Personal and professional transformative learning : Lived experiences of studying scripture in Israel

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PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF STUDYING SCRIPTURE IN ISRAEL.

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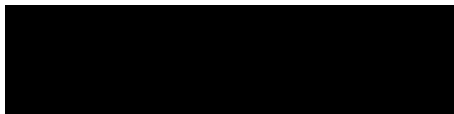Australian Catholic University

23 November 2021

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES

This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees.

Signed

Alice Teresa Youlden

Date 23 November 2021

APPRECIATION AND DEDICATION

From Sion will go forth instruction and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem   Is 2:3

This thesis has been a work of love because, to quote some of the inspiring participants, "I will never lose that sense of the holy land where you actually see things through your heart …a totally open time where we could just live with our heart, think with our heart."

This was also my experience and the motivation for this research. But it was not carried out in isolation, for just as it takes a village to raise a child, so too does it take a village to complete a thesis.

My work is dedicated to my parents, Mary and James Harrison. Their love, their support, their trust, and their values carry me through life. To my dad, who instilled in me a love of learning, so that "My muse, tho' hamely in attire, may touch the heart." (Rabbie Burns).
To my husband Ray, no words can ever express the thanks I owe you. Without your tireless love and support I could not have survived this long journey. To my children, David, Alicia and Teresa, their partners and my wonderful grandchildren, thank you. To all my fabulous friends and work colleagues, thank you for your support and belief in me.

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ABSTRACT

This study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological theoretical perspective and methodology to explore the outcomes of a Scripture-focussed professional learning program in Israel; the Sion Scholarship Program (SSP). Since its introduction in 2005, four Australian primary school teachers from the Catholic Diocese of Sale were selected and funded annually to participate in the SSP. This study explores participants' personal and professional response to the SSP, and provides a more substantive research-base to consider whether it is a means for transformative learning.

Three themes were developed from a review of literature: Professional Learning, Professional Learning in Context, and Adult Transformative Learning. Mezirow's (1981; 1990; 1997; 2009) theory of transformative learning informed the design of this study. Three main methods of data collection provide a robust corroboration of evidence: questionnaires, semi - structured interviews (focus groups and individuals), and a participant's reflective journal. Researcher notes provided further corroboration. Fifteen questionnaire responses were received and fifteen participants from a range of SSP annual programs (2005-2015), were interviewed, ensuring a cross section of responses from different iterations of the program. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to identify themes. Analysis also included a crafted story; a reflective approach enabling participants' meaning to become clearer through rich descriptions.

Results showed that the SSP enabled personal and professional transformation due to immersion in Israel, the dedicated time for study and reflection, and the sense of belonging to a like-minded learning community. Personal faith was transformed and their experience, according to participants, enhanced their teaching of Scripture. Experiencing life in Israel led to a heightened awareness of the need for interreligious dialogue and respect for others. Results also revealed a lack of coordinated opportunity to maximise post-learning potential for participants and other non-program school members. This has implications for the design,

implementation and follow-up for the SSP specifically, and for other immersion-forms of

teacher professional learning more broadly.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AITSL   Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

PBC   Pontifical Biblical Commission

DOSCEL   Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited

ECSI   Enhancing Catholic School Identity project

NCEC   National Catholic Education Commission

PD   Professional Development

PL   Professional Learning

RE   Religious Education

RELs   Religious Education Leaders (Primary)

RTA   Reflexive Theme Analysis

SSP   Sion Scholarship Program

TL   Transformative Learning

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accreditation   A necessary qualification to teach in a Catholic school in Victoria, Australia. There are two categories of accreditation: a) accreditation to teach in a Catholic school –and b) accreditation to teach religious education and lead in Catholic schools. In 2020 the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria introduced an accreditation policy whereby all teachers and leaders must maintain their accreditation status. This requires teachers in category a) to undertake 25 hours of PL in RE in a five-year period; teachers and leaders in category b) are required to undertake 50 hours of PL over a five-year period.

Accreditation Course/Unit

In the Diocese of Sale DOSCEL staff teach a course consisting of eight units that provide insight into the beliefs of the Catholic church and a better understanding of RE in general. This course enables teachers to gain and maintain accreditation.

Dereification: Changing the meaning perspective by firstly understanding how they came to believe them (reified) before introducing an alternate perspective.

Ecce Homo   Ecce Homo (behold the man) is the name of the convent in the old city of Jerusalem that is the base venue for the SSP. The Sion Sisters (see below) run their biblical formation and study courses at the convent. The convent, is situated on the Via Dolorosa, and is built over a site held sacred by Christian tradition to be the place where Jesus was scourged and condemned to death known as the Lithostrotos. (Notre Dame de Sion, 2011).

ECSI Terms

  Dialogue/dialogical:

    Dialogue is when "important insights emerge about how we see the world and the stance we take to it, and how the other sees the world and their stance to it. The result is mutual learning." (D'Orsa et al, 2019, p.41). A Dialogue school type invites all perspectives into a discourse, in which the Catholic worldview is presented but not imposed. Through this multi-directional interaction, the cultural, secular and plural realities.

  External Critique: a destructive perspective on religious matters

  Literal Belief style: assumes a direct connection with God and sees truth as definite, absolute and fixed. It is characterised by a conservative approach to tradition and reading Scripture as if it were historical fact. Every faith question can and must have one exact, certain and unchangeable answer, with interpretations that deviate from this considered to be wrong.

  Post Critical Belief: is characterised by a personal relationship with and belief in a God of mystery, despite an awareness of the variety of belief options and the many critiques of religion. Contact with God is never direct, rather it is mediated through means such as symbolic representation, stories, rituals, prayer and faith tradition

  Relativism: A belief style that is a destructive criticism on religion and faith. Religion is viewed from an objective standpoint and there is an attitude of explicit disbelief that denies the existence of God. Therefore, it is a disbelieving stance.

Epistemic   Relating to knowledge or the conditions for acquiring it

Historical Critical Method

Investigates the origins of biblical texts focusing on the sources of a document to determine authenticity. This method aims to understand the author, context of the time, the audience it was written for and how this influenced the writing. This method is an important starting point for students and scholars even though today other theoretical approaches are employed. Pope Benedict (2010) thought this method incomplete or one dimensional because the Scriptures are a document of faith, understood and interpreted by those who believed; thus, the hermeneutics of faith is involved.

Principal Professional Learning Program – Primary Principals

Provides primary school principals the opportunity to apply for self-directed professional learning. This program is intended to support short-term professional, spiritual and personal development. An allowance, based on the relevant pro-rata basis, is available towards costs.

Professional Enrichment Program - Secondary Principals

An opportunity for the principal to spend a period of time away from the school for professional development. The Professional Enrichment Program must contribute positively to the educational and spiritual leadership of the principal, as well as the management skills of the principal, and be linked to the key areas of the principal's responsibilities

Secondary School Bursary

Available to teachers of RE in secondary schools to further their professional development in the area of Religious Education, so that his or her work may be more effective.

Somatic	Of the body
Sion Sisters	Sisters of Our Lady of Sion/Notre Dame de Sion: An international congregation of women whose charism calls them to work for justice, peace and love among all people. Their charism, deeply rooted in Scripture, is to be a presence of faith and hope in the world, to foster respect and appreciation for the values and significance of all faith traditions and cultures. Their particular commitment is to give witness to God's love for the Jewish people, to promote understanding, trust and justice between the Church (which is intimately connected to Judaism) and the Jewish people (Congregation of Notre Dame de Sion, 2011). Their motto is *In Sion Firmata Sum* meaning I am established in Sion.
The Word	Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh. The Word of God, in the Catholic and Orthodox understanding, is not confined to Scripture. The relationship between Christ, the Word Made Flesh, and the Scriptures, the written Word of God, lies at the heart of what the Catholic church calls Sacred Tradition.

Chapter One

The Research Defined
Personal and Professional Transformative Learning:
lived experiences of studying Scripture in Israel.

I am an Education Officer: Catholic Identity and Religious Education (primary) in the rural/urban Diocese of Sale in Victoria, Australia. Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sale are structured like most schools in the state of Victoria with separate institutions for students aged between approximately five and twelve years in primary schools and 13–18 years in secondary schools. There are 38 primary schools in the Sale diocese spanning a distance of approximately 340 kilometres, from Orbost in the east to Narre Warren at the edge of Victoria's capital city, Melbourne. I work with school leaders from across the diocese, and in particular, with Religious Education Leaders (RELs) in twelve schools. Catholic Identity and Religious Education officers under the direction of the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL), work closely with leaders on curriculum content and pedagogy in Religious Education (RE).

This study focuses on the experience of teachers from the diocese who have attended a professional learning biblical program at the Centre of Biblical Formation organised by the Sion Sisters (see glossary) at Ecce Homo Convent in Jerusalem. DOSCEL calls this program the Sion Scholarship Program (SSP). Every year, from 2005 to the present day, DOSCEL offers four fully funded scholarships for primary school teachers to attend the biblical course in Israel. The uptake of the four scholarships is dependent on the number of applications and suitability of applicants; in some years only two or three scholarships have been awarded.

The purpose of the SSP is faith formation and building teachers' knowledge of Scripture in order to improve the way Scripture is taught in schools across the diocese. There is anecdotal evidence that the experience of studying Scripture in Israel deeply affects its participants and provides an opportunity for personal and professional transformative learning. I contribute to this

anecdotal evidence through my own personal experience as an SSP recipient, whereby I experienced the transformative effect that many other recipients also report.

1.1 Impetus for This Study

Christians seek to understand Scripture because it is a key source for encountering God and is the heart of theology (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993). It would, therefore, be expected that quality learning and teaching of Scripture be paramount in Catholic schools. However, concerns have been communicated to DOSCEL officers, in the course of their work with teachers, through their observation of RE planning, and in general feedback from RELs and primary school principals, that there are problems with the way Scripture is taught and that levels of knowledge of and teaching about Scripture are limited. Further to this, Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) survey results (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014) show that a concerningly high number of primary students take a Literal Belief (see glossary) stance, which includes a literal understanding of Scripture (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014). The crisis in teaching Scripture well, and moving students from a Literal Belief stance is, according to Pollefeyt and Bieringer (2005), hindered by a lack of teacher knowledge about Scripture. Poor knowledge of Scripture, often accompanied by lack of confidence and enthusiasm, is recognised as a broad issue in Australian research (Stead,1996; Carswell, 2006; Grace, 2003).

The impetus for this study arose out of these concerns. As an Education Officer in RE, my role is to advise school leaders and help them put in place actions to improve RE learning, which includes improving teachers' knowledge about Scripture. To support classroom teachers, I am part of a small team that provides advice about resources, access to professional learning (PL), links to pertinent information, and I teach a Scripture unit for teacher accreditation (see glossary). From a system level, one of the initiatives of DOSCEL was the establishment of the SSP: an attempt to address Scripture learning concerns by providing a unique form of PL for teachers and leaders in schools regarding the study of Scripture. DOSCEL has, and continues to, provide support for

teachers of Scripture in many ways, with the SSP being just one avenue. The purpose of this research is to consider the experience of the SSP from the perspective of participants' stories to substantiate what learning, personal and/or professional, may have taken place.

1.2 Context of this research

1.2.1 Scripture is foundational to teaching in religious education

If Christians want to know God, then they must turn to the riches contained in Scripture (Flannery, 1987). How well Scripture is taught in RE is dependent on the teacher since "teachers of religion often express their uncertainty about how to communicate faith with the help of the Bible" (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005, p. 118).

Church documents clearly convey the importance of Scripture in the RE curriculum and propose that teachers must be educated to teach Scripture accurately (Synod of Bishops, 2008; Australian Episcopal Conference, 1970; Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1964). There are numerous complexities around how to teach Scripture. The Church continues to recommend the use of the historical-critical method (see glossary) as an approach to interpreting Scripture (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1964). While the historical-critical method offers great potential, there is a danger that if teachers over-emphasise this method, they may miss the opportunity to involve both the head and the heart (Hall & Sultmann, 2019; Gowdie, 2017; Sharkey 2015), and to invite students to consider how Scripture speaks to them, because the Spirit continues to work in the Church of the risen Christ (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005). The Catholic Church points to the need for Scripture scholars to incorporate other approaches such as rhetorical, narrative, and semiotic (Pontifical Biblical Commission 1993). Teachers do not need to be Scripture scholars, but they do need to have some knowledge of the subject (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, 2007; Shulman, 1987; Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993; Sharkey, 2015).

Teachers of Scripture are encouraged to be witnesses, moderators, and specialists (Sharkey, 2015), that is, they must have specialist knowledge of the content, be good communicators who

allow dialogue (see glossary) to take place, and give personal witness to Christianity. This research explores the SSP to understand if and how participants experience transformative learning through knowledge of Scripture and its richness, as well as personal faith transformation while living and studying in Israel.

1.2.2 Building knowledge of Scripture in the Diocese of Sale

Since the 1980s, DOSCEL has been aware that the problems cited above exist within the diocese, and attempts have been made to address them through various PL opportunities. Local and international biblical scholars and educators have been engaged by DOSCEL over the last twenty years or more to enhance teachers' knowledge and how Scripture is taught. Provision is made for access to PL through diocesan-level formation sessions, school-based PL, and cross-school PL. Scholars have included Barbara Stead, Margaret Carswell, Brendan Byrne, Mary Coloe, Amy Jill Levine, Rosemary Prosser, and practitioners Rina Wintour and Carole Danby. While the importance of Scripture is acknowledged by leaders and teachers in primary schools in the diocese, other curriculum areas such as literacy and mathematics appear to take precedence in professional learning pursuits. In general, DOSCEL officers have not witnessed the same positive attitudes, allocation of time, or levels of commitment toward PL in RE as they have seen in these other areas of the curriculum. To emphasise the importance of PL in RE, and to build teachers' knowledge and skills, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (2020) introduced a new accreditation policy in 2020 which ensures there is regular, ongoing PL in religious education.

DOSCEL RE officers have taken a more strategic approach to developing teacher capacity around Scripture and bringing about sustainable change. First, a sound methodology for teaching Scripture, *The Composite Approach* was introduced by Dr Margaret Carswell in 2005. This methodology was further developed in 2018–19 to include current thinking around the teaching of Scripture. The methodology is now entitled *A Way of Encountering Scripture* and was the result of further consultation and input from DOSCEL RE officers, RELs, Dr Margaret Carswell, Prof.

Didier Pollefeyt, Prof. Reimund Bieringer and Dr Mary Coloe. Second, emphasis has been placed on building the capacity of school leaders. DOSCEL is specifically concerned with changing the attitude of leaders and, through them, teachers of Scripture. I use the term "attitude" here as Stead (1996, p.72) did when describing teacher response in her ground-breaking research in Victorian Catholic primary schools. I suggest that Stead is referring to teachers' approach to teaching Scripture in light of, their personal life context, their personal education, and their opportunities to develop an understanding of Scripture. Motivation and learning are linked, and improved learning involves both student and teacher learning (Leo, 2007). I am aware that teachers' attitude to change is the subject of much scholarly work in the field of educational leadership, but this study will not explore this in detail because I am specifically targeting one area of PL, that of the SSP, in order to understand if and how participants see this particular experience as a means for personal and professional transformative learning.

This study places teacher attitude to Scripture within learning, rather than isolating it from the key purpose of education. Therefore, it is learning, and particularly Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1997) for adults, that is pivotal to this study because it is concerned with a shift in feelings and attitudes in adults which leads to a new or transformed perspective. Transformative Learning (TL) aligns with Stead's (1996) notion of changing teachers' attitude to Scripture, but it goes one step further in that it offers a theory explaining how and why such attitudes or perspectives are changed. This is compatible with this study exploring participants' personal and professional response to studying Scripture in Israel and in what ways, personal and professional is it a means for transformative learning?

Having stated that the TL theory of Mezirow is central to this study, at this point it is prudent to also say that the work of Cranton and King (2003) and Dirkx (2006a; 2006b) add another dimension to TL, and that transformative learning is more than a cognitive process because it includes the affective dimension mediated through reflection and story (Dirkx, 2006b).

1.2.3 The Sion Scholarship Program (SSP)

The Centre of Biblical Formation situated at Ecce Homo Convent, Jerusalem is the responsibility of the Mediterranean Province of the of Sion Sisters as part of their ministries. Lectures are conducted by visiting professors attached to other institutes in Jerusalem, as well as Scripture scholars from around the world. The objective is to understand Scripture in the context of past and present, to gain a better knowledge of Christianity's Jewish roots, and to provide the opportunity to connect with other people of faith: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. (See sample program Appendix G). The month-long formation program attended by DOSCEL participants focuses on a different Gospel each year. The period of study incorporates formal classroom lectures and excursions to help participants discover the historical, archaeological, biblical, and spiritual aspects of the peoples and the land of Jesus (Notre Dame de Sion Congregation, 2011a, 2011b, 2019).

As of July 2019, 54 teachers in primary schools across the diocese (most of whom are school leaders) have accessed the SSP. Eleven DOSCEL personnel have also attended the program to support their work. Several primary school principals have accessed the Professional Learning Program (see glossary) to attend the course along with SSP recipients when the Sion Scholarship was no longer available to primary principals after 2008. Since 2005, several secondary school principals and teachers have also attended the course using the Professional Enrichment Program (see glossary) or Secondary School Bursary (see glossary) to attend the course. Since 2005 there have been people from various parishes across the Diocese of Sale who have self-funded their attendance at the course.

Prior to leaving for Israel, recipients of the scholarship attend two preparation meetings outlining course content, travel arrangements, safety precautions, and practical advice for their travel to Israel. These meetings are open to any others attending the same biblical course in Israel. Categories of recipients of the SSP are discussed more fully in Chapter Three, Section 3.3.

This study is limited to recipients of the SSP and organisers of the program. Secondary and diocesan participants were not surveyed but the study may provide insight into the response of these groups.

1.2.4 Researcher statement about possible bias

I was a recipient of the SSP in 2006. This had a significant impact on my knowledge of Scripture and my attitude toward effective Scripture PL, and it led me to consider how SSP learning could be disseminated more widely. My personal experience of the SSP, together with my insight into participants' responses through my work in schools, has resulted in a particular personal attitude to the SSP that must be declared as it could constitute bias.

To counter potential bias, different methods of data collection were employed to confirm results. Bracketing was employed to ensure that participants' responses were reflected rather than my own as researcher (Crotty, 1998). The crafted story in Chapter Four is formulated in a way that discloses meaning (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004), and together with Chapters Five and Six, provides an opportunity to confirm results (Creswell 2012). Issues of trustworthiness (credibility), dependability, and transferability, and how these were addressed methodologically in the study, are detailed in Chapter Three. This includes the identification of ways in which personal bias was mitigated in data collection and analysis.

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was chosen to reflect the above situation and to meet the needs of this research. In keeping with what Van Manen (1990) states about everything being interpreted, this study is interpretative; the phenomenon has already been interpreted by both myself as a past recipient of the SSP, by participants prior to interviews, and yet again in the classroom and among colleagues.

Preconceptions are inevitable, but this should be embraced by focusing on the phenomenon itself, the SSP, to shed light on what my preconceptions were (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). This in turn sheds light on how the interpretation has evolved, making explicit what

is implicit in order to understand. In other words, the researcher's experience should not be an obstacle to obtaining trustworthy data.

1.3 Research Problem Defined

Church authority (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993; Vatican Council II, 1965a) confirms the centrality and significance of Scripture in RE. Research confirms that if biblical scholarship was better understood then Scripture would be better appreciated and thus better taught (Stead, 1996; Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005; Carswell, 2006, 2017, 2018; Grace, 2003). Research and DOSCEL experience suggest that quality teaching and learning in this area is affected by teachers' knowledge and confidence. The researcher is aware that the attitude to teaching of Scripture may also be influenced by other factors, such as the secular, pluralist society of today (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014), but these factors are beyond the scope of this study. DOSCEL officers were aware that the SSP recipients reported a life-changing experience in relation to personal beliefs, to their understanding of Scripture, and to their teaching of Scripture in the classroom. This study seeks to explore whether or not these anecdotal accounts reflect the capacity of the SSP to be a means for personal and professional transformative learning.

1.3.1 Research purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore participants' responses to the SSP focused on whether the SSP experience is a catalyst for TL and if so, what aspects of the experience changed the perspective of participants. The study explores whether participants' Scripture learning has been transformed, whether there are connections between Scripture learning and transformation, and/or connections between transformation and immersion in the land of Israel. From a diocesan perspective, the data may indicate whether the SSP is an effective form of adult PL.

1.3.2 Terminology

Learning.

Learning is defined as an enduring change in the way a person responds to an experience and processes it to make sense of it (Burton, Weston & Kowalski, 2019; Loughran, 2010). Within the notion of learning, different levels of processing or learning are present, namely deep and surface learning. Loughran describes deep learning as the integration of new ideas with what the learner already knows and surface learning as the remembering of facts or rote learning. Both levels have their purpose in metacognition (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Transformative learning.

Echoing notions of surface and deep learning is Mezirow's (1981, 1997, 2009) adult TL theory where deep-seated habits of mind (deep learning) and more changeable points of view (surface learning) form the dimensions of a person's frames of reference. This study investigates learning from the participants' perspective: whether they recognise a shift or transformation in the way they view the teaching of Scripture or a shift in their thinking, understanding, belief or attitude. Related to learning is the source of the learning, how the SSP as a PL experience is structured, what experiences it provides, thus focusing on the phenomenon itself and what stimulates the response and the learning (Van Manen, 1990). This is in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

Travel, study tour, biblical program, and pilgrimage.

Participants describe the SSP experience using various terms. They call it a study tour or biblical program in Israel, or travel to Israel, or pilgrimage to the Holy Land, or a journey. Pilgrimage is described in Chapter Two as it is an important aspect of the SSP. The terms used by participants in this study reflect various aspects of the SSP, but no one term is preferred over another. All terms adopted by participants are accepted, respecting their voice and the way in which they communicate their perspectives. This aligns with a hermeneutic phenomenological

approach, where participants and researcher try to make explicit what is implicit (Heidegger, 1962) and where priority is given to the object of the study, the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2012).

Spirituality and faith.

For the purposes of this study, spirituality is considered to be closely linked to faith because participants used the terms faith and spirituality interchangeably. There is a considerable body of work related to spirituality from many perspectives, including, but not limited to, religious, secular, Australian, Celtic, and Catholic education research. Spirituality is difficult to describe because it refers to something that happens at the edge of awareness and consciousness (O'Leary, 1999). Like faith, it is something that is enriched by relationships and experiences encountered in the journey through life as people search for answers to what could be described as a divine calling (Ranson, 2002). When considering faith or spirituality we are entering into the affective realm of the human person (Dirkx, 2006b) where deeply held perspectives or feelings may or may not be verbalised (Claxton, Lucas & Webster, 2010). For a Christian, spiritual growth or growth in faith has a sense of the sacred and the transcendent, therefore it is a religious experience (Schneiders, 2000; West-Burnham, 2002).

Faith, or spirituality, influences the particular way a person sees the world (Tacey, 2003). It could be reasoned that TL alters and forms a new faith perspective in keeping with Mezirow's (1997, 2000, 2009) phases of TL. Thus, it is like the hermeneutical circle described by Gadamer (1975, 1993) and Heidegger (1962), with an added sense of the sacred suggested by Dirkx (2006a).

This study conducts its investigation by using participants' discourse, that is, whether the SSP provides a religious experience that they recognise as transformational in relation to personal faith or spirituality, in whatever form this may take.

Findings or Results

This study uses the term 'results' instead of 'findings' because it is more in keeping with interpretivist studies which generates theory reported as results (O'Donoghue, 2018).

1.4 The evolution of the major research question

In formulating the research question for this study, I sought to capture the concept of rich learning, which initially grew out of general educational research material about teacher learning, such as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2012, 2013). In evolving this thinking, I reflected on anecdotes from past recipients who talked about being changed or transformed by the SSP in some way. Investigating Mezirow's (1978, 1981, 1990, 1991, 1997, 2003, 2009) Transformative Learning Theory provided a basis to consider something about adult learning. The work of Dirkx (2006a, 2006b), Cranton and King (2003), and Tisdell (2017, 2020) added the importance of the affective dimension. This connected with recipients' reference to the SSP as nurturing their faith or spirituality during a follow-up meeting.

Authors in the realm of spirituality such as O'Leary (1999) and Ranson (2002), as well as many others I had read in previous studies, reinforced the importance of including something of the sacred in relation to TL. This was important because the SSP provided a unique PL opportunity to study Scripture in its original setting, the Holy Land. Thus, it acknowledges a realm where the sacred meets social inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), connecting the question to faith as well as the inner self, an important part of learning (Cranton & King, 2003). Together, the cognitive and affective aspects of transformative learning could be described as identity transformation, which Illeris (2015) asserts is the target of TL.

Faith is intrinsic to self, the very core of being. This is in keeping with Dirkx' (2006a, 2006b) learning theory about the unconscious self where knowledge is held deep within where there is a sense of the sacred, a silent knowledge (Pallasmaa, 2007). I realised that only the narratives told by recipients of the SSP could yield some insight into the cognitive aspects of

Mezirow's (1990) TL, and Dirkx's (2006a, 2006b) focus on the affective role of emotional and spiritual energies in TL. At this point I recognised that all of this was concerned with personal transformation. But I had observed through my work that the SSP had influenced the way Scripture was taught, so there was also a professional element to transformation.

Knowing that the Catholic Church holds that RE teachers must be witnesses to the faith, therefore, the hope is that personal faith is intrinsic to the individual and that teachers of Scripture give witness to it. Therefore, the connection between personal faith and giving witness as a teacher of religion had to be part of the question. I recognised that *Verbum Domini* (Synod of Bishops, 2008) emphasised that the correct setting for the interpretation of Scripture is within the "life and faith of the believing community" (para. 29). Thus, interpretation should be from a standpoint of faith, from within the tradition. At this point I was unsure how this connected to the SSP, but I recognised that a believing community was important. Participants in this study therefore needed to be given the opportunity to explore their learning and inner feelings and response to the SSP in order to describe in as much detail as possible what they learnt about Jesus, themselves, others, and the world.

The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology employed in this study provided an apt approach to explore the SSP from the participants' perspective. Hermeneutic phenomenology also unexpectedly gave me the opportunity to enter a hermeneutic spiral of reflection and learning from philosophers such as Heidegger (1962), Gadamer (1993), Ricoeur (1991, 2013), and social science researchers such as Van Manen (1990, 1997, 2016) and Moustakas (1994) to name the most influential in this study. I also wanted to ensure that a broad sense of what learning entails could be captured in participant data. These influences have collectively led to the formation of the major question and sub questions being pursued in this study:
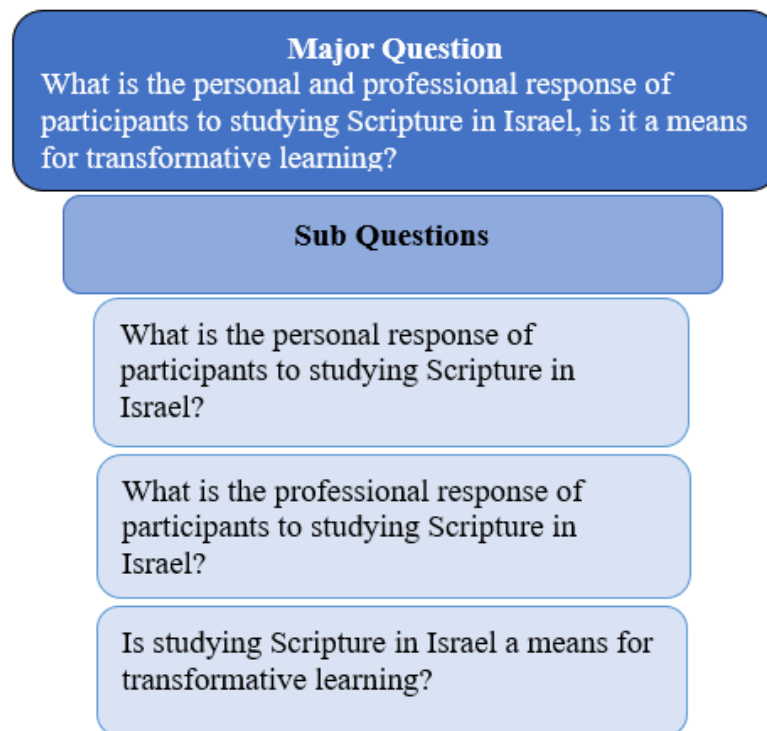
Figure 1.1

Major question and sub-questions in this study

1.5 Significance of this research

This study may be of value to a wide audience, including systems authorities such as schools and dioceses, particularly in relation to faith, Scripture, and RE. The response of participants may also provide information for organisations that promote pilgrimages, or study tours to Israel, so this study could also be applied to learners outside the teaching profession. Literature on Israel as a destination for PL for teachers of Scripture is difficult to find. I see this as a gap that this study will address. This study also points to the importance of providing PL that offers teachers of Scripture, and of religion in general, a genuine encounter that transforms. In Chapter Two the literature includes material on living out of home country for a time and the effect of liminality, particularly in relation to pilgrimages. There are undertones in some of the literature that reveal something about learning in general and Scripture in particular, but none provide insight from the perspective of a teacher of Scripture. Therefore, I see this study as filling

a research gap by specifically studying the response of teachers to a PL opportunity to study Scripture in Israel.

Because this study is focused on Scripture, and the experience takes place in Israel, the land of Jesus, it may be of value to those seeking insight into how participants perceive the effect of Israel, and the effect of Scripture study on personal faith. This may be of interest to systems seeking PL for leaders of faith, inside and outside the teaching profession. This study may also provide general insights into adult students' response to studying overseas for any purpose.

This research extends some of the work of Stead (1996), Grace (2003), and Carswell (2006), who researched the teaching of Scripture in primary and secondary schools in the Melbourne Archdiocese. It builds on their major concern: teachers' lack of knowledge about Scripture. This study, focusing on teacher PL in Israel, is the first of its type conducted in the Diocese of Sale and possibly elsewhere. It provides DOSCEL with valuable information about any teacher learning that participants experience, and insight into whether the SSP, as a form of PL, is worthy of the financial expenditure. It also provides information for future professional learning in the diocese. This study investigates the SSP from the participants' perspectives by employing a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology (see Chapter Three) to gain insight into its potential transformative effect.

1.6 Limitations and Delimitations

1.6.1 Limitations

Thick, rich description of the phenomenological experience of participants aids transferability of the study's results (Mertens, 2015) to similar programs. The methodological limitations are discussed fully in Chapter Three. These cover credibility, reliability, trustworthiness, and transferability of data. At this point, it is enough to give an overview. The primary concern of this study in relation to methodological limitations was to ensure integrity at every stage of the research. The research responded to Creswell (2012) and Mertens' (2010)

assertion that it is important to gather sufficient data for corroboration and identification of key themes by gathering and analysing data from questionnaires, individual and group interviews, and through a researcher journal.

All recipients of the SSP, from 2005 to the present day, were invited to take part in a questionnaire to provide a representative sample (Thomas, 2009). Because participants were known to me through my work, a degree of separation between my role of researcher and Education Officer was important to avoid undue influence which, as Creswell (2012) states, is important from an ethical stance.

Applying a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology brings its own set of challenges around credibility, reliability, trustworthiness, and transferability. To ensure these challenges were met, this study employs reflexivity (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2017), which is in keeping with Van Manen's (2016) description of a phenomenological approach requiring a sensitivity toward texts while tuning into the researcher's personal life experiences. In other words, as researcher, I entered the hermeneutic circle (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

To enhance transparency, I presented a component of the data as a crafted story in Chapter Four. This narrative presentation of data afforded an opportunity for credibility, trustworthiness, and transferability for two reasons. First, as Crowther, Ironside, Spence and Smythe (2017) state, a storied presentation of data is in keeping with philosophers from the hermeneutic phenomenological school of thought such as Gadamer (1993) and Ricoeur (1990, 1991, 2013). Second, presenting interview data as a crafted story, employing what Polkinghorne (1995) calls a *narrative analysis* approach, should engage the reader and, as Van Manen (2016) advocates, leave the data to reveal or speak for itself, for the reader to interpret, evaluate, and make meaning for themselves. This also enables the reader to make their own judgements about the transferability of the research (Mertens, 2010).

The need to be transparent influenced my decision to bring my voice into the study, using *I* rather than *the researcher.* As noted earlier, the methodological limitations, and measures to mitigate them, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.6.2 Delimitations

This study was delimited to investigating one form of PL for teachers, the SSP, a four-week biblical study program organised by the Sion Sisters at Ecce Homo convent in Jerusalem. It was also delimited to primary school teachers and leaders from the Diocese of Sale who were recipients of the scholarship. While questionnaires could be distributed to all recipients of the SSP electronically, interviewing participants from cohorts extending back a number of years meant the study was delimited to those participants who were accessible, located, and available.

This study explored the response of participants to the experience of the SSP to investigate whether they perceived that any personal or professional transformative learning took place. This included whether teachers reported a changed attitude to teaching Scripture or a changed pedagogical approach. Investigating any effect this may have had on student learning is beyond the scope of this study. Future research could investigate the effect of the SSP on student learning about Scripture; probing the emphasis that Stead, (1996), and Pollefeyt and Bieringer (2005) place on teacher Scripture knowledge and faith development influencing student engagement with the Christian story.

This study acknowledges the widening gap between society and religion (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014). Related to this is the possible effect on teachers' attitude toward and knowledge of Scripture. This in turn may result in student disengagement evident in the ECSI surveys (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014). Investigating this is beyond the scope of this study.

It is acknowledged that literature research on teacher PL specific to the teaching of Scripture in Catholic primary schools is limited. Stead's research was chosen despite being over twenty years old because the research was conducted in Catholic primary schools in Victoria.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

In Chapter One I introduce myself, describe my work in primary schools, and provide insight into the context of this study. I define the research problem and discuss common terms used and possible bias. In keeping with the hermeneutic phenomenological perspective and methodology adopted in this research, an explanation of the evolution of the major research question is explained. This is followed by the significance of the research, the limitations and delimitations, and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two reviews literature around three major themes: PL, including PL specific to Catholic educators, PL in Israel, the context of the Scripture texts, and adult transformative learning theory. In particular, the TL theory of Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1990, 1991, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2009) is explored.

