developing the shared vision. The literature review identified that differences between teacher skills and different expectations in the teaching of literacy affected student learning outcomes and, therefore, the development of the shared vision was central in developing high expectations and skills in teaching literacy in all teachers (Cuttance 2001; Hattie 2003; Hill et al., 1993).

9.5.2   Learning as a team.

Participants affirmed that the professional development model was an effective model; its strength being that it was a team approach to both the off-site and school-based components of the professional development model. Participants identified that the off-site sessions and professional learning teams developed their skills in working within a team and their own professional knowledge. While the off-site sessions assisted in developing the team culture, participants said that through PLT they identified a more visible and tangible community of practice than before (Wenger, 1998). Senge (1990) described this learning as an on-the-job phenomenon that had

opportunities to create reflection. Cheng (1996) described this as a cultural development that was '…not confined to individual teachers with specific knowledge and teaching techniques, but as professional individuals who can influence the performance of colleagues through team collaboration" (p. 135).

While participants did not always have input or control over the direction of the learning in the off-site sessions, PLT provided what Knowles et al. (1998) described as having control over what, how and why in the learning process, this being an effective element in professional learning. Hargreaves (1997) believed that when teachers had time to share ideas and plan within a team, it provided the best conditions for professional development. Participants acknowledged that the professional learning teams contributed to their own learning and to the team learning. Stoll and Fink (1996) argued that in developing a professional learning climate, teachers need time, space and emotional support as well as commitment to lifelong learning. Participants recognized that there was need for teams to have conflict and diversity in order to develop an exchange of different positions and perspectives (Fullan, 1999). Participants said that the role of the co-ordinator was important to team learning as the co-ordinator consolidated teacher learning through directing discussion, modelling strategies, coaching and mentoring (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

While participants endorsed the professional development model, there were some issues. They commented that not all members of the literacy team believed that they required the professional development. This view was consistent with Elmore (2002) who said that there was an assumption held by some that initial teacher training and teaching experience was sufficient professional development. The comments on trialling strategies and collegial discussion in the off-site sessions and the PLT indicated that initial teacher training was not sufficient. At times team members did not collaborate effectively. Hargreaves (1997) said that while opportunities can be provided for teachers to collaborate, collaboration did not always occur.

As noted in the previous chapter, participants said that new members were a challenge to working effectively as a team. They said that it often meant that they were

constantly revisiting the implementation of CLaSS: team meetings focused once again on how to implement the literacy block, administer the assessment tests and the components of reading. Participants said the consequences were that they had not adequately focused on the writing hour and their own professional development needs were not always met.

9.5.3 *Content of off-site sessions.*

As theory was often presented at the off-site sessions, participants were not always sure about the relevancy of the content in the off-site sessions to their own professional development and their classroom and school context. Consistent with findings of McRae et al. (2001) participants gave preference to professional development activities that provided practical ideas ahead of current educational theory or that challenged them with big picture ideas. Other research suggested that teachers need a strong theoretical base in order to implement change (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 1998). This was demonstrated by Teacher 2 School 2, who may not have been highly focused on the value of statistics at the time of that particular professional development session, but later applied that theory to data analysis and acknowledged its benefit.

Knowles et al. (1998) argued that adult learners needed to be aware beforehand of the benefits and gains of different approaches. Participants' comments indicated that they did not always see the connection of the theory to their own context. This may have related to their learning styles or stage of learning in literacy. Teacher 5 School 2, for example, would have liked independent choice over his learning (Knowles et al., 1998).

Participants said that they could not always engage with the content of the off-sessions because of the presenters. This confirmed that while the principles established for effective professional development were often based on the learner needs, the ability and styles of the presenters also impacted on the effectiveness of the professional learning. Woods and Thompson (1993) found that inspiring presenters did not necessarily mean the professional learning model was successful (Achilles &

Tienken, 2005). The comments on the presenters and the content of the sessions reflected that, while the presenter may have expert knowledge, it was more effective when teachers had a role in determining what they needed to learn and the type of learning experiences they wanted to be involved in (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Participants said a teacher presenting his/her own practice was also valuable (Dockett et al., 1998).

Principal School 2 commented that teachers were sometimes annoyed when the presenters at the off-site sessions reviewed the beliefs and understandings in CLaSS. As described in the literature review, the beliefs and understandings were part of the design elements for CLaSS (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). A feature of the off-site sessions were that these design elements were revisited in each session. Crévola and Hill (2005a) believed these elements "…formed the focus of attention for CLaSS schools in literacy" (p. 5). Participants' comments indicated that while this was the practice, it was not always engaging in its delivery.

9.5.4   *Linking learning to school context.*

Participants said the strength of the off-site sessions was in trialling strategies. At the off-site sessions they learnt about a strategy which they then trialled in their school, and discussed the strategy in PLT. When they went to the next off-site session they discussed it with teachers from other schools. This approach is supported by Guskey (2002) who advocated that it was more effective to ask teachers to trial a strategy in the classroom and discuss its effect on student achievement as the driver for changing teacher practice. Principal School 1 suggested that the off-site sessions would have been more successful if the presenters promoted more self-directed learning or action research. This, he believed, would have catered for different learning styles, allowed teachers to identify their own problems, experiment and reflect and evaluate literacy strategies. Principal School 1 believed that this approach provided a better link between the theory component of the off-site sessions and the school context (Collins, 1991; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). This approach allowed "active synergy" between the school and the individual needs (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 100).

The views of Principal School 1 was also consistent with Cole (2004) and Fullan (1992) who cautioned that the value of off-site sessions, who teachers were able to develop new ideas and discuss the learning with other schools, did not always transfer to integrating the ideas back in to the school context. Hoban (1997) and Fullan (1992) stated that the downside of off-site professional development was that teachers did not always integrate the information into the classroom. Crévola and Hill (2005a) intended that the school-based professional learning teams would facilitate the transfer of knowledge from the off-site sessions into the classroom. Participants said that, through reflecting on the different strategies, professional learning team meetings were highly focused on improving the literacy outcomes for students in their schools and provided synergy between the off-site sessions and the PLT (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1991). This was consistent with the findings of Hattie (2003), "What teachers know, do and care about is very powerful in this learning equation" for students (p. 2).

It should be noted that each school was allocated a CLaSS facilitator whose role was to assist individual schools and in particular the CLaSS co-ordinator and principal as required. They were to assist in building capacity to implement CLaSS within individual schools and also had a role in developing the off-site sessions. Their role was also a link between the off-site sessions and the school context. Crévola and Hill (2005a) said that:

> The visits [from the CLaSS facilitators] will be important in making
> direct connection between understandings gained during professional
> development sessions and the actual working knowledge [classroom
> practice] of the teachers and co-ordinators involved. The importance
> of these visits will grow as schools grapple with ongoing
> implementation issues (p. 30).

The principals, co-ordinators and teachers did not discuss the input or support from the facilitators (Crévola & Hill, 2005a). It could be suggested from the comments throughout the research that the impact of the facilitator's role was not strong in these

two schools or that the schools did not adequately communicate their issues to the facilitators.

Participants said that professional dialogue in the off-site sessions and the PLT was also a strength of the professional development model and assisted with linking the learning to the individual and school context. The discussion with other teachers in the off-site sessions allowed them to review their practices in the context of their own classroom and the impact on student learning. Fullan (1993) referred to this as the "mastery of skill" whereby it was not just important to know or understand a strategy, teachers needed to implement the strategy and refine it through further dialogue with colleagues (p. 16).

Participants commented that while the nature of the content was important in the off-site sessions, it had less value than if it were situated within a structure that allowed for inadequate professional dialogue with teachers from within and outside the school. Dockett et al. (1998) found that for effective professional development in literacy, regardless of the approach advocated, it was important that through the sessions teachers understood how different literacy experiences related to improving student learning. Co-ordinator School 2 stated that it was the "rich conversation" about literacy that was more important than where or what the professional learning was about. It was through these conversations that participants more effectively understood the application of strategies (Brophy, 2002; Dockett et al., 1998).

Participants believed the professional dialogue at the off-site sessions and the PLT impacted on their effectiveness as teachers of literacy and therefore on student performance. Stoll and Fink (1996) believed that professional dialogue, such as in learning teams, promoted a process of monitoring student progress and evaluating strategies which impacted on student learning outcomes. Conversely, McRae et al. (2001) found that there was not necessarily a link between professional development and student performance. The comments from the participants, however, indicated that they believed the professional development had contributed to improved student outcomes.

9.5.5   Different learning needs.

The CLaSS model for professional development was designed on established principles of effective professional development. The comments from participants regarding their own professional engagement in the off-site sessions and the PLT demonstrated the complexity of professional development.