Chapter Three provides information on the theoretical and methodological framework. It explains the hermeneutic phenomenological theoretical perspective and methodology employed to explore participants' perspectives about the SSP and whether it provides a means for personal and professional transformative learning. The selection of participants, data collection methods, the process for data analysis, methodological limitations and ways in which these were mitigated, and ethical considerations are also explained in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four provides a crafted story as part of the results of this study. This thick, rich story is in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective as it allows the data to speak for itself, and for the reader to immerse themselves in participants' stories. This is built on in Chapter Five where further analysis utilising Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) thematic analysis framework takes place. The framework is applied and the major phases identified: Preparation, PL, and Professional Development (PD). PL is further broken down into Encounter, Witness, and Transformation themes.

Chapter Six discusses results in relation to literature under the phases identified in Chapter Five. Phase 1, Preparation of participants prior to the SSP; Phase 2, PL, studying Scripture in Israel; Phase 3, PD participants' opportunities to share learning on their return home. The chapter concludes with a final concept diagram formed empirically from the data depicting the phases of Preparation, PL, and PD and the themes Encounter, Witness, and Transformation within the PL phase.

Chapter Seven contains conclusions and recommendations. The major research question and sub-questions of this study are answered and limitations are discussed. A diagram developed over the course of this study is presented showing the key indicators from the theoretical perspectives of Mezirow's TL theory and hermeneutic phenomenology. This model can be generalised for use by other researchers interested in studying transformative learning. Based on results from Chapters Four and Five, and discussion of results in Chapter Six, the final diagram presents Mezirow's phases of learning to show that the SSP is a means of transformative learning and how it occurred. Contribution to knowledge and recommendations are then discussed, followed by recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

As described in Chapter One, The SSP is a form of PL offered to teachers in primary schools (students aged between five and twelve) in the Diocese of Sale in Victoria, Australia. The Scripture study course attended by SSP recipients is conducted by the Sion Sisters in Jerusalem, Israel. Chapter One provided background that led to the major research question *What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, is it a means for transformative learning?* When I investigated the literature, I identified three themes relevant to this study: 1) Professional Learning; 2) Professional Learning in Context; and 3) Adult Transformative Learning. For the purposes of this study, "Context" refers to Israel, the setting for the SSP study course. In this chapter I present scholarly research literature under each of these themes. The conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) shows the exploration of literature as linear; one theme leading to the consideration of the next in order to explore the study's major question.

The first theme, PL, is explored (Section 2) because PL is the purpose of the SSP. There are two major sections under the PL umbrella: Effective PL, and PL for Catholic educators. Effective PL (Section 2.1) explores principles for PL that promote best practice and considers a model for PL to help identify how teachers learn. As the SSP is a form of PL for teachers of Scripture, it is important to investigate literature about what describes and promotes effective PL for adults. Literature pertaining to potential differences between PL and PD is also explored to provide a better understanding of these terms and identify differences with a view to applying ideas of PL and PD to different aspects of the study's results.

Professional Learning
- Effective PL
  - Differentiating between PL and PD
- PL for Catholic Educators including Church teaching about teachers of Scripture, formation of teachers for mission, and teachers operating as witnesses, specialists and moderators in the classroom

Professional learning in Context
- Pilgrimage
- Liminality
- Communitas

Adult Transformative Learning
- Mezirow's adult transformative learning theory
- The affective or spiritual dimension including the importance of critical reflection
- Embodied Learning

Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework

In Section 2.2, literature pertaining to teachers in Catholic schools is explored because specific PL is provided for teachers in this system to enhance knowledge about the Catholic tradition, RE in Catholic schools, and faith development in teachers (spiritual development). Given the focus of this study on PL for Catholic primary school teachers, Catholic Church documents beginning with the conciliar document *Gravissium Educationis* (Vatican Council II, 1965a) through to *Educating to Fraternal Humanism* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2017) are explored in order to consider the implications for Catholic educators and PL. Church documents from the Congregation for Catholic Education (2014, 2007, 1998) and Vatican Council II such as *Dei Verbum* (1965b), and more recent documents from Pope Benedict's (2010) *Verbum Domini* and Pope Francis' (2013) *Evangelii Gaudium* also inform understanding of what the Catholic Church says about teaching Scripture. These throw light on whether the SSP aligns with the literature in this field. The implications of these ideas are then explored in relation to teacher

formation for mission because teachers in Catholic schools are considered part of the mission, or work, of the Catholic Church. Connections are also made to desirable attributes of teachers in Catholic schools: witness, specialist, and moderator (Pollefeyt, 2013; Sharkey, 2015).

Continuing the exploration of literature specific to Catholic educators, literature about research conducted in the State of Victoria provides an insight into the concerns of Stead (1996), Grace (2003), and Carswell (2006) around the teaching of Scripture in Catholic primary schools. Casting a wider net, further consideration is given to data gathered by the Catholic University in Leuven, Belgium entitled the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) project. Together with this, consideration is given to what researchers in this field such as Pollefeyt (2008), Pollefeyt and Bouwens (2009), and Sharkey (2015) are concerned about in relation to Religious Education, including the teaching of Scripture, and its effect on student engagement with the Catholic faith.

The second theme, Professional Learning in Context (Section 2.3), explores literature about learning that takes place when participants leave their home country to live and study in a different country and social context. There are three sections associated with PL in context: pilgrimage, liminality, and communitas. These concepts resonate with the focus of the study which includes visits to sites of scriptural significance associated with the meta-Christian story that could be viewed as a form of religious pilgrimage. Liminality and communitas are explored because these features are often associated with pilgrimage (Turner, 1985; Capets, 2018; Carrasco, 1996). Liminality is associated with states of disorientation (Vidal, 1996) and this links to the different social and religious context in which the study places participants. During this liminal period the concept of communitas may be discerned (Turner, 1973) as something built through "common experiences with one's fellows" (Turner, 2012, p. 2) where there is a sense of kinship and equality (Turner, 1985). This may apply to the experience of groups involved in SSP study tours from which this study's participants are drawn.

The third theme of the conceptual framework, Adult Transformative Learning Theory, is explored in Section 2.4. The Adult Transformative Learning Theory of Jack Mezirow (1981, 1990, 1997, 2009) is examined alongside others who have expanded his work into the affective dimension, such as Dirkx (2006a, 2006b) and Tisdell (2017, 2020). Literature on adult TL provides an understanding of how adults learn, phases of learning, and how perspective transformation can occur.

Literature discussed in all themes in the conceptual framework allow me to become more experienced and alert to participants' stories. It will aid insight into examining the diversity, complexity, and richness of learning that may take place in the lived experience of participants in this study.

2.1 Professional Learning

In this section, the notion of PL is explored in relation to effective general PL, what this might look like in the Catholic context, and other factors specific to this study that includes PL in Context and Transformative Learning theory.

PL, and Scripture PL in particular, is the purpose of the Sion Scholarship Program. There are many forms of Scripture PL for teachers, both generally and in the Diocese of Sale. In the Diocese of Sale, PL often takes place in schools and directly relates to the core business of student learning. Other forms are provided to all teachers via presentations from Scripture scholars organised by DOSCEL and DOSCEL Catholic Identity and Religious Education Officers, as well as online resources to support curriculum and enhance teachers' knowledge of Scripture. The SSP is a unique form of PL, and although limited to four primary school teachers per year, it is deemed by DOSCEL to be an important way to enrich Scripture learning.

Given this focus, it is important to examine literature pertaining to PL in general (Section 2.1). The literature explored will focus on governing bodies in Australian education and international researchers regarding PL for knowledge development rather than pedagogy. This in

no way diminishes the importance of teachers' pedagogical skills as a vital pillar in engaging students; however, it is beyond the scope of this study given the focus of the SSP, and this study's interest in participants' experiences of this program.

2.1.1 Effective professional learning

AITSL (2012) emphasises that all educationalists undertake ongoing PL in order to improve knowledge and practice. Effective PL should lead to improved student learning, and as Zepeda (2008) states, PL "offers intellectual, social and emotional engagement with ideas, materials and colleagues … if teachers are to teach for deep understanding" (p. 16). The Victorian Institute of Teaching (2021) links engagement in PL to a teacher code of conduct, stating in Principle 3.1 *Professional Competence* that professionalism is valued and therefore high standards of competency should be set and maintained. In order to do this, teachers have to be well informed in their discipline area and pursue their own PL, employing reflective practice to identify their learning needs.

It is valuable to consider how PL enables teacher learning, and while there are a number of models for PL or professional growth (Boylan, Coldwell, Maxwell & Jordan 2018), the Interconnected Model of Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) is the focus taken here. Clarke and Hollingsworth contend that it is important to understand how teachers grow and what enables such growth. They argue that contemporary learning theory has not been applied to PL programs, something they claim that their model does take into account. Clarke and Hollingsworth's Interconnected Model shows that change occurs via reflection and enactment in four domains: external, personal, practice, and consequence. They argue that this allows for the "complexity of professional growth through the identification of multiple growth pathways between the domains" (p. 950), and its cyclic nature allows for multiple entry points. Clarke and Hollingsworth's results show that professional growth can happen through an assortment of growth networks, and therefore that PL should allow for individual teacher preferences for learning and enacting change.

One point Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) stressed was that the opportunity for teachers to further their professional growth is highly dependent upon the school environment. That is, access to support and encouragement, and opportunities to experiment and share ideas with colleagues. This has links to building social capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) and also to the Department of Education and Training's (2004) principle of collaboration for highly effective PL. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) state that professional capital is the product of human, social, and decisional capital. Human capital is having necessary knowledge and skills, and social capital increases knowledge by giving educators access to a network of other human capital. Decisional capital is refined in conjunction with social capital by examining both personal practice and the practice of colleagues.

Work in schools concerning the building of social capital also has implications for notions of what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) distinguish as PD rather than PL. They argue that PD is about "growth in terms of who you are and what you can do" (p. 3), whereas PL is about new learning that a teacher may or may not find valuable and incorporate into their work in school. Personal growth and PD "build character, maturity, and virtues" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016, p. 4). PD therefore recognises that teachers grow both personally and professionally, which involves many aspects of learning over a period of time. PD may also build teacher well-being as well as

> developing mindfulness, team building and team development, intellectual stimulation for its own sake, reading good literature that prompts reflection on the human condition, taking sabbatical leave to provide service in poor countries or communities, and reinvigorating teachers' love for their subject. (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016, p. 4)

The SSP could be considered an external source of information (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) and thus be considered as PL. However, there are also opportunities in the SSP for personal growth, linking to Fullan and Hargreaves' (2016) notion of PD.

It is noted that PL and PD may be conceptualised differently. For example, Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) define PD as the events teachers attend when they are away from the school context for brief periods, and PL as the process for pedagogical shifts. This seems to be the opposite to Fullan and Hargreaves' (2016) definition. For the purposes of this study, I subscribe to that definition, that PL and PD are like two parts of one whole learning experience where PL is about new learning and PD is about the personal and professional growth that follows later. Dowling (2012) and Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) note that PL and PD are terms that are used interchangeably in the literature. For clarity throughout this chapter, I have applied the term PL even when some literature refers to it as PD. Results will assist in determining whether opportunities for PL, PD, or indeed both, are available through the program and whether participants recognise a change in their beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes, which links to the notion of transformative learning which is explored in Section 2.3 of this chapter.

Timperley (2011b) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) indicate that effective PL is not a top-down experience where new information is poured into empty vessels to bring about change, but that the learning is ongoing, needs to be tried out in practice, and must involve either working with teachers or emerge as a result of the work by teachers. This builds social capital. Timperley (2011b) makes it abundantly clear that one-off courses make little difference and that it would be more beneficial to give teachers the time to reflect together about their practice. Based on research findings, Timperley (2011a, 2011b) theorises that if PL is to make a difference to student outcomes, it must be intentional, systematic, supported by school leadership, and grounded in what students need to know (curriculum); and that the aims and ideas valued by the school and wider community are accommodated.

2.1.2 PL for Catholic educators

PL for Catholic educators is bound by the mission of the Church. In this section I explore what the Catholic Church states in various documents, both historical and current, regarding the focus for Catholic schools and the implications for PL. This discussion refers to particular sections of the documents, referencing relevant section numbers in alignment with the convention for citing Church documentation. Consideration is given to how Catholic schools, as the educative arm of the Church, share in the Church's mission. This, in turn, has implications for PL for Catholic educators, as formation must address both knowledge content and spiritual or faith formation. Thus, teacher formation and any implications for PL for Catholic educators is examined, concluding with the important attributes (witness, specialist, and moderator) identified by researchers in Catholic education.

PL for Catholic educators influenced and guided by Church documents. Church documents are clear that if Catholic schools are to be a catalyst for students to respond to God's call, then teachers play a vital role and must be supported (Vatican Council II, 1965a; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982). Church documents show an evolution of understanding concerning the need for PL for teachers, particularly in relation to contextual challenges. Official documents of the Catholic Church address the issue of PL for teachers in Catholic schools in general terms only. They refer to the importance of teacher education, or formation.

The Catholic School (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) and *Lay Catholics in Schools* (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982) promote a dialogue between faith and life. Ongoing religious formation, both personal and mission-oriented, must include formation in theology, ethics, philosophy, and Catholic social teaching (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). According to *Lay Catholics in Schools* (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982), the role goes beyond words to living and actioning

Christian values. *The Catholic School* (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) emphasises employing the best qualified teachers, and states that as witnesses to the Catholic identity of schools, teachers must be supported (# 78). The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) states that formation could include "reading periodicals and pertinent books, attending conferences and seminars, participating in workshops, assemblies and congresses, making appropriate use of periods of free time for formation" (# 69).

It is noted that over the years, the presumption that all teachers are Catholic or are closely affiliated with the Church has changed (Gowdie, 2017). *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education,1988) recognised the "need to look to the future and promote the establishment of formation centres for teachers; … so that the teachers of tomorrow will be able to carry out their task with competence and efficacy" (# 97). Also, the reality acknowledged by the Second Vatican Council that not all students in Catholic schools are Catholic is emphasised in this document which concentrates on how young people can be supported to become good citizens of the world (# 46). *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997) addresses socio-political and cultural challenges in the form of subjectivism, moral relativism, nihilism, and pluralism and acknowledges the increasing gap between the Catholic Church and pupils and families. It recognises the primary role played by teachers in forging a Christian climate, advocating that teachers be "competent, convinced and coherent educators, teachers of learning and of life" (# 14). The increasing numbers of students disengaged with the Catholic Church has implications for pedagogy, particularly around inclusivity.

The Congregation for Catholic Education (2007) in its document *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A shared mission between consecrated persons and the lay faithful* provides some insight into the professional and spiritual formation of Catholic school educators. The document points to the need for formation of the heart among Catholic educators. A personal

encounter with Christ will animate their teaching and also give witness to the Catholic faith (# 25). To this end teachers

> should continually update methodologies and knowledge of culture, psychology, and pedagogical approaches. Catholic educators must possess a "sensitivity with regard to the person to be educated in order to grasp not only the request for growth in knowledge and skills, but also the need for growth in humanity". (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007, # 24)

The challenges around a Catholic school maintaining its Catholic identity while being inclusive of all cultural expressions is addressed at length in *Educating to intercultural dialogue in Catholic schools: Living in harmony for a civilization of love* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013). PL or formation is not specifically mentioned; however, formation of teachers takes place in the Catholic school's learning community.

Educating Today and Tomorrow: A renewing passion (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014) is the first document that clearly states the urgent need for lifelong training for teachers, and it recognises the challenges this brings. It suggests that such training could be provided by national and diocesan structures, religious congregations, Catholic universities or institutions, parishes, deaneries, or monasteries, through networking and e-learning (Part III, No. 1k).

Two recent documents, *Educating to Fraternal Humanism* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2017) and Pope Francis' address to the Gravissimum Educationis Foundation (2018), addressed to educational institutions and academics and researchers respectively, emphasise networking, the culture of dialogue, inclusion, solidarity, Catholic identity, quality research and education, and the common good. This echoes a previous address by Pope Benedict (2008) to educators, emphasising teacher professionalism and the need for solid instruction in Catholic doctrine and practice to combat potential weakening of the Catholic identity at the institutional

level (para. 15; para. 17). Of paramount importance is that Catholic educational institutions enable "the dynamic between personal encounter, knowledge and Christian witness is integral to the diakonia of truth which the Church exercises in the midst of humanity" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2017, para. 3).

In particular, the concepts of formation (both knowledge and spiritual), dialogue, inclusion, witness, encounter, and networking have been identified in Church documents as important considerations for PL for Catholic educators.

PL for Catholic educators influenced and guided by Church documents specific to teaching Scripture. *Dei Verbum* (Vatican II, 1965b) states that "The study of the sacred page should be, as it were, the very soul of theology" (# 24). In order to clearly understand a Scripture text, the study of Scripture should include the author and his [sic] intentions, the context of the time, and the literary forms and devices, as well as where the texts are placed within the document (# 12). Teachers must be trained to teach Scripture accurately and ensure that it is appropriate for students' level of comprehension (Synod of Bishops, 2008).

The Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) (1993) recommends the Historical-Critical method as being best for interpreting Scripture. This method takes into account the historical context and is critical because it aims for objectivity by employing criteria such as literary criteria (PBC, 1993, 1, A, 2). This document notes the difference between literary meaning (the author's intention) and literal meaning (taking the meaning verbatim) (PBC, 1993, 1, F); and that it is vital that the literary intention is understood in order to convey authentic intention (PBC, 1993, 1, E, 1). The PBC (1993) also emphasises that Scripture is in dialogue with the original understanding from historical contexts, and, of equal importance, that it has meaning for today because it is in dialogue with contemporary peoples in their particular historical contexts (PBC, 1993, III, A, 3).

Pope Benedict's *Verbum Domini* (2010) echoes the PBC (1993) regarding the interpretation of Scripture: that a person of faith or someone empathetic to biblical texts is best

suited to conveying a proper understanding of Scripture (# 30). This document emphasises that the Bible is the Church's book, an essential pillar of the Church, and that the best place for hermeneutics to occur is in the life of the Church (# 29). Therefore, the lived tradition of the Church and Scripture are the sources from which understanding is derived. *Verbum Domini* (2010) warns against the dangers of secularised hermeneutics when Scripture study stays at the first level, that is, it becomes an historical study which reduces Scripture to mere literature and eliminates the message or meaning it contains for Christians (# 35). Pope Benedict looks to a balanced interpretation employing both faith and reason (# 36), and an interpretation that is both literal and spiritual (# 37). Pope Francis, in his exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), reaffirms the importance of really understanding scriptural texts in order to preserve the integrity of the message (# 39, # 147) because "God's word is unpredictable in its power" (Pope Francis, 2013, # 22).

 Dei Verbum (1965b), the Pontifical Commission (1993) and *Verbum Domini* (2010) contain clear implications for PL for teachers of Scripture. PL must provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to interpret Scripture without losing the faith or spiritual sense of sacred Scripture. The Church documents cited above will inform the results of this study, which is focused on the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel.

 What research says about teaching Scripture, teacher competency, and the implications for PL. Stead (1996), Carswell (2006), and Grace (2003) conducted research into the teaching of Scripture in Victorian primary and secondary schools. There was much congruence between their findings. All agree that the historical critical method is indispensable, but if it is not used in schools then a fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture becomes a real danger. The major concern for these researchers is lack of teacher knowledge about Scripture. Teacher confidence, quality teaching, student engagement, selection of text, and avoidance of proof-texting relies upon teacher knowledge. Stead's (1996) data showed that most teachers surveyed had no professional learning for some years in religious education. In 2020 the Catholic Education Commission of

Victoria introduced an accreditation policy whereby all teachers and leaders must maintain their accreditation to teach and lead in Catholic schools (see glossary). The aim of this policy was to ensure that educators undertake a set number of hours to guarantee regular, ongoing PL in religious education. It was hoped that these accreditation requirements would address some of the concerns raised by Stead, Carswell, and Grace.

Stead (1996) and Grace (2003) point to poor-quality teaching during previous catechetical eras as another possible reason for negative teacher attitudes and lack of knowledge and confidence in teaching religion. Many teachers attended Catholic schools where their scriptural literacy was formed during "three major catechetical eras... [but this] does not instil confidence that any era has provided syllabus and processes that might lay the foundations for an informed and fruitful reading of the Bible for life" (Stead, 1996, p. 133). How well Scripture is taught in Religious Education (RE) is, as with many disciplines, dependent upon teacher competency (Stead, 1996; Zepeda, 2008; Pollefeyt, 2008).

Competency is understood here to mean the capability of a teacher to have an effect on student learning (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Further complicating teacher competency in RE is the complexity of theology and the body of knowledge associated with Scripture scholarship. Although teachers are not expected to be pseudo-theologians or Scripture scholars, there is a body of knowledge associated with RE as a subject, and teachers have to seek out the knowledge required to teach effectively and engage students in the learning (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). "Teachers of religion often express their uncertainty about how to communicate faith with the help of the Bible" (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005, p. 378), thereby demonstrating a lack of knowledge. This lack of knowledge may lead to lack of confidence in their ability to teach RE, a fear of the unknown and a fear of making mistakes (Stead, 1996). Thus, competency and confidence could be seen as being inexorably linked. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) point to the importance of synergy in teaching, where success breeds success, which requires support from peers and PL. It could be

said Catholic education is still paying the price for past inadequate catechetical approaches (Stead, 1996) and that in this time of deep change teachers feel overwhelmed and uncertain (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2012).

The result of poor Scripture teaching is born out in the Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project data (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014). This project adds important statistical data to previous research, indicating that the approach to teaching religious education, including Scripture, has resulted in many primary school students having a high level of Literal Belief, that is, an uncritical receiving of the Catholic tradition where Scripture and doctrine are accepted literally. Data gathered from surveys conducted across the state of Victoria by the ECSI project shows that if students are not supported in moving from a Literal Belief stance this has serious impact in later years, causing them to disengage and move to a non-belief stance. The ideal movement is from a Literal Belief stance to Post Critical Belief stance (see glossary), a mature faith stance characterised by belief in God and a religious interpretation of the world mediated through symbols (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014). Figure 2.2 shows that a number of students in years five and six are not moving from a Literal Belief stance in years eleven and twelve. There is congruence between this data and research conducted in Victoria by Stead (1996) and Grace (2003), who contend that teachers need to be more aware of the developmental characteristics of students as this could lead to fundamentalism or total disengagement from religious education and Scripture.

According to Pollefeyt and Bouwens (2014), if literal belief, including a literal understanding of Scripture, is challenged in teenage years, students may question the truth of other aspects of faith. Despite good intentions to help students develop a mature faith, primary school teachers may be doing just the opposite (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014). Teachers need to give students the opportunity to engage with Scripture texts in a dialogical manner. This includes employing the historical critical method, providing students with accurate Scripture knowledge

and inviting their response, in keeping with the Church documents cited above. Carswell (2017) is "convinced that the teaching of Scripture is both part of the problem and the answer" (p. 135) to the high Literal Belief stance of students shown in ECSI project data. Questions arise around the capability of teachers to support students to transit to a more mature faith stance, to engage them in meaningful dialogue, particularly in scriptural studies. As Welbourne (2003) stated:
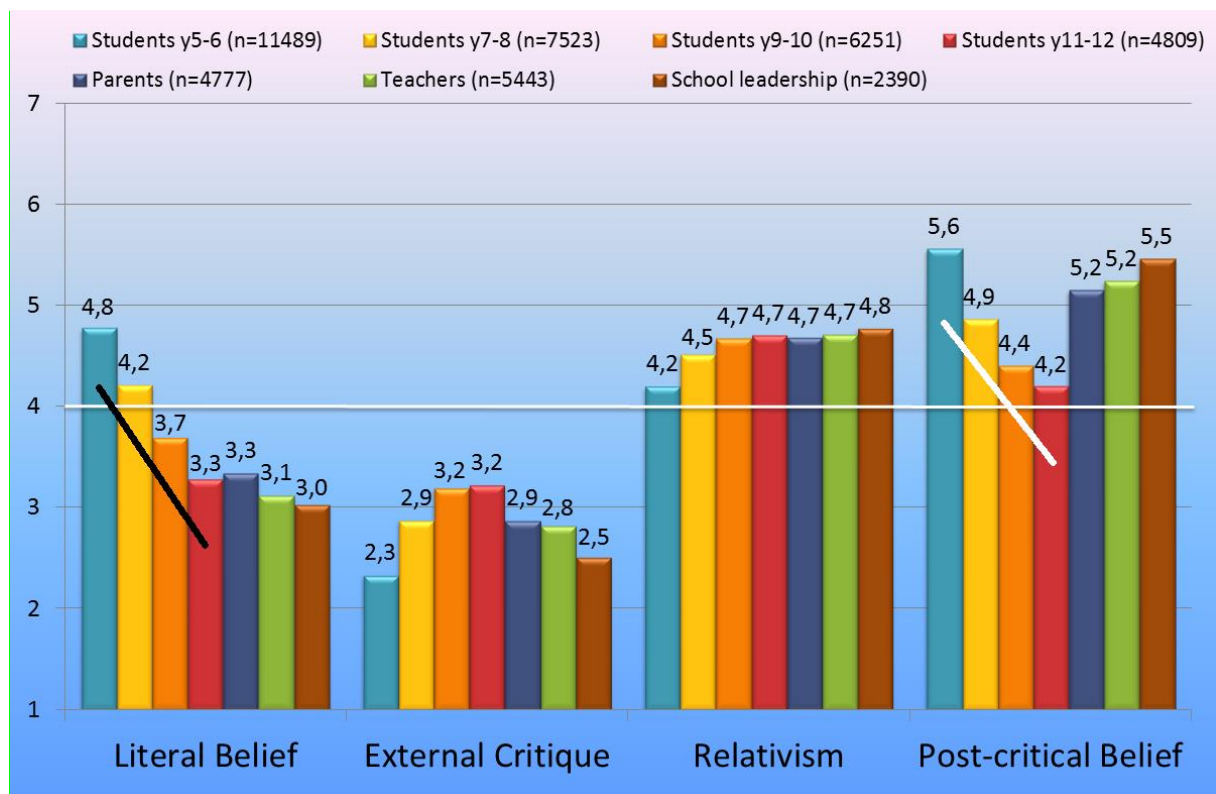
Figure 2.2

The movement from literal belief to non-belief

The Post Critical Belief scale (2013) by J. Bouwens Personal Communication, November 1, 2013. Used with permission. (See Appendix H).

Critical pedagogy has been promoted by scholars such as Charpentier (1982), LaVerdiere (1980), and Stead (1997). Their approaches recognise that biblical education is not neutral but rather challenges the manner in which it impacts upon the political and cultural life of the learner.

In essence their approaches to critical biblical literacy require students, at age-appropriate stages, to engage with the text to define, locate, analyse, synthesise and identify the nature of the text. Their learning approaches are about processes that generate knowledge created laterally between the individual and the text. (p. 1)

Teachers may be operating from a Literal Belief stance, or unknowingly promoting such a stance in their pedagogical approach due to lack of knowledge or confidence. Pollefeyt and Bieringer (2005) suggest that teachers' theological and exegetical formation is inadequate for addressing the problem, and teachers are therefore uneasy about teaching Scripture. Teacher knowledge of Scripture impacts on their ability to present it in a way that engages students. Stead (1996) also points to the fear of teaching something that goes against Church dogma, or even the fear of not meeting the expectations of Church authorities, thus having an impact on pedagogy. Compounding the problems around the teaching of Scripture is the danger of linking Scripture to a Christian Values educational approach in a *proof-texting* manner in order to bridge the gap between culture and religion (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014). The danger is that the richness of Scripture and tradition may be reduced to "something purely human, to human values… [This] strategy tends to overemphasise ethics and detach it from the life of faith" (Pollefeyt & Baeke, 2007, p. 60).

Research into the teaching of Scripture in Victorian schools indicates that lack of teacher knowledge about Scripture is a major concern (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014; Stead, 1996; Carswell, 2006; Grace, 2003).

2.1.3 Teacher formation for mission

Teachers share the mission of the Catholic Church which influences PL. Mission is the driving force and integrating factor for educators in Catholic schools. Mission is the religious purpose of the Catholic Church as a whole and therefore the purpose of educators in Catholic schools who share this mission. This mission "is to be intentionally at the service of God's

Kingdom" (D'Orsa, D'Orsa, Brown, & Meneely, 2019, p. 3). The importance of the Kingdom of

God is evident through the approximate 150 different references it draws in the New Testament of

the Bible (O'Leary, 1999). The Catholic Church's mission to bring about the Kingdom of God is

grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus, who revealed Kingdom values. These values are

constant, yet not set in concrete, because they must adapt to the context of every age (D'Orsa &

D'Orsa, 2020). The Kingdom of God, or Reign of God, proposed by Jesus is a life-giving force,

one that nurtures spiritual growth because it empowers everyone in its service to all, for all time

(Gittens, 2002). The Kingdom of God is not a place, but a dynamic event that evokes tension

between its immediacy and its eschatological nature (O'Leary, 1999). It is at the heart of

Christianity because it is the heart of Jesus' teaching; it is the response to the spiritual search of all

humanity (O'Murchu, 1997).

D'Orsa et al. (2019) describe the work of Catholic schools, and therefore Catholic school

educators, as creating "kingdom spaces" (p. 14). Pollefeyt (2013) and Sharkey (2015) would call

this the hermeneutic space where students make meaning. Whatever the term used, schools

themselves can be spaces where mission is experienced; where school members may gain "a sense

of belonging to a school community and of being captured by its mission narrative" (D'Orsa et al.,

2019, p. 14). Cullen (2019) describes religious education as conversational and hermeneutic,

which is both formative and educative: formative because "it is concerned with proposing a vision

of life and a meaning making structure" (p. 75), and educative because "its purpose is to help

people to engage with, and understand the religious impulse, the nature of religion and their own

personal engagement with this so as to be able to draw on that as a resource" (p. 75).

The Catholic Church's understanding of its mission is not static (D'Orsa et al., 2019).

However, the goals of mission remain the same: they are "proclaiming, witnessing, dialoging,

[and] actualizing" (p. 26). The understanding of mission has, however, moved from a narrow

perception prior to Vatican II to an understanding that it is God's mission, not the action of the

Church alone, and that mission is a partnership between the Church, others, and the Holy Spirit (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020). This means that mission is an inclusive notion, where all are invited to take part (D'Orsa et al., 2019).

The mission of the Catholic Church: Implications for pedagogy and PL. In Catholic schools, the learning space is a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1993) where teachers and students bring their personal world view into the mix. The role of educators in Catholic schools is to animate Kingdom values, yet every teacher has their own personal perceptions or assumptions about mission and the Kingdom of God, and this influences their pedagogical choices. Teachers also make assumptions about students' worldviews and how students learn (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020). The ever-growing gap (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014) between contemporary context and Christianity means that Catholic educators have to find ways to bridge the gap; to recontextualise Catholic beliefs so they become meaningful for students (Sharkey, 2015).

D'Orsa and D'Orsa (2020) contend that an expanded understanding of mission in the twenty-first century has implications for pedagogy. The paradigm shift from understanding mission as inward-looking to outward-looking has left many in the Church struggling, including those responsible for Catholic education (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020). The role of the teacher has changed from simply imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith to one that places the teacher as a "moderator of the dialogue between faith and culture" (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020, p. 80). As Boeve (2004) states, a person who is educated around matters of religion can "deal creatively, critically and reflectively with plurality, identity and fundamental life options" (p. 253). Furthermore, D'Orsa and D'Orsa (2012) state that Catholic mission is primarily concerned with hermeneutics and this has implications for a teacher's ability to engage students in three big questions: "[1] How do we make sense of the world about us? [2] What constraints and possibilities are inherent in this process? [3] What place does faith have in this process?" (p. 75). Being a moderator in this space requires skill and knowledge.

Desirable attributes of teachers in Catholic Schools. For the purposes of this study, it is worth considering three attributes judged to be important in the teaching of religious education, namely: witness, specialist, and moderator (Pollefeyt, 2008; Sharkey, 2015). The teacher witnesses his or her own faith, has specialist knowledge of the Christian tradition (and other religious traditions), and a sound knowledge of the religious education curriculum. These enable teachers to act as guides or moderators for young people as they search for their own identity (Pollefeyt, 2008). The SSP is primarily focused on developing participants' specialist knowledge of Scripture. However, exploration of data may indicate that gaining specialist knowledge may influence participants' ability to witness the Catholic faith and perhaps to act as moderator in the classroom.

The three attributes, witness, specialist and moderator (Pollefeyt, 2008; Sharkey, 2015), intertwine and have an effect, one upon the other, and upon a teacher's ability to share the Christian narrative in a way that engages students to develop a personal worldview that is open to faith (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020). To be a witness, specialist, and moderator is no small feat.

Witness. The teacher as witness must have some knowledge or experience of the faith and be prepared to engage with students: to dialogue, not only through words but also through actions (Sharkey, 2015). Teachers may have different faith stances and worldviews, thus giving witness in their own particular way (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020). The unifying ingredient, irrespective of the degree to which teachers are able to give witness, is taking God seriously (Sharkey, 2015). Within the hermeneutic space that is the classroom, and the inner hermeneutic space of every student, hopefully there is recognition through the teacher as witness that Christianity has something worthwhile to say (Cullen, 2019). The teacher as witness is ready to lead the conversation and share their experiences (Sharkey, 2015), not to impose, but to invite students into dialogue, a dialogue that is "born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from the conviction that the other person has something good to say" (Bergoglio, 2013, p. XIV).

Specialist. The second desirable attribute of Catholic educators is to be a specialist, to have knowledge or be an authority on the Christian faith, and have an understanding of other life philosophies and other faith traditions in order to promote critique and dialogue (Pollefeyt, 2008, 2013). Teachers of religious education also need to know the content of the curriculum in order to cater for students' level of understanding of the Catholic faith. Knowing the curriculum also has implications for being a moderator because in order to moderate and help students make meaning (Sharkey, 2015), teachers need to know what students know, where they stand in relation to the learning continuum. The work of Stead (1996), Carswell (2006), and Grace (2003) cited above has already made clear that teacher knowledge of Scripture, in particular, is not strong. To be a specialist, teachers require knowledge in order to teach students about a text and invite them to respond. For example, knowledge of who the author is, the author's purpose for writing the text, the context, and the intended audience.

Moderator. Between culture and Christianity is the space where religious education occurs. It is where the teacher as a mediator of meaning (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020) helps students to make meaning. Pollefeyt (2008) points out that the role of the moderator is to allow "Christian and other traditions to interact creatively with modern day culture" (p. 313) so that students are invited and challenged through exposure to new and different viewpoints (Pollefeyt, 2013). Christianity is not merely reduced to one voice among many. As moderator, the teacher must enable different voices, beliefs, and life philosophies to be part of the learning space. At the same time, she or he must show "respect for the particularity of the Catholic tradition and the challenge it offers to those who engage with it" (Sharkey, 2013, p. 170). The moderator role may be influenced by efficacy (Bandura, 1995b, 2006), a construct concerned with people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments. Bandura (1995a) acknowledges that a teacher's ability to create a positive learning environment is reliant on their skills, their instructional efficacy, and their self-efficacy.