While the literacy team was required to attend the sessions, Blandford (2000) noted that mandating specific professional development did not necessarily ensure engagement of all teachers. This was evidenced in the comments from Teacher 2 School 1 who said that some teachers were interested in the food they brought to the session rather than the content of the sessions. Blandford (2000) argued that engagement in professional development came from individual teachers who were motivated and prepared to address their own professional development needs. This motivation was fostered when teachers recognized its relationship to the classroom context and their own needs in professional development (Scott, 1997; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Participants indicated their engagement through wanting to discuss ideas with other colleagues, asking questions and involvement in trialling activities. It was suggested that motivation might also be affected by other factors, such as career stage and learning styles which could impact positively or negatively on individual teacher motivation to engage in professional development (Knowles et al., 1998; Scott, 1997; Stoll & Fink, 1996). The profiles of participants revealed that they were at different stages in their experience of implementing CLaSS and in general teaching: they had different requirements depending on when they implemented CLaSS and their knowledge of different literacy strategies. Participants stated that these learning needs were a factor in their engagement in the off-site sessions. Marczely (1996) noted that individual learning needs embraced stages of development and also different personal philosophies and abilities.

As already noted, participants found that the PLT did not always cater for their learning needs particularly when there were new members to the literacy team. Some participants said that they came later into the literacy team; it was difficult for them trying to learn about CLaSS within a team that had expertise. New team members meant more team building to understand the vision and components of the literacy strategy that

caused tension for individual learning requirements (Fullan, 1993). Senge (1990) argued, however, that in developing team learning, it was the collective learning of the team that was important rather than the differences in individual learning. In contrast, Cheng (1996) claimed that individual teacher development was best supported by the collaboration within team or whole school development. The comments from the participants further illustrated the complexity in providing effective professional development. While there was time allocated in the off-site sessions for collegial discussions about theory and implementation, each participant had a different understanding of when and what was sufficient time.

Crévola and Hill (2005a), the designers of CLaSS, identified key characteristics of effective professional development. They also acknowledged, "…designing programs that have all these characteristics presents a great challenge" (Crévola & Hill, 2005a, p. 28). Based on the participants' comments, there were challenges despite the professional development model being developed on what were considered effective elements of professional development. Participants in the research identified professional dialogue on literacy as one significant element that assisted in dealing with the challenges in catering for individual and team learning.

Overall, participants felt that the professional development model was effective in that it did raise teacher professional learning in literacy. Participants identified the opportunities for on-going professional dialogue as critical to any professional development. They identified professional dialogue on strategies within a literacy team as an important activity that led the team to a shared vision. Though there was some criticism of the off-site sessions and PLT, participants valued both the off-site and school-based components especially when they were synergized in their purpose and content. In particular, PLT was shown to be an important link in the transfer from off-site learning to classroom practice. Participants, however, raised a number of perspectives on lifelong learning for teachers; it was recognized that professional learning is dependant on a number of factors, such as learning styles (Knowles et al., 1998; Stoll & Fink, 1996), career stage (Marsh, 1997; Scott, 1997) and personal

motivation (Whitaker, 1993), and that these factors played a role in participants' engagement in the professional learning.

Participants raised the question of the complexity of putting forward a professional development model: although elements of effective professional development may be used, it is not necessarily effective for all participants all the time. It can be suggested from their comments that sustained professional development that is highly focused on developing collaboration and discussion contributes to lifting individual, team or whole school professional development. Participants voiced concerns in sustaining the change and noted financial restraints at the sector and school level in the sustaining of the professional development. This resonates with Ingvarson et al. (2005) who noted that research has shown that it is the gap in the funding which constrains most professional development programs and leads to change not being sustained in the classroom. The sustaining of the professional learning was addressed through developing the literacy co-ordinators capacity to use coaching conversations on reflective practice (Crévola & Hill, 2005a).

The following chapter explores participants' views about future literacy innovation. Their comments on innovation further reflect the idea that they found the professional development model generally effective and an improvement on models participants had experienced in the past.

Chapter 10 Findings: Future Literacy Innovation

This chapter of the findings addresses the research question: Having implemented CLaSS at their school, what did principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers see as important issues for consideration in any future literacy innovation? The main themes that arose from the participants' comments were "school wide approach", "design elements", and "professional development".

10.1   School-wide Approach

10.1.1   School vision.
Participants said that for future innovations a school-wide vision for the literacy strategy should be considered. Teacher 1 School 2 said, "I think you need common goals. Everyone working towards that, because if you've got a few that aren't, I think it's harder to maintain it". Consistent with the previous chapter, participants commented on the importance of developing a shared vision through a whole-school approach in any future innovation. Co-ordinator School 1 said a shared vision in a school-wide approach gave all teachers ownership of the implementation and success of the strategy. The shared vision also assisted in the development of a positive team culture:

> What the beliefs and understandings are and knowing your whole
> model, what to do, where to go, how to work it and having full
> ownership, not just me in my class [classroom] in my little corner of
> the school, but other people own this with me and other people own
> this group of children with me and we work as a team. (Co-ordinator
> School 1)

10.1.2   Structure across the school.
In future innovation, participants said that they wanted a similar structure for literacy, such as a literacy block, throughout the school. Principal School 2 said that while the notion of a whole school approach from Prep to Year 6 should be considered

in any future literacy innovation "…of course [Years] 3 to 4s have to be treated differently to Preps, [Years] 1s and 2s. You might have the basic structure, but what you're doing is different" (Principal School 2). Teacher 2 School 1 said that a school-wide approach would provide direction to structure rather than the school spending time working out how to adapt a literacy approach from one area into another area of the school. He elaborated:

> I think it was by our second year of CLaSS. We were working on ways to implement the model across the whole school, to make it a whole-school mandate on a whole-school model. And I guess it took probably this year, it is working the best. So it probably took three years to work affectively from junior to senior. (Teacher 2 School 1)

Teacher 2 School 1 said, "The seniors took the most amount of time to find a way of working within the structure, what was going to work best for them. He elaborated that "…initially they tried working exactly as the juniors did, and they found they didn't like it and it didn't work". He explained that they then tried a different approach "…by mixing reading and writing, because they are so changeable type of thing, and that didn't really come up with high quality outcomes for the kids". Teacher 1 School 1 commented that as they had some new teachers in the senior levels, it was an opportunity to review the approach again. As CLaSS was not originally designed to be implemented in the senior school, participants had to develop resources, such as testing kits, to assist the senior teachers:

> In this school, we have set up to ensure that the CLaSS process carries on through to the senior school. As soon as we started using the junior testing kit, we produced our own senior testing kit. We set up along the same lines… Whilst they weren't getting the CEO [Catholic Education Office Melbourne] support, having all the meetings and so on, we started to look at testing and supporting them so across-the-board testing happened. (Teacher 1 School 1)

School 2 did not begin implementing a literacy approach based on CLaSS in the senior school until after CLaSS was institutionalized for four years as the strategy for Years Prep to 2. Teacher 1 School 2 said that while she wanted to implement an approach similar to CLaSS in the senior school, there was not enough direction as to how the literacy should be taught at this level:

> You're not as pinpointed as to where they are actually at because there's not as much direction, and the resources are just not being put into that area of the school, which is fine for now it just needs to get progressed. It's starting at [Years] 3 to 4 level now. They're putting CLaSS in. And I still modify reading and writing in the [Years] 5 to 6 level only because that's what I was initially trained at…I try to adapt it to suit the Grade 5 and 6s. (Teacher 1 School 2)

Teacher 4 School 2 said there was potential for student development in literacy to be at risk if a literacy approach was not developed across the whole school:

> As far as a new concept, the whole school would have to be in on it. That was the failure of CLaSS in the beginning where it just concentrated on Prep, 1 and 2. And then when they got to [Grade] 3 to 4…They just slipped back, and they didn't do anything. When they got to Grade 3, if the teacher had been doing something for ten years, well then she still did the same thing. So in my view that was not the waste of CLaSS, but you would have liked to have seen it flow through. That is happening now, but in the beginning they hadn't addressed how you would flow through [into higher year levels].

Principal School 2 stated that the school was introducing the literacy approach to Year 3 and 4 and would then consider establishing it at Years 5 and 6. She said that, although the teachers in Years 3 and 4 received school-based professional development, the issues surrounding the implementation were similar to it being introduced in Year Prep:

That's been a major focus for the co-ordinator this year is getting the [Years] 3 to 4s into the structure. A lot of other schools went there a lot earlier, but we've just moved into it. Probably our middle school has a few structural things that have meant that it has been a fairly challenging task for the co-ordinator in the last 12 months. But I think that it's really come a long way. (Principal School 2)

Principal School 2 said, " …but the people who like to take their kids out for a walk around the oval instead of getting stuck into literacy…There are always lots of issues". Principal School 2 also said, "By this stage of the year, the teachers who seem to be a bit reluctant are saying 'I can see the change!'"