In keeping with Bandura's (1995b) notion of efficacy, Pollefeyt (2008) poses a question around whether teachers, with their own personal construction of Christian beliefs, are able to give witness to Christianity and be an effective moderator, especially if they have strong or even biased personal ideology. Pollefeyt suggests that to be a good moderator, teachers must not only have specialist knowledge of the Catholic tradition, but also their role relies on the way their personal faith is developed (Pollefeyt, 2008). Therefore, teachers of religious education in Catholic schools require professional learning that enables them to meet criteria that goes beyond simple knowledge of a topic to an encompassing personal religious formation. Sharkey (2015) states that teacher formation should "focus first on the heart, not on the mind, as personal experience is often a necessary condition for nurturing knowledge" (p. 32). All of this has implications for exploration of data in this study: for example, whether the data indicates that the SSP is a PL experience that forms the heart or a growth in personal faith, as well as providing an opportunity for cognitive engagement. Therefore, Pollefeyt, Sharkey, and D'Orsa and D'Orsa align with Church teaching that teachers need formation addressing both the head and the heart, providing knowledge, and nourishing faith or spiritual needs.

It is acknowledged that pedagogy as well as content knowledge is important (Shulman, 1987) if the teacher is to be a good moderator. Teachers have to be pedagogically skilled in order to help students make meaning when difficult theological concepts are involved (Goldburg, 2019). Teacher quality has a major influence on student achievement (Zepeda, 2008), and improving student learning is a key reason why teachers undertake PL. Thus, PL must consider the best approach for teaching Religious Education in a pluralist, secular world. The Leuven Enhancing Catholic Identity Project advocates a multicorrelative approach to the teaching of religious education and this has implications for teacher PL. A multicorrelative approach is about teaching students to recognise and evaluate "the signs of the tradition in everyday reality … not a matter of building bridges, but … rendering visible the bridge that is already present" (Pollefeyt, 2008, p.

315). A multicorrelative approach is concerned with "hermeneutics of the subject and hermeneutics of the context, in interaction with the traditional hermeneutics of text and tradition" (Pollefeyt, 2008, p. 311). Employing a multicorrelative approach in Religious Education relies upon the teacher acting as witness, specialist, and moderator. This reinforces the implications that teacher PL should include opportunities for teachers to develop personal faith, and also specialist knowledge of Catholic faith and the RE curriculum. Teachers need to be provided with the opportunity to consolidate a Post Critical Belief stance or to be moving toward this stance. This stance, in combination with a dialogical approach to the teaching of Religious Education and a recontextualising school environment, where the Catholic faith is reinterpreted in a contemporary cultural context, may challenge young people to give shape to their personal identity in conversation with others against the background of the Catholic tradition (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010; DOSCEL, 2018).

In order to help students make meaning and develop a personal worldview that respects the voice of religion and the voice of God, teachers as witnesses, specialists, and moderators are vital. This has implications for school and system leadership and for PL about Scripture, and raises the question of what PL could look like.

What could PL or formation for mission look like? In response to the twenty-first-century understanding of mission as outward looking, Gowdie (2017) proposes a new model for teacher formation titled "Transforming Encounters: Mission Formation for Catholic Teachers". This model is the culmination of intense research into formation in Christology, the theology of Mission, contextual challenges, authentic adult spiritual formation, educational culture, and the Catholic faith tradition, as well as exploration of formation models from research in human development and spiritual growth. Gowdie's model is dynamic, holistic, and interactive, and calls for a head, heart, and hands response. She suggests that an organic process is required for formation grounded in narratives. The personal narrative (self-engagement phase), the communal

narrative (mutual engagement phase), and the meta-narrative (transformational engagement phase). Gowdie's model may inform the results of this study as the communal narrative and meta-narrative may be evident in participant narratives (personal narrative).

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) published *A Framework for Formation for Mission* (NCEC, 2017), a resource for Catholic educational leaders responsible for staff faith formation for mission. This resource provides an orientation for educators to better understand the mission that the school shares with the Church and the role of educators. It also provides a framework for evaluating current practice in the formation and enhancement of leaders and staff. It serves to emphasise two things: that mission is at the heart of Catholic education; and that teacher formation is important. Teacher formation could also be described as PL, where, like PL, formation is described as "systematic, collaborative, graduated and on-going" (NCEC, 2017, p. 14). NCEC emphasises that formation for mission includes formation of the heart, is respectful, experiential, scripturally rich; has an affective focus on faith journey, has theological content, builds communal Catholic identity, provides opportunity for differentiated learning, connects to the Catholic tradition and mission, and develops confidence and ability to serve the mission of Catholic schooling (p. 14). Therefore, it could be said that formation is taken very seriously by leaders of both Catholic education and the Church. The summary of what formation must include echoes the literature cited in this section from educators and researchers. Therefore, the head and the heart, the cognitive and affective aspects of formation or PL, are integral to PL for educators in Catholic schools.

This study is not researching how teachers understand the mission of the Catholic Church, but it could be argued that PL could provide educators with formation necessary to animate mission, to gain vital skills and knowledge to enable teachers to be moderators, or dialogical bridge-builders in the classroom. Cullen (2019) argues that teachers require explicit education in the Catholic faith so that they have the content knowledge as well as the opportunity to develop

their view of themselves in the world. Hall and Sultmann (2019) contend that because teachers in Catholic schools may not be Catholic, or attend regular worship, formation via PL offered in schools is their only means of learning about Catholicism and its mission. Hall and Sultmann (2019), with Gowdie (2017), suggest that the head and the heart must be involved if formation is to be meaningful. In addition, PL, according to Gowdie (2017), must be about encounter with self, others, and God through personal story, community story, and the meta-God story. Formation is an invitation to respond as well as a way to access learning that invites entry into a "new way of being and seeing" (Gowdie (2017, p. 172). If teachers are to "assist students to develop a personal world view that is open to faith… [which] requires formation as a person of faith" (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020, p. 158), then teachers must be afforded PL that provides opportunities for personal faith formation. The setting or context for PL that provides formation of the heart and the head is important. While PL could take place in any number of settings, I will focus on an out-of-home context because participants in this study experience PL in Israel.

Summary. Literature in this section shows that PL is of vital importance and should be ongoing, intentional, collaborative, and supported in the school environment. To maintain and develop professional competence, teachers need to be well informed in their discipline and work collegially to implement knowledge and refine skills. The terms PL and PD are used interchangeably in the literature, but for the purpose of this study, PL will be applied to new learning and PD to professional growth.

This section, PL for Catholic educators, examined Church documents, Victorian Catholic education documents, research documents into the teaching of Scripture in Victoria, and wider literature in the field of Catholic education in order to ascertain what PL should, and could, look like. Literature was examined with a view to understanding the role played by teachers in Catholic schools and the PL needed to support this work. The mission of the Catholic Church was examined because it is the heart and the driving force of a Catholic perspective shared by Catholic

educators. Although lacking in detail, it is clear from Church documents that teacher formation, and the PL that enables this, should encompass knowledge of Catholic doctrine, knowledge of Scripture, spiritual formation, and sound pedagogical skills. The concepts of dialogue, inclusion, witness, and encounter, together with ongoing training and supportive networks to ensure competency and confidence, are noted.

The research cited shows the critical need to build teacher knowledge about Scripture as this is fundamental to teacher confidence, competency, and student engagement. To engage students in an inclusive, dialogical manner that links faith and life requires teachers to have certain skills, namely, to act as a witness, specialist, and moderator.

The next section examines literature on PL in context as this is what the SSP offers, learning about Scripture in Israel.

2.2 Professional Learning in the Context of Israel

Professional learning in the context of Israel refers to learning that takes place while out of home country. Literature in this section explores pilgrimages and the associated concepts of liminality, experiential dissonance, and communitas. Literature shows that these concepts are common for people who leave their home country and live in another country for a period of time. This applies to the present study where participants learnt about Scripture in the context of Israel.

2.2.1 Pilgrimage

A pilgrim's journey may be spiritual sojourns searching for security and support, or a way to recapture hope for the future, or a renewed sense of purpose (Tisdell, 2017; Post, 1996; Carrasco, 1996). Whatever the reason, a pilgrimage is a purposeful journey to a particular destination for particular reasons. There is a deep human longing to be "connected to mother earth" (Elizondo, 1996, p. vii), which Elizondo suggests may explain part of the reason why pilgrimages have become popular. In the past, pilgrimage was only associated with holy sites, but the field of travel and tourism is beginning to explore a broader concept of travel and

transformation (Morgan, 2011). In fact, Turner (1973) observes that there are a growing number of people undertaking pilgrimages, a social phenomenon that occurs during times of rapid social change when society is going through increasing secularisation, pluralisation, and detraditionalisation (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2009). The Oxford Dictionary (n.d.) provides three different descriptions of pilgrim, as a person who: travels for religious reasons; travels to a place of interest; or is journeying through life. In this study I am adopting the first definition because participants in the SSP are religious people undertaking a journey.

Psychology points to the human need to travel to places where the divine can be encountered, like the thin places of Celtic spirituality (Vidal, 1996). The land plays a part in the process of reflection as it "invites conversations, it calls, provokes reflection" (Quillinan, 2016, para. 6). It could be said that a pilgrim longs for the divine, that in some way she or he is looking for a change, a new outlook or insight (Minehan, 1999). Christians are called to conversion, which is concerned with change and which "implies movement; [and] movement evokes pilgrimage" (Philibert, 1996, p. 81). Philibert (1996) looked to Piaget, Kohlberg, and Fowler to explain an individual's journey toward autonomy, a journey to moral maturity. The pilgrim sets out to reach a destination, yet the diaries of travellers generally suggest that their arrival may be anti-climactic compared to the journey itself. The experiences along the way, the people they meet, the landscape, nature, and the elements, affect the pilgrim and often engender deeper reflection, new discoveries, and new meanings (Post, 1996). "The real obstacle on our journey to God is … our inherited and unquestioned way of perceiving ourselves and the reality around us" (Hughes, 1986, p. viii).

Donnelly (1992) asks if people who travel to a different country for a time are pilgrims or tourists. Journey and pilgrimage imply something physical, yet also encompass something of a faith journey as they express the human spirit's yearning for the infinite, a path taken by individuals and in community in order to grow closer to God (Quillinan, 2016). Literature points

to a distinction between a pilgrim and a tourist (Donnelly, 1992). Just as there are different kinds of travel, there are different levels of transformative effect of a travel experience (Donnelly, 1992). This varies according to the intention of the person, and the level to which they involve themselves in new experiences.

Donnelly (1992) identifies five distinctive characteristics that distinguish a pilgrim from a tourist. First, she relates pilgrimage to an *internal* characteristic that can be seen in three theoretical ways: as a physical journey to a particular place; as a metaphor for the journey of life; or as a journey deep within the core of a person. What is common to these three characteristics is the sense of movement as a means for internal transformation. She also sees pilgrimage as a *personal commitment* where there is an investment of time, energy, and usually money, as well as an attitude of openness to new insights. Donnelly notes that pilgrims *intentionally* seek to be transformed by visiting places traditionally considered holy, which is a characteristic that could describe SSP participants applying to journey and study in Israel. Finally, Donnelly notes that pilgrims recognise the journey as being as important as the destination, and that the sense of community among pilgrims provides a sense of equality, spiritual bonding, and a source for rich personal reflection. These ideas of pilgrimage are relevant to the SSP because recipients have expressed their identities as Christian pilgrims rather than as tourists. Exploration of data in light of Donnelly's (1992) five characteristics may confirm or negate recipients' anecdotal declarations that the SSP is a pilgrimage.

Tisdell (2017) develops the concept of transformative pilgrimage learning. She was intrigued by the question of what it is that transforms, and proposes that a "spiritual pilgrimage … would likely unite all these dimensions [TL, spiritual, and cultural], and could be a form that transforms" (p. 341). Tisdell's research over many years has focused on the connections between spirituality, cultural identity, and how these interconnect with TL. Added to this is her interest in transformative pilgrimage born out of personal experiences (Tisdell, 2020). She suggests that

momentous spiritual experiences are what transforms a pilgrim. This study must still keep in mind that there are "different forms that transform" (Kegan, 2000, p. 35), and therefore exploration of data may provide insight into conditions for transformation specific to the SSP.

Pilgrimage to Israel. It is important to explore literature specifically related to Christian pilgrimage to Israel, the setting for the Christian narrative. This calls, first, for a definition of Christian faith, which has been defined as "personal knowledge of God in Christ" (McBrien, 1994, p. 39) – an encounter with Jesus so Christians can come to know God in order to connect better with others and the world. Faith is about a face-to-face meeting with the other (Lenehan, 2016), whoever that other is. Faith, freely given by God, is "the story of God's search for us" (Weigel, 2006, p. 12). If faith is about God searching for people it is interesting that many pilgrims to Israel, including participants in this study, may be travelling to Israel in search of God. The reason for this is perhaps that "Major pilgrimages do have an integrating effect and, at the same time, lead to a more profound comprehension of Christian identity" (Davies, 1988, p. 203). A pilgrimage to Israel puts a Christian in touch with the foundations of their religion, strengthening their sense of belonging and possibly their faith (Davies, 1988).

For Christians, each of the characteristics of pilgrimage (Donnelly, 1992) form a new awareness of Christian beliefs and teachings and learning about them: "it is important to realize that there are proper intellectual as well as emotional motives for pilgrimage" (Davies, 1988, p. 207). To visit a biblical site where archaeological research is taking place may give some visitors a sense of certainty that it is the site of a significant event. However, "archaeology can do no more than fill in the backgrounds against which the drama of evangelisation was played out" (Hamilton, 2013, p.8). The human urge to travel to significant places indicates that some places help devotees to recognise that God is truly with them. Today, devotional practices such as walking the way of the cross in Jerusalem, or touching the foot of the statue of St James in Compostela, are (mostly) seen as a means to grow spiritually (Davies, 1988) rather than 'magic formulae' for salvation.

Indeed, Merton (1973) indicates that devotional practices such as these help to provide a means for people to find what they need to find. Even if the object of pilgrimage no longer exists, the site may remain significant because people somehow feel connected to a greater mystery (Vidal, 1996).

What better way to gain an insight into the foundational documents of Christianity than to visit Israel, where the land itself reveals "the passing of the parables before your eyes" (Davies, 1988, p. 206). Visiting biblical sites, which may or may not be historically and geographically accurate, may help participants understand the fundamental truth of Scripture because it provides the opportunity to reflect and ponder the deeper meanings of the actions or events that took place there.

Pope John Paul II had a strong desire to visit the Holy Land all his life, to the places connected to salvation history, but this was not fulfilled until 2000. In John Paul II's own words

> To go in a spirit of prayer from one place to another, from one city to another in the area marked especially by God's intervention, helps us not only to live our life as a journey, but also gives us a vivid sense of a God who has gone before us and leads us on, who himself set out on man's path, a God who does not look down on us from on high, but who became our travelling companion. (Pope John Paul II, 1999, #10)

The uniqueness of the land of Israel must be considered because it is the context for the meta-Christian narrative. Israel may be the land of biblical stories but it is also a land contested by many throughout history (Paz, 2014). Pilgrims cannot remain ignorant of the fact that the conflict continues today. In fact, participants in the SSP are provided with material before their departure regarding safety precautions and some background information about the tensions they are likely to experience. The struggles and conflict cannot be overlooked by Christian pilgrims. Davies (1988) states that it is important that a pilgrim's renewed sense of witness is

related to today's world: so to go to Israel with no knowledge of the present situation in the Middle East could be to treat the pilgrimage as a journey backwards in time and irrelevant to the contemporary scene. This is not what Christianity or pilgrimage is about. (p. 204)

Pilgrimage is a physical journey as well as a spiritual journey (Morgan, 2011). Physically travelling to places outside a home country may have the potential to disrupt a person's worldview and perhaps begin the process of Transformative Learning (Morgan, 2011). Perspective transformation is described by Morgan (2011) as a spiritual journey that reveals a better way for people to exist. According to Henderson (2009), experiencing different belief systems may provide an opportunity to expand a person's own belief and give them a new way of looking at their faith and their place in the world. Exploration of data may reveal something of this deeper learning about life, personal spirituality, and personal faith because participants will have met many people with different perspectives, and they will have experienced a social context unlike their life in Australia which may challenge previous ways of thinking.

The SSP is a physical study tour. Participants must walk to sites, traverse rocky desert landscapes, and avoid dehydration in the summer heat. Since humans are embodied minds (O'Loughlin, 2006), the role of the body and its five senses must be considered when examining participant data because, as Pallasmaa (2007) points out, the body "produces and stores silent knowledge. Our entire being in the world is a sensuous and embodied mode of being" (p. 770). O'Loughlin writes that he is highly aware of "the sense-richness of human experience of the world" (p. 5) when he thinks of embodiment in education. He is keenly aware that the senses help a person to understand life and its many and varied experiences, assisting with reasoning and judgment in the meaning-making process. O'Loughlin suggests the process of making sense of experiences is dialectical; sensory information about the world integrates with a person's unique worldview and their previous knowledge and understanding.

The data gathered and discussed will offer an opportunity to explore the notion of Israel's uniqueness in light of broader research. The data will provide an opportunity to explore the concepts of a spiritual journey suggested by Morgan (2011) and an embodied learning opportunity involving the senses (Pallasmaa, 2007; O'Loughlin, 2006). It would be reasonable to suggest that the context of Israel is distinctive and unique from a faith perspective, a physical and socio-political setting as opposed to experiencing faith in the local Church in Australia.

2.2.2 Liminality

Liminality is a Latin term meaning a threshold, something on the verge, "when all hangs in the balance, when change might be possible" (Turner, 1985, p. 207). Turner (1969, 1985; Turner & Turner 1978) built on the work of Van Gennep (1960) and used the term liminality for his analysis of Ndenbu rituals (Wels, van der Waal, Spiegel, & Kamsteeg, 2011). Van Gennep used the term to describe the middle phase of a ritual process, whereas Turner saw it as applicable to the entire ritual (Turner, 1985). The term liminality is now widely used to describe broader social processes where the feelings of uncertainty or in-betweenness prevail (Wels et al., 2011). The notion of liminality and liminal space is relevant to this study because the SSP provides an unfamiliar space away from people's home country that is filled with uncertainty, particularly due to the religious tensions unfolding in Israel.

In relation to this study, I note that Turner (1985) describes a liminal space as something created when a person moves away from the complexity of everyday social structures and provides a time where "creative activities may or might take place… leav[ing] room for a 'dialogic', a counterpoint of ideas" (p. 210). "[P]ilgrimages are 'liminal' phenomena", confirms Turner (1973, p. 191). Pilgrimage could be seen as a time to concentrate on what is important to the individual and/or the group (Wilson, 2012). A period of liminality provides the opportunity "for the formation of new ideas, symbols, models, beliefs" (Turner, 1985, p. 215). Wilson states that being removed from life's complexities allows time to "focus on fundamentals, either those of

a universal nature or those particular to a given society" (Wilson, 2012, p. 157). The SSP gives participants the opportunity to come together as a group for a particular reason, to study Scripture; therefore, in this study the notion of liminality could be explored in relation to providing the time and space to study Scripture.

Turner and Turner (1978) distinguish pilgrimage as a liminoid experience rather than liminal because it is voluntary rather than obligatory. 'Liminoid' shares some of the liminal attributes such as escape from everyday life, equal status of participants, formation of communitas, time for reflection on religious tradition, and a "movement from a mundane centre to a sacred periphery, which suddenly, transiently, becomes central for the individual" (p. 254). The SSP could be considered a liminoid experience because participants choose to apply for the scholarship to attend the Scripture course in Israel.

2.2.3 Communitas

Turner (1969, 1973) introduced the concept of communitas in connection with liminality. Turner (1973) states that pilgrimages "exhibit in their social relations the quality of communitas (p. 192) … a social system, founded in a system of religious beliefs, polarized between fixity and travel, secular and sacred, social structure and normative communitas" (p. 195). Turner (1985) states that liminal spaces are filled with a social structure where "close friendships" (p. 211) arise between people. Liminal spaces are not bound by previous notions of status; all are equal, and some form bonds that last a lifetime (Turner, 1985). Participants' status in their regular life is irrelevant; all are equal, no matter their background, for their association is cemented in friendship and shared experiences (Donnelly, 1992). Liminal people "seek a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared" (Turner, 2012, p. 80). The strong bonds forged between those taking part in the SSP course in Jerusalem could be considered a communitas, even a spiritual community bound together by very strong faith bonds (Donnelly, 1992).

Turner (1969, 1973) identifies three types of communitas: spontaneous, normative, and ideological. The first, spontaneous, arises due to the shared experiences of the group, leading to a sense of a free community where all are equal. The second type, normative, is influenced by the time the group is together: their separation from everyday life results in some organisational features arising to ensure that the members of the communitas are looked after, bonds are formed, and the sense of equality among them is preserved. Carrasco (1996) suggests that the normative group arises out of the need to ensure the group gets the most out of the shared experience. The third, ideological, can be assigned to a communitas that exhibits a perfect model of society. All three types may be exhibited by a communitas during a pilgrimage.

Separation, the second of Turner's (1969; 1973) three types of communitas, is important. Carrasco (1996) speculates that separation begins through the process of removing the person from their everyday life, shifting them to a new place where they are often far out of their comfort zone and removed from their social status. Different food and cultural customs, which are often a component of pilgrimage, add to the feelings of insecurity, strangeness, and, sometimes, menace. It is in this separated, liminal state that relationships with fellow travellers develop (Carrasco, 1996).

Turner (1973) states that bonding may occur between pilgrims and those who offer help and hospitality along the way. During the SSP participants may form relationships with others which are not confined to the group who travel together. Participants in the SSP meet people from a number of different countries and walks of life. Some people they meet are participants in the course, others are presenters and/or administrators, or people working at Ecce Homo (the venue for the SSP), or from the local community. The opportunity to meet and mingle is, from a Christian perspective, "a practical manifestation of the communion of saints and an activity forging links between different Christian communities" (Davies, 1988, p. 204).

Turner (1973) theorises that the formation of communitas begins at the preparation stage and Carrasco (1996) agrees that it may begin prior to the actual journey. Turner (1973) asserts that research is able to follow the process of liminality and the formation of communitas through data gathered about the preparation and the journey, the arrival, during the pilgrimage, and on their return. This present study provides the opportunity to gather and explore data that may give insight into liminality and liminal space in relation to the preparation time before departure, the travel to Israel, the arrival, experiences during participants' sojourn, and their insights into what happened on their return. On their return, DOSCEL organises a gathering to reflect on the experience. This gathering of participants could be considered as an ideological community because, having shared common experiences, the group finds ways of expressing its newfound understandings and "new social and spiritual relationships" (Carrasco, 1996, p. 17).

Summary. Church documents state that teacher formation should provide a dynamic opportunity for spiritual formation; development of a culture of dialogue, inclusion, witness, encounter, and networking; and opportunities to develop as a Christian witness (Pope Benedict 2008; Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013; Congregation for Catholic Education, 2017; Pope Francis, 2018). For the purposes of this study the SSP could be considered a form of pilgrimage as participants travel in Israel and study the context for the foundational documents of Christianity. Therefore, the concepts of liminality and communitas associated with pilgrimage may inform results: in particular, whether PL in this context assists knowledge and understanding of Scripture and the Catholic tradition (Davies, 1988; *Dei Verbum,* 1965b; Pontifical Biblical Commission 1993; *Verbum Domini,* 2010), responding to the concerns of Stead (1996), Carswell (2006, 2017, 2018), and Grace (2003), and the call for teachers to be 'specialist' (Pollefeyt, 2008; Sharkey, 2015) in their field.

This notion of a transformed way of being and looking at things through PL in context lends itself to notions of transformative learning theory, which is hence explored in the following section.

2.3 Adult Transformative Learning Theory

Studying in context, in Israel, where many Scripture stories are set, could be considered a means for TL. TL is thought to be fundamental to understanding perspective transformation that is unique to adult learning (Mezirow, 1978). Mezirow (2009) contends that TL is a *reconstructive theory* concerned with a fundamental shift of feelings and attitudes resulting in a new or changed way of looking at things. In Mezirow's TL theory, learning is understood as a "process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience… [which] involves five interacting contexts: a meaning perspective, the communication process, a line of action, a self-concept, and the external situation" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 35).

Transformation is a movement from reification to dereification (see glossary) (Mezirow 1978, 1981): a transformed perspective which he identifies as a learning domain (Mezirow, 1978). Meaning perspectives are customary expectations that govern how a person thinks. Mezirow (1991) addresses the important role played by a person's individual frame of reference through which meaning is interpreted because it is "frames of reference that define their life world …[which] encompasses cognitive, conative [purposeful action], and emotional components" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5).

Meaning perspectives are the "boundary structures" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 4) for seeing and understanding new information. These boundary structures are formed from childhood and consist of epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). The boundary structures are the dimensions of a person's frames of reference that form deep-seated habits of mind and more changeable points of view. These two frames of reference are the guides for making meaning – what people draw upon to make sense of their experiences. Key to changing a

person's point of view, and even more so their habits of mind, are instances of cognitive

dissonance, "triggering events" that compel reflection and instigate the process of transformation

known as transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009).

Key to changing points of view, and even more so, habits of mind, are experiences that

create a cognitive dissonance that compel a person to reflect on the assumptions that ultimately

engender their often-unconscious habits of mind.

2.3.1 Mezirow's phases of learning in the transformation process

Mezirow states there are ten phases of transformative learning (Figure 2.3), which begins

with a triggering event or disorienting dilemma and concludes with the integration of a new

perspective into a person's life:

Table 2.1.

Phases of Learning*

1.	A disorienting dilemma.
2.	Self-examination.
3.	Critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions.
4.	Recognition of a connection between discontent and the process of transformation.
5.	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.
6.	Planning a course of action.
7.	Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan.
8.	Provisional trying of new roles.
9	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.
10	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

2.3.2 The triggering event and reframing

According to Mezirow (2009), the event or disorienting dilemma that triggers

transformative learning may be a sudden, dramatic event that calls for immediate change; or, the

transformation or reframing may be incremental and happen slowly. These disorienting dilemmas

*Adapted from Mezirow's phases of learning in the transformation process (Mezirow, 1991, ı a
p. 168; 2009, p. 22)

(Philibert, 1996). These moments exist in liminal spaces, which Turner (1985) describes as the moments when everything is on a cliff edge, when things could go either way, when change might be possible. Emery-Wright (2014) states: "Turner's theory of liminality and Mezirow's theory of transformative learning suggest that experiences of dissonance within the context of pilgrimage form fertile ground for change" (p. 40). However, transformation requires more than just these liminal moments of cognitive dissonance. They also require critical reflection.

2.3.3 The importance of critical reflection

In the latter half of the 1990s, Mezirow extended his research into critical reflection (Kitchenham, 2008). He emphasised the need to look back on an experience and critically examine the assumptions involved. This required objective and subjective reflection about what caused the assumptions and how valid they were (Kitchenham, 2008). Subjective reflections on assumptions "can include one of four forms of critical self-reflection on assumptions: narrative, systemic, therapeutic, and epistemic" (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 117).

In discussing communicative learning, Mezirow (1997) states that reflection "becomes essential for learners to become critically reflective of the assumptions underlying intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings" (p. 6). He asserts a holistic orientation that engages other ways of knowing, namely, affective and relational ways (Mezirow, 2009). Mezirow also states that for affective knowing, "developing an awareness of feelings and emotions in the reflective process – is inherent in critical reflection" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 10). Nevertheless, Malkki (2010) asserts that Mezirow did not examine the "origins and dynamics of reflection itself" (pp. 45-46). Malkki suggested that the complex relationship between emotion and cognition helps our understanding of the challenges faced by reflection. Indeed, "reflective practice is crucial to the learning process" (White, 2013, p. 70). Taylor (2011) states that critical reflection was considered a rational approach to learning. However, he posits that it is the affective dimension that influences what the learner perceives as personally important to reflect upon. This means that personal experience and

identity influence the process of reflection, and highlights the importance of the affective domain and associated deeply held beliefs and understandings.

2.3.4 The transformative learning theory of John Dirkx

Dirkx's (2006a; 2006b) learning theory encompasses the unconscious self and has more to do with intuition, imagination, and emotional images than with the rational self. A sense of the sacred is injected into Dirkx's (2006a) process of TL because he considers the integration of the outer and inner worlds of the teacher as essential to TL. This is in keeping with the nature of a religious journey through Israel by Christian believers, where there is also a sacred element to the journey, for it involves places that Christians hold dear. As Pallasmaa (2007) states,

> The body is not the locus of cognitive thinking, but the senses and our bodily being as such structure, produce and store silent knowledge. Our entire being in the world is a sensuous and embodied mode of being. (p. 770)

This statement aligns with Dirkx' learning theory about the unconscious self and adds to it that the knowledge held deep within a person is not solely reliant on cognitive thinking, but rather, the senses, a person's embodied self. Since humans are embodied minds (O'Loughlin, 2006), learning cannot be purely cognitive. If TL is to be better understood, then Mezirow's (1981, 1990, 1997, 2009) cognitive framework does not take into account the affective dimension. Mezirow refers to emotional components, describing them as the things outside a person's awareness related to habits of mind. Here, Mezirow's triggering events act as catalysts for change, but these emotional components may not necessarily be outside a person's awareness. For the purposes of this study, Mezirow's theory does not delve deeply enough into the affective domain where the unconscious self, the spiritual being within, may be affected by triggers that participants may recognise.

Tisdell (2017) adds another layer to the view that the work of Turner and Mezirow could be connected through the notion of spirituality. Tisdell points to a merger of the spiritual/cultural

perspectives of some learning theorists with that of Mezirow's TL theory in relation to pilgrimage, namely, "The cultural dimension of spirituality and the spiritual dimension of culture" (Tisdell, 2003, p. ix). This is akin to the affective dimension described by Dirkx (2006a, 2006b). Capets (2018) uses the term liminoid to describe a Catholic pilgrimage because participants want to go, they are open to the pilgrimage experience. She also suggests that if participants experience an unsought change in themselves, it is through their positive attitude and cooperation that this unfolds for them. There is a sense of *metanoia* in what Capets describes. Metanoia is a term used to describe change associated with faith. Its origins are Greek and it means a change in one's views (Meagher, O'Brien, & Aherne, 1979).

The Compendium of the catechism of the Catholic Church (2005) states that the mission of the Catholic Church, centred on the person of Jesus (para. 149), is to build the Kingdom of God (para.150), to bring about change. Therefore, if the whole purpose of Christianity is to bring about change, then Capets' assertion that Catholic pilgrims are open to change is in keeping with Catholic doctrine on the mission which all adherents share. Not only does metanoia imply a change in thoughts concerning faith, but it also echoes something of the literature on TL concerning a changed perspective initiated by an experience that is disorienting. A disorienting dilemma leading to changed perspectives echoes the work of Turner on liminal/liminoid, dissonant experiences usually experienced in communitas, as such experiences may lead to change. The data gathered and discussed will offer an opportunity to explore and consider the notion of metanoia in relation to TL (Mezirow, 1981, 1990, 1997, 2009) and liminality/liminoid (Turner, 1969, 1975, 1985; Turner & Turner, 1978) and other learning theorists such as Dirkx (2006a, 2006b) who include the affective dimension which Tisdell (2017) describes as spiritual/cultural.

Teaching is an emotion-driven profession (Dirkx, 2006a), and understanding of self is ultimately reflected in the quality of teaching and in the relationships formed with students. The two need to be in harmony if authentic teaching (and therefore learning) is to take place. This

study sets out to learn about the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel where the outer persona of a teacher expresses their inner self. Therefore, both the cognitive and emotional experiences of the SSP must be considered. A teacher who does not express his or her real or inner self is merely playing a character, which will not lead to the genuine communication that is essential for learning (Cranton & King, 2003).

Owen-Smith (2008) is in agreement with Dirkx (2006a, 2006b) about the importance of an affective area in learning, and with Cranton and King (2003) about a teacher being genuine in their communication of information to students so that they can make meaning. Although Owen-Smith (2008) is focused on student learning in secondary schools, there is congruence with her contentions about the role of affective learning in adults as proposed by Dirkx (2006a, 2006b). In particular, enduring learning cannot occur unless the heart and mind, the affective and cognitive, are both involved. Owen-Smith (2008) suggests that an epistemological revolution is taking place, not forsaking the importance of scholarship in education but grounding it "in a contemplative education and inquiry that provides a safe space for growth" (pp. 31-32). This safe space concept aligns with the hermeneutic learning spaces described by Pollefeyt (2008; 2013) and Sharkey (2013; 2015) and the Kingdom spaces of D'Orsa et al. (2019) applied to Catholic schooling. Owen-Smith (2008) describes the process of learning within these spaces to include disorienting experiences, critiquing, reflection, risk-taking, and interiority, much of which echoes Mezirow's (1991, 2009) phases of learning in the transformation process and in hermeneutic phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990; Heidegger, 1962; Gadamer, 1993).

I see affective learning as closely aligned to a nurturing of spirituality, or inner life. de Souza (2001) points out that spirituality has a much broader meaning and cannot be confined to any religious framework. She argues that despite pluralism and an increasingly secular society, spirituality is still alive and well and evident in young people who search for connectedness to each other and the world. Backed by educational research, de Souza points out that curriculum

development in some western countries shows more awareness of the importance of spiritual and moral development to support the inner life of students. de Souza proposes a curriculum model for religious education that includes cognitive learning, reflective/intuitive learning, and affective learning. de Souza's work assists here in emphasising that education researchers have been taking the affective element of learning seriously for many years.

Tisdell (2003) argues that spirituality has a role in adult learning, in the way that knowledge is constructed. Her broad definition of spirituality includes the assumption that spirituality is not the same as religion; it honours the role of a transcendent awareness in people, is concerned with meaning-making, exists in learning spaces, and says that developing the spiritual makes links to the authentic self. It is concerned with unconscious and symbolic meaning-making (for example, creative arts), and happens by surprise (Tisdell, 2003). Therefore, the integration of the outer and inner worlds of the teacher as described by Dirkx (2006a, 2006b), combined with the arguments of Tisdell (2003) and de Souza (2001) that spirituality is part of learning, has implications for understanding both TL and PL.