Principal School 2 also suggested that it was important that any future innovation implemented was at a school level and at a sector level. She recalled that when it was implemented, School 2 was in the first intake of 38 schools that implemented CLaSS in 1998, and she found that this had the potential to isolate her from her principal colleagues in other schools:

But it's not just for our school. It's changed the culture of our system. In that first year, when we were the Year 1 Intake, our school was the only one of 26 schools in this zone that took on CLaSS. And there was a great emphasis on the part of the other schools still on First Steps. I used to go to principals' meetings and feel like I was the pariah, because I'd gone over to the dark side. I was excluded from discussions, not in a planned way, but I think it was also that we had a literacy co-ordinator in the zone that was very committed to First Steps, and was very anti-CLaSS, and very popular and very good at what she did. And I think there was a real loyalty among other principals. They sense that I'd abandoned her [name has been left out.] That was the first year, and there were 38 schools in the first intake. There are less than 20 schools in our system now that don't do CLaSS. (Principal School 2)

10.1.3   Equity in teacher development.

Participants stated that teachers were not able to access extensive professional development in literacy and, therefore, this created difficulties developing effective literacy implementation throughout the school:

> If there was a CLaSS day [reference to off-site professional
> development day]…so we had a school closure day. And the others
> [referring to teachers] got a bit resentful because they inevitably ended
> up doing an RE [Religious Education] day with the RE
> co-ordinator. And you just felt the resentment. (Teacher 2 School 2)

Participants said that having a literacy innovation such as CLaSS in one section of the school might result in other teachers feeling that they did not have the capability or confidence to implement the literacy strategy at a future time. Teacher 2 School 1 said, "They are curious but they are apprehensive also because it seems, looking from the outside in, it seems like a lot to learn". Teacher 2 School 2 commented:

> There was also a sense in the school "Oh my god, no way known I'm
> teaching Prep to [Year] 2s". Because they saw the detail of the
> programming and what was involved, and there were teachers from
> [Years] 3 to 6 who said, "We're not going back there ever again.
> There is no way known we're going to sit down and write like that for
> our programs".

10.2   Design Elements

10.2.1   Similar to CLaSS.

Participants said design elements similar to those in CLaSS should be considered in further literacy innovation. Teacher 4 School 2 commented, "I couldn't see it taking away a lot of the elements that are already in CLaSS, because they work. They're successful and the kids are motivated…. So I think when you're onto a good thing stick to it". They supported these elements within the context of a whole school

literacy approach that was from Prep to Year 6. Teacher 1 School 2 said, "…there should be a follow through. So for something to happen it needs to go across the whole school. It's actually followed with that child throughout".

Participants felt that the structure of the literacy block provided them with more focused time with students than in other literacy approaches. For future innovation, they supported the inclusion of the design elements of the "classroom teaching strategies" in the CLaSS model (Hill & Crévola, 1997, p. 9). Co-ordinator School 2 said:

> …without the teacher having the intimate time with students where they're focused on their learning, and they're asking the right questions to get the right answers and directing the children a bit more carefully, it's very hard. It's very hard to teach. And if you're not doing that I believe you're just teaching to the mainstream.

Teacher 1 School 1 agreed that the structure and the focused time with students was an important design element for literacy learning. She also suggested that in future literacy innovation the literacy block should be "…locked into four days a week and let's see what we can do with the other [day]". Participants said regular assessment and analysis of data was another design element that should be included in future literacy innovation. This design element, they said, would be important in assisting teachers in understanding literacy improvement in students. It would also help towards developing their own confidence as literacy teachers. In discussing the use of data and assessment Teacher 4 School 2 said, "You saw improvement in your ability. You saw the confidence. It was really great to say, 'Oh I'm up there now'. So you can go onto the next thing". Principal School 2 said that the use of assessment and data provided teachers with positive feedback on their own professionalism. She said, "We talk about the structure, but it's the implementation by the actual staff members who feel good about what they're achieving with kids, because they know that they're doing a professional job" (Principal School 2).

Principal School 2 commenting on the CLaSS design elements as a benchmark for future innovations, said, "I think there would be very little [about CLaSS] that I would permit people to think [of as] junk". For further literacy innovation she said, "I suppose I can't imagine what it is they would do to make it better. It would have to be better, not different" (Principal School 2).

10.2.2   Non-negotiable.

Participants said that in future literacy innovation it was important that there are non-negotiable elements within the literacy strategy that would be implemented by the whole school. Teacher 2 School 1 said he "…liked the idea of non-negotiable components…like you don't interrupt it, you don't swap it around". Co-ordinator School 2 said it was important "…finding a model and sticking to it. Learning the model, learning the ins and outs, all the nitty gritties before you start playing with it…Once you have learnt the model, then you can manipulate and play with things". Teacher 1 School 2 said, "Everyone knows what is expected. So you pretty much don't argue with it. So if that's established, that sets you up. And if everyone is expected to do it and follow that model then everyone is on the way to making it work".

Co-ordinator School 1 said the elements of a literacy innovation should be mandated and, therefore, everyone is clear about the expectations:

> I kind of think that when things aren't mandated, people will do, not
> everyone, there are really good teachers out there, but many will do
> their minimum. That's okay. Because nothing else is expected of
> them. But when something is mandated you've got to do it. You don't
> have a choice. And CLaSS has proven that it's not terribly hard to
> mandate things, it can be done.

Principal School 1 agreed that a model that everyone had to agree to and a clear process of implementation are important:

> We definitely have to have it based on a sound conceptual model that
> you can look at. It has to have project design that you can look at and
> understand. Then you need to convince the people [key personnel]
> that this is good and it is a time for it to be done. And that needs to be
> proven. You need to have a process for implementation and a time
> line and all those things to ensure that it's going to work. You need to
> keep on stoking the fire; you need to have three monthly or however,
> something where those key people get fed more stuff.

10.3   Professional Development Model

10.3.1   Team approach.

Participants said that a professional development model that included the
literacy team attending professional development sessions off-site and school-based
professional learning team meetings should be a requirement for any further literacy
innovation. Participants said that the opportunity to attend as a team is important in
building a whole school approach. Teacher 1 School 1 said, even after the
implementation of a literacy strategy, the provision for the literacy team to attend
off-site professional development was useful in maintaining a whole-school approach.

> Keep up the PD even for those people who have been doing it…It was
> a great day for catching up and speaking professionally with people in
> your own team and then having that and then going away from it. …I
> would still encourage them to somehow find a way to PD the whole
> lot of them so the team was kept intact. That has been the most
> beneficial thing of the whole thing, having the team together. Working
> together professionally and sharing responsibilities of the kids.
> (Teacher 1 School 1)

Teacher 1 School 2 said that it was important that the literacy team attended
professional development together rather than "…someone coming back and talking to
me [which] doesn't have the same impact". Teacher 2 School 2 commented that while

teachers often went to professional development (other than CLaSS), they did not necessarily share their learning with other staff. She noted, "There is a lot of days where people are out, but you don't necessarily get feedback at school level". She supported CLaSS as a model for professional development for further innovation.

Teacher 2 School 2, however, cautioned whether a team approach provides value for money. She said, "It cost over $200 to replace a teacher per day, and anything that you go to should have a value of equal standing to make it worthwhile or use that $200 for resources". She questioned whether it was "…valid to send us out for a day [with the cost] or is it valid for a school to have the money to do something at school level (Teacher 2 School 2)".

10.3.2   *Engaging teachers in off-site sessions.*

In future literacy innovation, participants said it is important to have quality of content and a variety of presentations in any off-site professional development sessions. Teacher 1 School 1 said that CLaSS proved team learning was for everybody to "…actually have time to talk to each other about these strategies and these things".

While Teacher 5 School 2 liked the use of videos to demonstrate to teachers how a strategy worked, she said it would have "…been really fantastic to come together to meet with the co-ordinator and others…and maybe try it out on the class and come back and talk about it". She stated that there needed to be stronger links between the professional development sessions and the school context. Teacher 5 School 2 felt that she would like "…to see more workshops. I'd like to own things".

Teacher 2 School 2 agreed with Teacher 5 School 2 and said, "We would need lots of work-shopping". She commented that learning from practitioners was also important. She said that experts from organizations such as the Catholic Education Office Melbourne can provide some insights into literacy: "they can throw in theories. They can draw in ideas that they've got from a particular person, how do you think it will work and what do you need to do". She said hearing from fellow teachers in schools enhanced the professional development days. She elaborated:

I think it's important that the teachers have, not the total input of what goes on…there are some staff who are provided from the CEO [Catholic Education Office Melbourne], for example, who are probably quite good at what they do, but in fact, they've been out of the classroom for so long. I don't think they're got the connection, and I don't think they've got the picture of real life. I think they can facilitate days, but I think the learning has to come from practitioners. (Teacher 2 School 2)

Teacher 1 School 1 said literacy experts could present interesting ideas in the professional development sessions. The difficulty however, was that teachers did not necessarily follow through on these ideas. She described a professional development session she attended with the literacy team and commented on a presenter. Literacy "…was his area of expertise and interest, and I could feel, everybody was just soaking it up" (Teacher 1 School 1). She wondered, however, "…how many people took it back and had enough energy and time to go through that because we're back into it" (Teacher 1 School 1). She said that the material should be linked to what was happening in the school context. Principal School 1 said that information presented within professional development sessions would have relevance and interest for some people. She said that the key to any successful professional learning is that what is learnt in these sessions can be implemented properly in the school context. She also said processes to support the learning in the school context are needed:

So like all educational philosophies, they will work for a certain percentage of people, a certain percentage of time, and it is all analytical, and all that sort of stuff, but they have to be employed properly to actually work. You can't be half hearted about anything, otherwise that will not succeed. (Principal School 1)

Principal School 2 also said that any presentations needed to challenge the learner's understanding of literacy:

We've done things with PD, with the CEOM. Like this year we had
this woman from America lecturing to us…who has been very
successful in some very difficult areas in Chicago developing their
approach to literacy and that kind of thing. I went and spent a day
listening to her and it was dead boring. Because we'd done that years
ago.

Co-ordinator School 1, however, said that the challenge for any literacy
innovation and professional development was "…keeping people enthused and just not
letting people get stale and thinking 'I know all this…'. We need to see ourselves as all
learners and just keep it real and keep that going". She remarked about teacher literacy
understanding: "it's funny the more you know, the less you know".

10.3.3   *Professional learning teams.*

Participants said that a professional development model for literacy should
include professional learning teams. Teacher 2 School 2 said, "And I think whatever
new innovation you have you really have to have that weekly contact". She explained
that the team meetings allowed teachers to discuss data and teaching challenges
including the progress of individual students within a professional environment:

You can discuss results and what are people's issues so that people
can constantly air their things and hopefully have the encouragement
to try different things. Once they've heard it from someone or
someone's had a good idea, to try it in CLaSS because it's worked for
this particular group of children. It's just sharing. It just makes you
feel more supported I think. (Teacher 5 School 2)

As stated in Chapter 8, participants said that the professional learning team
component reinforced the learning in off-site sessions through creating further
opportunities for the discussion of the learning among the team. Teacher 3 School 2
explained, "It's to have the PLT. Teachers do a lot. It [PLT] reinforces a lot. And I think
there's a lot of sharing and talking that goes on. Which is great! I think that's very

important". Principal School 1 said, "The professional development day only made sense when you went back and you debriefed [in the PLT] and you practised".

10.4   Other Considerations

Teacher 2 School 2 suggested that literacy innovations ought to be student-centred so that they developed students' ability to be self-motivated learners:

> Things that will allow kids to progress even further than they would normally because they are able to. I think there has to be scope for allowing kids to be extended. I think we have to look at programs that will allow kids to become, not independent learners, but self-motivated learners. Not necessarily sitting down and having everything fed to them. Ways of getting kids to be involved in activities that will allow them to move on themselves. Nowadays, when you look at secondary and tertiary, the self-motivated kids are the ones that tend to get out there and do better because there is no one to tell them what to do.

Teacher 4 School 2 suggested that some aspects of literacy learning, such as games, are more engaging to students and should be considered:

> They're [games] successful and the kids are motivated. They like games. But at the same time they are still learning. It's very good for co-operative group work. It's the older ones helping the younger ones. They like it.

Principal School 1 suggested that the implementation process should be staged so that the literacy co-ordinators received the professional development first in order to provide more informed leadership to the rest of the team:

> I think what they would do is they would talk to just the CLaSS

co-ordinators for the first year, and then have years one, two and three…So instead of everyone learning at the same time, like [as it was] your CLaSS co-ordinators couldn't tell people what to do because they didn't know what it was.

10.5   Analysis

10.5.1   School-wide approach.

Participants believed that any future innovation in literacy required a shared vision across the school and therefore a school-wide approach to literacy should be adopted. They preferred a school-wide literacy approach rather than a literacy approach that is focused on one section of the school.

Participants' preference for a school-wide approach was based on their experience of transferring a CLaSS approach to the whole school. School 1 implemented elements of CLaSS in the upper levels of the school, Years 3 to 6. After the first year of implementation, Teacher 2 School 1 said, it took three years to have a literacy approach based on CLaSS working effectively from the junior to the senior school. In the process they had to modify the implementation in the senior school each year. They said there was no direction from CEOM as to how to implement literacy based on a CLaSS approach beyond Year 2. School 2 began implementing literacy based on CLaSS in Years 3 to 4 before attempting it in Years 5 to 6.

Participants' comments illustrated the difficulty they experienced in implementing a sequential literacy strategy throughout the school. This difficulty arose because CLaSS defined the literacy strategy for the early years of schooling, and once the school mastered its implementation there seemed to be little or no understanding of what the vision or strategy for literacy ought to be throughout all levels of the school. Participants in the research formed the belief that something like CLaSS could and should be implemented from Prep to Year 6. Teacher 1 School 1 also indicated that there was a difficulty with primary to secondary school. As most participants talked about literacy in the primary school it cannot be ascertained from their comments

whether they saw a future literacy innovation as one that encompassed both primary and secondary schools.

First Steps was an approved approach in Literacy Advance for Catholic primary schools. Teachers in the latter years of primary school indicated, in the evaluation of First Steps in Western Australia, that though they valued the First Steps strategies, they generally found that students required different strategies from those that were identified and built upon in the early years (Education Department of Western Australia, 1993). This was also consistent with the findings of the mapping of 100 students by Hill, Comber et al. (1998). This study argued that students required specific literacy strategies at different stages of schooling. Clay (1979) and Beck and Juel (1994) also indicated that the development of decoding skills in the early years of schooling was an important foundation for reading. Winch et al. (2005) said that while continuing to develop decoding skills was important in Years 5 to 6, students needed more focus on broadening their range of texts, refining their understanding of different texts and their ability to be critical readers. Students needed to be exposed to the different dimensions of comprehension in latter years (Rosenblatt, 1983; Smith & Elley, 1998). This resonated with participants' comments, which indicated that while students in Years Prep to 2 developed strong decoding skills, students needed to be developed further in comprehension. Winch et al. (2005) also suggested that ":...learning in other curriculum areas becomes highly literacy based" (p. 109). Participants' comments also indicated that duplicating the structure beyond Year 2 required modification and the development of standardized tests to measure student improvement in these year levels.

10.5.2   Design elements.

Participants said that the design elements that drew on those in CLaSS should be included in any future literacy innovation. In particular, participants mentioned the following design elements: the structure of the literacy block (school and classroom organization); the professional development model (including professional learning teams); and regular assessment and analysis of data (monitoring and assessment, standards and targets) (Crévola & Hill 2005a; Hill & Crévola, 1997a). In Chapter 7 participants commented strongly on the role of the co-ordinator and the principal in

leading the innovation and therefore, it can be implied that the design element of "leadership and coordination" (Hill & Crévola, 1997a, p. 9) should also be included.

The research did not focus on the CLaSS design elements of "home-school-community partnerships" or "intervention and special assistance" (Hill & Crévola, 1997a, p. 9). These areas were spoken of by the participants, though not in depth, and were not mentioned by them as possible design elements. CLaSS also had a design element called "professional learning teams" (Crévola & Hill, 2005a) that was a specific element of the whole professional development model in CLaSS. Participants were very positive about professional learning teams as a professional development element. They wanted the naming of this design element to capture the professional development model not just a component of it.

10.5.3 Professional development.

Participants said that in developing a school-wide approach to literacy, the professional development for future innovations should be school-wide. They said all teachers require access to appropriate off-site professional development designed for the literacy needs of their students. Cole (2005) and Showers and Joyce (1998) argued that the practice of sending out one or two teachers to professional development had limited capacity in influencing others to embrace a strategy or program. Participants agreed that sending a team from one section of the school, may have limited the capacity to provide direction for another section of the school. According to Cole (2005) and Hoban (1997), while a school-based model of professional development was often strong in building collaboration and connecting the learning to the school context, it had the potential to be limited by the expertise of the presenters. Participants did not provide any insights as to whether the professional development in CLaSS assisted in developing their understanding of literacy post Year 2. Therefore, its capacity to provide appropriate literacy learning for teachers in higher year levels was questionable.