Dirkx (2006a, 2006b) refers to the significance and power of authentic teaching, that is teaching from the heart, being true to self, being genuine; it could therefore be presumed that PL that touches the soul and connects the individual to their inner self is important because it not only has the potential to transform the teacher, but through them the student as well. When a teacher experiences emotion it points to what is of value, what is important to them and who and what they are (Dirkx, 2006a, p. 31). When learning touches deep within, it ignites further search, it motivates and drives a person to become a self-directed learner, one who is perpetually in a state of transformation, a continual cycle of critical reflection and TL. To be transformational, PL must provide the opportunity for the individual to explore the deepest level of self-knowledge, the emotional being within. Critical reflection is "a potentially powerful way to help teachers identify,

critique, and possibly modify existing assumptions and perspectives about themselves as teachers and the teaching-learning process" (Dirkx, 2006a, p. 30).

TL requires the individual to make meaning that reflects their relationship with self, but also their relationship with the society and the culture in which they live. Learning is both personal and shared in relationship with others:

> [D]eveloping awareness of these relationships involves cognitive, affective, somatic, and spiritual processes, mediated by reflective analysis, story, symbol, or ritual. Such work may lead to profound shifts in one's awareness or consciousness of being in the world – what we refer to as transformative learning. (Dirkx, 2006b, p. 15)

If adult learning is both personal and shared in relationship with others, then PL must provide opportunities for both of these facets. First, it must offer opportunities to stimulate a relationship with self. It is essential that people have the time and opportunity to experience PL that touches the soul and offers the space to reflect on their changing perspectives, their learning. Second, PL must provide the opportunity for the person to share their learning journey with others. As communal beings, we learn who we are; we form our ideas and test our thoughts in relationship with others.

Understanding self, developing a relationship with self as well as with others is important, as is understanding the context and culture in which the individual operates (Dirkx, 2006a, 2006b). It is about being in tune, achieving a balance with all in order for TL to take place. Despite the fact that scholarship understands the importance of developing self-knowledge, there are numerous questions around what self-knowledge is and how teachers develop it. Emotions and feelings can be accessed through creative imagination which provides "spiritual guideposts to our own growth, healing, transformation, and development of self-knowledge" (Dirkx, 2006a, p. 32).

Summary. Mezirow's (1981, 1990, 1997, 2009) adult Transformative Learning theory provides a way to understand how points of view and deeper habits of mind are transformed so that people look at things from a different perspective. Together with the cognitive emphasis of Mezirow, the affective domain emphasised by Dirkx (2006a, 2006b) introduces a sense of the sacred into this study which is appropriate given its focus on Scripture and faith. Understanding of self is also an important aspect of learning and transformation. Loughran (2006) and Tisdell (2017) add the importance of the body in the learning process which is relevant given the physical pilgrimage feature of the SSP. From a faith perspective, the term metanoia echoes the TL theories of Mezirow and Dirkx and the role of the body associated with affective learning. All of this must be considered when analysing data in order to identify both cognitive and affective elements of TL. This will require evidence of triggering events, reflective practice, deep emotional responses, and subsequent learning that is of a personal and or professional nature. In order to answer the major question: *What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, is it a means for transformative learning?*

2.4. Chapter Summary

The literature explored in this chapter provides the opportunity to consider effective PL, PL specific to Catholic educators, PL in context, and Adult Transformative Learning Theory. Each of the sections gives information which may be considered in light of results. This literature is important because it offers guidelines around PL expectations.

Examination of the literature shows that high standards of professional competence are expected by educational bodies by the State of Victoria, Catholic education bodies in Victoria, and Australia, and by leaders and governing bodies in the Catholic Church. Opportunities to improve knowledge and practice should be ongoing, collaborative, and supported by the school environment and leadership.

Considering that the mission of the Catholic Church is the heart and the driving force of a Catholic perspective shared by educators in Catholic schools, it is important to consider if results show that mission is being supported by the SSP. Given that official Catholic Church documents recognise that PL, or formation, is vital, then the concerns raised by scholars about teacher competence and confidence, particularly around teaching Scripture, raise questions about what effective PL could look like. Literature shows that PL for teachers of religion should provide subject knowledge and opportunities for personal faith or spiritual formation. The concepts of dialogue, inclusion, witness, encounter, and networking have been identified as important considerations for PL for Catholic educators.

Since teachers share the mission of the Catholic Church and their work is about preparing young people to go out into the world with a Catholic perspective, then the desirable attributes of acting as witness, specialist, and moderator are important in order to shine a light on the bridges between the Catholic faith and lived experience. Therefore, literature around the role of the teacher needs to be considered against the results in order to discern whether the SSP as a PL experience gives participants the opportunity to develop these attributes.

Examination of literature about pilgrimages and the associated concepts of liminality, experiential dissonance, and communitas show that these concepts are common for people who leave their home country and live in another country for a time, which applies to the present study. As an embodied learning experience, the SSP as PL in context provides the opportunity for participants to experience Israel through the senses. Broader research indicates that Israel is a distinctive and unique place with regard to its religious and socio-political setting as opposed to that experienced by participants in rural Victoria. This could be considered in light of results.

The TL theories explored in this chapter will assist discernment of the SSP as a PL opportunity in light of how adults learn. From the literature it was identified that every person has individual boundary structures for seeing and understanding new information and that if deep-

seated habits of mind are to be transformed then both the cognitive and affective realms of learning have to be considered. Furthermore, TL theories may provide the opportunity to consider whether the SSP is a catalyst for TL and give insight into any transformed learning that has taken place in light of results.

Chapter Three
Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The major question being explored in this research is: What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, is it a means for transformative learning? Chapter Three outlines and explores the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological framework for this study, which is couched in Mezirow's (1981, 1990, 2009) transformative learning theory and Dirkx's focus on the role of emotional and spiritual energies (Dirkx, 2006a, 2006b; Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006).

This chapter explains the qualitative research design adopted in order to uncover the essence of the lived experience of recipients of the SSP who have participated in this study. First, the interpretive, constructivist theoretical framing of the study is presented, followed by an overview of hermeneutic phenomenology. Methods employed for recruiting participants, data collection and analysis are then discussed. These aspects of the research design (summarised in Table 3.1) are discussed in relation to their alignment with qualitative research.

Table 3.1

Summary of theoretical and methodological framework

Theoretical Perspective	Interpretivism.
Epistemology	Constructivism.
Methodology	Hermeneutic Phenomenology.
Methods	Questionnaire. Focus Group interviews. Individual interviews. A reflection journal.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

"Theoretical perspective is taken here to mean the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology… [and] … providing a context for the process" (Crotty, 1998, p. 66). Creswell

(2012) states that a researcher must consider both quantitative and qualitative tracks in light of the research problem and the questions being asked. This guides the adoption of an approach appropriate for a particular study because this influences epistemology, methodology, and data-gathering methods (Flick, 2009).

Quantitative and qualitative paradigms have evolved over time (Burns, 2000), and today are not considered to be in conflict. In the past they were "linked to the different theoretical positions like positivism versus constructionism or post-positivism" (Flick, 2009, p. 24). The distinction between the two is dependent on the way they are used and why (Morgan, 2014). Quantitative and qualitative approaches for this study were both considered with the research question in mind: What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel; in what ways, personal and professional, is it a means for transformative learning? An overview of the considerations made are outlined below, demonstrating the rationale for ultimately adopting a qualitative approach to the research design.

Mertens (2010) states that quantitative research is primarily concerned with numerical data often related to testing and assessment, and that it may include data from previous research, and/or existing records found in databases or held by institutions. This study is not concerned with numerical data nor are there previous studies on the SSP. Rather, it is interested in the individual stories and perspectives of participants regarding their experiences of the SSP. Creswell (2012) also notes that the purpose, questions, and hypotheses of quantitative research are specific and limited to a few variables, which again is not applicable in this study as there are no limitations on the variables participants might identify as relevant in their experience of the SSP.

Burns (2000) suggests that the scientific approach associated with quantitative research has four characteristics: control, operational definition, replication, and hypothesis testing. He states that replication relates to knowledge that can be discovered if the experiment is repeated (as opposed to observations that cannot be repeated), whereas qualitative study is known for its

uniqueness (Burns, 2000). Such uniqueness applies to the present study, as it would be impossible to replicate results with different recipients of the SSP. There are several reasons for this: the same people are not sent to Israel every year; nor are the exact same circumstances experienced in different iterations of the program, that is, there are different companions, lecturers, and content focus. While the socio-political situation might remain similar, it is subject to peaks and troughs in the levels of peace and conflict in Israel. The perspectives of multiple participants over a span of ten years could not guarantee the same participant responses. Indeed, meeting records indicated that the response of recipients of the SSP was very positive, but there were different reactions to different activities and experiences, indicative of more than one reality. These factors lend support to the rationale for a qualitative, and, indeed, hermeneutic phenomenology research design informed by constructivism and interpretivism (all of which are explored further below).

Further support for a qualitative design is provided by Mertens (2010), who states that quantitative research does not take into account that the human person reacts and interprets situations and constructs meaning in different ways at different times. As such, a quantitative approach to this research was deemed unsuitable because it did not provide adequate possibilities for exploring the personal and professional responses of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, and whether it is a means for transformative learning. The phenomenon of studying Scripture in Israel from the perspective of participants was explored because the variables were unknown and literature did not provide sufficient insights into this particular phenomenon. Therefore, as Creswell (2012) states, more information had to be gleaned from participants.

Qualitative research offers the opportunity to capture participants' views or perspectives of the same events and experiences and to provide an insight into the meaning it has for each of them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Yin, 2011). It is a dynamic, diverse approach that refers to a variety of perspectives, methodologies, and methods concerned with interpreting phenomena in light of the meaning brought to it by the human person.

Where quantitative research is based in objectivity, numbers, and generalisability, qualitative research seeks transferability by providing data that is thick and rich in description and not intended for generalisation. Enough details have to be provided so that the reader can make judgments based on similarities and differences to their own contexts (Mertens, 2010). Subsequently, the large sample sizes that bring validity to quantitative research data are not required in qualitative research.

3.1.1 Researcher Positionality

There are two perspectives in qualitative research, an *emic* perspective from the standpoint of the people or culture being studied, and, at the same time that of the researcher, the *etic* perspective (Yin, 2011). The emic and etic characteristics of qualitative research are consistent with the nature and purpose of the present study. I seek to explore participants' individual experiences and meaning-making during the SSP (emic perspectives). Concurrently, I am directly involved in the education context through my work in schools and I understand the influence of the considerable body of research about learning and PL. Together with this, I have personally experienced the SSP and am not void of opinions, meaning-making, and response (etic). Such a closeness to the SSP and to participants known to me through my employment in the diocese has ethical and methodological implications for the study which are discussed further in Section 3.7.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) posit that qualitative research situates the observer in the world in order to make it visible, to make understandable the meanings of a phenomenon from the perspective of the people involved. In order to understand the response to the SSP and Scripture learning, myself as researcher and the participants in the study played a role in the interpretation of its meanings. The perspective of the participants provides insight, but, as researcher, I had a part in the interpretation of the experience. Interpretation is explored further in sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4.

The considerations discussed so far place the present study firmly within the qualitative paradigm: multiple realities of a relatively small sample of participants; value-laden richness

associated with descriptive data; and direct involvement of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), whose intent is to seek understanding of experience in context (Richards, 2009) rather than objective "truth". Because it is the lived experience of participants that is being sought in this study as a means to understand their response, this further indicates a qualitative approach.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe how a researcher 'speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective" (p. 18) via three interrelated, general activities. These can have different titles, "a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)" (p. 18). My particular perspective is discussed under three headings: ontology, epistemology, and methodology, including the thinking behind why particular pathways were taken.

3.1.2 Ontology

The qualitative researcher operates in a complex arena where the epistemology and methodology employed reflect the theoretical perspective taken. This relates to how the researcher understands "*what is* (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding *what it means to know (epistemology)*" (Crotty*, 1998, p. 10)*. Ontology is the study of "what it means to be … the phenomenology of being" (van Manen, 1990, p. 183).

The theoretical perspective of interpretivism was deemed the most appropriate lens through which to conduct this research for, as Thomas (2009) states, interpretivism as a framework within social science which recognises that individuals construct different meanings of the world. Therefore, researchers "are interested in people and the way that they interrelate – what they think and how they form ideas about the world" (p. 75).

At the heart of an interpretive approach is the premise that the searcher is seeking empathetic understanding (*Verstehen*) as opposed to either a more cognitive or rational understanding (van Manen, 1990, p. 15) or trying to explain (*Erklären*) (O'Donoghue, 2007). According to Flick (2009), *verstehen* is concerned with understanding a phenomenon from the

participants' perspective. The present study is about understanding how participants experienced the SSP as a means of transformative learning, therefore an empathetic understanding (*verstehen*) is appropriate.

O'Donoghue (2007) uses the terms interpretivist and interpretivism interchangeably. He writes about an "interpretivist approach" (p. 17), a "paradigm" (p. 21) or "position" (p. 21), and refers to the "assumptions of interpretivism (p. 18) and the fact that it "is not a homogenous position" (p. 21). Thomas (2009), when differentiating between the two approaches of positivism and interpretivism, describes them as ways of thinking. He uses the terms positivist and interpretivist when referring to the person doing the research as in "if you are a positivist writing about research … in a positivist or an interpretivist position" (pp. 78, 79). In this study the term "interpretivism" is used to describe the theoretical perspective and the term "interpretivist" is the researcher's perspective. Interpretive is used to define the action of interpretation.

Within the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, two interpretivist approaches were considered for this study, symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. These two approaches differ in the way they see culture as a meaning system (Crotty, 1998).

According to Crotty (1998), symbolic interactionism, which originated in the Chicago school of social psychology and is associated, in particular, with the work of Blumer (1969), which holds that social interactions influences meaning-making. Blumer (1969) posited that people are engaged in a continual process of living and acting while interacting with others. Symbolic interactionism holds that relationships and interaction between individuals and groups lead to the interpretation and creation of norms for social behaviour and social order within particular contexts (Segre, 2014).

In contrast, phenomenology considers this to be limiting, as it cuts us off from untapped significant meaning (Crotty, 1998), which, Mertens (2010) adds, is an individual's "perception and meaning of a phenomenon or experience" (p. 235). As a research methodology, reconstruction of

participants' views is important and includes *subjective theories* that help people explain the world, and *autobiographical narratives* that provide participant perspectives (Flick, 2009). However, van Manen (1990) adds that the individual symbolically interprets society through an intricate network of persons with whom they interact, and that symbolic interactionism is usually applied to research in "role behaviour and perception studies" (p. 186). The notion of how an individual perceives how others see them impacts on how they see themselves and is an important part of this perspective according to van Manen.

This study, focusing on the phenomenon of the SSP experience, sought to get to the very nature or essence of participant response to the experience and whether it transformed their learning, not how the individual perceived themselves. Symbolic interactionism was therefore deemed an unsuitable approach and phenomenology was judged to be better suited to this study. It allowed for the exploration of an individual participants' response to the SSP experience in order to understand if and how this could be a means for personal and professional transformative learning.

It is important to note the role of axiology in my ontological perspective. Axiology, "the branch of philosophy dealing with ethics, aesthetics, and religion" (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2017, p. 116/), is complex, and Guba & Lincoln consider it should now be thought of as part of all paradigms rather than separate from them. Because axiology encompasses religion, the realm where the sacred meets social inquiry (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2017), it has a natural alignment with this study of participants who belong to Catholic communities and who are participating in a Catholic professional learning program in the SSP. Meeting records indicate that recipients of the SSP refer to "personal faith" or "belief", and at times have spoken emotionally about what it means to visit the Holy Land and gain deeper insight into the Gospel being studied. This is the context of the research and I have to be aware that participants may express deep feelings or beliefs which are, as Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, (2017) describe, entering the realm of the sacred.

3.1.3 Epistemology

This study is framed within a constructivist epistemology, where, in line with Crotty (1998), individuals build their own meaning within a social construct. Loughran (2010) states that constructivism is about how individuals learn; it is done "by developing mental schemas that allow them to progressively add new information to existing knowledge with the result being the development of increasingly complex cognitive structures" (p. 34). He describes some of the principles of constructivism, and two in particular are of interest to this study: "building individual meaning in a situation or experience; and learning with and from others" (p. 35). For the purpose of this study, I considered whether the epistemology of constructionism (construction of a group's shared understanding) or constructivism (construction of an individual's understanding) was appropriate. I raise this to indicate awareness of the distinction between these terms and to say why constructivism was selected over constructionism as the appropriate epistemological position.

Crotty (1998) writes about the difference between constructionism (a constructionist view) and constructivism (a constructivist view). He suggests that humanity has already interpreted the social and natural world, therefore there is a shared understanding or meaning; it is socially constructed. This is constructionism, "where the focus includes 'the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning'" (p. 58). Constructivism, on the other hand, is focused "on the unique experience of each person. It suggests that each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid as and worthy of respect as any other" (p. 58). Valuing and respecting the meaning-making of the individual supports the notion of what can be considered truth as argued by Gadamer (1993).

The purpose of the present study is to gain insight into the personal and professional response to the SSP, and as such, it is important that participants be given the opportunity to express personal insights and thoughts through an epistemology that is systematic yet sympathetic to individual insights. As Mertens (2010) states, data collection is more "personal and interactive" from the perspective of a constructivist epistemology. This is a suitable approach for two reasons.

First, participants are known to me through my work as an Education Officer, and second, I have experienced the SSP, which means we can comfortably converse about something which participants are aware that I too have experienced. Participants did not feel compelled to explain the context to me and therefore could focus on how they reacted, what they felt. This does not mean that my personal experience and that of participants in this study will be identical, because, as Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest, ontologically speaking, there could be multiple constructs among participants, but some elements may be shared.

Participants experience the SSP through the eyes of people who are members of the Catholic tradition. Therefore, it could be assumed that there is shared meaning among these adherents, meaning that has been constructed through lived experience and expressed through tradition and Scripture. Such an experience suggests alignment with the constructionism perspective because participants hold shared meanings, socially constructed within the tradition of the Catholic Church. However, there are also individual constructs of the socially constructed Catholic tradition to consider. Crotty (1998) argues that meaning is made by the individual even if it is through social means. Hence, even if the Catholic tradition is socially constructed, individuals within this tradition tend to make their own, and sometimes quite different, meanings, thus aligning with a constructivist perspective.

The work of Gadamer (1993) helped to clarify constructivism versus constructionism. He uses the term "horizons" when referring to people's understandings or views, and how their horizons are not fixed but continually in a process of formation and re-formation, continually being formed. People have new experiences; they are confronted with ideas or concepts that challenge their current understanding. So, a bridge is built between past understandings and new information: the past and present entwine to form a new horizon.

Past prejudices are reflected upon in light of current experiences: "understanding is always the fusion of these horizons" (Gadamer, 1993, p. 306). Therefore, the participants in this study

could continually be assessing their own ideas in light of what they heard from others, their lived experience of the SSP, and their past understandings. The meaning-making taking place within a focus group was hermeneutic in nature; each person brought to the interview space their own horizon, current at the time, which was the fusion of their past and present horizons (Gadamer, 1993). It could be said that there was a fusion of horizons within the group if they shared similar perspectives; despite this, however, each person viewed this fusion from their own perspective, their own world view, which can never be identical to others (Gadamer, 1993). Thus, it must be constructivist in nature.

In light of all the above, constructivism was considered to be most suited to the philosophical underpinnings of the present study, and the ways in which phenomena and learning are experienced and understood. Hence, constructivism was adopted as the epistemological framework underpinning the research design.

3.1.4 Methodology

Aligned with an interpretive, constructivist theoretical framing, a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was adopted in this study. In this section, phenomenology and hermeneutics are first explored separately, and then together, to affirm how such a methodology supports the theoretical framing of the study.

Phenomenology. Phenomenological research explores the way the human person experiences and knows the world. "And since to know the world is to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching … is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world" (van Manen, 1990, p. 5). This intimate connection to the world is called intentionality. As a research perspective and methodology, a phenomenological approach offered the opportunity to explore deeply the experience of participants in this study, how they understand and explain their response to the phenomenon of studying Scripture in Israel. It allowed me to intentionally insert myself into their experience, to see it through their eyes, to connect with their world. Reflective awareness of a

particular phenomenon allows us to "transform or remake ourselves in the true sense of *Bildung* (education)" (van Manen, 1990, p. 7). This echoes the research of Mezirow (1990) concerning transformative learning and how reflecting on previous learning is part of the process.

Not only were participants engaged and encouraged through reflection to discover deeper truths and express them, but also, I transformed my own learning through the act of research. The phenomenological researcher must *live* the research, driven by the quest to investigate and interpret the narrative of participants in order to engage the reader (van Manen, 1990). The reader should want to know more about the phenomenon: "One might say that a phenomenological questioning teaches the reader to wonder, to question deeply the very thing that is being questioned by the question" (van Manen, 1990, p. 44).

Phenomenology fits this study for a number of reasons. First, it allows for the focus to be placed on participant response to the SSP. Second, it is not static; it lets different interpretations and possibly reinterpretations of the SSP experience to emerge. Finally, there is further evidence through historical documents (see Appendix I) and discussions with past recipients at various events (e.g., reunion gatherings, joint work in schools) to indicate that even though the experience may have occurred some years ago, it has not been forgotten. Memories are triggered and revisited repeatedly, particularly when engaging in Scripture work in the classroom.

With regard to participant response to the phenomenon, Mertens (2010) states that, a phenomenological methodology "seeks the individual's perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience" (p. 235). Thus, it invites an attitude of exploration focused on participant views. It is acknowledged, however, that a researcher's viewpoint cannot be eliminated as it is the researcher who does the interpreting (Ricoeur, 2013). It is an exploration that allows for deeper meanings, deeper reflections to come to the surface as "phenomenology makes a distinction between appearance and essence … what is the meaning of something" (van Manen, 1990, p. 184).

Phenomenology is a way of questioning, wondering, and reflecting rather than answering (van Manen, 2016). Barnacle (2001) states that "phenomenology begins with wonder … of opening up to the unknown" (p. 3). She explores the notion of making meaning for ourselves and others, stating that reason alone is not the sole initiator, but that wonder can be a catalyst for giving thoughts direction. This resonated with me because wondering why so many recipients of the SSP reacted to this experience in different yet positive ways led to this research. Drawing on the work of Husserl and Levinas in particular, Barnacle (2001) states: "When we attempt to understand the world we do not access it 'as it is', but rather, 'as it is to us'" (p. 7).

Finally, this study recognised that participants continually revisited, interpreted, and reinterpreted their SSP experience over many years. This is supported by (Crotty, 1998), who posits that phenomenology is about going back to the phenomenon itself in order to elicit new meanings, to enrich and enhance previous meanings; it begins in the *lifeworld* of the participant. Participants indicated they continually revisited the experience, or phenomenon, which is "something interesting yet difficult to understand or explain fully" ('Phenomenon', 2018) and invites continual wondering and reflection triggered by life experiences. This called for an explorative stance in this study, such as that offered by phenomenology, in order to gain insight into how participants perceived the SSP experience.

We can never know exactly how another person sees the world; this makes us wonder and draws us into dialogue with the other (Barnacle, 2001). Wonder is therefore related to interpretation, which in turn encompasses hermeneutics. Because of the interpretive nature of most phenomenological research studies, hermeneutics is integral to this methodology. van Manen (2016) states hermeneutic phenomenology takes into account the interpretive nature of an experience. A phenomenological approach is "descriptive, interpretive, linguistic and hermeneutic" (van Manen, 2016, p. 26). It is *descriptive* in that it is concerned with things

speaking for themselves, while the hermeneutic perspective is *interpretive* because all phenomena are interpreted. He suggests that this contradiction can be resolved if one agrees that

> … the (phenomenological) "facts" of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. Moreover, even the "facts" of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretive process (van Manen, 1990, pp. 180-181).

Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, derived from the Greek *hermeneuein*, to interpret, is a method used to discern meaning. It is used today in a broader sense than its original application to interpret Scripture (van Manen, 1990). It is applied to texts and human practices, events, and situations. In all of these applications, language is central to human understandings, not only by expressing these in written form, but by expressing a reality or interpreting its meaning (Crotty, 1998). In one sense, hermeneutics deems texts to be distant or foreign to human understanding yet, at the same time, there is a relationship between the text and the reader that allows interpretation because the texts transmit meaning (Crotty, 1998).

Historically, hermeneutics, grounded in interpretivism, emerged from the works of Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer (Crotty, 1998). What is clear in this historical development is that hermeneutics is a rich concept that has many different uses and forms, more than mere interpretation. It has its uses in reading and literary criticism, in philosophical and historical research, in research that tries "to get a handle on people's perceptions, attitudes and feelings … in research that echoes with profoundly spiritual, religious, historical or ontological overtones …" (Crotty, 1998, pp. 110-111).

Hermeneutics is about determining the meaning of a text, taking into consideration context, author, interpreter, and intention in order to aid understanding. For this study, text is considered to be transcripts of participants' discourse and written responses to open-ended questions in a survey. A hermeneutical approach encouraged deeper understandings to emerge

from the text, even some that may not be recognised by participants but are implicit in their articulation. As Crotty (1998) suggests, participants' texts have meanings that are implicit and these may become explicit and lead to assumptions being discerned.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology. In arguing a case for employing a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, this study draws particularly on the work of Moustakas (1994), van Manen (1990; 2016) and Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2012). van Manen (1990) and Smith et al. (2012) claim that in the work of Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1993) a hermeneutic phenomenology was taking shape. Aspects of Heidegger's (1962) and Gadamer's (1993) work were considered as they have implications for this research.

First, Heidegger (1962) looks to the two parts in phenomenological research, phenomenon and logos. According to Heidegger (1962), phenomenon is perceptual; it has visible meanings, while logos is analytical. Thus, phenomenology is interpretive, it is hermeneutic. Second, Heidegger's notions around fore-conceptions or preconceptions impact on the researcher concerning bracketing, that is, the ability to put one's preconceptions to one side. For Heidegger (1962), this is a lively process of interpretation. Preconceptions are inevitably present, but rather than letting this obstruct the purpose of the research, priority should be given to the object of the study, the phenomenon, for this may help the researcher understand and shed light on what their preconceptions were (Smith et al., 2012).

Heidegger's (1962) notions around bracketing and fore-conceptions or preconceptions had implications for me as researcher. I had experienced the SSP and was not devoid of preconceptions. However, the research helped me realise that irrespective of different world views, participants and I had responded in some way to the experience of the SSP. This returned my focus to the experience itself, the phenomenon we had encountered, and to the exploration of what enabled these responses. Therefore, in keeping with Heidegger (1962), participants and researcher aimed to make explicit what was implicit.

Heidegger's (1980) concept of *Dasein*, the phenomenology of being, is the pre-understanding starting point for "the journey toward Being" (Crotty, 1998, p. 97). His version of the hermeneutic circle is concerned with the movement toward Being, the task of making explicit what is implicit in order to understand "existentials – structures of being that make human existence and behaviour possible – and on to a grasping of Being itself" (Crotty, 1998, p. 98). The cyclic motion is continual as a newer understanding informs our existence and behaviour, which in turn continues to inform new understanding and so on.

Gadamer (1993) adds to the understanding of preconceptions in relation to hermeneutic phenomenology. The phenomenon "influences the interpretations which in turn can influence the fore-structure, which can then influence the interpretation" (Smith et al., 2012, p. 26). This echoes Mezirow's (1981; 1990) theory of transformative learning, which stresses the need to reflect on previous understandings in order to come to terms with new insights that result in a new world view.

By its very nature, the SSP is interpretive and hermeneutic; the participants enter into it with preconceptions which were influenced by the experience and then interpreted by them. The SSP experience is interpretive on a number of levels and hermeneutic in that it interprets the Christian story for participants who come from a peaceful yet increasingly pluralist, secular society, to a land where conflict is part of its socio-political reality. Scripture texts being studied encompass biblical hermeneutics (everything is interpreted). The Gospel writer being studied by SSP participants interpreted the Christian story. Scripture scholars, lecturers, fellow pilgrims, and travel guides further interpret these interpretations. It can be said that the land of Israel itself, which some call the fifth gospel, also influences the interpretation of the Christian story. I was aware that different layers of interpretation around the experience would already have taken place.

The participants' experiences relayed to me in interviews were the reality of the SSP experience for them at the time of the interview. They were making explicit what was implicit and

continuing the hermeneutic, cyclic motion of the movement toward Being (Heidegger, 1980; Gadamer, 1993; Crotty, 1998). Participants expressed their interpretation of the experience, which was recorded, transcribed, and interpreted by me, thus adding further layers of interpretation. This does not mean that the reality of participants' experiences is falsely represented by me as researcher or by them as they remember and relate experiences, for all experiences are interpreted (Kearney, 2007). My perspective or prior understandings remain intrinsic to studies employing hermeneutic phenomenology because this is how, as researcher, I make meaning. From a hermeneutic phenomenological stance, Sharkey (2001) posits that prior understandings are a means to enter the participants' world and as such they offer me the opportunity to examine personal perspectives and understandings.

In light of all the above I decided that hermeneutic phenomenology was the most suitable approach because it provided a way to examine participants' response in depth. "Hermeneutic phenomenology is a human science that studies persons" (van Manen, 1990, p. 6). Because this study is focused on the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture and whether it is a means for transformative learning, it required a methodology that allowed for an in-depth study of the participants' experiences. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach is particularly suited because it invited a sensitive, reflective approach to participants' lived experience, as well as making sense of that experience, which, in turn, points to things of pedagogic importance (van Manen, 1990). Therefore, participants' responses and reactions were the key to making sense of the SSP as a means for personal and professional transformative learning.

3.2 Participants

Participants in this study were limited to primary school teachers, one primary school principal, and DOSCEL employees. A number of additional school personnel using various enrichment programs such as primary principals, and secondary principals and teachers (see

section 1.2.3 and glossary) have attended the biblical program in Israel and joined the preparation meetings conducted by DOSCEL. Clergy and parishioners have also joined the DOSCEL preparation meetings. These additional groups have been excluded from this study for two reasons. First, they were not recipients of the SSP funding, and second, they were not closely involved in the teaching of Scripture in Catholic primary schools.

One exception was made to this criterion by the independent panel (see below) in consultation with me. A principal who attended the SSP through Enrichment Leave was included in FG2. I agreed to this because I was aware of the close bonding of this group while in Israel, a bonded communitas (Turner, 1969, 1973; Donnelly, 1996; Carrasco, 1996), even on their return to home country. I also took into consideration the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology of this study. Because it is interpretive and seeks to make explicit perceptions and meanings (Heidegger, 1962; Mertens, 2010; van Manen, 2016), it was deemed in keeping with hermeneutic phenomenology to include the principal in Focus Group 2. This would provide the best way to understand the close bonding of this group. The dynamics of a closely bonded group (Robson, 2002; O'Toole & Becket, 2010; Creswell, 2012) could also provide opportunities for them to consider in depth their personal and professional response to the SSP.

An independent panel of DOSCEL employees was set up in order to select participants for individual and focus group interviews because DOSCEL employees understand the feasibility issues this entailed. The panel selected potential participants following the criteria I set. This included selection of potential participants from across a number of years and from different parts of the Diocese. The Diocese covers 42,350 square km (16,350 square miles), so I asked the panel to be mindful of logistics around travel time for participants. The responsibility of travelling long distances fell to me. Availability of busy teachers was another consideration, and the selection of convenient venues. The independent panel also served a role around trustworthiness (see section 3.6).

The independent panel added a suggestion to the criteria I had given them, which was, if possible, that membership of one focus group should consist of participants from the same SSP cohort, i.e., recipients who studied together in the same year. Their reasoning was that a group interview could provide different insights to other data-gathering strategies. It was suggested that a group who studied together in Israel were like a community within the Diocese of Sale primary schools and this could aid this study. I agreed because this is in keeping with phenomenological research which Mertens (2010) states is "the study of a way in which members of a group or community themselves interpret the world and life around them" (p. 235). It is also in keeping with the concept of communities that share special bonds described by Donnelly (1996) and Carrasco (1996).

Table 3.2 shows total number of SSP recipients 2005–2015 and their position when they attended the SSP. Some participants were classroom teachers, others classroom teachers with a leadership role, while a small number had a leadership role only. By far the biggest group were the teacher/leadership cohort. The latter two were collapsed into teacher/leadership. Potential participant numbers were reduced due to retirements or staff who no longer working in the diocese. Although questionnaires were anonymous the participant's position in the school was part of demographic information provided.

Table 3.2

Summary of possible research participant numbers and actual number who participated

Participant Position	Total number of participants 2005-2015	Total number Invited to participate	Number of questionnaires received	Number participated in individual and group interviews
Class Teacher	6	6	3	3
Teacher /Leadership	35	34	12	9
DOSCEL employees	8	3	Unknown	2
Total	49	38	15	14

Following Director of DOSCEL approval (Appendix A) and principal approval (sample letter Appendix B), a letter was sent to DOSCEL and primary school employees who had undertaken the SSP (sample letter Appendix C). The invitation letter included full disclosure of the purpose of the study, participant involvement, time commitment, the type of questions to be asked, and an explanation of the formats for data-gathering. It explained the selection process for interviews and provided assurance of confidentiality and secure storage. Participants were asked to sign a consent form once fully informed (sample Appendix D). Those who accepted the invitation were sent a copy of the questionnaire via email by an independent person and the completed questionnaire was returned to them so that participants could be de-identified before being forwarded to me.

To de-identify participants the demographic information provided on questionnaires has been collapsed and presented within a relevant range. Participants who attended the SSP 2005–2008 are classified as early 2000s, 2009–2012 classified as mid 2000s, and 2010–2015 classified late 2000s. Age of participant and years of service are presented within a range. Position in school follows the same as Table 3.3, marked as either class teacher or teacher/leadership. This data was collated because it gave me an insight into the level of participation by school leaders. It also gave some indication of the age range of participants and the gender ratio.

Table 3.4 provides information about interview participants, whether they took part in a focus group or individual interviews; the coding used to identify participants; the year range they took part in the SSP (early, mid, late 2000s); their position in the school at the time of attending the SSP; and their position in 2020. This information shows that interviews were conducted with participants from a range of program iterations and whether they had moved on to different positions or retired. This information was provided in order to note in interview transcripts if they mentioned that the SSP had influenced their role. It should also be noted that during this study

there was movement within the categories described in Table 3.4. Some teachers became leaders, some teacher/leaders became principals or DOSCEL employees; others retired or left the diocese.