While participants valued the professional development model for CLaSS and said that it was a good model for future literacy innovation, the comments reflected the difficult task in balancing teacher, school and sector needs (Blandford, 2000).

Participants felt that the inclusion of professional learning teams had demonstrated the capacity of that element to address teacher, school and sector needs and, therefore, was a critical element of the professional development model in future literacy innovation. Their comments indicated that they would like to see, for future literacy innovations, a professional development model that improved further on the *outside-inside model* (Hoban, 1997).

While the CLaSS model was a clear improvement on past literacy professional development, they wanted school-wide professional development that consisted of off-site and school-based learning which developed a school-wide vision for literacy. They also wanted off-site sessions linked to their particular school context and which provided different approaches that took into account different learning styles. They wanted a model that allowed participant input into what was presented. The off-site learning should include presentations from classroom teachers (Blandford, 2000; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Huberman, 1995; Marczely, 1996; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Importantly they wanted sufficient time in the sessions to have the rich conversations with colleagues (Johnson & Scull, 1999). Participants said that the learning from the off-site sessions needed to be linked to professional learning teams within the school where the learning was generated by the off-site sessions and their own action research (Johnson & Scull, 1999; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Participants said that they wanted learning sessions from peers through modelling from teachers within and outside their own setting (Harris & Muijs, 2005, Whitaker, 1993). The professional development model for future innovation would be ongoing and cater for different competency levels for teachers as well as schools (Marsh, 1996; Scott, 1997). It would also require a sufficient allocation of money to ensure that it could be sustained for the whole school (Ingvarson et al., 2005). What participants believed is important in a professional development model reflects the complexity of what is needed for successful innovation.

This concludes the finding of the research. The next chapter summarizes the key conclusions throughout the findings and provides some recommendations and suggestions for further literacy research.

Chapter 11 Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the conclusions and recommendations from the research. It also identifies suggested future research. As stated in Chapter 5, the conclusions and recommendations are based on the research data. A more extensive study of schools implementing CLaSS may not produce the same conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions and recommendations from this research could form the basis of further research. The conclusions are organized around the overarching question and the three specific questions of the research.

11. 1   Conclusions

The research stemmed from my own involvement and interest in CLaSS. I recognized that it was a phenomenon that I had experienced and shared with participants in this research. The conclusions in this section are based on their perceptions of CLaSS by way of the overarching question of the research: What were the perceptions of Catholic primary principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers of implementing CLaSS as a literacy and professional development approach?

11.1.1   Effective literacy approach.

The research indicated that participants overall regarded CLaSS as an effective literacy approach for the early years of schooling. While the literacy block initially was daunting to implement, participants liked the structure, the whole-group-whole, of the literacy block because it provided a common organizational framework. It ensured that they covered and gave sufficient time to the different elements of literacy. There was a common language and understanding in which responses, such as "CLaSS is CLaSS" (Teacher 5 School 2), had a shared meaning for participants in the research. Participants also said that, because the routine generally had the same understanding in many schools, it provided a wider collegial base in which to discuss literacy. Participants believed that students responded well to the notion of knowing the routine of the literacy block. Participants also said the daily routine of the literacy block was beneficial in maintaining positive student behaviour. It would seem from the research that participants liked the structure and routine in teaching and learning approaches as

much as students did. Section 11.2 of this chapter provides more detailed analysis of the conclusions to their perceptions of the literacy approach.

11.1.2 Professional development model.

The research study indicated that the professional development model in CLaSS was well received. Participants believed that the combination of off-site professional development and professional learning teams was a good model. They believed it was an improvement on models that participants had experienced in the past. Other related activities, such as visits to other schools or having other teachers visit their school, enhanced the model.

Though the model was quite successful, there were some aspects of it that participants identified as areas of difficulty, such as catering for different learning styles and new team members. These are further discussed in Section 11.3 of this chapter.

11.1.3 Leadership.

Participants said effective leadership played an important role in the success of implementing the innovation. The research showed that the principal and literacy co-ordinator together were important for developing the shared vision and setting the literacy directions in the schools. The research demonstrated the importance of initial leadership at the time of implementation and the ongoing interest. Leadership made literacy a priority in the schools. Leadership supported literacy through providing resources, communicating directions and working through issues in collaboration with the literacy team and as a leadership team. Participants believed that unless they had effective leadership, they may not have implemented all aspects of CLaSS and that the impetus of the strategy would decrease. This indicated that the ongoing support was critical in the sustaining of the innovation.

Participants, however, said that leadership needed to deal with the potential difficulties through providing constructive and careful feedback in evaluating the reasons for poor or below expected results. The study suggested that participants had become more expert in using evidence-based assessment as an important mechanism for

tracking students, reflecting and evaluating literacy strategies, and providing a personalized approach to literacy. The research demonstrated there was some uneasiness among both leaders and teachers in making too close a connection between student assessment and teacher effectiveness. The use of data identified a challenge for leadership as the dignity of some teachers could be jeopardized by public analysis of student data.

The research also indicates that participants without formal leadership roles, had also developed opportunities for informal leadership. Their collaboration, sharing and trialling of strategies suggested that while they developed a culture of learning, participants had opportunities to be teacher leaders.

11.2   Literacy

This section presents the conclusions from the research on the first specific question: What were principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions of CLaSS as a school and sector approach to literacy?

11.2.1   Reading and writing.

The study showed that participants implemented an effective reading strategy to improve decoding. Participants, however, were not as confident in implementing comprehension and some areas of writing. While they were not as confident, they developed collaborative learning approaches to improve their own professional understanding in these areas. This study also demonstrated that teachers when supported can develop solutions to issues rather than needing to be directed to use specific approaches.

Participants drew on a range of approaches in teaching literacy. Some were developed prior to implementing CLaSS and others they learnt about or modified as a result of CLaSS. This demonstrates that participants adopted explicit strategies to achieve a specific purpose when they were aware of the application, purpose and limitations of different strategies. Choosing an approach involved considering theory

and practice through collegial discussion and evaluation within the context of professional learning teams.

The research suggested that participants, through their experiences with CLaSS, improved their ability to analyse the learner and apply the right approach to the context. This demonstrates that participants generally were not caught up in debates about whether a particular approach provided all the answers to successful literacy learning. They found neither phonics nor whole language alone were the answer to improving reading or writing. They thought that while phonics is good for learning to decode, and while they employed it for that purpose, they also thought that other approaches are important for specifics aspects, such as comprehension. To the participants, all approaches were important parts of the task in delivering effective literacy, though the importance of one approach varied from student to student. Participants demonstrated the importance of teachers knowing when and why to apply approaches. While in the past participants might not have been clear about the when and why approaches should be used, there are indications in their responses that perhaps their use of approaches in comprehension and writing, as a result of implementing CLaSS, have improved.

11.2.2   Testing.

The research study indicated that participants accepted the idea that the assessment of text levels for reading provides an effective measure for determining student improvement. While observation and other measures could be used, participants wanted some testing to ensure that assessment was standardized. Though they acknowledged there may be some difficulties in more testing, participants regarded testing as more reliable than other forms of assessment. They sought uniform sector measures for comprehension and writing.

11.2.3   New levels of professionalism.

From the participants' comments, it seemed they had moved up to a new level of professionalism in literacy. They recognized themselves now as experts on literacy, though this expertise had limitations in areas, such comprehension and writing. By the

continuous involvement in collegial discussion, use of evidence-based assessment, supported by professional development, they gained confidence as teachers in the classroom and also as professionals who collaborated and worked as a team to solve issues and develop a better understanding of literacy.

Through the implementation of CLaSS, the research indicated that participants had moved from a culture of individuals or ad hoc teams, to a culture of systematic collaboration, professional dialogue and reflection that took them beyond their previous teaching level. The use of evidence-based assessment also contributed to this increased professionalism. The research demonstrated that teachers are able to change if given the appropriate support, time and a clear purpose. Teachers working together in conjunction with a whole sector change can have an impact on teachers as a group and as individuals. The research also indicates that change is not necessarily an even or easy process and that individual needs are as important as group needs in the change process.

11.3   Professional Development

This section presents the conclusions from the research on the second specific question: What were principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions on the professional development model in CLaSS?

11.3.1   Professional learning teams.

The professional learning team meeting (PLT) was a critical component in the professional development model. The inclusion of the PLT was a significant improvement on past professional development models. It created the capacity for the participants to link the content of the off-site sessions to the school context through collaboration, professional dialogue, reflection and evaluation of the literacy program. It promoted shared ownership of student progress, and empowerment for teachers to problem solve. The PLT provided a context for developing a school culture of continual professional learning that developed different learning styles and interests in the team members.

11.3.2   Improvements.

The research showed that with a clear purpose, a sustained approach and layers of support, a professional development model could work even if some elements of the model are not always effective. The model has to be applied and sustained beyond the implementation phase to take into account teachers new to the approach. A professional development model that is sector-driven, school-team focused and linked to off-site sessions and school-based professional learning team meetings can be effective. Participants' comments indicate that it can be more effective if individual learning requirements are also taken into account.

The research demonstrated that off-site sessions needed to take into account learning styles, career stages and motivation of individual members of the participants. Participants identified the tension between the amount and type of theory and practical sessions presented in off-site sessions. The research indicated that providing time for participants to discuss what is being presented can assist. Participants suggested that presenters from a school context who could demonstrate how the understandings of the theory were implemented in a school were also important.

11.3.3   New team members.

The research showed that the formation of the literacy team was an important component of the success of CLaSS in each of the schools. The team approach was critical in the shared vision and success in improving the literacy outcomes for students. At the same time new team members presented a significant challenge in how to cater for the different levels of knowledge about CLaSS. The research indicated that this is a risk factor in the management of the continued success of an innovation and as such, there needs to be a strategy in place to overcome the potential issues. Continual and co-ordinated sector-based professional development is one approach that may assist. Schools themselves also need to develop strategies to overcome this issue so that the innovation is fully developed rather than continually revisiting particular components.

11.4   Future Literacy Innovation

This section presents the conclusions from the research on the third specific question: What did principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers believe, having implemented CLaSS at their school, were important issues or considerations for any future literacy innovation?

11.4.1   Whole of schooling approach.

Participants wanted to impose, in some form, the structure of the literacy block on all levels of primary schooling so that the literacy development was sequential. They also felt that a literacy strategy could cause conflict when one section of the school receives extensive professional development opportunities and resources and other sections less. This situation can also discourage teachers teaching at specific levels. Their reasons for supporting a school-wide approach to literacy are critical issues. It seemed that as participants became more competent in implementing CLaSS they became aware that the common vision was contributing to better literacy outcomes for students in the early years. Consequently, they wanted this improvement to continue throughout the school. Their responses indicated they saw that the literacy learning from CLaSS had improved their understanding of literacy. The participants in the research study however, did not reflect on whether the learning they engaged in through implementing CLaSS necessarily gave them literacy expertise post Year 2.

The research highlights the impact of an innovation designed for a specific section of the school that while it may appear to be successful, not easily transferred to, or desirable for, other levels of schooling (Hill, Comber et al., 1998). The research indicates to just focus on one level may leave other levels at risk. Also a literacy approach in one level of schooling does not easily transfer to another level. The challenge, it would seem for future innovation, based on the research study, is to provide a whole of schooling approach that maps out specific requirements at different stages of schooling and shows how each stage is linked. This would be assisted through a professional development model that builds leadership capacity to understand the focus, strategies and structures that are appropriate at different levels. The model would build on the relationship between off-site and school-based learning and provide links

between different levels of schooling. A whole of schooling approach, based on the participants' responses, would need to take into account and manage the impact that CLaSS has had in the early years of schooling. Participants were hoping for future innovation to take into account the structure and design elements of CLaSS.

11.5   Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the analysis of responses provided by the participants in the research:

11.5.1   Literacy block.

That the structure and purpose of the literacy block is evaluated.

Participants in the research viewed the literacy block as important for developing effective literacy, and, therefore, they believed the components of the whole-group-whole are required. There is some evidence, however, to suggest that some participants had opportunities to include aspects of literacy that they believe are not sufficiently visible in the literacy block. The participants suggested that play development and its contribution to literacy is not generally included in the literacy block. Participants in the research did not give any indication as to how the schools can include "new" literacies, such as digital literacy in the curriculum, nor did they discuss how these different literacies assist with reading and writing development (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, Snyder, 2008). As the research was focused on literacy in the literacy block rather than literacy across the curriculum, this may have influenced their reflections. The development of different literacies as argued by recent theorists, such as Cope and Kalantzis (2000) and Freebody and Luke (1998), and how each is incorporated across the curriculum, however, needs to be an important consideration for future literacy innovation, especially given the significant recognition of literacies in the VELS (VCAA, 2005).

11.5.2   Relationship between decoding and comprehension.

That future professional development could provide further clarity about the relationship between decoding and comprehension.

This could be resolved through specific professional development that should be based on research. This research would clarify for teachers the purpose of specific literacy approaches and how each contributes to literacy development (Brophy, 2002; DEST, 2005; Louden et al., 2005).

11.5.3   Comprehension.
That future professional development could focus on how comprehension is developed for different text types at different levels of schooling.

This would provide clarity for the participants as to how to develop comprehension at a particular level. This would take into account different approaches necessary for each level of schooling and for each stage of reading development (Hill, Comber et al, 1998; Rivalland, 2000).

11.5.4   Writing.
That further professional development or advice about the teaching of writing is developed.

Based on the responses of the participants, there needs to be an investigation of what teachers are requiring for their implementation of the writing hour. Though teachers in the research demonstrated knowledge of a range of strategies for teaching writing, they still asked for more direction. Participants in the research suggested that often when new team members began, the professional learning teams were refocused onto reading first and with constant new members, writing was not given the same attention (Blandford, 2000; Chapman & Aspin, 1997; Huberman, 1995; Louden et al., 2005; Marsh, 1996; Marczely, 1996; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Therefore, participants seemed less confident in this area. Further professional development could direct the professional learning teams to revisit writing, by providing them with teacher learning materials that guide their thinking and participating in school-based action research (Achilles & Tienken, 2005; Guskey, 2002; McRae et al., 2001; Putman & Borko, 2001). This could be initiated on the basis of teacher feedback and piloting a "revisiting" strategy in a number of schools.

11.5.5 Testing.

That the sector could identify specific standardized tests for writing and comprehension to be implemented in all schools.

As standardized testing of each aspect of writing and comprehension would be onerous to conduct at each year level and not necessarily reliable for all genres of writing and comprehension, then a sector bank of different assessment types could be developed or identified for genres at different year levels or stages of schooling (Beck & Juel, 1994; Jackson & Coltheart, 2001; Zimmermann & Brown, 2003). In establishing sector results, sample schools could trial different assessment types. Teachers could select the type of assessment required and measure the result against sector information. The assessment bank would identify which assessment types are more useful for different elements of comprehension and writing. This bank would also assist in developing more extensive teacher knowledge of assessment about specific students at any year level. The assessment bank could also include a sector-wide criteria-based system or rubric to assist teacher observation of student development in comprehension and writing, as an alternative to additional formal testing (Graves, 1983, 1994; Jackson & Coltheart, 2001). It could also include an extensive range of annotated student work samples for different levels of achievement that provide the basis for teacher professional judgment in determining levels of progress. Sector-wide professional development on consistent teacher judgement could also be considered.

11.5.6 Sector evaluation.

That further sector evaluation of professional development requirements could be conducted to assist in maintaining the impetus of the professional learning teams in schools.

While CLaSS is increasingly becoming practice rather than innovation, participants in the research believe that some teachers are not as well developed in literacy as others in their school (Achilles & Tienken, 2005; Cole, 2004). They believe this was indicated by the fact that some teachers avoid teaching in areas of the school with CLaSS (Cole, 2004). As my research did not involve interviewing these teachers,

participants' perceptions cannot be verified. My research also could not ascertain other reasons for his avoidance, such as whether these teachers were not in agreement with the literacy approach. There needs to be an evaluation of sector provision for continuing teacher knowledge in literacy for CLaSS teachers and others. Part of a sector evaluation could examine how to build capacity within the school contexts to address the variety of teacher needs for professional development (Louden et al., 2005).

The effectiveness of off-site professional development could be enhanced in future literacy innovations by a process of establishing what teachers require. This would identify types of presentations and presenters and whether schools should be grouped into sessions according to similar interests (Brophy, 2002). Off-site sessions could include a number of focused modules or units and literacy teams could participate in the ones that are more appropriate for their school context (Blandford, 2000; Dockett et al., 1998; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). The information from the modules or units could be provided in an electronic form that teachers could view to facilitate individual choice. It is acknowledged based on the research findings that professional development for teachers is complex and, therefore, the provision of continuous off-site professional development needs detailed planning that allows literacy teams to select what is relevant to their context. This detail could include information on how some aspects are provided in the off-site sessions, and how the learning could be expanded in school-based activities (McRae et al., 2001; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

11.5.7 Building leadership capacity.
That the sector could conduct professional development for principals to build their capacity to lead literacy and teacher improvement.