Table 3.3

Questionnaire: Participant information

Participant Code	Year of attendance (Early, Mid, Late 2000s)	Age range in 2015 30-40 40-50 50-60 60-70 & gender	Range of years of experience in Catholic Education in 2015	Position in school at the time of participation in SSP
	Early	60-70 Female	35-45	Teacher/Leadership
	Late	40-50 Female	25-35	Class teacher
	Early	40-50 Male	25-35	Teacher/Leadership
	Mid	50-60 Male	35-45	Class Teacher
	Mid	30-40 Female	5-15	Teacher/Leadership
	Mid	60-70 Female	25-35	Teacher/Leadership
	Early	50-60 Female	25-35	Teacher/Leadership
	Early	60-70 Female	35-45	Teacher/Leadership
	Late	50-60 Female	25-35	Class teacher
	Late	40-50 Female	5-15	Teacher/Leadership
	Early	50-60 Female	25-35	Teacher/Leadership
	Mid	50-60 Female	35-45	Teacher/Leadership
	Mid	50-60 Female	15-25	Teacher/Leadership
	Mid	30-40 Female	5-15	Teacher/Leadership
	Early	50-60 Female	15-25	Teacher/Leadership

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Table 3.4

Interviews: participant information

Type of Interview	Year Attended SSP	Position in school at the time of attending SSP	Position at the time of interview 2015	Position in 2020
Focus Group 1				
FG1V1	Early	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership	Left Diocese 2018
FG1V2	Early	Class teacher	Class teacher	Class teacher
FG1V3	Mid	Teacher/Leadership	DOSCEL secretariat	DOSCEL secretariat
Focus Group 2				
FG2V1	Late	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership
FG2V2	Late	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership
FG2V3	Late	Class Teacher	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership
FG2V4	Late	Teacher/Leadership	DOSCEL secretariat	Teacher/Leadership
Individual	**Year Attended SSP**	**Position in school at the time of attending SSP**	**Position at the time of interview 2015**	**Position in 2020**
IP 1	N/A	DOSCEL 1	DOSCEL secretariat	DOSCEL secretariat
IP 2	Late	DOSCEL 2	DOSCEL secretariat	DOSCEL secretariat
IP 3	Mid	Class Teacher	Class Teacher	Retired 2019
IP 4	Late	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership
IP 5	Early	Teacher/Leadership	DOSCEL secretariat	DOSCEL secretariat
IP 6	Mid	Class Teacher	Class Teacher	Class Teacher
IP 8	Early	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership	Retired 2019
IP 10	Late	Teacher/Leadership	Teacher/Leadership	Retired 2018

3.3 Data collection methods

A range of data collection methods was adopted, as noted in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Data-gathering collection methods: an overview of data to be collected and the methods used

Source	Description	Detail
Participant	Questionnaire: QP1–QP15	Demographic information. Brief written responses to open-ended questions
	Interviews: IP1–IP10	Six one-hour semi-structured interviews. Recorded and transcribed.
	FG1, FG2	Two focus group semi-structured interviews of one hour. Recorded and transcribed.
	Reflection Journal FG2V4RJ	One reflection journal mentioned during FG2 interview and subsequently provided.
Researcher	Field Notes	Written observations during interviews that included: Description of physical reactions, emotive language, themes identified in questionnaires, descriptive detailed stories, key words and phrases, points to follow up.
DOSCEL	DOSCEL 1	Two one-hour interviews to gain insight into the SSP organisation and aims.
	DOSCEL 2	Recorded and transcribed.

3.3.1 Participant data: questionnaire

A questionnaire may also be called a survey because it is a particular instrument used to survey or gather both qualitative and quantitative information, particularly from a large group of informants (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010). A questionnaire may include probing questions or questions that promote discussion (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010). Questionnaires may be mailed or emailed to informants, completed and returned to the researcher, or they may, in the case of an interview survey, be used to ask specific questions and write participants' responses during an interview (Creswell, 2012).

Questionnaires may contain open and/or closed questions. Open questions aim to get to the heart of an issue by allowing participants freedom to express their opinion, but these cannot be left totally open as respondents may need "a prod to jog the mind … Open questions may be

expressed for example as … How would you describe… [or] I am/am not enjoying my work because …" (Thomas, 2009, p. 175). Closed questions may be yes or no answers, multiple choice, ranking in order, rating scale, matrix, or grid questions, or scales such as the Likert Scale. Closed questions are useful for screening respondents into groups, gathering knowledge about facts or measuring response or attitudes (Thomas, 2009).

I decided that a questionnaire could be a useful tool to guide interviews and that it was a worthwhile undertaking for this study. Prior to devising the questionnaire, I began by following a suggestion from van Manen (1990) to write about my personal experience of the SSP before asking participants to do the same. He states that this provides "a more precise sense of what we are attempting to obtain" (p. 64) and a better understanding of "what a lived experience description looks like" (p. 65). This enabled me to consider the full rich descriptions that I wanted in order to paint a picture, to make it come alive for a reader. This reflective exercise led me to initial considerations of what I could target in the questionnaire and in subsequent interviews.

Once drafted, the questionnaire was trialled by critical friends. Such trialling helped to ensure that questions were clear and not onerous, and also to explore whether they provided scope for a wide range of responses. The trialling process led to some questions being refined to target specific areas such as PL. It also led to the inclusion of additional clarifying words in some questions such as Why? If so, how? The opportunity to provide other comments was also added. For, as van Manen (1990) states, participants tend to "include explanations and interpretations with their descriptions of lived experience" (p. 66). Even though he was referring to oral rather than written responses, I decided participants needed the opportunity to expand on their thoughts in the questionnaire if they wished. Furthermore, the time constraints of teachers had to be considered and open-ended questions, even if around particular topics, allowed participants to answer the questions as briefly or fully as they wished.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to guide interview questions by indicating possible themes, particularly those I had not anticipated. This is in keeping with Burns' (2000) statement that questionnaires can probe for initial coding of themes. The questionnaire began to "'borrow' other people's experiences and their reflections" (van Manen, 1990, p. 62) in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. It also allowed a way to enhance reliability and validity if similar themes were raised in both questionnaires and interviews (Witzel & Reiter, 2012). See Appendix E   for a questionnaire sample.

3.3.2 Participant data: Interviews

Interviews are a common method used in qualitative research and can be conducted in person one on one (individual), or with a number of participants (focus group). Interviews can also be conducted by telephone, email, or video link. The questions can be fully structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (O'Toole & Becket, 2010). Fully structured interviews ask the same questions of all participants who have identical or similar experiences. They are useful for gathering statistics. Semi-structured interviews probe responses and opinions within a framework. They allow participants the freedom to expand and explain. The researcher prepares questions to guide the interview and keep it on track, but also allows for the freedom to explore some aspects more fully (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010). This study employed a semi-structured approach to interviews (see sample Appendix F).

The disadvantages of interviews are that they can be time-consuming for both researcher and participant, difficult to organise; recording equipment can fail, or the participant may be inarticulate. The data gleaned may be inaccurate as the participant may provide only what they think the researcher wants to hear. Also, the researcher filters this information via their own perspective, which may be biased as a result. Transcriptions take time, voices may be inaudible, and they do not capture the body language, facial expressions, or emotions of participants, which must be to be noted by the researcher. The researcher must be a skilled communicator, questioner,

and attentive listener. If these skills are lacking then the interview will not produce the best data possible (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010; Creswell, 2012).

The advantages of interviews are that they provide a window into an experience that you yourself cannot observe (Creswell, 2018). In qualitative research, open-ended questions provide the opportunity for participants to feel unconstrained in their description of personal experiences (Creswell, 2018).

Group interviews provide an opportunity to gather information in one setting with a number of people. There are advantages to employing both individual and focus group interviews. Individual interviews offer the opportunity to probe deeper into the phenomenon, hopefully shedding light on the research question. This can be done in focus groups too, but the real advantage of focus groups is the group dynamics and the stimulus they provide for each person to reflect deeply on their experience. The group dynamics have the opportunity for participants to question themselves and each other (O'Toole & Becket, 2010; Creswell, 2012; Robson, 2002).

According to van Manen (1990), engaging participants in interviews is in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach because it allows the researcher to gather participants' anecdotes and experiences. The participants' constructs are provoked, stimulated, and refined in interviews. Individual and focus group discussions employing a hermeneutic method allow ideas and thoughts to emerge and be interpreted, resulting in a more informed construct. The process of constructing and reconstructing meaning happens to both researcher and participants during the interview process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and is in keeping with both TL theory (Mezirow, 2009; Dirkx et al., 2006) and the interpretive perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990).

Semi-structured Interviews. A semi-structured interview approach was employed primarily because it allowed a variety of opinions and thoughts to be explored, particularly in a focus group, some of which may be unexpected. In addition to the questionnaire, interviews

enabled further data collection and allowed participants to speak freely about their experience, to return to it, to share meanings, feelings, thoughts, and reactions. This is in keeping with Brinkmann (2018), who states that semi-structured interviews give the participant more freedom to pursue topics they consider important. The purpose of focus groups and individual interviews was not to generate consensus but to disclose deeper thinking, reactions, and perceptions (Larson, Grudens-Schuck & Lundy, 2004), including perspectives and meaning around the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2011).

Individual and focus group interviews were conversations stimulated through probing questions, or by staying silent, stepping back to allow others in the group to add or pose their own questions depending on the course of the dialogue. This silence was not uncomfortable, but rather, simply allowed reflection time which sometimes led to deeper insights – something that van Manen (1990) notes as a potential outcome of silence in such settings. I consciously invited depthing of conversation through my body language, leaning forward or nodding to indicate my interest. The fact that I knew participants through my employment and had been a scholarship recipient, I believe helped the flow of the conversation because participants appeared comfortable in my presence. This is in keeping with what Brinkmann (2018) says about semi-structured interviews: they allow the researcher to become "visible as a knowledge-producing participant [and have] … a greater say in focusing the conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project" (p. 579).

Group Interviews. O'Toole & Becket (2010) posit that focus group dynamics generate profound ideas and insights into concepts important to a group. In recognition of Creswell's (2012) suggestion that rich conversation can arise in group interviews, I decided that two focus groups would be conducted. One focus group comprised of participants who had taken part in the same year in order to ascertain if having similar experiences could lead to richer data, or data that

was different from the other focus group, whose members attended in different years. This could yield some insight into the importance of the group as a community.

Questioning in focus group interviews followed Creswell's (2018) suggested mix of open questions and probe questions as a way to keep some control – to keep participants on track. Creswell (2018) states that if the researcher does not have control in a busy focus group discussion it can be detrimental to providing an atmosphere that respects all voices and gains valuable insights that answer the research questions. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach calls for some freedom to make it dialogical, to allow the exchange of ideas which Creswell (2012) and van Manen (1990) say are important. In group interviews I found this particularly important as there was a fine balance between allowing discussion to flow and inserting a probing question such as Creswell (2012) mentions, about distinguishing between fruitful and irrelevant conversations. In group interviews, knowing the participants and employing active listening skills helped me remain alert to individual nuances such as tone and inflections used in speech, or body language such as shaking of the head or in some cases strong emotions which resulted in a shaky voice or tears. In addition to being alert to all the dynamics of the focus group, as well as acting as both participant and observer, I had to consider whose voices were silenced, something that van Manen (1990) states is an important consideration. Such observations formed part of the field notes. It was important to encourage all members to contribute. At times this required direct questioning to explore deeper, and to counteract some of the more dominant voices, a tactic suggested by Fontana and Frey (2000) and Creswell (2012).

I heeded Creswell's (2012) suggestion to limit the size of focus groups in order to enable dialogue while maintaining control, and improve identification of voices during transcription. Thus, focus groups were limited to a maximum of four participants.

Individual Interviews. Individual interviews were conducted to explore the experiences of recipients who attended in different years. van Manen (1990) states that thoughtful questioning is important "so as to be able to render the full significance of its meaning" (p. 62). During individual interviews I found this to be particularly true as I had to be alert to vocal nuances and body language in order to read the demeanour of the participant, while also keeping the focus on the phenomenon in order to delve deeper into the experience itself. Because there were only two of us in the room, sometimes when participants became emotional their reaction could not be masked in the way group dynamics might work to support or fill the gap when tears flowed. Therefore, my questioning, or my silences, had to be respectful yet focused on stories to see beyond them, beyond the tears, to the phenomenon itself; and consider why their reaction was so deeply felt. Individual interviews allowed for more penetrating questions not distracted by interjections of others. The other advantage of individual interviews was to gain insights from people who had much to offer, yet would not be as vocal in a group interview.

3.3.3 Participant data: A reflection journal

In this study I used one personal reflection which I consider a reflection journal (see Appendix J) because the participant wrote it looking back on the whole experience before leaving Israel. This is in keeping with Mertens' (2010) description of an extant document written for personal reasons. The validity of such documents has to be considered, as well as their usefulness with regard to relevant content and relevance to the experience of people within a particular context (Mertens, 2010). This written reflection journal was included in the study because the writer was also a participant in an interview, and at one point referred to how they had shared this journal with others. The participant offered me the written reflection journal, which is included in the data. From the perspective of this study, it was useful as a way to cross-reference themes discovered in interviews and questionnaire responses, and to identify what the writer considered the most meaningful aspects of the SSP.

3.3.4 Field notes

Field notes are written observations by the researcher that can be taken during studies that require observation of a subject/s, or they can be more reflective or descriptive of insights gained by the researcher (Creswell, 2018). My field notes fall into the latter category because they highlighted emotive words and feelings as well as the key stories they shared. I noted some broad themes that emerged as well as insights gained. I was particularly attuned to the stories participants told and these were noted. This is in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology because, as van Manen (2016) emphasised, in a phenomenological interview there is a need to be alert to examples of experiences that relate to the question being explored, the purpose of the research.

Field notes were taken and reviewed and reflected on soon after interviews. This included observing physical reactions in order to gain a better understanding of participants' narratives. Paying attention to speech and body language helped me gauge whether interview participants were fully engaged in the conversation. Some of these notes were added to transcribed interview notes because they added to participant response, often providing emphasis or indicating where a response was deeply emotional. I kept a journal containing insights during the analysis process and any other details that needed to be followed up. Reflection was a part of this entire process in order to understand what had been learnt, what was new, and what significance the results might have.

3.4 Data Analysis

"The learning process *is* a hermeneutical process in which one has to cope with one's preconceptions and with the tradition of which these are part and parcel" (Lombaerts & Pollefeyt, 2004, p. 121). These words served to remind me of the complexity of analysing data to explore the major question about learning while being alert to the fact that this learning involved the Catholic faith perspective of participants. Employing a hermeneutic, interpretive process meant that data

analysis required identifying learning from the perspective of participants, their meaning-making, not my personal response to the SSP.

Themes that emerged from the data and labelled as such assisted analysis. As van Manen (1990) states, themes are a way for researchers to give order to their study; they are concepts, but "cannot be captured in conceptual abstractions" (p. 79). Themes provided a notion of the experience but could not, as van Manen (1990) acknowledges, "unlock the deep meaning, the full mystery, the enigmatic aspects of the experiential meaning of a notion" (p. 83). Regardless, thematic analysis provided a convenient structure to begin to analyse data.

I employed the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2018; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019) to analyse data. I was drawn to RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2018; Braun et. al., 2019) six phases for a reflexive thematic analysis because it had a synergetic feel; it was dynamic and true to my role of shaping this study. Braun and Clarke (2019) state

> qualitative research is about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as
>
> always context-bound, positioned and situated, and qualitative data analysis is
>
> about telling 'stories', about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding
>
> the 'truth' that is either 'out there' and findable from, or buried deep within, the
>
> data. For us, the final analysis is the product of deep and prolonged data
>
> immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection, something that is active and
>
> generative. (p. 591)

RTA is consistent with a theoretical perspective of interpretivism and a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology because it calls for transparency and continual questioning of interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2019) in order to understand. This is in keeping with *Verstehen*, which seeks empathetic understanding (van Manen, 1990) of participants' perspectives. For Heidegger (1962) the hermeneutic circle is intrinsic to a hermeneutic phenomenological

perspective, is concerned with making explicit what is implicit in order to understand. This is in keeping with RTA, which is a process grounded in the data that allows meaning-making, and understanding of participant perspectives, for identifying and interpreting data (Braun et.al., 2019).

Gadamer's (1993) fusion of horizons recognises that a researcher must understand the horizon of the participant as well as their own horizon, but as Sharkey (2001) states, prior understandings are a way to enter into participant horizons while at the same time reflecting and examining one's own perspectives. Hermeneutic phenomenology focused on participants' insights, feelings, and understandings is in keeping with RTA because as van Manen (2016) says, practising phenomenological writing cannot be separated from reflection or reflexivity because this is a form of virtual writing where thoughts, ideas, and connections are made as we muse over the data. He calls it inner speech or writing. Therefore, I see that RTA aligns with my theoretical perspective and methodology.

Clarke and Braun (2018) state that their approach is not lock-step but flows back and forth because they "emphasise [that their approach is] an organic approach to coding and theme development, with quality coding resulting from depth of engagement" (p. 108). It is a flexible analytic method, not a methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2018;). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) a theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question" (p. 82), for "themes are those that tell a coherent, insightful story about the data in relation to the research question" (Braun, et al., 2019, p. 854). Braun and Clarke (2019) state that "There are different conceptualisations of a theme – domain summaries versus patterns of shared meaning, underpinned by a central meaning-based concept" (p. 593). Their RTA approach identifies *shared meanings* not *domain summaries*. Braun and Clarke (2019) say shared meanings are joined together by a unifying idea (a central organising concept). I recognise that in this study I initially employed domain summaries, particularly with questionnaires; later, with

further familiarisation and confidence, I then saw themes as a unification of ideas, or shared meanings as described by Braun and Clarke (2019).

The RTA approach of Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2018) identifies six phases. Phase One is *familiarisation* which, according to Braun and Clarke, encompasses immersion into data, reading and re-reading and taking notes. It includes a thorough transcription of recorded data. Phase Two, *generating codes*, is about making sense of data involving chunking around similar meanings.

The present study initially employed a semantic approach to identifying codes, that is, recording explicit meaning. As the sifting and chunking continued, I moved into a latent level to identify implicit meanings (Braun et al., 2019). Throughout the analysis process as I examined different sets of data I moved back and forth between these two approaches. As the analysis progressed and codes and themes were *generated* – Braun and Clarke (2019) prefer this term as themes are not waiting in the data to be fished out – it was a latent approach that I employed in order to go deeper, to refine themes, or to see connections between themes.

Phase Three, *searching for themes*, involves the collation of codes from all data into initial themes, or *candidate themes* and sub-themes that best informed the question (Braun et al., 2019). The collated codes across all data sets with similar features were organised under a central concept which "helps the researcher to determine what a theme is all about" (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 18).

Phase Four, *reviewing themes*, is about examining themes in each data set and then across all sets to ascertain whether data supports the theme, or whether a theme can be collapsed or broken into separate themes. Reviewing involves going back to coded extracts and ensures that the candidate themes fit (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase Five, *defining and naming themes*, is a refining of themes and "identifying the essence of what each theme is about" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each theme is analysed and written

down so that it is clear how it fits into the overall picture and how it relates to the research question. Sub-themes are part of the themes story (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase Six, *producing the report*, is a story about the data. Extracts from data are included to illustrate the story in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.4.1 Questionnaires

In this study, Braun and Clarke's (2006) Phases One to Four were applied to questionnaires. Analysis commenced when questionnaires were returned. Initial readings of responses enabled first-level coding in response to the question "What seems to go with what?" (Robson, 2002, p. 477). Laying out the questionnaire responses in this manner provided the opportunity to cross-reference and compare data, which enabled identification and chunking of initial themes. Codes were applied to data and themes named. Themes were later colour-coded and entered into a Word document table (see sample Appendix K). The identified themes were placed in a bar graph, which Mertens (2010) describes as a way to ascertain how data relate: to aid initial identification of themes and to serve as a way to later collapse some themes (see Appendix L). The visual clarity provided by the bar graph acted as a reminder that some questions specifically targeted some areas such as learning. Robson (2002) and Mertens (2010) describe memoing, that is, collating ideas and linking data during analysis, which was applied to the sifting, sorting, and reorganisation of themes that followed. What emerged was identification of themes and possible sub-themes, which was refined and changed as sifting continued. After completing this process, I had some indication of themes and an understanding of participants' responses.

3.4.2 Interviews

Phases One to Six of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework analysis were followed for interview data. However, I used the codes for initial themes from questionnaires when I began to sift through interview data, which meant that in Phase Two, the generating of initial codes, I was

able to add data to those codes already identified in questionnaires and then to identify and establish new codes as I discovered themes.

In Phase Two, the chunking and coding of data did not rely solely on the text from interview transcripts. In keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology that requires a researcher to encourage participants to tell stories about their experiences (van Manen, 2016) I employed an active listening approach entitled Teacher Effectiveness Training (Gordon, 1974). The Teacher Effectiveness Training skill I drew upon for individual and group interviews was listening carefully to audio recordings, to understand exactly what they said and their tone of voice, any repetition of words, or stories. Engagement was revealed in the stress, volume, intonation, and sometimes speed of speech. Gee (2014) suggests that these indicators, together with the use of the first person *I*, and constantly returning to themes, are indicative of salient information the speaker wants to convey. Active listening followed by repeated reading of transcripts assisted the elimination of researcher bias because the focus was on what participants were saying about the experience, not what I thought they were saying. Some colour coding, as well as memoing, was employed for the initial sifting and re-sifting in order to identify initial themes and sub-themes. Questionnaire coding initially assisted with this phase, but as the themes were modified and further themes and sub-themes were discovered, a table was developed to reflect identified themes.

Analysing text data revealed important themes, connections between themes, theme variations, and emerging themes which saw analysis move into Phase Three of Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. Main ideas pertaining to themes were ascertained as well as differences and similarities in participants' responses. Material was read, re-read, and categorised into manageable chunks that were selected as worthwhile for their connection to the literature reviewed and for their illuminations, repeated themes, words, or phrases, and emerging themes.

Phases Four and Five (reviewing and naming themes) was sometime challenging as some categories were difficult to separate, which led to a review of the conceptual framework and the initial chunking of themes. In keeping with Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003), it was decided to employ broad categories that would leave scope for the many nuances and category cross-references because they were so difficult to separate. Taylor-Powell and Renner also suggest that themes or categories are identified when they arise several times in participant discourse. Personal abbreviations or codes were assigned to the categories and example texts were included (see Appendix M).

3.4.3 Crafted Story

Engagement in Phase Six led to the decision to construct a crafted story from interview transcriptions. The themes already identified in questionnaires, interviews, and the reflection journal (FG2V4RJ) provided some insight into the phenomenon. However, pursuing a narrative presentation of data where the text was crafted into story was deemed appropriate for capturing a more holistic overview of participants' lived experiences (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; van Manen, 2016; Crowther, Ironside, Spence & Smythe, 2017). In summary, what I had learnt was that crafting stories generated rich details of the SSP experience, which provided an insight for readers and an opportunity for me and any other readers to reflect on the text.

The purpose of analysis is to identify the meaning of the lived experience and according to Crowther, Ironside, Spence and Smythe (2017), crafted stories are part of the interpretive analysis, "not separate undertakings" (p. 828). The crafted story enabled presentation of perspectives or insights important to them, particularly if they are repeated a number of times. This could illustrate the dynamics of poetics described by Ricoeur (1990). Therefore, the decision was made to present a crafted story in Chapter Four. Excerpts from interview data would be selected in order to present the major themes and sub-themes in keeping with that suggested by van Manen (2016) and Lindseth and Norberg (2004). FG2 would be used as the basis and built on to include excerpts

from other interviews. Thus, Chapters Four, Five, and Six are a verification of themes (Creswell, 2012) identified in questionnaires, interviews, and in the reflection journal.

3.5 Trustworthiness

Qualitative research, like any method, has methodological limitations which without due consideration can threaten the validity, or trustworthiness, of results. Trustworthiness is specific to qualitative research and draws on methodological processes that increase confidence in the reported results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify four overarching considerations that are ubiquitously accepted for trustworthiness of the results based on data collection and analysis methods. These four areas are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.5.1 Credibility

According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), credibility is a measure of the internal validity of qualitative research findings and is achieved when there are multiple approaches to data collection (see Table 3.5) and analysis (Chapters Four and Five). This is reflected in this study through the use of three different methods of data collection: questionnaires, interviews, and a reflective journal. These methods were used to search broadly for data to deepen the data base and generate theory in keeping with an interpretivist study (O'Donoghue, 2018).

As well as collecting data through multiple methods, multiple sources of information further strengthened and confirmed results. This included the voices of as many past participants of SSP as possible to assist in overcoming any limitations around availability by ensuring enough voices were heard to validate data and results (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2017).

After completing and transcribing interviews, I reviewed the transcripts in order to identify any areas that needed clarification, and to begin the analysis. Member checking was employed, which is important during the course of the data gathering and analysis. Mertens (2010) states that member checks can take place during the collection, analysis, and writing of a research study as a

way to provide validity. Checking with members also engenders a sense of collaboration, a dialogical, hermeneutic approach which is in keeping with van Manen's (1990) recommendation that it is important to engage the participant in dialogue that encourages further thoughts to emerge and be considered, interpreted, and reinterpreted. Such an approach helped to ensure that this study is more informed, that transcripts are accurate and that I was able to ask clarifying questions.

All participants were invited to review transcripts to check for accuracy, but the response rate was low to this formal approach. I reviewed the relevant transcriptions with each of the participants who agreed to be involved in member checks. Mertens (2010) suggests member checking may be conducted formally or informally as part of an ongoing dialogue with participants. A more informal approach was therefore employed. The constant contact with participants during the course of my work offered opportunities for their input about transcript accuracy, analysis, whether they thought something was important, and whether I had accurately interpreted meaning. Most participants were eager to discuss my analysis, to ask about progress and results, and they were made to feel that their questions and comments were welcome at any time. None expressed disagreement with my analysis.

A secondary review of the data conducted by a critical friend contributed further credibility, providing a check for accuracy and integrity in the writing and results of the research (Creswell, 2018).

These strategies for achieving credibility provide robust corroboration of evidence and enough data to support claims, ensuring provision of "evidence that the information is trustworthy and believable" (Mertens, 2010, p. 379).

3.5.2 Transferability

The qualitative researcher seeks transferability of research results, which is concerned with the results being applicable to a different context or setting. This requires "detailed descriptions of the procedures and writing findings in vivid detail" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 261). For

this to occur, thick descriptions must be provided that enable the reader to compare this research to their own context (Mertens, 2010). van Manen (2016) adds to this notion in his description of the vocative voice in phenomenological inquiry, stating that "the experiential writing of the text should aim to create a sense of resonance in the reader" (p. 241).

Hence a crafted story is presented in Chapter Four, to enable the reader to enter the world of the participants and make judgments about the transferability of the research (Mertens, 2010). A barrier to a reader's understanding of participant experiences in this study is that it is presented through the eyes of Christian believers, both the participants and myself as researcher, and whether a reader can relate to the depth of participant response if they know little about Christianity.

3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability of qualitative research provides what the quantitative researcher refers to as reliability. Achieving dependability requires highly detailed descriptions of the methods and procedures such that the study can be replicated in a new or different setting. This is achieved in this study through the detailed and considered accounts provided of methods for data collection and analysis.

Reliability is also linked to tracking change, particularly if there is a change in focus due to emergence of unexpected themes. "A dependability audit can be conducted to attest to the quality and appropriateness of the inquiry process" (Mertens, 2010, p. 259), which may give rise to further considerations. A dependability audit was conducted during a presentation to some participants, critical friends, and interested DOSCEL personnel regarding the data collection methods and analysis. Ongoing discussions with participants and critical friends discussed above under Credibility also contributed to dependability. As a higher degree research student, I also had the guidance of experienced research supervisors assisting with the design of a dependable approach to data collection and analysis.

3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability, or bias, is addressed in qualitative research through a conscious effort on the researcher's part to identify and acknowledge where they might bring their own assumptions and beliefs to analysis. van Manen (2016) suggests the importance of transparency and consciously acknowledging bias. As a recipient of the SSP, I had to be aware of potential sources of personal bias and employ bracketing during the analysis process to provide data and results that accurately represented the participants' contributions. Transparency and openness were also promoted in this study through the use of bracketing and through critical reflexivity and positionality, which Mertens (2010) suggests could be supported by keeping a record of changes to construction, thoughts, insights, and understandings which ultimately may impact on validity of the data analysis. I kept detailed records through a journal and through extensive memoing, which captured the emerging analysis.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics was given serious consideration as I am committed to making a worthwhile contribution to the body of knowledge about adult professional learning in Scripture. The three primary ethical principles of "justice, beneficence and respect for others" (Israel & Hay, 2006) guided this research and required me to act with integrity. These principles led to ethical considerations around participant and researcher perspectives in this process in order to achieve transparency.

3.6.1 Faith perspective

McIntosh (2010) suggests that to be ethical, trustworthy, and moral the voice of the researcher within studies in the field of religious tourism should be heard through reflexivity and acknowledgment of the different cultural and religious perspectives at play. "Without this perspective, arguably, the research process is not transparent" (p. 215). If this research is to be ethical then participants' and my own personal understanding of the Christian narrative must be

considered. This required understanding participants' perceptions as much as possible, to see it through their eyes, even though each person has a unique understanding and perspective of the Christian story (Crowther et al., 2017; Lunde-Whitler, 2016). This is in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach (van Manen, 1990).

In order to express thoughts and feelings deep within their personal hermeneutic space (Sharkey, 2015; Pollefeyt, 2013), participants had to feel safe. By listening carefully and respecting their perspectives, their stories can be "worked out" (Lunde-Whitler, 2016, p. 315) with others. This is in keeping with Ricoeur's concept of mimesis (1990; Flick, 2009); with the *Transforming Encounters* model described by Gowdie (2017); with Gadamer's (1993) description of encountering the world; with Sharkey's (2015) description of opportunities of encounter in a safe space; and with Pope Francis' (2016) call for a culture of encounter.

3.6.2 Ethical Stances

Historically, there are five ethical stances: absolutist, consequentialist, feminist, relativist, and deceptive (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Israel and Hay (2006) describe a number of ethical issues that were considered in this study. The sites where interviews were conducted had to be respected, and the participants' day-to-day running must not be adversely affected. Part of this respect included seeking relevant permissions from gatekeepers at all levels, namely the Human Research Ethics Committee, Director of Catholic Education DOSCEL, primary school principals, and individual participants. Also, in keeping with Creswell (2018), de-identifying questionnaires and ensuring interviews did not take any longer than one hour, and conducting them at a time convenient to participants helped to ensure minimal disruption to the participants and the schools.

Ethical consideration was given to my role as an Education Officer, Catholic Identity and Religious Education in the research setting of the Diocese of Sale, which meant that: 1) participants were known to me through our work together; and 2) that my role as a leader in this setting could create a sense of power imbalance between myself and teacher participants from the

diocese. To address this an independent panel from DOSCEL selected participants for individual and focus group interviews. This was discussed above in section 3.3. Consideration was also given to the fact that participants may have felt obligated to take part. For this reason, the invitation letter clearly stated that there was no obligation. An empathetic manner (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) was important during interviews because of the emotional responses. A counsellor was available to participants who might require such support. Protecting participants from harm, deception, coercion, and loss of privacy is in keeping with *contextualised-consequentialist* research.

To honour the importance of openness and trustworthiness as an ethical concern, I explored the notion of reflexivity in qualitative research. Reflexivity, according to Pillow (2003), is about "ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses" (p. 178).

3.6.3 Ethics approvals

This study received approval from Human Research Ethics Committee register number is 2015 – 77E and DOSCEL letter of support (Appendix A)

3.7 Chapter Summary

Chapter Three outlined the theoretical and methodological framework for this study. It explained why a hermeneutic phenomenological theoretical perspective invites an attitude of exploration best suited to understanding the participants response to the SSP. It also shows the alignment between this theoretical position and the approach taken to data collection and analysis. Results from these methods are presented in the next two chapters. First, in Chapter Four, and in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, a crafted story is presented. The crafted story forms part of the interpretive analysis process and is a way to provide rich details of the experience inviting reflection by both myself as researcher, and the reader. Following this, themes identified from the RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) approach are presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

A Crafted Story

The crafted group story in this chapter is a rich source of data exemplifying the major themes of Professional Learning, Encounter, Witness, Transformation, and Professional Development. It illustrates the diversity and richness of the learning; and demonstrates the complexity of data that could be lost if participants' words were clinically analysed and represented in this narrative form. The crafted story illustrates how participants learnt about themselves, their strengths, their personal faith and their determination to keep the experience alive. They learnt about the Other and their world. They responded to time and space to learn in a believing community (communitas) It shows they recognised a change in themselves, a transformation. The crafted story was incorporated, not only as part of the analysis process, but also to draw the reader into the experience to enable meaning-making for themselves; an important feature of hermeneutic phenomenology.

4.1 The Story

As narrator, I get to tell of this amazing encounter with a group of people who participated in the Sion Scholarship Program (SSP). In this group were Bianca, Brenda, Pat and Katy, members of FG2. Joining them later, for only a short time, were three more SSP participants who had studied in different years: Richard, who was part of the first group of scholarship recipients in 2005, Sam, who went in 2009, and Helen in 2014. Even though they had undertaken the SSP in different years, this interview group knew each other fairly well. They were all members of leadership teams across the diocese who met frequently.

It was late afternoon in Australia, after a long day of work, when FG2 group gathered in a school. We had nibbles to sustain us, but it was soon obvious to me that this group were energised by each other, not by the snacks. There was something palpable about their

connection, and I was keen to find out more. My plan was to test the waters with an open question to gauge their interaction. Within ten minutes I had ascertained that FG2 had a special connection, a bond forged by their shared time in Israel.

Once settled, I began simply by asking about their reaction to the SSP; how they felt about the experience.

After a long silence, Bianca started to speak almost hesitantly, as though she did not know how to put her thoughts into words.

"I felt, the sacredness of the land as soon as I was there, and, to think that was the land that Jesus walked, that had a real profound impact. Because for years we had read, listened to, heard about these stories and for the first time, all of a sudden it was brought to life, and, … it was really meaningful. And what it did, it actually really deepened my faith and made me realise how proud I was of my faith."

"I would have to agree with Bianca," says Brenda. "In that land, I was overwhelmed by the people, and the different faiths they had. I thought that was the most overwhelming thing until we went out to the desert and went to the Sea of Galilee. They were the things – when we were actually on the soil, in the water – that I thought nothing's changed. I'll go to churches, and I think somebody built this to remember. Whereas, for me, sitting on the side of the Sea of Galilee thinking this is actually where he was! The morning we were about to leave Galilee, I just didn't want to go, I don't know what it was that held me there. Father Joe, our lecturer, asked if I was okay as I felt quite sad. I explained how I felt and he said, think about how Jesus must have felt, this was his home. Think about how he felt when he turned his sights to Jerusalem, knowing he was heading for his death. Gee, he wouldn't have wanted to leave. I think that was the moment that had the greatest effect, greater than anything else."