The research study demonstrates that leadership is important in implementing innovation and sustaining practice in literacy. The leadership capacity needs to be extended to literacy development throughout the whole of schooling so that leaders can interpret the literacy directions for the different levels of schooling and its transition from one level to another. The development of leadership capacity is important in managing change and teacher development (Beare et al., 1989; Hattie, 2003). The

research study also shows that while evidence-based assessment is effective in contributing to teacher effectiveness, there is a need for awareness and skill in leadership to manage this component (Beare et al., 1989; Elmore, 2002; Glatthorn & Fox, 1996; Hattie, 2003).

11.5.8   *Whole of schooling.*

That future literacy innovation should take into account a "whole of schooling" approach rather than "whole-school" or "section of school" approach to literacy.

Participants identified difficulties for the schools in maintaining high standards as students' progress out of the early years of schooling. They suggested these transition issues would also occur between primary and secondary school and, therefore, a whole of schooling approach identifies the specific needs and approaches for students at different stages of schooling and provides links across them (Hill, Comber et al., 1998). This would be preferable to having a single approach across all levels. This approach would address "time on literacy", "structure", "class organization", "assessment requirements", and "professional development" that are relevant to each stage. It would also address the broader development of literacy within English and literacy outside of the literacy session. A "whole of schooling" approach might encourage all teachers to be more informed about how literacy is developed across schooling and the specific requirements at each stage of schooling (Blandford, 2000). This would, therefore, include teachers engaged in professional learning teams at each level to implement the vision through professional dialogue, collaboration, opportunities to observe each other within the classroom and contribute to building communities of practice (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Munro, 2005; Wenger, 1998; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

11.6   *Further Research*

The conclusions from this research are based on the 11 participants' responses. There were some issues that arose that would require further investigation with larger samples of participants and schools to further investigate the issues raised.

Firstly, participants raised issues about their competency in teaching comprehension and writing. This cannot be generalized for teachers across the sector. It is suggested further research is conducted to establish teacher competence and professional development needs in implementing comprehension and writing.

Secondly, participants indicated that oral language played an important role in the development of both reading and writing. They said that while it was developed within and outside the literacy block, they believed that this aspect of literacy was not effectively developed. As this cannot be generalized for other teachers and schools within the sector, research could be conducted to ascertain whether the participants' views are consistent with those of other teachers and schools.

Thirdly, the participants indicated that effective leadership played a significant role in sustaining CLaSS in their school. Further research could examine whether the ways in which other schools' leadership was important in sustaining CLaSS beyond the implementation phase.

Fourthly, participants made little mention of the CLaSS Facilitators. The facilitators were a significant resource for the CEOM in terms of cost and their role in supporting schools. Further research could be conducted to ascertain whether this component of supporting schools was effective.

Finally, while participants valued the parent assistance in literacy, they were not sure how to involve parents. It is suggested that research be conducted to explore how parent assistance can be effectively used in the literacy block. This could include case studies from schools that have effective parental assistance.

11.7   *Final Reflection*

The interviews provided a rich source of data. Given that participants generally indicated they liked the survey as an indication of the parameters of the research, it may have been more useful to use a quantitative survey. This would have provided

information to use in the interviews as well as to inform the participants on the nature of the research.

This research study began with my own reflections on the implementation of CLaSS, which I bracketed in my investigations of participants' experiences. As I was involved in the implementation of CLaSS in a school for two years, some of the participants' perceptions resonated with my own experiences, while many of their perceptions extended my understanding. What I found was that as they fully implemented the strategy, they had become firm believers in the design of CLaSS despite some challenges. This belief, I think, was because the strategy affirmed them as professionals. I learnt that CLaSS gave them a confidence that they did not have before. This confidence came in part from professional learning teams and in part from their ability to interpret and use data to improve student learning. Participants suggested that the literacy block has made a significant contribution to literacy in the early years. While ClaSS made a significant contribution, there are still issues in developing effective literacy in specific areas, such as comprehension and writing. For participants in the research, CLaSS was valued as a literacy strategy and professional development model and was definitely a phenomenon.

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Attachment A: Ethics Approval

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

⊕ACU National

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Josephine Ryan   Melbourne Campus

Co-Investigators: Dr Patricia Cartwright   Melbourne Campus

Student Researcher: Mrs Mary Lovelock   Melbourne Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
The implementation of the ClaSS in Catholic primary schools: School leaders', literacy co-ordinates' and classroom teachers' perceptions on implementing ClaSS as literacy strategy

for the period: 15.3.2004 - 30.12.2004

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: V2003.04-61

The following **standard** conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999) apply:

(i)   that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
- security of records
- compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
- compliance with special conditions, and

(ii)   that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
- proposed changes to the protocol
- unforeseen circumstances or events
- adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than minimum risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of minimum risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: .... Date: ....
         (Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

(Committee Approval.rot @ 28.06.2002)   Page 1 of 1

Attachment B: Letter To Principal

Dear Principal

As part of my thesis for the Doctor of Education at Australian Catholic University, I wish to ask your permission to invite you as well as the literacy co-ordinator and classroom teachers to participate in a qualitative research for my thesis. The research is titled: The implementation of CLaSS in Catholic primary schools: Principals', literacy co-ordinators' and classroom teachers' perceptions on implementing CLaSS as a literacy strategy.

The purpose of the research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of principals, literacy co-ordinators and classroom teachers that have experience in implementing CLaSS for three or more years. I have attached further information that includes:

- an outline of the nature of the research and participant involvement
- copy of approval from the Catholic Education Office Melbourne
- information and consent letters for participants
- copy of the questionnaire.

If you are willing to grant permission for me to invite appropriate staff to participate, I am available to discuss any further questions and possible timeline for the involvement of any school staff in the research data by contacting the Principal Staff Supervisor Dr Josephine Ryan on telephone number 9953 3260 in the School of Education, St Patrick's Campus at Australian Catholic University, 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy 3065.

Yours sincerely

Mary Lovelock

Attachment C: Outline of the Research

Title: The implementation of CLaSS in Catholic primary schools: Principals', literacy co-ordinators' and teachers' perceptions on implementing CLaSS as a literacy strategy.

Objectives

The research seeks the perceptions of three groups within a Catholic primary school: principals; literacy co-ordinators and classroom teachers.

The overarching objective of this research is to explore the experiences and views of each of these three groups on the implementation of CLaSS as a literacy strategy. From this overarching purpose are three specific objectives:

1. To identify ways in which CLaSS has contributed to knowledge and understanding of literacy.
2. To explore insights and views on the professional development model in CLaSS.
3. To identify the important issues in implementing CLaSS that can inform any further innovations.

Proposed Sample

Two Catholic primary schools of different socioeconomic backgrounds in the Archdiocese of Melbourne that have implemented CLaSS will be selected for the the case study. The basis of the selection will be that each school has implemented CLaSS at least three years and there are individual teachers at each school that have been involved in the CLaSS program for at least three years.

Questionnaire

Principals, literacy co-ordinators and all teaching staff will be involved in the questionnaire survey. Teachers will nominate on the survey whether they would be willing to participate in the open-ended interviews. It is anticipated that the questionnaire will take 40 minutes to complete.

Interviews

Participants from each school will be involved in the semi-structured interviews. At least two classroom teachers from each school then will be selected for the semi-structured interviews. Each interview will take no longer than one hour each. Participants can request a second interview, if required. Participants will be given a copy of the transcript from their interviews to clarify, refine or modify the data.

Methodology

As the research is focused on the perceptions of principals and teachers, a qualitative research approach will be used. Using a qualitative approach, the data will be able to provide an interpretive viewpoint of the perceptions of participants in the research.

Data collection

The selection criteria will be two Catholic primary schools that have implemented CLaSS for at least three years.

Stage One

The questionnaire relates to the overarching objective in the research that seeks to gain the perceptions of principals, literacy co-ordinators and classroom teachers on the introduction of CLaSS as a literacy strategy. All teaching staff at each school will be invited to participate in the survey. This survey will also ask teachers to participate in further interviews. The information gained from the surveys will provide some insights for the research; some of, which can then be further, explored in the interviews.

Stage Two

The second stage of the data collection will involve semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews will be used to further explore the data from the questionnaire as well as the focusing more in depth on how CLaSS contributed to their understanding of literacy and professional development. Further, the interviews will also focus on what can be learnt from implementing CLaSS in implementing other

literacy innovation within the classroom. The selection for the interview process will be purposeful sampling. Participants may choose to provide data from sources such as anecdotal notes or diaries that they have kept.