I asked Brenda to explain her reaction a little more.

"Aw, I was so overwhelmed by this feeling of not wanting to go, and I had only been there three days and I was going somewhere else that was really nice. Jesus turned away from his home and headed towards his death, and he knew full well he was! All the way back to Jerusalem on the bus, staring out the window the whole way back I thought, it was closer to what he knew he was heading for. I could not imagine what it felt like for Jesus. And that just stayed with me everywhere we went after that, didn't matter where we went, it was, he knew what was coming! And I think in all my learning and in all of my faith, it hit me right at that moment, and that stayed with me everywhere we went and in everything we did, and still does. And I pass that on to the kids and they get it! I told them this story, and I got emotional telling them, and they will say to me 'Can you tell us the story about the Sea of Galilee again?' And when we're doing gospel stuff they gasp and say, 'that was near the Sea of Galilee wasn't it, aw I know how you would have felt when you were there'. And it just keeps going, it's quite amazing."

Pat who has been nodding in agreement the whole time said, "I'd agree with that. Because the desert and the Sea of Galilee are the things that I've shared most with my students, with my family, and with my friends because they are the things that haven't changed. I loved the liturgies. They were all so engaging, so meaningful, just because we were there. It just all connected and made sense."

"Yeah, that's right," said Brenda. "The fact we were in a group of people who felt the way we felt, and shared the way we shared, I think probably that was profound. We would go down to the Sea of Galilee to have Mass on the shores, and the feeling among the group! I guess because I'm in a family who, most of them don't have my faith, so you're constantly feeling like, you're almost trying to preach, or get through to them who you are."

I was curious about the feeling among this group and asked them about the bonding they were describing.

Brenda picks up where she left off in order to explain. "One of our fellow pilgrims got up and spoke on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he talked about his life, and he was crying, and we were all crying! It was his faith journey, you wouldn't do that anywhere else, you wouldn't unless you were surrounded by like-minded people who gave you the strength, and the faith and the trust, to be able to open that up. I can't imagine he's ever shared like that before in a group because of the sort of person that he was. But it was that sort of thing that became part of who we were, and we would get up at ridiculous hours, like five o'clock in the morning, especially Bianca and Katy and others too"– they all chuckle at this. "You never ever, ever felt like, faith wise, you were alone or different."

I said "So, this group had a special bond" which was met with overwhelming agreement, nodding of heads and lots of "oh yeah." Katy tries to explain the strength of this feeling. "It was an incredibly strong group, the people! We were all so different, we had all come for different reasons, but when you actually talked to the people, that was the richness of the experience for me, relating really deeply to each other. We cared for each other. And the way we talked about the Scriptures. Even the Sion Sisters at the convent said we were a very interesting, connected group. The experience will never die, the richness of a connection through a common faith, or through a common story of Jesus. And to be on that land where he was … Our lecturer, Joe, depthed that whole thing so much. Joe was the glue, we connected in all different sorts of ways. I mean, some people weren't as connected, but they did it their way, but the general thing of the group was a very deeply connecting group of people through the experience of Scriptures and the experience of place. We didn't even have to talk, you just knew what people were thinking or saying, and for that to happen in such an incredibly short time … there's some energy in that place that pulled us together."

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"Well," says Katy, "the experience, whether we call it the place, the people, the Muslims, the Palestinians, the Jews around us. We were in there, we were very much a team, and when we'd walk through the crowds who were going off to, where were they going off to?" Looks to the others. "Ramadan." The men would be around us, and I fell at one stage, and about seven fellas picked me up and I kept going. We knew we were sort of believers. I don't walk around town and think to myself I'm a believer, I'm a Christian." She laughs and the others join in. "But I did in that place, and proudly. There was something about us, we knew we were there for a reason beyond what you normally live your life for, and it was the place that pulled us there. From the time the plane landed you knew you were in a Holy, sacred space; we just knew it! And then, when we all met – the connection of being there for a common purpose, but all for very different purposes. Because I know I was very – I'm a bit of a cynic – so some of the places I'm like, yeah, whatever, but whether Mary was born here or somewhere else, or whatever, it was: this is the place! No one can take it away, and that spirit between us – of awe – was amazing. It was amazing.

Richard had just arrived, and even though he is only able to stay for a short time he adds to this conversation. "Our group tried to pray or read Scripture in public places, and I was very uncomfortable in those more formal prayer experiences. For me, public prayer has never been a strong point. I can't stand the thought of going out to the Via Dolorosa and saying a prayer, because that's not my faith. It's sort of, in my mind, it's oh 'look at us we're really holy, and we're doing what Jesus did'. I loved sitting out in the Judean wilderness. So, it was very easy to feel alone, and close to God in that sort of experience. That spoke to me more than standing on the Via Dolorosa and reading a Scripture passage, because intellectually I know that's not the path that Jesus took. I'm not an emotional response giver, a lot of my responses are internalised, for me it's an intellectual response that leads possibly to a faith response. There were people who were

brought to tears by place and story, that's not me, and that's not me judging other people, if you make that response – fantastic, that's not me.

Katy nods in agreement at Richard's words, but it is clear she is keen to explain the closeness of their study group for the month in Israel, their community bound together by faith. "But what was really important was to be there with those people. The watching and observing people and different ways of experiencing faith, and their different ways of talking about faith at all different levels, with no judgement, it just was, and it is, a great lesson for me. Also, not judging the Palestinians, or the Jews, or whoever. And I said to myself, 'Katy, don't you ever open your mouth about what's right or wrong, you know nothing! You're just a pin, a pin's head in that world, and don't even open your mouth!'"

I wanted to explore this aspect of learning a little more, so I asked if the place helped her realise how much she didn't know?

Katy struggles to find the words to express her feelings. She answers hesitantly, and with great emotion. "The poor Palestinians. I didn't know, didn't understand, had almost no right to think about – because I have no – haven't even a breath near understanding what's going on in that place" she says.

Bianca pipes up in an effort to help explain, "It was like a moment frozen in time where you experience it without any of the external pressures so you could really reflect and contemplate within you, you were there solely for that purpose. I think it was the length of time that allowed you to do that. If it had've been a shorter time, no."

"We started to lose that in the last week because we were starting to head for home in our heads. The first week was just getting assimilated but two, three, four, those three weeks in the middle were exactly what you said. No one could get at us; we couldn't get to anybody else," explains Katy.

Bianca then adds, "It was just such a privilege and joy and a blessing, to be able to have that time to really think about these things …. We didn't get lost in the physicality of actual places, did this happen there or there? Just to be able to – to be able to – it was like an ah-hah moment. You were able to believe and think whatever you wanted. You weren't doing it for anyone else. It wasn't about hearing what they wanted me to hear. We were with many people and I would say everyone was more knowledgeable than me." Other voices assent to their agreement. "We had priests, we had nuns, we had a vast range. And every one of them! Yes, the climate of the group was – 'whatever you believe, that's fine, you be true to yourself'! I think Katy was right, Father Joe was the conduit, he allowed that to happen. We didn't feel threatened in any way, it was just a totally open time where we could just live with our heart, think with our heart. And I think, probably see with our heart too. in Israel, I will never lose that sense of the Holy Land where you actually see things through your heart. You question things, it was just so liberating to be able to think what you wanted and try and make your own connections with Scripture".

Wanting to tease out their thoughts about time and freedom further, I said, "Tell me about not having other things around you."

Helen had just arrived, and after quick hellos all round she picked up on the conversation and was nodding in agreement. "Taking part in the SSP had a big impact on a personal level because I was going away by myself for my faith. I've always been a daughter, a mother, a wife. Always done things because it's been the right thing to do, I suppose, out of that love that you have. This time it was truly about me! It was about me and my faith. Giving up all those commitments that you have at home that you think you can't give up. I really prayed about this. I really wanted to get there. I said "God, if you really want me to get there, you're really going to have to help me get there, for all those personal reasons". It was too hard, I have to leave my kids, I have to leave my husband, and I have to leave my parents. So that was massive. But by going, I really offered myself to God. It was for my faith! I didn't see it as a selfish thing, although it probably was selfish, but it was

really my way of saying I am doing this for you God, and with you God, so help me here. But being so embraced by all the beautiful people I was with made a difference. I've always been someone who had to go with someone else, but I didn't have anyone that I knew really well. Even having my own room just by myself. I've never had my own room, ever, in my life! That probably seems really funny but that was a really big thing, to have my own room. So, on a personal level there were so many moments where I knew that I was grown up, so to speak. I can look after myself, I am a strong person and when you have faith in God you can do anything. You know what else I learnt? I didn't need to go to Jerusalem or go to the Holy Land for faith, but in the end, I did need to go, really, for me!

Pat picks up on the notion of time. "Well, you have lectures and you go out on excursions and things, but when you're on your own you could really think about what had been said, who you'd spoken to, you know, every other study I've done, you've got to go back home then you go back the next week or whenever."

"Okay, so because you didn't go back home …" I ask, leaving the question open.

Pat responds enthusiastically, "Yeah, you were just thinking about it the whole time and you could reflect deeply on the day. There were always people you could talk to or ask. In other studies I've done I haven't had that opportunity to talk to people and say 'I heard this, or that … what do you think about' – that sort of thing. I often sat next to Father Pete, and he would say to me, 'I don't really get what he means,' I'm thinking oh my gosh! A priest doesn't get it either."

The group laugh as though they too have had this same experience.

Pat's voice and body language exude amazement. "That made me really think … oh my gosh! So often we've been at RE things and you think, aw, I don't really want to say what I really think because I'll be wrong. I learnt there, nobody's wrong! We all have our own interpretations." Pat stresses her next statement. "That was my biggest thing! I thought that's really good, we can all

have different opinions, and a commentary in a book on the Gospel of Luke is different again."

The group fully support this statement, they nod and voice their agreement.

"Did the learning ever stop?" I ask.

"The learning still hasn't stopped," says Pat with feeling.

"No, it never stops," says Katy. "Even when we were there, you think it's over for the day and you sit down for a social gathering, even our social gatherings turned into more learnings about … because we just talked about that all the time." The rest of group agree enthusiastically.

During the next conversation, I watched and listened as they started posing and answering questions themselves; they were trying to get to the heart of their feelings. I kept totally silent as this exchange took place.

Katy asks the first question in a wistful tone, "What was it? I'm just thinking while you are talking, it was a different group. Like, we got to a deep place. What caused that? What is it? What happened to us?

"I've thought about that a lot," says Brenda. "Because it's such a diverse group, and from so many different countries. I think it's because when we all arrived there, we all arrived with the heart of faith. And we all knew it. And we were all there … because of our faith. And I was trying to think of a good analogy for it. Now if I turn up to an Eagles concert because I love the Eagles, and we're all sitting around together, and I turn to you, you love the Eagles, there's a common feeling between us already, that if you're singing together, you can sing together because you're all together. This was like an extreme version of that, that we'd all given up our time, and our homes, and our families to go to this part of the world to share this together and everybody seemed to arrive with a feeling of just complete acceptance and love for each other through the faith I think."

Other voices express agreement in various ways.

Brenda goes on to express her fears. "I thought at the start, oh God they've partnered me with Father Mick, but he'd say, 'Well what do you think, Brenda?' I was very timid at the start, so I'd say 'Well I'm not really sure,' and there were times he'd say, 'I'm not really sure either, so let's chat about it'."

Katy is still trying to dig deeper and ponders, "Do you go there, sort of, empty?"

At this point there is a very long pause and one person lets out a deep sigh.

"That's a good question," says Pat softly.

The group is quiet, obviously deep in thought.

"I went there with not much between the ears, I don't mean as in a Scripture scholar, I was exhausted and tired before we got on the plane," says Katy very quietly. "I'd been preparing to get to this thing, and we were supposed to be doing all these things to prepare, and I'd done none of it. I got on the plane, we're going, and then, we get there and suddenly – something happened. Does our soul ache for it?"

"Yeah, our soul aches for it. I tried to get this spiritual nourishment in the parish and at work, but you don't get if from your colleagues. Remember the first day when we went for our walk, and there was that lady - she asked, 'Who are you?' 'Oh, we're Catholic', and she said, 'No, you're Christian, you're Christian here.' Pat laughs and the others nod in agreement. "Oh, just to say so many times during those five weeks, I'm Christian, I'm Christian, I've never said it that many times."

I wanted to get back to considering what happened on arrival, so I asked, "You said it was sudden …" Before I could even finish the sentence Bianca answers with conviction "It is sudden"!

"It's almost like you slip into it," says Katy. "Why?" asks Katy genuinely puzzled.

At this, the rest of the group make noises, but no words come; they are having difficulty explaining.

Katy slowly starts to unpick her feelings. "For me, I would say the experience was an absolute privilege and an honour. To be on that holy ground. I would think back to my mum who was a staunch Catholic, an Irish Catholic, and many nights I'd cry, thinking, I have been to Bethlehem today. If my mother could have even been 100 miles from Bethlehem, to have even thought this, she would have died. And here I am, just walking around these places! That's given me a sense of 'Oh Katy you cannot, cannot, take this for granted'. Somehow, it's almost like that aching spirit, to have been in the place where this Jesus fella, whoever he be, lived. I was brought up in this faith, and heard all the stories sitting on dad's knee, and then, to actually be living in the land of my whole life story! The whole Catholic-Christian story of my forefathers", she slaps the table, "bang, bang, bang, forefathers who would never ever have got to that land, ever"! Katy goes on speaking with firm conviction, emphasising words, "But to have been there myself, that sense changed me, how dare I not be so – just to take every moment of it in and just – whatever, I haven't got the words for it." Katy is emotional, struggling to express her feelings.

"How did you imagine Israel?" I ask

"I remember as a child," says Richard, "listening to stories of the Sea of Galilee and, my only understanding of sea as a child of ten was when you go to Portsea or Rosebud. Just this huge thing with waves. But you get to the Sea of Galilee and it's a lake and it's a lake that you can see from one side to the other. It really changes your perception; you carry a lot from your childhood into your adult life. So, as a child when you'd hear stories of, Jesus went from here to here, you sit and think, oh that's easy, you get in the car or whatever. Well ok, to get to Nazareth from Jericho you're walking through some pretty inhospitable country, it's not easy. I went to Israel 10 or 11 years ago, and you still picture in your mind the places that you visited. I know it's a lot easier to

do that today online, you can look at these places much more easily than you could even ten years ago. But to actually walk there, tells you a lot of things. Even the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt into Israel, you think, right, the story says 40 years, it wasn't, that's neither here nor there, but it was a very hard journey. So, you can understand, when they can finally reach a place that they think could be home, you could understand why they would work so hard to defend that and to claim it. And it's the same today for us. We've been there, you know we claim the place as our own, when we hear stories.

"I'd looked it up as much as I could," says Katy.

"We had the map up on the door and that was it," says Bianca. "I knew what I was in for, but I didn't realise the depth of the emotion that I was going to feel, and the connection. I think there was so many different things that were woven into the tapestry of our study tour. Part of that was the people and the life journeys of people, because there were some fascinating stories there, but there was this common bond that we were all there to explore the gospel of Luke. We did that, and so much more. The multi-faith dimension really hit home for … You know, we're just a small part of the world, we have no right to judge, you cannot lump people in together. In light of what's been happening, with a lot of the Muslims, and the IS, I feel like I have a – I have a lot more of – perhaps empathy – if that's the right word – for the Muslims and all the people with their different faiths. Just to take people on face value, don't judge them and lump them together.

"Implications of the learning are far broader than what you thought?" I ask.

"Far broader, I can't even begin to tell you how much broader. It was like everywhere you turned you were learning," says Bianca.

I ask, "Was the experience different to what you thought before you left?"

"Yes, yes," says Bianca. "I'm a fairly pragmatic person, so I thought, okay we'll go there, we'll do the chronological order of Jesus' life, we'll go around there, we'll do that."

"We'll see it and we'll take the photos," laughs Katy.

"I knew it was going to be a wonderful experience, I didn't doubt that for a second. But, it just – it's really hard to put into words – it really just does nourish your soul," says Pat.

"Did it change you?" I ask.

Pat's voice comes through with passion, "Absolutely! It's, it's – it hasn't changed my faith insofar as I've always believed and even at tough times in life it's never wavered. So, it's not like I'd lost it and, ah-hah, I've got it back. But it certainly has enriched it, and like Katy's mum, my mother loved her faith, lived for her faith, not a holy person, just a real faith person." Pat's voice begins to quaver with emotion. "I lost her about 30 years ago and I found it really emotional because I could actually feel the connection with her and her love of her faith, and I think that's what I really felt and so, yeah, pretty powerful for me."

Brenda adds wistfully, "It's interesting because my mum's the same, she goes to Mass every day and all of that, and always had that feeling of" – Brenda pauses before continuing – "don't question the faith, it is what it is, and you leave the stories of faith alone. She has very literal belief, and so that's what I was brought up with. Through my RE leadership, I developed my understanding a lot more because I had to teach others and had to mentor them. But it wasn't until I got over there." once again Brenda hesitates. "… I felt like, it sounds really strange because I would have said the depth of my heart was my faith, but it wasn't until I got over there that I realised there is a deeper depth to your heart that you can find in the right experience in the right place that I didn't know could go any deeper, until I got there, until I experienced it, and I've come back quite different, and I can't go back to the way I was before."

I wanted to probe further so I ask, "You thought that your faith was deep, but it's actually become something deeper?"

Brenda answers with certainty "Oh absolutely! There were little examples, it sounds like a funny example, I guess. Out of seven kids I'm the only one that still goes to Mass, and a couple of them will say yeah, I'm Catholic but I don't do anything, the others say they have no faith at all. On the weekend we went to Melbourne to my sister's for lunch and everybody was there, and one of my sisters, who is a non-believer, has a friend who has come back from Jerusalem and she said can you bring your photos because I want to have a look. I thought I don't want to just bring my photos; I'm going to bring my PowerPoint and I'm going to bring my written reflection. So, I took it and said 'Here's the laptop, if you want to have a look.' Then a couple of the others, who were thinking, oh, you know, 'I can't believe she went to Jerusalem, how ridiculous', said 'well, we'll have a look. Well, they watched the whole thing and were just like, 'Oh my God, we had no idea, no idea, have you got anything else'? I said, 'well, I've got a reflection'. 'Please would you read it to us'? So, I read it to them. There were tears, and they were saying, 'That is incredible, that's so amazing, oh you're so lucky, what a beautiful faith thing to experience'. And I thought to myself, I wouldn't have had the courage to do that before I went to Israel. I'm the youngest sister and I still believe, so I get the sense they think I haven't grown up enough to grow out of my faith." At this the rest of the group laugh. "They were in awe of what I'd experienced and what I felt and – so there's you know – the Pentecost scene where the flames come over their heads and they stepped out and went and proclaimed. I'm much more like that than I used to be. Not that I go and bang on people's doors, but I'm not afraid to say, hey, this is my faith."

Brenda goes a little quiet, but the rest of us wait because we realise there is something else on her mind. "This morning my kids said, 'Can we see more of your Jerusalem photos, we want to see your photos, we want to hear your stories, can you tell us more about where Jesus was'? So, I put them on, thinking oh, they're going to get bored, or they're trying to do it because they're trying to get out of work. When it finished, I said, 'would you write what my trip has meant to you', to the kids in my class, and they all wrote these pieces you know, we learnt that the old Jerusalem has

four quarters and said what they were, and we learnt that … And there's all these reflections of things in all different ways that I hadn't even realised that I had given them through my experience. But it's all there, and it's been there all the way through, because … and a lot of it was because of my personal feeling".

I catch a glimmer of something important here, something about Brenda's students picking up on her attitude. So, I ask "Okay, tell me what you mean, you mean the way you talked to them about it?"

Brenda goes on excitedly, "Yeah the passion that I have, and the enthusiasm and excitement and fear and all the emotions that we had when we were over there. You can't not have it come out of you when you talk to the kids."

The group fall silent, there is nodding in agreement, but there is silence. They are obviously thinking about this.

I begin to speak but never finished my question.

Pat jumps in before Brenda has a chance to speak. Pat is clearly feeling strongly about what she is about to say; her voice is full of passion and surety. "Oh absolutely! And, I think it was that whole shared experience with other people of the same faith that are, *my age*, not a generation older.

"But Pat, when you say our generation, there were people there that were in their 80s back to 30s, so there were lots of generations" Katy says.

"I know," says Pat. "There was a lot of generations, but I'm just saying, it was nice for us who were younger, the younger ones, I'm thinking of Agnes and Jack and that sort of thing, it was lovely. It was a mixture.

"Yes, it was a mixture," says Bianca.

"But you could talk about it, because you don't talk about it." There is clearly something going on with Pat, something that is making her a little upset. Then it all comes out.

"We all went there feeling the way I felt and responded and reacted to things in the same way that I did, that I thought I'm part of this [emphasis on *this*] community of pilgrims, and when I go back, I don't have a right, as Katy said, to step back into my box and go okay, I'll just leave that as a nice holiday memory. It's got to be part of what I am or I'm not who I'm supposed to be. And it's changed at school, my teaching, changed the way I am as an RE leader, changed the way I am as a leader in the school in so many ways." At this point Pat is clearly frustrated. "You do a prayer, you put a bit of effort in for the staff prayer and they're going, aw it's taken 10 minutes," she says, mimicking a whining tone of voice.

So, there it is, I think to myself, Pat is frustrated by the lack of interest in her school. The rest of the group look at her in sympathy, but they don't want to upset her further.

"I'm just thinking of things that hit us," says Katy. "I think we all had awe. That feeling of awe. You know when we were looking at these ruins that were ancient, it's just … the time and timelessness," Katy says, emphasising the last word in a voice filled with amazement. "Timelessness of the whole story and ... the Dead Sea scrolls! Then in a quieter voice, Katy with a big grin and emphatic nodding, says "I've got the real ones in my crystal cabinet at home". Everyone whoops with laughter.

"She got the last ones in the shop for $10.95," adds Bianca.

"I pushed everyone to get them," laughs Katy. "But, just all that, to put dirt into the story, to sew the threads together of our life story, because … when I grew up there was no Scripture, the Protestants studied Scriptures, and we went to a Catholic school, you don't do Scriptures" says Katy in a haughty tone and putting her nose in the air indicating the superior feeling of the time. "That's what the *Proddy dogs* [common term used in the 50s and 60s for state school children] did

down the road. I now know Scripture through being a teacher, hearing it not in Latin and all that. But then, to actually be there with Father Joe, our lecturer who joined so many dots," she says, breathy with admiration and emphasis. "Many of those dots I didn't quite connect to because I just couldn't. But to have gone over there, but to have not had that connector, it would have been an experience, and it would have been meaningful and deep, but somehow bringing it all back to Scripture before we even went anywhere or the minute we came back, connect, connect, connect is the thing that I reckon has somehow made it real. Or connected us to whatever it is, our yearnings inside ourselves."

"So, did he do that?" I ask.

"Yes, that was his whole thing. He had this incredible skill of photography." The rest of the group make a noise of assent. "So, his PowerPoints, after he had been somewhere, and he would be teaching us, up would come something that we'd all seen, except his lens had seen it differently." Katy laughs, "like with a sunset behind it or something. He had this incredible gift, it was a real blessing to us, of re-living what we'd already seen, but through the eyes of his incredibly insightful, holy, sacred spirit, and we re-lived everything again didn't we?" The rest of the group agree. "So that somehow, he took us on a journey, connecting things that we hadn't connected, or I hadn't connected. I'm sure there was people there that were making those connections all the time, but I wasn't, because I was just …"

"And I think it went back to … we had the time to do it," says Bianca. "I think that's what … I think now even at home, the conversations I'll have with my family are different now and I'll make myself have the time because life is very busy and that was one of the wonderful things about going, because it was nearly self-indulgent to have so much time to contemplate and reflect, to enjoy, to immerse yourself, to listen to other people and really listen to them and the stories,

and then make the connections so … And we can't do that here all the time, "we did there, but it gave me the … thirst to want to do it a bit more than I have ever done it before I went."

"So, you weren't the tourist," I say.

"No!" says Pat emphatically, and all other voices agree. "Because we heard the stories of the Jews and we heard, you know we heard the people, we heard the … it was great," she finishes quietly.

"And the group became a family. We all had little idiosyncrasies," says Katy.

How important was the support the group?" I ask.

"That was the most important," says Katy. "That group, the support. And it wasn't always about the religious thing, it was the funny stupid things ... Like I had another mate there and we loved butter, and we used to hide the butter in the flower pot at breakfast, because that was the only time we got it. But everyone else in the group made sure we had it. And that little old lady, everyone looked after her. Everybody sort of keyed into the idiosyncrasies respectfully of everybody" – spoken softly – "and saw the strengths and the weaknesses of everyone and ... it didn't matter".

"No never but we were all different, but we were all the same," says Bianca.

"There was a sameness, we were all accepted," says Katy. I think you hit it before, one of you, it was coming with the heart, coming there with the heart. A heart to … almost a yearning heart that we didn't know we really had the yearning for before, till we got there."

"And we realised that it was yearning," says Bianca, finishing the thought.

"And also," says Bianca, "I don't know whether just going there for the five weeks of that program, necessarily would have the same outcome that we had. Because I think there is a lot of variance. Oh, not variance in going there for five weeks and staying at Ecce Homo. It's more about, it's the combination of things, it was a combination of people, and I think … I think the Sion Sisters." Her voice ends in an upward inflection inviting comment.

Other voices comment. "Oh, they were brilliant." "Amazing women."

"You know, Sister Julia said, 'we haven't had a group like you before that gelled so quickly right from the beginning. 'Normally,' she said, 'there's a lot more people from a lot of countries.' She said there would be a lot of people that hardly have a shared language. But she said to me how, for her, to just sit back and watch the group was amazing, because of the connections made, and how we looked after each other was very different for her, compared to other groups. And, we knew it, it was very powerful."

"And there were no cliques," adds Bianca. "You could go and sit at any table at dinner and know you were going to enjoy the company and have great conversations, and a bit of a laugh."

"How often did you find, I found it quite often, that you would be having a really emotional experience, and you'd have a really powerful interaction with someone, with not a word spoken," says Brenda. Sounds of agreement come from the rest of the group. Brenda goes on but struggles with emotion at the memory. "Because, I can remember standing in Mass and I'd got some not good news from home and I was struggling not to cry, and I was really stressed, quite beside myself. People who, and not just our Aussie group, as they walked past would just put their arm on me, they could see there was something wrong.

"Yeah, there was a knowing," says Katy wistfully.

"But they didn't impose, they didn't ask, they didn't," says Brenda, filled with emotion and stressing the point. "No, they never asked what was going on. When we went to Yad Vashem one of the fellows, Peter, I think, from Melbourne, just said, 'Are you alright?' And all the way through Yad Vashem we would pass each other so many times, and he would just give me a hug and then keep walking. We didn't speak, the whole time we were there. But he'd be crying at something, or I'd be crying at something, and he'd just give me hug and keep walking. I thought

I'd miss my family shockingly, because I'd never been away before, but they became my family for the five weeks."

"We never had to speak," says Bianca with tears in her eyes.

Brenda says quietly, "It was just this constant feeling that you were never alone, and you were never struggling on your own. And, it just might be someone coming up to you saying 'hey, I'm going for a walk, do you want to come?' We wouldn't talk about what it was that either of us were upset or worried about, people picked you up and kind of carried you all the time, didn't they?"

I'm curious to know if there was a little bit of fear involved, being in a strange environment, so I ask them.

"I was worried," states Katy quite openly.

Pat speaks up next. "You know, before we got there, we were worried because we were told what to say at the airport, and we were told different things that would happen. But then, when we got there, I remember, it was like – because we thought we were all going to have to walk around the streets together – after a couple of days you thought, 'I can go by myself.' It was just the local neighbourhood."

Katy speaks up, her tone serious. "When we were in the desert and the jet fighters had gone over the Dead Sea, and at night they went and bombed Syria. And then, we were at the Syrian border watching the bombs, that was different though. That didn't feel good."

 "No," says Brenda.

"There was always a tension," says Bianca.

"We just got used to it," adds Katy.

"Yes, we did," says Bianca in a wistful tone.

Richard is making a move to leave, but he doesn't really want to go, he has been enjoying the conversation. He says, "Look, I have to go soon, but I just want to add, from my perspective how the tension added to my learning. It's not a pleasant place to visit. There's that feeling of tension when you're talking to people. There's a feeling of tension that you constantly feel in the place itself, because of the history that it has, and when you go out into the countryside, it's hot, it's dry, it's brown, it's dusty, there's not much greenery until you get to the Jordan Valley and up north. So, it is very confronting, and you have that sense of danger, a sense of danger you get through the Scriptures too. You know, there's that challenge. You can see not much has changed in, well, if you look at it, in two and a half thousand years. So, when you go there, you're immediately thrust into that, especially when you come from a safe, middle-class country like Australia where conflict is generally superficial, for most people. Then you come to a place where conflict is the lived experience of nearly 100% of the people.

"When you look at Scripture, conflict was a constant there, too! When you look at the socio-political reality of Israel today, not much has changed from the time of Jesus.

"We sit here on the outside and say 'Why can't the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims just get on with each other?' Because, to us, it's not logical, but logic doesn't necessarily enter into an emotional response to place and people. You know, this year's group were spat at by both Jews and Muslims when they visited particular places. Now, that's not a normal response of people, so it's a response of people who are threatened and under stress. Well, once again that's a reality of that land. And that's the land that Jesus walked and that's what he was dealing with. So, when he talked about acceptance, and welcome and all these sorts of things, you can understand why. It definitely added to Scripture understanding, because it's still being lived there today, and in fact, you know, if Jesus appeared today, he'd get just the same response now, from the Christians as well as the Jews and the Muslims. So yeah, nothing changes, and that's probably one of the strengths and one of the huge challenges of the area. You can go to Israel today and live the

Scripture because it's happening still. So, Jesus' call to show hospitality, that's the call for us today, and how hard is it when there are stabbings on street corners and buses blown up?" Now I must dash, see you all soon, I hope."

After the goodbyes, Katy returns to the issue of tension they experienced. "I'm thinking of the night of the barbecue," she says. "With the bombs and all that, we're out chatting like this and everyone was feeling a bit funny. But although that was happening, we knew we were among friends. And even if a bomb had landed there, someone would have picked us up. It was a very safe feeling."

Pat says, "Yeah, I felt safe too."

"That word family," muses Katy.

"Remember," says Pat, "when we'd been to Mass, and we were going back into the old city, remember? We had to go around to another gate because Christine and Julie had come across this guy …

"At the Damascus gate?" says Katy, remembering "Yes. He said we couldn't go through, that there will be a killing."

"You know you felt safe with the sisters as well. They would always make sure that we were safe. We were!"

"That night we sat down to watch the light show and Julie and Christine said, 'We're going now!" says Katy, mimicking the emphasis Sister Julie put on the word 'now'. "They just knew. The environment was changing while we were there, and after we left it did change. But you could feel it happening, there had been killings and stabbings. And we'd lay in bed and hear the guy with the machine gun, and we knew he got killed just down the road from us."

There is a moment of quiet as they are all lost in their thoughts.

"But you know," says Pat, I've been thinking about it, and I would love to go back there and share it with my husband. But then I thought, it's never going to be the same." The others make sounds of agreement. "It would never be the same, so I don't want to spoil it, but I talk about it all the time. It would be completely different."

"Pat, you're probably really saying you just want to hold onto that one," says Katy.

"The people, the place, the land, the Word. That was our thing" says Katy.

There is quiet again as everyone is feeling emotional, I can see tears being wiped. I leave it for a moment before going on to ask, "When you came home, and tried to share this with your family, how easy was that?"

Brenda speaks first. "Very, very easy. Much easier than I thought it would be."

Bianca struggles to get the words out. "I found it … and I know Sister Barbara had told us at the end, when you go back just drip feed people with it. And what I … and to me, that's the way that I had to do it. And it wasn't like a show and tell, because I thought photos never do it justice … of what you've seen, so it's more that drip feed of things … because it's such a big part of me now, there's not a lot that can happen that I don't touch on in it in some way. I think it's in your mind and I think over the weekend of … with Paris happening, it really came to the fore too."

"Can you just explain that connection?" I say.

Bianca continues, choosing her words carefully. "I think we came to know people who were of different religions, so it wasn't necessarily the religions, it's the people. And so once again it's the connections with the people that we made, the Palestinians, Muslims, and Jewish and we just … it just made you … I think you …I think we are only a small part of it, and I just think there's no judging and it just ..." Bianca is quite emotional and stops for a moment then speaks softly and deliberately. "The world wants to be all together, that's the way we want it to be. It's not, it

probably never will be in the Middle East because it's been going on forever. Someone spoke about apartheid in South Africa, well if they can eradicate apartheid there, but that wasn't going as long as the Holy Land. So, I don't think you can, it's like comparing apples and oranges." Bianca stops, struggling to explain her thinking. "But there … I just think … we had an experience … remember Temple Mount, we were up there and there were a group." Bianca's voice changes, almost an aside. "For a while there I was a little bit starry-eyed, the Jewish people had come in and all the things they're doing to try and break down the barriers and try and be a lot more inclusive, and I thought this is great, people are trying to do this." Her voice quietens again as she remembers. "But up on Temple Mount, I saw a group of young children, a school group with a teacher. The kids would have been probably, eight or nine, and they chanted something and, and … the look of venom in their eyes as they went like this, at us." Bianca mimics the expression of hate on the children's faces. And I just thought … it's never going to go. These kids are just born into it, and you know … there were a few children at the end of the group, who were la la la, you know. They had no idea what they were chanting. But when I hear about things in Paris, I sort of feel like these people who are doing it, know exactly what they're doing, they're indoctrinated into it, and they think that they're right and that's the way to go."

"They think they're saving the world," says Katy.

"Yeah, that was a real realisation," says Pat. "And I thought, doesn't matter … you know, you don't get despondent about it, or give up, but … it really made me think." Pat ends on a sigh of either frustration, or resignation, I can't tell.

"But even before that, when we got to the door, they picked out a few of us to say your dress is too short, mind you, my dress was down to here," Katy indicates below her knee, "and it still wasn't enough." They just needed to get some money off us to show us who was in power.

"Yeah," says Bianca, "it was about power, and, it's on both sides."