Recording of data

The collection of data will involve information from a questionnaire survey and through interviews. The interviews will be assisted through audio-taping from which a transcript will be made. Participants will be advised that the interviews are recorded using written notes and audio-taping. The written transcript will be available for each participant to check for accuracy and for any further clarification or modification.

Data analysis

There are three process involved in data analysis process: data reduction; data display and conclusion and verification. The data reduction will be assisted by the use of NVIVO software that allows for the data to be coded and compared systematically through categorizing information. The data is examined in order to establish patterns.

Through a cycle of collecting, analysing, reducing data and data display, conclusions from the research can be drawn. In the research the data is checked and verified through triangulation. This involves checking data from the different sources involved in the research. One source is the data from the survey questionnaires. The second source is the interviews that can be checked with the participants. The participants are grouped into principals, literacy co-ordinators and teachers and the data can be then compared between each group. The third source involves comparing the data between the two schools.

Ethical issues

The research will be conducted in accordance with the policies of the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. As the participants in the

research will be teachers in Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, permission will be sought from principals of the schools involved in each case study, after permission has been provided by the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne.

Confidentiality

The participants will be given a letter inviting them to become involved in the research. The letter states their involvement is voluntary, they can withdraw at anytime, their identity will be protected, confidentiality will be assured, and no harm will come to a participant as a result of their involvement in the research.

Each participant will be given a code number for anonymity. Reference to the school is necessary and therefore a pseudonym for the school will be used. Any material that identifies the school or participant will not be used in the research. All records of the interviews including notes, audio-tapes, transcripts and other relevant material will be secured in a locked filing system access to which will be available only to the researcher. Information collected will be sensitive to the position of the participant and the participant's school in that the data collected will be used only for research purposes.

Limitations and delimitations

The limitations of the research are acknowledged. The scope of the research is limited by its focus on participants in two Catholic primary schools. The research is particular rather than general in that it does not necessarily relate to all primary teachers in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The data represents the perceptions of participants' understanding of the implementation of CLaSS and the implications for personal development.

Attachment D: Information Letter To Participants

TITLE OF PROJECT: Implementing CLaSS as a literacy strategy.

PRINCIPAL STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr Josephine Ryan

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mrs Mary Lovelock

COURSE: Doctor of Education

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in some research on the implementation of the Children's Literacy and Success Strategy (CLaSS) in Catholic primary schools. The research seeks the perceptions of principals, literacy co-ordinators and classroom teachers. This research will contribute towards a thesis for my Doctor of Education. The research will focus on four perspectives: the benefits, issues and concerns in implementing CLaSS; how involvement in CLaSS has contributed to teacher knowledge in literacy; insights and views on the professional development model in CLaSS; and the issues that arise from implementing CLaSS that inform further innovations.

I require the participation of principals, literacy co-ordinators and classroom teachers at two Catholic primary schools in which CLaSS has been implemented for at least three years. The collection of data for the research involves a survey and interviews.

- **Survey**. The survey takes about 40 minutes to complete and involves an open-ended questionnaire which will allow participants to write their perceptions of the strengths, challenges and issues that have arisen for them or have observed in introducing and implementing CLaSS as a literacy strategy in a primary school. All teachers in the participating schools, regardless of whether they have been directly involved in implementing CLaSS or not, are invited to complete the survey.

- **Interviews.** When participants complete the survey, there is an opportunity to nominate whether they would like to participate in the interviews. For the interviews I need principals and literacy co-ordinators and at least three classroom teachers in each school that have been directly involved in implementing CLaSS for three or more years. This experience in implementing CLaSS in the classroom can be at different schools or though not currently implementing CLaSS have in the past implemented CLaSS for three or more years. If you nominate to participate in the surveys and are selected this will involve one or two interviews of no longer than one hour each time. The interviews will be semi-structured and foster a conversation between each participant and myself on common perceptions and issues that arose in the collation of the responses in the survey and how CLaSS has contributed to their understanding of literacy and professional development. Further, the interviews will also focus on what can be learnt from CLaSS when implementing other innovations in the classroom. The interviews will be recorded with hand written notes and through the use of an audio-tape. Before the second interview, participants will be given a copy of the transcript from the first interview. The focus of the second interview is clarify or discuss deeper important issues raised in the first interview

and allows each participant to refine, add or modify the written transcript of their interview. Each participant will be given a copy of the final transcript in which they will be able verify accuracy or ask for any changes.

Participation in this research is voluntary. For the interviews you will be asked to nominate or suggest a convenient place and time to participate.

The research will provide you with an opportunity to reflect and share with myself as another interested person on your own role, contribution and professional growth in implementing an innovation. Your reflections from the survey or interviews will contribute to a broader insight into the implementation of an innovation across a school sector.

At any stage during the survey or during the interviews you 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.

Confidentiality will be ensured during the conduct of the research and in any report or publication arising from it. Participating schools and participants will be allocated a code number for anonymity. Any material, which identifies your school or you as a participant, will be excluded from any report. The results of the research may be used in discussion with colleagues and may be used in future publications.

If you have any questions about this research, before or after participating, please contact the Principal Staff Supervisor Dr Josephine Ryan on telephone number 9953 3260 in the School of Education, St Patrick's Campus at Australian Catholic University, 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy 3065. Before commencing, you will have the opportunity to ask any questions about the research. At the end of the research I am also available to provide appropriate feedback to participants on the results of the project.

The Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University has approved this study. In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Investigator or Supervisor and Student Researcher has (have) not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Unit.

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY VIC 3065   Tel: 03 9953 3157   Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to 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 Principal Staff Supervisor or Student Researcher.

Mary Lovelock   Dr Josephine Ryan

Student Researcher   Principal Staff Supervisor

Attachment E: Participant Survey

General Information

Current Position_____

Numbers of years at the school since the implementing of CLaSS at the

school_____

Have you been involved in the implementation of CLaSS in Years Prep –2 _____

If yes, Which years and year levels?

1. Initiating Stage

(a)What was your role and input into the decision making process?

1. Initiating Stage

(b) What did you see as the benefits for the school in participating in CLaSS?

1. Initiating Stage

(c)What did you see as the perceived difficulties or challenges?

2. Implementation Stage

(a)What did you see as the benefits in the implementation for:

(1) the school

(2) students

2. Implementation Stage

(a)What did you see as the benefits in the implementation for:

(3) yourself

2. Implementation Stage

(b) What were our expectations of the implementation stage? How were these met?

(c)What were the main issues that arose during the implementation stage? How were the issues addressed?

3. Institutionalization Stage

(a) Have the changes been sustained in the classroom program? If yes, how? If no, why not?

(b)What modifications were made in the classroom program? If so, how?

3. Institutionalization Stage

(c)What do you identify as important issues for maintaining CLaSS beyond the implementation stage?

(d)How has your approach to teaching and learning in literacy change since your involvement in CLaSS? If so, how?

4. Other Comments

Interview

Would you be interested in participating in the interview process?_____

If you would like to participate, fill in your name and contact number.

Name_____Contact number_____

If you would like further information before committing to the interview process, please indicate through providing your name and contact number below.

Name_____

Contact number_____

Attachment to Participant Survey

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Copy for Participant to Submit

TITLE OF PROJECT: Implementing CLaSS as a literacy strategy

PRICIPAL STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr Josephine Ryan

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mary Lovelock

COURSE: Doctor of Education

I .... *(the participant)* have read and understood the information provided in the letter inviting participation in the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time.

I agree that that the interviews will be recorded with handwritten notes and through audio-taping. 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. I agree to be contacted by telephone if needed to arrange a mutually convenient time to complete the research task. I am over 18 years of age.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: ....
                  (block letters)
SIGNATURE ....   DATE ....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL STAFF SUPERVISOR: ....

DATE:…………………………………..

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: ....

DATE:...............................…………

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Copy for Participant to Keep

TITLE OF PROJECT: Implementing CLaSS as a literacy strategy

PRICIPAL STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr Josephine Ryan

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mary Lovelock

COURSE: Doctor of Education

I .... *(the participant)* have read and understood the information provided in the letter inviting participation in the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time.

I agree that that the interviews will be recorded with handwritten notes and through audio-taping. 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. I agree to be contacted by telephone if needed to arrange a mutually convenient time to complete the research task. I am over 18 years of age.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: ....
                      (block letters)
SIGNATURE ....   DATE
....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL STAFF SUPERVISOR: ....

DATE:……………………………………..

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: ....

DATE:...................................………….