"My son came over the other morning for breakfast, because we've got this thing, a big tradition in our family is the Christmas tree, unpacking the thing. It's the same Christmas tree we've had since the kids were babies. And my little grandchild is six, but that family was gone. My other son is too far away, so two kids came together for the unpacking of the Christmas tree, and we turned on Christmas carols, and 'Where Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night' came on and the tears started to roll down my face. And Ted, who was the son determined I should go, 'Katy you're going, you're going', he had said. A couple of the others were saying you're not going." Katy laughs, and continues to laugh as she relates her family's response to the idea of her going to Israel. "My daughter said, 'you've come down here from living further away in the past, to be with your grandkids, and you're never going to see them again'". Still laughing, she resumes her story about crying at the carol. "But the tears, and Ted said, 'What's going on?' He's a very insightful sort of fellow, and he said, 'It's Israel isn't it?' I said 'Ted, shepherds, the field, I can see it happening, I can see it.' And it just hit me like a ton of bricks that … that Christmas, is going to be different for us."

"Christmas carols are never going to be the same. Like that song 'Jerusalem'," says Bianca.

"And to be really filthy mouthed," says Katy with a cheeky grin, "we're screwed forever now, because it can't ever be Christmas. Like everything is going to have a totally different …

"And Easter. Easter will be …" Bianca's voice trails off. "But the Christmas carols, and sometimes, when you least expect it …"

"It just hits you," Katy finishes the sentence, referring to the emotion and tears that come easily. Then Katy goes on, obviously something else has just struck her. "It's like as if you want to be there or need to be there, or you are there."

"You want to be back there, like you were", says Bianca.

"Is a piece of you left behind?" I ask.

"No," says Bianca, "it's, it feels more like a piece is left in my heart."

"It's been added on," states Brenda. "We've taken a piece and added it on."

Katy says, "For me, I'd say I've left a bit back there. Like there's part of me still in Jerusalem and always will be. But we might be saying the same thing with different words I think, yeah."

Brenda had been deep in thought, and then launches into another story, that I could see was connected, but I wasn't sure where it was going.

"It's interesting as I said before, when they were talking about Temple Mount and the faces and the aggressive look of the children. Remember, we had a guy with us who had an incredible ability to take photos of people's faces, and he called it the faces of Jerusalem. He would walk up to people of all different faiths all the time and just say, could I take your photo and 90% of them said yes. There were the Jewish people with the big Fez thing on their heads, or the Muslim women, or whatever. And I was showing the photos to my kids at school, and one of them said 'stop, stop,' and I stopped it. They said 'they've got that scarf on, aren't they Muslim people?' And I said 'yes they are', because we'd talked about all the different ways they looked and how we could tell who different people were. They said, 'they're smiling at you and letting you take their photo'." Brenda continues, "I hadn't stopped to think about teaching a lesson in religious tolerance, tolerance of … people, until they looked at that photo. They didn't comment on the Jewish people, but later one of the other kids said, 'that the one who had the big Fez thing, the Jewish man, he's smiling right into the camera.' And they said, 'but he's Jewish.' I had no idea the kids thought that way. 'How could they let you take their photo because you're not one of them?' So, I pulled out the Bible and I held it up and I said 'see this, this is the Old Testament. We believe all of that with the Jews. See this bit, that's the New Testament, the only difference we have. So, we're this much alike, and we're only this much different. And I wouldn't have thought to do that, or taught that way before I went to Israel. But that all came about from being over there,

and it's that whole idea of showing them the faces and the smiling, it's that building of understanding that we are all … part of something so much greater. As a Catholic, and came back as just a part of … lots of different …"

"But yet, part of us came away a bit Muslim too," says Katy. "I'm thinking of the Muslim lady who came in and she talked to us. And at the end of the talk she wanted us to get down on the ground. And she got down on the ground and she sort of completely rolled up in a ball and came up again as a sign of respect to us. And I just cried! But I felt as close to her as you would to anyone else. Like the Muslim–Christian stuff, the Palestinian–Jews, it's sorted of faded."

"Even though it was in our faces it is all so blurred," says Bianca.

"Yeah," says Pat. "Do you know it was funny because when I came back one of the parents, the very first day I came back, she said to me, because I know her husband was born in Iran. She said to me, 'how was it?' I said oh it was so good; it was really interesting because we learnt all about Ramadan. And she said 'my husband does that'. I said 'really?'. She said 'I'm Catholic but he's Muslim, and so between the children …' I said really! She was saying how it was really good to have that conversation, because I would never have been able to have a conversation about it before. In some of our schools we've got these children as well, and we've got to remember that, you know, they might be baptised Catholic, but they might have a Muslim parent. You know, that was really interesting, just to be able to talk about it. It's really funny because dad's been coming into the school a bit more, just coming in and talking a bit more, yeah, it's really good."

Sam had arrived and had slipped in quietly, not wanting to disturb the conversation going on. He now spoke up. "You know, there's a different side to all of this, meeting people of different religious groups is one thing we all experienced, but I think we didn't always understand the Christian groups that were there. I'll tell you a story. Mind you, sometimes I saw and heard things a little differently to the majority of the group. They might have missed things that I experienced.

My group was great and we learnt heaps together, but they had a bit of a group mentality that needed to be challenged."

"Down from Jericho there was this monastery, Saint Gerasimus, I think. The first thing everybody did, because it had beautiful ancient iconography and all that sort of thing, was bend down to pray. Well, this nun came running in, saying 'Get up, get up' and she was pushing people. I couldn't work out what we were doing wrong. Anyway, people are saying things like 'aw that's rude', you know, rude. But I thought nah, she wouldn't be rude, there's something else going on here. So, I followed her outside and I just asked her, I said 'Excuse me, Sister, what did we actually do wrong?' And she said 'You showed your feet, we don't show our feet.' When you kneel down you see the soles of your feet, which is rude in their custom. I said 'Okay, sorry.' She said 'That's alright,' she was really warm. So, I learnt something from that. I went back inside and I said to people don't show the bottom of your feet, it's rude in this Orthodox church. She was really nice and she said 'come with me and I will show you something really special'. She took me and showed me all these votive offerings, she said that some of these are hundreds of years old. They were little lace figurines of where people had prayed to Saint Gerasimus for a baby, so they had made a clay baby, or a little wax baby, and they left it and they [the monastic order] would collect these and put [them] to the side. Well, I don't think anyone else got any of that from St Gerasimus' monastery."

We mull over this story, and some of the group are keen to hear what else Sam discovered that they missed, so he is encouraged to continue.

"I'll tell you another one where Sister Julia was walking with me at Shepherds Fields. I had a pretty snazzy camera at the time, which, I found out later, I probably shouldn't have had it because, when you stopped with everyone around you, they thought you were the one with money."

"Anyway, Sister Julia said, 'Can you take a photo for me? Can you just stay behind?' And I said, 'yeah, sure.' And she said, 'can you see? It was just pasture; it might have been about fifteen metres away. Just a little paddock, and there was a set of steps. She said 'can you get a photo of those steps?' So, I just jumped up and went click, click. She said, 'Can you get them to me?' I said, 'yeah I'll put them on a USB.' So, when we got back, I put them onto a USB and I had a look at them, I zoomed in. It was Jacob's field, the field of the patriarch, 4000BC! And we'd all just walked past it! That's mind blowing. I reckon that's mind-blowing, that sort of stuff. And nobody saw it. Not even I appreciated it, and I'm taking these photos. Field of the patriarch, Jacob, 4000BC. Well, that's got to be 6000 years old, that paddock where they've got the little steps going up. I think there were lots of things people missed. It makes me wonder how many things I missed."

"Another thing that touched me was the Chapel of the Divine Child at Bethlehem University. I could have sat in there for hours. There was a nun from South Korea in our group. She was a tall woman with a very young face, but she was about 80 apparently. In the church, a very simple church, it had images of martyred children from around the world on the wall. And I think of this nun, I can't remember her name, and she had tears strolling down her face. I said 'are you alright, Sister?' and she whispered to me 'I taught these children.' Man, it was so moving, man." Sam is crying at the memory and we all feel for him. He struggles with emotion but continues.

"It was so beautiful. I just thought it was the most beautiful church, and the little kids were pictured all marching toward the tabernacle with palms. They'd been canonised. I didn't get the story, but … they were canonised saints. It was pretty powerful. They weren't all blood martyrs, but most of them were martyrs, and a lot of them were from recent times, or they must have been if she taught them. She said, I've taught this child and I thought oh, and the tears were streaming down her face."

"I'm sorry I got a bit emotional thinking about that Korean nun, but it was that sort of stuff, you know, you deal with those little kids each day in your school, you teach them and you don't know what you're teaching. And when a child suffers … It touched the teacher in me, you know."

"We went to the Temple Mount, to the Western Wall on about three Fridays. I didn't look like I was a tourist. There was one Jewish bloke and he looked like a bit of hippy really, with a big white beard, and he had the tassels and what have you and they were all dancing around. I felt warmth, a real warmth and I thought, actually you're really nice blokes in your own way. I saw a different perspective of the Jews. But just for that moment I thought, there is a warmth here. We'd been to Yad Vashem the holocaust museum before that and I thought, I actually get it. I get why you're defensive, I get why you have to fight for what you believe in. Even though it's 70 years ago, it's not something you readily forget, you know."

Sam finishes and once again apologises for crying, but the group assure him it was fine, they understood emotional response to experiences in Israel. Unfortunately, Sam can't stay, he has an appointment. So, after farewells, we sit in silence for a while.

Then the conversation moves to discussing the importance of the SSP for them, in their leadership role in schools.

Helen speaks first. "We know that the Gospels were written for particular audiences, but when you hear it every day, and you're living in the land, you can see what the land might have been like, and how hot it might have been, and who the actual audience were. It just made so much more sense. I don't take the Gospel literally; I'm always now looking for the little messages. When I teach it now, I always, always give as much background to that piece of Gospel as I can possibly give. I give diagrams, I talk to the kids about the lay of the land, I talk about the audience of the time and who it might have been for. And the kids respond in a much, much more open manner."

Brenda states firmly, "I'm much more passionate, I think. The passion is the thing that people keep saying, 'God, you just loved it didn't you?'" Spoken in a breathy amazed tone. "I must come across that way … surprise, surprise!"

Katy picks up on the passion theme. "I think, as leaders in a Catholic school, somehow the experience ignited a passion. A passion for what you already knew, but you didn't know it. Does that make sense?" Katy laughs, then continues. "So, I probably haven't had an opportunity like you to talk to kids, or to talk to staff as yet."

Bianca says, "I have, because I've gone around to grades."

Katy continues, "I've probably guarded myself from even getting into those conversations. I haven't talked to anyone much about … But what I was going to say was, about that ignition of a deeper person in the school, people may not notice it, but *I* know."

Katy emphasises the word *I* very strongly.

"I'm different in this Catholic school today than I was three months ago … Very different. I've never had to buy a bible because there's always bibles around, but I never had a personal one in my life!" Katy laughs at this.

"In Jerusalem I went on a hunt, I'm buying a bible, I'm buying a bible. Well, we looked everywhere, I'd given up, hadn't I?" Looking at Bianca. "And, I bought a bible. For me to have a bible in my bedroom, sitting on my little old antique dressing table, and," Katy giggles, "with a wooden holding cross [type of cross to hold in the hand] on it, like, would freak those people out who know me." Katy is now laughing loudly. But it is there because it is sacred. And when I got back from Israel, I started reading the bible like a novel, and some nights I read a page and other nights I get three words out. I'm going to read that Bible from go to whoa, because it's very important coming back. It's almost like a mission; I owe it to myself and to the experience. But it's almost laughable if you knew me well, but it's right! And I had to get that Bible in Jerusalem.

I had to! I think by the time, you know, way down the track, I would say one of my kids will want that bible, because they'll know it's very important to me, which to me is a big mark of something in my family."

Bianca almost summarises the conversation, "Yeah, so we're different people. I find as a leader in the school, because I've gone around to different grades and shown them things, and spoken about things, I guess I feel like I'm talking more from my soul than from my head. Whereas, I used talk from my head. But now, I think … it was like that prayer we had at our meeting today, talking about the visible face of the invisible God, that was beautiful, it really struck home."

I sense it is time to wind things up. It has been a long day for them, and the last hour or so has been fairly emotional. Not just for them, but for me too, for I was caught up in their stories. Their stories are a wealth of information that could be further explored, but for now it is enough.

I had learnt about the strength of a community of faith. I had come to understand how the tension they experienced in Israel led to learning about interfaith dialogue, and the need for tolerance and respect. I had even learnt that participants' personality led to different sorts of learning; about Israel, and about all the religious groups, including Christians. I learnt how they loved coming together to remember and share. I was given insight into how the SSP had touched them personally, strengthened their faith, influenced their teaching, and their leadership. I saw in their stories the hand of the Sion Sisters in Jerusalem, guiding them, supporting them as they tried to understand the complexity of a society totally alien to their own. I was privileged to encounter these faith-filled people who recognised something powerful had happened to them in Israel. They wanted to explore this as much as me, and for that I am humbled and grateful. They opened their hearts to me and together we had explored the depth of learning they experienced.

Chapter Five

Results

This chapter is commonly called findings; however, I have elected to name it results. This decision has been made because it is more in keeping with an interpretivist study (O'Donoghue, 2018). O'Donoghue (2018) refers to the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) who, he states, defined theory as an "integrated framework…that can be used to explain or predict phenomena [and therefore] it makes no sense to speak of 'findings'… Rather, he or she generates theory, which can then be reported as one's 'results'" (O'Donoghue, 2018, p. 33). In this study, the theory generated relies on participants' perspectives of the phenomenon (the SSP) at a particular point in time. It is acknowledged that perspectives are in a constant state of flux or change due to interactions with the world, therefore this study seeks results to generate theory rather than hard and fast findings more akin to quantitative studies, furthermore, such findings may be misconstrued as constant for all time.

Chapter Four presented a crafted story that revealed the essence of the major themes and sub-themes that are made explicit in this chapter. Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2019) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) framework was used to identify the key themes which are reported in relation to the results. Questionnaires, interviews, and a reflection journal answer the major question this study on the Sion Scholarship Program (SSP) seeks to answer: What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, is it a means for transformative learning? The results presented in this chapter should be considered against the backdrop of the richness of the crafted story.

5.1 Questionnaires: Phases One to Three

The process of filtering responses to identify potential themes began immediately on receipt of de-identified questionnaire data. Two overarching potential, or candidate, themes were identified*: Learning*, and *Journey to Israel*; along with *Professional Learning* (PL), *Scripture*

Learning, *Faith*, *Interfaith* and *Place*. The process of identifying these candidate themes through the questionnaire data is outlined below. See sample questionnaire in Appendix E.

First, I created a separate Excel sheet for each question and copied the relevant responses into the corresponding sheet. This was a way to become familiar with content and examine and note possible themes. If responses contained information about different aspects of the SSP, these were split into separate cells. For example, QP14 submitted their response to question 1 in dot points:

- It has impacted on my own understanding of the Bible, the chapter of Luke & the current & past history of the area.

- It has impacted on the way I teach Religion and when I sit and listen to scripture myself.

- It has left a lasting impression on me for the better, I believe (QP14).

I entered this data as per example A in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Example A: Initial coding of questionnaire data

Data excerpt	Initial Theme
"It has impacted on my own understanding of the Bible, the chapter of Luke & the current & past history of the area" (QP14).	Scripture Learning/Place (SL/P)
"It has impacted on the way I teach Religion and when I sit and listen to scripture myself" (QP14).	Teaching/Personal Faith (T/PF)
"It has left a lasting impression on me for the better, I believe" (QP14).	Personal Response (PR)

This process was adopted for responses to each question and questionnaire in readiness for initial identification of themes. All questionnaire responses were then placed under the code

headings. Rereading and reflecting on the responses enabled me to further familiarise myself with the data in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for thematic analysis.

I labelled the candidate themes using letter and colour codes (Appendix K) and identified candidate themes: Scripture Learning, Teaching, Place, Personal Faith, Interfaith, Personal Response, and the Ecce Homo Course. Some were closely connected, or intertwined. Notes were made in the document about my thinking at the time, including possible sub-themes as I believed these could assist with further sifting and chunking.

Following the identification of candidate themes, data were entered and displayed as bar graphs (see Appendix L). These provided a scheme of the prevalence of themes, aiding identification of candidate themes and where collapsing of themes might take place. The bar graphs were also a visual reminder that some questions were intentionally worded and therefore particular themes would be strong in some responses. The initial candidate themes Teaching and Student Scripture Learning were collapsed into Pedagogy. This was done because responses, such as the one below from QP13, indicated something about teacher knowledge having an effect on teaching and on student learning.

> I am far more excited to teach Scripture stories now as I bring real life experience
> to the retelling of the stories, and this must impact on how I teach it. I honestly
> believe if educators really feel the story it has a big impact on how the story is
> experienced for the learner (QP13).

The themes *Course* and *Professional Learning* were collapsed into *Professional Learning*. At this stage, responses seemed to be about different aspects of the SSP, so they needed further consideration. Personal Response was left as a separate theme even though it could have been amalgamated with PL, but data indicated a deeper, richer learning, something more than cognitive knowledge, and more indicative of a change in attitude in keeping with the major question around transformative learning. QP9 mentions the word "levels", suggesting that it was not just PL about

Scripture. Personal Response was not a good heading, indicating I needed more data to investigate further.

> It had a huge impact on me at various levels: spiritually, educationally, knowledge wise, geographically, emotionally, personally (QP9).

Further reorganisation and chunking of themes and sub-themes were required because the land of Israel, the place itself, seemed to be a catalyst for learning. Pedagogy was recognised as part of *Scripture Learning* under *Place* because it was the context of Israel that was the through line. This became Pedagogical Impact, a sub-theme, indicated by data such as, "Yes, my understanding grew significantly, and I now have more a context for the text and believe strongly that this needs to be part of Scripture teaching" (QP15). Also, *Personal Response* comments, such as "The journey was life-changing!" (QP12), required much more investigation. Data indicated that the learning that took place during the SSP was broader than *Scripture*. Therefore, *Learning*, not *Scripture Learning*, was the title given to this theme, which offered scope to explore a wider range of learning identified in the data.

The second major theme was *The Journey Experience* as this offered scope to encompass the Place (Israel), and the many different learnings that took place indicated by questionnaire data. The title *Journey* was used because it represented movement from one place to another in both a physical and metaphorical sense. Table 5.2 outlines coding and candidate themes at this point. I realised that data identified as *Interfaith* and *A Place Of –* would require further consideration because I identified that eleven out of fifteen returned questionnaires contained data around interfaith in relation to socio-political and religious tension. This indicated something about data identified as *Interfaith* and *A Place Of –* as having greater significance.

Table 5.2

Version Two of codes and candidate themes, and sub themes

Candidate Themes	Letter Code	Themes	Letter Code	Sub-themes	Letter Code

Learning	L	Professional Learning	LPL	Course Organisation	LPLCO
				Personal Response to this PL Experience	LPLPR
Journey to Israel (a unique place?)	J	Scripture Learning	JSL	Adult Learning Pedagogical Impact in Schools	JSL JSLPI
		Faith	JF	Place of Pilgrimage	JFP
				Place of Jesus	JFJ
				Celebration of Liturgy	JFC
				Witness	JFW
		Interfaith	JI	-	-
		A Place	JP	Of Socio-political Tension	JPSPT
				Of Religious Tension	JPRT
				Where they Met People	JPPM
				Of Particular Geographical Places of Scripture	JPG

Table 5.2 informed some of what I explored in conducting the interviews and was used as the base document to begin analysis of individual and group interviews.

5.2 Interviews and Journal Phases Three to Six

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2019) framework with initial candidate themes from questionnaires, I was able to identify three major themes of *Encounter*, *Witness*, and *Transformation*, and how they sat under the umbrella theme of *Professional Learning*. I also analysed data under the themes *Preparation* and *Professional Development* because data relating to the preparation for the SSP and the post-experience opportunities were important to understanding the SSP experience as a whole.

In this section, I explain the identification of these themes in two ways. First, I outline the methods used to code data and search for themes, headed *Overview of analysis* (Section 5.3.1). This is Phase Three, moving into Phase Four of Braun & Clarke's (2006; 2019) Reflexive

Thematic Analysis (RTA). Following this, in Sections 5.3.2 to 5.3.6, I present the themes and examples from data identified through the reviewing (Phase Four) and refining and naming (Phase Five) (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019). These include the major themes *Professional Learning, Encounter, Witness*, *Transformation*, *Preparation, and Professional Development*. Phase Six, the reporting of themes, was undertaken in Chapter Six of this thesis, where connections were made to literature and checked to ensure the final themes answered the research question. Phase Six marks the "final test of how well the themes work" (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 857). The crafted story in Chapter Four was also part of the reporting process of Phase Six because it was another way of checking against multiple data sets whether the "themes, content, structure and names" (Braun & Clarke, p. 857) were valid.

5.2.1 Overview of analysis

I transcribed interviews, and read them closely, adding colour coding for candidate themes as shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1

Example of colour coding of themes

 The results were added to candidate themes identified in questionnaires (Table 5.2) of. I marked new themes in red, added comments and sample data extracts. Phase Three of Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019), constructing candidate themes and Phase Four revising and defining themes took place as content was moved around and notes made of stronger themes. Appendix M shows a fuller version of Table 5.3. This document was a working document that went through numerous revisions.

Table 5.3

Example of additional candidate themes and coding identified in interviews shown in red

Candidate Themes	C	Codes	Code	Sub-codes	Code
Journey to Israel ?? (a unique place?) *A Place for Encounter?*	J	*Scripture Learning Stronger Code* *This needs to be collapsed into learning* *NOTE: This should all be with learning* *Perspective change* *JESUS*	JSL	Adult Learning Pedagogical impact In schools *NEW: Effect of the experience on Scripture learning huge* *NEW: Changed perception dispelling childhood images* *NEW emotional. Better understanding of Jesus through Scripture* *NEW: Deep response to experience* *always close to the surface, recalls regularly* *NEW: Effect of the experience on Scripture learning* *NEW: it changed the way they looked at Scripture* *changed because of experience there* *NEW: effect of experience on Scripture learning & teaching* *NEW: ignited a passion.* *NEW: A passion for what you already knew but you didn't know it* *NEW: the way that I look at Scripture has changed because of New my experience there* *NEW it deepened the passion I had for study of Scripture.* *NEW scriptures that come to life.* *NEW encounter with God*	JSL
					JSLPI
		Faith needs to be stronger code *NEW witness, encounter, changed perspective Strong across multiple codes* WITNESS *Personal Faith*	JF	Place of pilgrimage not strong *NEW: sense of connection with the land through faith* *NEW deepening of faith,* Place of Jesus celebration of Liturgy Witness *Stronger code – coming through everywhere* *NEW: Linked to interfaith experiences and to Place in general* *NEW: Experience led to action* *NEW: unashamedly Catholic (witness)* *NEW: Group gave support to being Catholic (witness)* *NEW Personal Faith stronger code* *NEW: Passion linked to witness and faith Also linked to changed perspective.*	JFP JFSO JFJ JFC

		Transformed		*NEW: Perspective change* *NEW Passion linked to witness and faith* NEW: you are a witness in everything you do, in the way that you speak to other people and in the way that you teach the kids and the way we approach our work	
					JFW ALPC
		NEW perspective change *STRONGER Code* *Transformed?* *OTHER PEOPLE* Interfaith	JI	*STRONGER* *NEW Palestinians met evoked a response toward group members' simplistic view – perhaps helped consolidate learning or new learning.* *NEW changed perspective about what was possible re: political situation & interfaith* *NEW: a shift of being more understanding,* *NEW: it's the people: those connections with the people the Palestinians, Muslims, and Jewish* *NEW: I just think there's no judging and it just*	

During a period of reflection and close investigation of interview data, I reconsidered the use of the word *Journey* as a theme title. It was changed to *The Land* and then *Place*, as shown in Table 5.1. As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, a theme is about the essence it conveys and *Transformation* was the essence. *Journey* as a theme title was therefore abandoned. *Transformation* as a candidate theme was better suited to what data were showing. Below, Figures 5.2 and 5.3 are two examples of the mind mapping process I utilised during the period of reflection.
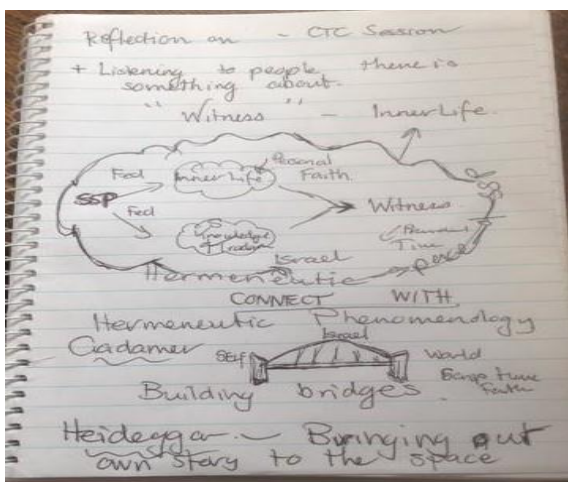
Figure 5.2

Mind Map 1 of candidate themes and themes after reflection
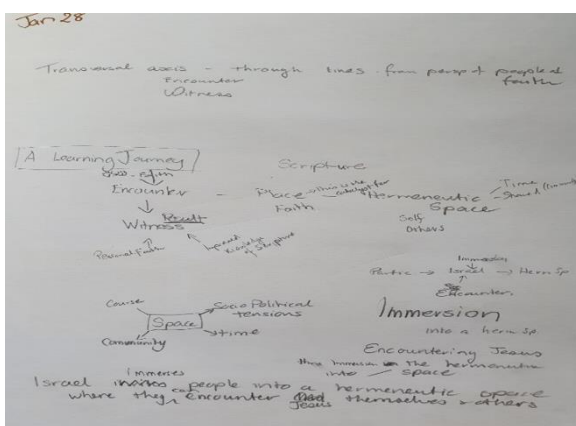
Figure 5.3

Mind Map 2 of candidate themes after reflection

Figure 5.4 is a sample of the Mind Mapping flow chart I developed to consider how themes and sub-themes connected. This took place in Phase Four leading into Phase Five of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It shows how I saw the connection between candidate themes. *Professional Learning* is not mentioned in this mind map, but I had already considered candidate themes to be embedded in this as the SSP was a PL experience.

Revised Themes – Collapsing above contents into:

A Learning Journey (through eyes of faith)

⬇

A Hermeneutic Space for Encounter

The Place: Israel

The community they lived with

The time to reflect – permission to indulge

The biblical course

THIS HAS INFLUENCED

⬇

Witness

Passion

Personal faith

Scripture Understanding

⬇

Impact (not a good term)

Changed perspective – This has made a difference to:

Thinking differently about Scripture teaching

They perceive a difference in themselves

Increased Confidence as witness specialist and moderator

View of the world and their place in it

Interfaith Understanding

Figure 5.4

Mind Map 3 of candidate themes

Coding and recoding data samples continued on from the above in order to identify and confirm major themes and sub themes. These themes were identified and further refined

in light of data examples reported for the final themes presented below, showing why themes were confirmed or further collapsed.

5.2.2 Professional learning

PL is defined in this study as learning, either formal or informal, undertaken in order to improve teacher knowledge and practice. PL was evident in multiple comments from questionnaires such as "This was an exceptional PL experience and faith formation experience" (QP10). This quote shows the link between PL and faith formation that the participant identified, but in general, the brevity of answers in the questionnaires did not provide an understanding of the scope of the SSP as PL. Another layer of understanding I identified in questionnaires was that the learning had a long-lasting effect on participants. QP3 calls the learning they experienced during the SSP "deep learning" because it has stayed with them, "learning that still lives with me today many years after attending the program" (QP3).

As I analysed interview data, the candidate themes identified in questionnaires - *Learning* and the sub theme *Professional Learning* – seemed inadequate. Learning also encompassed part of the first candidate theme – *Journey to Israel*. Broader learning was captured in the crafted story in Chapter Four. The example below expands on the long-lasting effect of the SSP and links the ability to be able to readily reflect back on the SSP experience as evidence of the best form of PL.

> If this [the SSP] is real professional learning … professional learning is going, living, being, thinking, and whatever. But reflecting, the reflection that we're doing now [referring to current interview] is for me, evidence of professional learning. We can reflect back, we've got feedback that's just there [pointing to head], we can remember things that are just there [pointing to head]. That for me, is the *best* form of it, for me, yeah. (FG1V1)

After identifying *Professional Learning* in data coded *Scripture, Place, Faith, Interfaith*, I confirmed *Professional Learning* as an all-encompassing theme, later titled a phase. The crafted story in Chapter Four contains examples of how the people, the place, the land, and the Word (see glossary) were key to learning. Pilgrimage was another term used by some participants to describe the SSP experience and at one point this was a candidate code:

> A pilgrim is someone who is going on a journey, I suppose, either to honour God or find their religion, to fulfil, sometimes you know a religious commitment. But it's one of exploring and finding, and so I would say it [SSP] was a pilgrimage. (FG1V3)

The words *exploring* and *finding* were deemed to be part of a PL experience because this was what people did, so *Pilgrimage* was collapsed into *Professional Learning*.

Another layer to studying in Israel as an all-consuming form of PL emerged in one of the interviews. In the following extract, the interview participant (IP4) talked about the importance of being removed from everyday life and living and learning twenty-four hours a day, unlike any previous PL they had experienced. IP4 also mentioned that learning encompassed other people and their culture, and they were learning with people, in a community, all of which exemplifies the reasoning behind this all-encompassing theme.

> I think when you go to something for example, up at the CEO at Warragul, it starts at 9 and finishes at 3.30, and each person goes home to their own. When you go here [Israel], you have literally walked away from your life to go and live for a month, and *you cannot leave it at 3.30*! You are living it, breathing it for 24 hours a day with those people, for that whole time, and it's *all-embracing*! You're learning about different cultures, it's such a different, diverse place, and even that was the learning, that learning was massive. (IP4)

IP4's words indicated something about a PL that saw studying with others as important. Focus group participant FG1V3 had expressed this as encounter, a term that seemed apt. FG1V3 was talking about the encounter leading to joy: "And that joy would spill out even now when I would talk about it. Overall, I would say it was with great joy that I encountered everything there."

PL was confirmed as an umbrella theme encompassing Encounter, Witness, and Transformation because it covered all aspects of the unique experience of studying and living in Israel. However, comments like the one above led me to question what it was they encountered in this PL, and what they meant by "spill out".

5.2.3 Encounter: Israel, a hermeneutic space for encounter with Jesus, self, and the other

Using *Encounter* as a candidate theme title gave me scope to consider what things participants encountered, which ultimately led to the identification of three sub-themes: 1) Encountering Jesus; 2) Encountering Others; 3) Learning About Self. These were supported or enabled by a further three sub-themes: 4) Learning in Community; 5) Time and Space for Personal and Professional Learning; 6) Scripture Learning. The supporting themes were integral to, and interrelated with, all aspects of Encountering Jesus, Self, and Others. This section, and subsequent sub-sections, show how themes were reorganised and collapsed under these five sub-themes within the overarching theme of *Encounter*.

Encountering Jesus. The theme of Encountering Jesus was identified particularly through data about the land or geography of Israel, and Scripture learning about the Gospel being studied. Some data about the socio-political tension was also identified as Encountering Jesus when participants stated that the tension helped them understand the time of Jesus.

This was how IP5 saw the links between the land, Scripture and Jesus:

So, it is very confronting, and you have that sense of danger, and that sense of danger you get through the Scriptures too. *And*, when you look at Scripture, conflict was a constant there, too. And that's the land that Jesus walked and that's what he was dealing with! So, when he talked about acceptance, and welcome and all these sorts of these things, you can understand why. (IP5)

The geography of Israel helped participants understand Scripture, and through this they gained a better understanding of Jesus in the context of his time. Geographical features such as the Sea of Galilee and the desert regions were identified as unchanging landmarks. All interview participants recognised that they were not literally walking in the footsteps of Jesus, particularly in Jerusalem, so geographical features that were less likely to have changed had great appeal. I considered knowledge about the physical geography of Israel to be part of the learning about Jesus and his world because it could only have happened in Israel. The distances between places, the ruggedness of the terrain, or the desolation of the desert helped participants to contextualise stories and gain meaningful insights. As such, earlier candidate themes of *The Land* or *Place* or *Scripture* learning were collapsed into *Encounter*ing *Jesus*. The interview extract below shows the connection between geography, Jesus, and Scripture.

When he went to the Garden of Olives with his disciples, he would have seen the Temple soldiers coming to arrest him, and he could have quite easily just ducked over the back of the hills and off he went, and he chose not to. (IP5)

For some participants, the experience of being in Israel turned something almost mythical into a reality: Israel really did exist. In two interviews, the participants spoke about moving from childhood images of Scripture and Jesus to a mature understanding: an encountering of Jesus and the Christian stories in a new way: "It [the land of Jesus] really

does exist, it's not just a story" (FG1V2). IP4 explained how the SSP ultimately enabled them to move from this childhood perception to a better understanding of the texts and of Jesus.

> So, I was just assuming that a mountain is a mountain, huge like Mt Everest when you are a child. Being in the land, and seeing the close proximity of everything, understanding that he might have been on the Temple Mount and then just went out to that Mount of Olives to pray, it made sense to *me*, and I could see by that land exactly what Jesus might have been thinking, then, [in a rush to explain] when it was said that he went out to the desert, well, the desert was virtually his back door, wasn't it [laughs]! (IP4)

Throughout the sifting and reorganising of themes I recognised that *Transformation* was a possible theme; the movement from childhood images being transformed into meaningful realities was repeated in other data. The thought that the essence of an experience led participants to some sort of transformation regarding encountering Jesus began to take shape throughout Phase Three of data analysis.

I made the decision that since the purpose of the SSP was to learn about a particular Gospel, which is focused on the story of Jesus, then what was identified as Scripture Learning and Learning about Jesus could be collapsed into *Jesus* under the bigger *Encounter* theme, thus becoming *Encountering Jesus*.

Encountering the Other. Whilst examining data linked to *Encountering Jesus*, I identified that encountering other people was also important. Originally, I had chunked some of this under *Journey to Israel* or the *Land*, or *Place*. I had applied a candidate theme title, *Meeting Other People*, during analysis of questionnaires and continued using this title in interviews before I recognised just how important encountering others was to participants.

> I presume that any study changes your understanding. For example, I always understood that Jesus was a Jew, but listening to a Jewish man give his

response to having read Luke's Gospel for the first time heavily underscored this. He pointed out that, for him, Jesus came across as being extremely Jewish in both his sayings and style of teaching. I think he even pointed out that the Jewish leaders were not left much room in their decision to crucify Jesus for his claims. (QP4)

Below is an example of how *Meeting Other People* was mentioned in data originally coded *Jesus*. The essence of this extract was learning about others, and in particular, any relation to other religious and ethnic groups. Participants perceived they were not welcomed by some people (see crafted story, Chapter Four). This led to the collation of themes under *Encountering Other* within the theme *Encounter*.

In order to ascertain how important *Encountering Other* was to participants I returned to questionnaires and noted that eleven out of fifteen questionnaire responses included the candidate themes *Interfaith* or *A Place* as *Socio-Political Tension, Religious Tension.* Interview data was coded in a similar way, with notes and examples acknowledging the interreligious or interfaith component.

The first example below shows the awareness of socio-political unrest and the complexity of the situation and how it is linked to respect for other faiths.

I learnt about the need for honest dialogue and respect amongst different faiths. I also learned about the importance of forming opinions that were not about judging others, but about recognising and speaking up about injustice. Being in Jerusalem really helped me to understand the complexity of the relationship between Palestinians and Jewish people, but the need to balance my views of the injustices faced by Palestinians in a way that did not demonise Jewish people. (QP5)

The interview of IP4 added another dimension to this. Their observation of Jewish and Muslim adherents going to worship made them think about the similarities rather than the differences between religious groups.

> … all the different religions and the culture, just watching them and observing them, [breathy tone] just seeing them just as equally as passionate about their faith as what you are about yours. And you know, just living all together with them, and watching them go about their business, you know, heading off to the Western Wall and away they go, and I thought, I wonder if that is how we look, when we are heading off to Mass, in a hurry, and trying to get off. (IP4)

The example below about participant learning around *Socio-Political and Religious Tension* cites the need for interreligious respect for adherents of other religions. I decided that because every interview contained data coded *Interfaith* or *Interreligious* learning and *Socio-Political Tension*, this was now a higher-level candidate theme. Data under these themes could be collapsed into one theme, *Encountering Others*. The essence of the example from IP6, one of many examples, confirmed that *Encountering Others* was an important sub-theme; it was about the people they encountered and, in that encounter, they learnt something valuable.

> The different religious groups and the need for utmost respect for that call to prayer, the need for utmost respect [stresses words] for the Jews, the traditional Jewish culture and their prayer, and their Friday prayer and the [Western] Wall. The utmost need for respect for that, was paramount. (IP6)

Both the IP4 and IP6 excerpts exemplify a transformed way of looking at interreligious dialogue, therefore reaffirming the potential theme *Transformation*. I recognised that participants were experiencing some sort of transformation, which augmented my thinking around transformation as a candidate theme.

Participants often became very emotional when discussing interreligious tensions, indicating deep feelings around this theme. Their reaction reinforced my decision to elevate it to a higher theme. For example:

> I think the immediate impact for me, when I was there, was emotional. I know the first time we went to Bethlehem, and the first time I saw the wall, the separation wall, that was a very emotional day for me, and I was keeping a journal. And that day I didn't write, I had to just talk, I had to audio-record my reflection for the day and it was twenty minutes of me, crying essentially, about just how sad it was to see this place that is tied to the story of the nativity, and to see the reality of what it is and how the people live there. That was very upsetting. (FG1V3)

Place and *Interreligious* or *Interfaith* were renamed *Encounter*ing *Other* because there was a sense of otherness about people, society, other religions, other socio-political realities. Thus, these data were collapsed under the theme of *Encounter – Encountering Other*. A further, indicative example of this otherness was:

> I had to stand for quite a few minutes and absorb what I was seeing. It was like stepping into the Bible. There were the different religions, there were the different cultures, there were people in traditional costume. It was [pause], there were colours and markets and, and people in burkas, it was just *overwhelming*. It was out of my comfort zone; out of anything I had ever known before! (IP6)

The crafted story in Chapter Four provides rich examples of *Encountering Other*, including other people in the SSP course, Muslim and Jewish people, *Interreligious Tension* and *Learning*, and *Socio-Political Tension*.

Some data identified as *Preparation – Israel* were also moved to *Encounter – Learning About Others*. The example below comes from a reflection journal referred to by FG2V4 during a group interview and subsequently provided to me (FG2V4R). Although seemingly about how the course was organised, it was in essence, another example of learning about the Other, strongly influenced by the Sion Charism (see glossary). This highlights social justice and the dignity of the human person by witnessing the Christian faith through learning about Scripture and Jesus and the promotion of understanding between Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

> Before I left Australia, Catholicism was largely the depth of my knowledge of God. Having had lectures from Jewish women, I learned about Ramadan and the importance of faith from a Muslim woman, discovered the joy and generosity of sharing a meal with a Bedouin family and listening to their story, visiting Bethlehem and listening to the voices of young people and their pastoral leader, celebrating Shabbat with a Jewish community, going to an Armenian celebration, attending Mass in Hebrew, Italian and French, tasting the best that Israel has to offer and coming away with a knowledge of the desperate need for our world to accept each other, celebrate who we are as a people, a community of faith and custodians of stories, cultures and beliefs that make us who we are. What I immediately discovered was the tolerance between religions. But I was constantly reminded to be watchful as the peace I was seeing had the potential to turn very quickly. (FG2V4R)

Encountering Other was confirmed as a strong theme identified in data about interfaith or interreligious experiences and socio-political tensions. This theme conjured emotional reactions in a number of interviews which showed the strength of feeling

participants had. They were in a totally different, alien society, and they were struggling to come to terms with Learning about self.

Given the emotions and strong reaction to *Encountering Other*, I returned to interview data to see if participants had learnt something about themselves. This was also a way of reviewing the interview data set to confirm the emerging candidate themes. When I identified data about *Encountering Self,* I noted what I believed they had learned about themselves. The examples below show different learnings about *Self* that I identified.

IP10 recognised that they gained insight into their personal faith, which was enriched because of meeting others of different faiths. Respecting the faith of others was very important to IP10; they considered this brought about something powerful in the lives of believers, all believers. There was a sense that interfaith learning enriched IP10's personal faith. This data sample also indicated a transformed perspective about the need for greater respect between people of different faiths.

> I would say that the experience gave me a greater insight into not only my faith, but a range of other faiths which enriched me in a personal and professional way. I learned the power of respecting each other in faith and the dedication and enrichment faith brings to the lives of the Israeli people. (IP10)

The crafted story in Chapter Four provides examples of participants recognising that their perspective had been transformed. Perhaps there was a tacit acknowledgement of bias they had not previously identified in themselves.

IP4 recognised they had personal strengths of which they were not previously aware. IP4 revealed this strength through the depth of faith that drove them to face challenges. During the SSP they realised they could be independent and that they were a strong person.

> I can look after myself, and I am a *strong person*, and when you have faith in God you can do anything. (IP4)

Learning about Self included learning about themselves as a person of faith, about their untapped strength of character, about their need to be more tolerant of people with different perspectives on Catholicism, and people of other faiths and cultural backgrounds.

Scripture Learning. The theme Scripture Learning was identified as integral to all sub-themes under Encounter. In the questionnaires I had identified links between the candidate themes Journey to Israel, Scripture, and Learning, because participants learnt about Scripture through the land itself, its geography, its terrain and the distances between places:

> To experience the heat in the desert and reflect on OT Scripture about Abraham and other figures and their experiences of thirst and feeling close to death just brought the scripture to life in a vivid way. Also, having a better understanding of the geographical distances and the conditions that Jesus travelled and the stillness of the desert. (QP5)

Examination of interview data led to reorganisation and collapsing of the candidate themes *Journey to Israel*, *Scripture* and *Learning* into *Scripture Learning*. That *Scripture Learning* was integral to the entire *Encounter* experience. I identified data showing that Scripture was the vehicle for participant learning leading to a greater understanding of Jesus, of themselves, and of others. Therefore, all data samples provided under these sub-themes were linked to *Scripture Learning*. Learning about Scripture was the purpose of the SSP and it was the basis and springboard for all learning.

The importance of the land for understanding Scripture was identified in all questionnaire responses and interview data, but is best conveyed in the crafted story in Chapter Four in the words of Katy as "a response of the heart".

Learning in community. Every participant interviewed indicated the importance of those with whom participants studied. For example, data showed how the many nationalities

who undertook the Biblical Formation Program at Ecce Homo gained the opportunity to learn about different perspectives of Christianity during the month they were together.

> It was good [being with 17 Irish priests] because, you know at that time the Irish church was still fairly pre-eminent in the Irish society and the priests had a particular view of themselves as priests. But it was good to see some of those sorts of walls break down over time. The African nuns brought a different perspective as well. The mix of the group was quite fascinating. (IP5)

The community also provided companionship, support, and a sounding board for learning. This was particularly noticeable in the data from Focus Group Two which is the basis for the crafted story given in Chapter Four showing that the community support and learning within a community appeared to be integral to all aspects of participants' experiences. The crafted story captures the enthusiasm toward the community experience which they returned to on three occasions. IP6 spoke about the importance of having fellow recipients from the Sale Diocese.

> There was a priest from America, he was good fun, he had a great sense of humour so I gravitated to him for a good old chat and a bit of a laugh. There were people that enjoyed going down for a glass of wine of an evening as I would, so you'd gravitate to them and mix and match with a lot of different people that way. Yeah, the socialising was really important and that's where you got to know a lot of the others. What also gave me more confidence too, is I was there with people from Gippsland. It was like a little family group, and we made ourselves into a little team, and the support and the knowledge of those friendly faces was amazing, and that's what reassured me. (IP6)

The examples above are representative of the entire interview set and were therefore considered important. I decided to recode data that spoke about the support of the group, the

companionship, the community feel, the learning they shared, how their learning was enhanced, and how the community gave them confidence in a very different country. These were eventually collapsed under *Encounter* as the sub-theme *Learning in Community*.

Time and space for personal and professional learning. I identified another sub-theme about the importance of time in the SSP experience, where time was referred to either implicitly or explicitly in every interview. Participants recognised the importance of having time to reflect and learn, and the opportunity to develop personally and professionally. FG2V1 shows the importance of being given time to devote to learning. To be removed from day-to-day responsibilities and to find themselves in a "comforting place" was considered a "privilege".

> I was lifted out of the day-to-day things here and put somewhere else … People who were sharing the thinking. Concentrating on Scripture, not that I hadn't, but a comforting place where I felt safe … But I had this privilege to being able to stop, think. (FG2V1)

IP5 adds to the importance of being given time.

> It was like a moment frozen in time where you experience it without any of the external pressures and so you could really reflect and contemplate within you.

These and other similar anecdotes led to *Time and Space for Personal and Professional Learning* to be identified as a sub-theme.

5.2.4 Witness: Witness to faith

This study understands *Witness* to mean giving assent to Catholic beliefs and Tradition, and with that, a personal assent or commitment to animating this belief. I identified data that showed there were two sub-themes in *Witness*: *Personal Faith* and *Teacher of Faith*. *Personal Faith* acknowledged data that showed a deepening of personal belief in God. Data

concerning matters relating to teaching the Catholic faith in schools, especially teaching Scripture, was coded *Teacher of Faith*. *Witness* was recognised as a major theme because it was identifiable in all data sets.

My examination of interview data led me to identify the prevalence and importance of responses associated with both sub-themes, *Personal* and *Professional Witness*, which confirmed *Witness* as a major theme. *Witness* became the umbrella theme for *Personal Faith* and *Teacher of Faith* to encompass the essence of what participants were saying. A close review of interview data led to the recognition that participants expressed their witness to personal faith in different ways such as an "inner yearning" (crafted story Chapter Four).

Personal Faith as Witness to the Christian faith. *Personal Faith* as it applies to the data of this study refers to an inner spiritual nourishing. The examples below show different facets of *Personal Faith*. IP8 indicated a strengthening of faith and a recognition that faith had to be a lived faith.

> … as far as my own faith goes, [the SSP] made it stronger, just to be able to say, well, you can only live as a Catholic as you believe God's called you to, and then it's even more important to make sure you put your money where your mouth is. (IP8)

Results showed that the SSP experience enabled them to witness without fear (crafted story, Chapter Four), and the time and space to consider faith and their mission.

> I felt that with my faith, I was in a place where I could think, read, talk, listen. And for the first time I actually felt more about what my mission was about, not only in my workplace but my life. (FG2V3)

Professional growth as witness to the Christian faith. Data indicating professional growth was identified in all questionnaires and was further strengthened by interview data. The decision to place data originally coded *Professional Learning* under the theme *Witness*

was decided during the reviewing of themes. Since *Professional Learning* was the umbrella for all themes, I decided that data specifically concerning *Teacher of Faith* fed into the theme *Witness to Faith*. In this respect, *Teacher of Faith* is understood as knowledge or learning that enhances work in schools, resulting in improved teacher competence. For example, IP4 explained how the SSP enhanced their learning about Scripture and how this has influenced their teaching of Scripture. They go on to describe how they strive to inspire a young teacher to improve their teaching. IP4 is giving witness to faith, and giving witness to students through professional growth and knowledge:

> It's made a significant difference to the way I really listen to the Gospel, the way I teach … And, when I teach it now, I always, always give as much background to that piece of Gospel as I can … I give diagrams, I talk to the kids about the lay of the land, I talk about the audience of the time and who it might have been for. And the kids respond in a much, much more open manner.

IP4 cited the reaction of a young teacher to mentoring:

> 'I love it when you teach RE, … I'm learning so much from you, I love it, I love it, because you're teaching me. Everything you do you're teaching me; … I say 'really?' She says 'Oh you have no idea, oh I love it when you start talking about the Gospel or any of your stories. So, I said 'Okay, if you're happy to keep learning, that's the best way to learn and I can help you and we can do it this way.' When I listen to her teaching the kids, I know it goes a little bit deeper too. It's that little bit more about broadening [her knowledge]. (IP4)

With its two sub-themes, *Personal Faith* and *Teacher of Faith*, *Witness* was confirmed as a major theme. Improved knowledge together with the experience of unique encounters in Israel enhanced participants' ability to give witness, professionally and personally.

5.2.5 Transformation: Transformative learning – personal and professional

In this study, transformation is understood as a changed perspective, a changed understanding that leads to viewing or doing things differently. The major theme *Transformation* includes two sub-themes, *Personal Learning* and *Professional Learning*, each of which has a number of associated indicators. Data indicating transformation was identified in all data sets.

Throughout the coding, re-coding and collapsing of themes, it was important to focus on the major question of this study: What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, is it a means for transformative learning? I decided that data revealing the concept of transformation was important and should be clearly identified and collapsed into the candidate theme Transformation. I returned to interview data and the reflection journal, in order to consider any additional themes. This is an example of the organic process of coding described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

I had already identified and coded examples of *Transformation* while reviewing and refining *Encounter* and *Witness*. In fact, data identified as *Transformation* could be traced back to earlier analysis of questionnaires. The indication was that through the encounter with *Jesus*, *Others*, and *Self*, participants recognised that their *Personal Faith* and their identity as a *Teacher of Faith* had been transformed. The transformation, as QP6 stated, "had a huge impact on me at various levels: spiritually, educationally, knowledge wise, geographically, emotionally, personally". Therefore, it was not just about a transformed knowledge of Scripture, but something much broader and more profound. "Throughout this journey I have watched, listened, shared, discussed, challenged, read, felt, prayed, laughed, cried and grown

… I have changed." Responses such as this compelled me to return to data to confirm whether participants recognised that transformation had taken place, and to identify what had been transformed. What I identified during the re-examination of data was that when participants wrote, or spoke, for example, about others, or their learning about Jesus, or interfaith learning or about the socio-political situation in Israel, there was an underlying sense that they recognised a difference within themselves. "Many people said we came back different. I hope it was visible to others because it sure was visible to us" (QP13). I collated data under two identifiable sub-themes, transformed *Personal Learning* and transformed *Professional Learning.* I recognised that data in these two strands were examples of *what* had been transformed and was therefore important in relation to the major question of this study, and that these came under the theme *Transformation*.

Transformed learning: Personal. In Phase Four analysis, Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, and Terry (2019) state that "you aim for an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the central organising concept" (p. 856). To achieve this level of analysis, I began to code data that indicated transformed *Personal Learning*. This study understands transformed *Personal Learning* to mean learning that changed their personal perspective of the world or their attitude to the world and to people. I identified three sub-themes: Confidence; Tolerance and Respect for Others; and Deepening of Faith and Commitment to Faith, each of which is discussed below.

Confidence. I identified a change in participants' confidence in every data set. Participants recognised increased confidence in matters relating to faith, in their ability to teach Scripture, and as witnesses to Scripture. Many participants wrote or spoke about increased Scripture knowledge leading to a growth in confidence. For example,

> I finally felt like a Catholic. I had never felt good enough, knowledgeable
>
> enough or capable enough to answer questions about my faith in adult

company. Now I do. My faith has grown in many ways. It gave me confidence

to voice my views on Scripture verses, parables, etc, knowing that it is okay to

have a different view to someone else. (QP7)

FG1V1 spoke about confidence from a broader perspective. This participant saw their

learning during the SSP as something that gave their life purpose, gave them confidence to

change direction in their teaching career. "It [the SSP] gives me purpose for what I do, I

know that. It probably did beforehand but more so, my life has greater purpose since I went

there" (FG1V1).

Tolerance and respect for others. Data about change in participants' sense of their

place in the world, their duty to behave in certain ways as a result of their learning was

collapsed into *Tolerance and Respect for Others*. Every interview and all but a few

questionnaire responses contained data relating to this sub-theme. I also identified and

collapsed data into this theme that showed learning had transformed participants' worldview

because they had learnt about the need for tolerance in their own lives: "I now find myself

wishing to be more respectful of other religions, and people who hold religious views

different to my own" (QP4).

It has changed me, everyone is the same, we're all the same [laughs]. You

know, unless you go and experience somebody else's faith with them and

watch them in their domain, how can you possibly know? How can you judge?

(IP4)

The final contribution from FG2V4R connects Scripture, the love of God, and different

religions to show a transformed worldview:

Scripture is one continuous story of God's love … in all who celebrate faith. If

you change the way you look at things, the things you look at will change.

God is too big to fit into one religion. According to Huston Smith, the golden

rule is – If we take the worlds' religions at their best, we discover the distilled

wisdom of the human race. (FG2V4R)

Deepening of faith and commitment to faith. It was observed in all data sets that

participants experienced a transformation in personal faith and this observation led to the

identification of the sub theme *Deepening of and Commitment to Faith.* An example

characterising the types of responses linked to this sub-theme is that of QP13, who wrote

about how their faith had changed from an internal private perspective that was not discussed

to one where they talked about it openly. There is a sense that their confidence in matters of

faith had developed. Speaking openly, witnessing, is an important quality for leaders in

Catholic schools.

> Previous to the tour/program my faith was important to me, but I tended to
>
> think it was my own personal faith and I was reluctant to talk about it openly.
>
> The biggest difference for me now is that I feel happy to talk about my faith
>
> and I think as leaders in our schools that this is really important. In fact, I
>
> believe it to be paramount in Catholic leadership. (QP13)

Transformed Learning: Professional. In this study transformation is understood as

a changed perspective, as an understanding that leads to viewing or doing things differently.

PL has been defined as formal or informal learning undertaken in order to improve teacher

knowledge and practice. I identified five sub-themes: Knowledge of Jesus, Scripture,

Judaism, Islam, and general Interreligious understanding. Data coded *confidence, tolerance*

and *faith* under Personal Transformation above were also linked to this section on

professional transformation because participants indicated these had played a part in

transforming the way they teach Scripture specifically, and Religious Education generally.

Participants stated that the SSP enhanced their learning of Scripture, and most said their

teaching had improved as a result.

Some data linked deeper faith, knowledge of Israel, and improved teaching together in one statement, indicating they saw a correlation between them. This was coded *Transformation- Professional Learning* when data indicated a transformed way of teaching Scripture.

> It deepened my faith, improved my teaching and gave me a better understanding of issues in the Holy Land, both past and present. My teaching has a greater depth of understanding as I understood the geography of the country better. I had a better grasp of the messages in the parables and Gospel stories and a much more personal and enriched faith dimension to pass on to others. (QP1)

This excerpt indicates a transformation in the way Scripture was taught because of the SSP. The last phrase also indicates how their personal learning and enriched faith influenced their teaching. The crafted story (Chapter Four) showed how learning about Judaism, or Islam, flowed into the classroom and became a learning opportunity for interreligious study and about tolerance and respect during a Scripture lesson.

Contributions such as QP1's informed the decision to revise the theme previously named *Transformation,* to incorporate two sub-themes, *Transformed Personal* and *Professional Learning*.

Data where participants identified a change in themselves was coded *Personal Learning.* These included transformed confidence, tolerance, and respect for others, commitment to faith, deepening of faith, and an attitude of enthusiasm for Scripture. *Professional Learning* indicated transformation that affected teaching, or knowledge that aided teaching, for example knowledge of Jesus, Scripture, Judaism, Islam, and interreligious understanding. The data indicated that *Personal Learning* and *Professional Learning* were interconnected. Just as *Witness* and *Encounter* were connected, so too was *Transformation*;

all were part of the hermeneutic cycle of learning. Personal learning was considered as a stand-alone theme, however, since the purpose of the SSP is PL for teachers of Scripture I made the decision that it sat under PL, part of the hermeneutic cycle.

5.2.6 Preparation and Professional Development

Braun et al. (2019) state that in Phase Five of an RTA approach, theme names are tightened and made clear. In this study the final major themes, and theme titles, *Encounter*, *Witness*, and *Transformation*, sitting under the umbrella of *Professional Learning*, had gone through numerous phases of restructuring and reorganising in order to tell the story of the data. Two final aspects of data did not sit within the above themes: the pre- and post-SSP experiences, specifically the preparation sessions conducted by DOSCEL and follow-up after the SSP experience. I recognised both aspects were important because I identified data in both interviews and questionnaires. I named these two themes *Preparation* and *Professional Development* (PD). In this study PD is recognised as what learners do with the PL they have experienced during the SSP; it is about putting the learning into action. In PD, I identified three sub-themes: *Sharing with Colleagues*, *Sharing with Families*, and *Sharing with the Wider Community*.

The coding, reviewing of data, and identification of data for Preparation and PD involved moving back and forth between Phases Three to Five of Braun and Clarke's (2006) RTA before the themes *Preparation* and *PD* were identified. They are explained, with their respective sub themes below.

Preparation. This section contains data about how participants viewed the preparation for the SSP by DOSCEL. Data about communication with participants, the interview process, the gathering of documentation by organisers, the practical preparation information, and information provided during the two meetings prior to departure was brought together under *Preparation*. (See samples, appendices 6a, 6b.)

Some data were provided as blanket statements, such as "Those of us from Sale Diocese were very well prepared in all aspects from the housekeeping issues at Ecce Homo to the questioning at the airport before boarding the flight to Tel Aviv" (QP2). Some data focused on being prepared to face a very different socio-political tension:

> As a first-time traveller I was happy with all the pre-work and information. Travel arrangements were easy to follow and having a travel buddy is a great idea. Being warned about the soldiers and security arrangements was very thorough and not once did I feel unsafe. (QP12)

The theme *Preparation* originally contained data directly associated with being physically and mentally prepared by DOSCEL, but I decided to collapse comments made about the selection process into *Preparation* as it was an important part of the process leading up to the SSP.

I identified two different perspectives about the interview component of the selection process. The first allowed insight into the fact that the panel conducting selection interviews thought carefully about the reasons why some recipients were selected and some were not. This participant was satisfied that the process was rigorous.

> [This year] there were reasons why we chose two, and didn't choose the other two. We're sending four very different people next year … four different personalities and experiences, and it might speak to the four in slightly different ways. But they'll all respond I think to the experience. The four we're sending, we, the selection panel, were quite clear on why we're sending them, … and we were also quite clear on why we weren't sending the last two. So, there is a rigorous selection process for the *teaching* side of it. (IP5)

However, IP2 provided a different perspective:

It [selection interview] does play a role because you can get some individuals with personalities in any group, and it can, if you allow it, spoil your time. There was only one or two. [There was the] … element of being able to fit in, as well, on a personality level, which I don't think possibly the panel really looked for that. It might be good to just check with a DOSCEL person that supports that particular school and that particular person who has applied, [to seek] confidential, wider advice. (IP2)

IP5 mentions how the panel recognised that four very different personalities had been selected and that this caused some hesitation, but was worked through by the panel. IP2 suggested seeking confidential, wider advice on recipients who do not fit in because it might detract from the SSP as a PL experience; thus they might interfere with any possible personal and professional response of other recipients. Given that *Learning in Community* has been identified as a vital sub-theme in the whole *Encounter* experience, this difference of opinion about the interview process being rigorous enough is important.

Preparation was therefore identified as a theme encompassing organisational and practical preparation as well as data about participant selection. Preparation activities were seen as feeding into and supporting the PL that would take place in Israel, perhaps affecting how well participants were able to focus on the learning and respond to the SSP experience. Data showed that participants felt well prepared.

Professional Development (PD). This study sees PD as actioning learning after the SSP, how participants applied or shared their learning with others on their return. PD also builds on participant learning whilst sharing with others.

I identified two main themes in PD, *Post SSP Gatherings* and *Sharing with Community*. The latter has three sub-themes: *Colleagues*, *Parents*, and *Wider Community*. This section contains data that is relevant for this study because it provides insight into the effectiveness of participants sharing their learning with teaching colleagues in particular and

the school community in general. As a fully funded PL initiative, DOSCEL would be hoping that SSP learning would influence colleagues and the wider learning community. This section also sheds light on what structures are in place across the system to support participants to effectively share learning.

Post SSP gatherings. This section contains data about the variety of gatherings that participants described after the Israel experience. This section provides insight into if and how PD occurred between recipients of the SSP over several years, and whether the PD pool of teachers was being utilised to the best advantage from a diocesan perspective. Undertaking Phase Five (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019; Braun et. al., 2019) with data coded PD, I began to identify and refine specifics of the theme. If participants' learning was built on or shared after the SSP then it was identified as PD because it focused on how they had applied the SSP learning. Participants' response was very positive about informal social gatherings, and formal gatherings organised by DOSCEL and the Sion Sisters, but these gatherings were intermittent, not available after the return of every group.

> I wouldn't make any changes to the program; however, I would like to mention that the follow-up sessions and social catch-ups that were run in Melbourne and Warragul [Two gatherings only in Warragul organised by DOSCEL since 2005] were really useful. (QP4)

IP 5's statement was typical of data concerning follow up to the SSP. "That's one thing I found very early on. I think the whole process fell down, that there was no expectation to take it further." Indicating that there is a gap in the SSP as an overall PL activity.

The great disappointment around lack of opportunity to get together was identified in five questionnaires, Focus Group 1, and three individual interviews. This data was coded under the theme PD. Participants wanted to gather for two reasons, personal and professional. First, on a personal level, to debrief about their experience in a social setting. Second, on a

professional level, participants desired further discussion and learning about Scripture and

discussion about how they shared their learning in schools.

> Reflection time after the pilgrimage, be it shared and/or personal, would be a
> suggestion. Having an annual gathering of those who have been on a
> pilgrimage to Jerusalem would be helpful. This would enable the journey to be
> re-lived and explored further in light of added life experience, and build on
> their learning and share how this learning was applied in the classroom.
> (QP15)

The importance of being able to share regularly to consolidate learning was

exemplified in the experience of Focus Group 1. This group identified the advantages of

having multiple recipients in one school as it kept the learning alive. In the absence of regular

gatherings being organised, colleagues in this school had formed their own post-SSP

community. Although it is unusual to have more than two recipients of the SSP in one school,

I marked this as PD because this focus group saw the advantages of this for the school and to

consolidate and continue their learning.

I also named data PD if its purpose was to lead others to fuller participation in Liturgy

through a better understanding of Scripture. "Having studied the Gospel of Mark in such

depth I have learned to look deeper. I continually relate more detail and look for further

meaning to Scripture" (QP9). If SSP learning led to further formal PL I coded this PD. For

example, "It definitely impacted on me because it made me want to return to study, and this

year, I began a Masters of Arts (Theology) because I wanted to learn more about Scripture"

(QP5).

Much data pertained to what they had done in their classrooms regarding the teaching

of Scripture, but I identified another PD area, that of teaching about interreligious learning.

For example, QP13 posed a question around how recipients applied interreligious learning in

the classroom. Interreligious learning had already been identified by participants as important learning during the SSP in light of current religious and political tensions.

> The only thing I would suggest as part of the follow-up may be a discussion around 'how did I follow up my trip with the children in my class?' Hopefully this trip could lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of other faiths, clearly starting with Judaism and certainly Islam. I think we desperately need to build this respect for other religions in our schools, especially now. Perhaps in the follow-up discussions participants could share how they have done this and what worked well for them. (QP13)

IP8 expressed the need for follow-up at principal level. I coded this PD because it called for the application of learning during the SSP by presenting to Principals.

> How often do principals actually get to sit around and talk about pedagogy, teaching and learning, let alone faith, let alone Scripture and what it might mean to you, and the context … Something could be organised for principals to attend, perhaps with a recipient presenting to the group. (IP8)

Data showed that participants across all data sets recognised the importance of post-SSP gatherings, and that there was room for improvement in the area. The professional and personal response of participants is limited because the current structure lacks follow-up.

Sharing with community – colleagues, parents and wider community. This section contains the themes *Sharing with Community* and its three sub-themes: *School Colleagues, School Families*, and *Wider Community*. This data is important to this study because it provides insight into how participants shared their learning with others who had not experienced SSP, and what structures if any were put in place by DOSCEL, and by individual schools to support and encourage participants to share learning. If DOSCEL

expects the PL gained during the SSP to have a flow-on effect in schools where participants teach, then it is important to understand if and how this is done.

School Colleagues. Participants shared both positive and negative stories about working with colleagues. "I'm working with teachers across the diocese again, so any time I talk about Scripture I'm able to bring that knowledge that I experienced and bring it to bear" (IP5). A positive response compared to: "Unfortunately, I do not think my experience has impacted on others as much as I would have expected or liked. Schools are such busy places that it is hard to get a chance to share knowledge with others" (QP11).

The data did not reveal any consistent structures around working with colleagues; it was left up to participants to find ways to engage others in their learning. The data did not show any evidence of DOSCEL structures, guidelines, or expectations regarding how participants could work with colleagues in schools. Participants were not expected to provide DOSCEL with feedback about how they shared their learning. This is clearly an area for improvement that DOSCEL could consider.

School Families. The data below gives examples of how some participants engaged parents. Sharing with school families happened incidentally for most participants, and only three participants organised opportunities for a wider sharing in the community. IP8 talked about catching the moment to share with families, but how this was to be done was left up to participants.

> I was able to put on a night for parents as well. It's like that, you talk about catching the learning moment for kids. That maybe when you come back, could you catch the learning moment then to keep it going for the people? (IP8)

The crafted story (Chapter Four) contains a very different experience of sharing learning with parents: it was about an incidental discussion that led to improved communication with a

family. The participant capitalised on the opportunity to build a relationship with a Moslem parent because of the SSP experience.

Increasingly over the last five years, participants have used blogs to share information. Some provide daily updates that students, teachers, and families can log into. Material from blogs or websites have not been cited because of the vast amount of visual data they contain. However, it is still important to recognise that blogs have had a significant impact on how SSP participants have been sharing their experience, and the open access they provide to the wider school community.

Few participants commented on sharing with families, so it could be considered as an aspect of PD that is underdeveloped. The data did not show evidence of any system structures or advice or expectations about sharing with the school community.

Wider Community. The code *Wider Community* was applied to data where participants shared their learning outside the school community, including with parishes. There were only two examples of this type of sharing. Both participants were proactive in seeking these opportunities. IP5 provided one example.

> I did presentations for a number of parishes. I did a presentation for I think it was Rotary… So, I took it upon myself to share those experiences. I felt there was an obligation to share more widely so I also worked with the catechists, because I was invited to address the Diocesan group of Catechists. (IP5)

Data showed that sharing with the wider community was another aspect of sharing that relied on the initiative of individual participants.

Other results. PD was now confirmed as a theme, and as I went back to Phase Four (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to map analysis, I recognised that data from DOSCEL organisers should also be coded PD because it provided a different perspective and gave insight into possibilities for the future. For example,

… you've got that initial honeymoon period when you get back …, So, if

you're going to do anything, do it then. Look, I think moving into the future

… we do need to think about how we build in that response element. Not to be

prescriptive, but to say, the reality is we're spending a lot of money sending

you over there, and part of that is because it's an extremely worthwhile

learning experience for you, but what do you bring back to the Diocese? …

So, If we could look at a way of formalising that as part of the process … you

will do work with your school, or parish community on your return, in a

formal sense. (IP5)

The data in this section showed the significance of PD to this study because it
identified that actioning of participants' learning and sharing with others on their return is a
significant gap. Participants recognised the need to improve how their learning was shared
with others in their school and that gatherings of recipients over the years could be helpful.
Furthermore, there were no expectations, feedback, or direction provided by DOSCEL about
what PD participants could or should do with their learning and experience on their return.
Participants were seeking opportunities to build on their own learning. They recognised that
gatherings with other recipients (formally and/or informally), could lead to ongoing PL and
further PD as ideas could be shared about how to apply their learning in schools.

5.3 Conclusion

The following table represents an overview of the coded data identified in all data sets
and final emergent themes. Through sifting and chunking, earlier codes were eventually
collapsed into those named in Table 5.4 Column 1 shows codes, column 2 provides examples
from data, column 3 shows recoding and collapsing, and column 4 names the final themes.

Table 5.4

Overview: from key candidate codes to final themes

Candidate Codes	Data samples	Recoding and collapsing	Themes
Identification of Israel as a Place of:			
Religious Tension	FG1, FG2	Jesus *Place of Jesus – Geography* *Scripture Learning* *Socio-Political Tension*	
Socio-Political Tension	QP5, IP5, FG1, V3		
Place of Jesus – Geography	QP4, IP5, FG1,V2, IP4		
Other Religions	IP10	Self *Stronger Commitment* *Interreligious understanding – Respect, tolerance* *Purpose* *Scripture Learning*	Encounter
Bonding in a Community	FG2, IP10, IP6, IP5, IP6		Jesus
Liturgical Celebrations	IP6		Self
Pilgrimage	FG1, V3		Other
Time	IP4, FG2, V1, IP5	Other *Other Religions* *Religious Tension* *Socio-Political Tension* *Interfaith – Judaism Islam* *Socio-Political Tension* *Community*	*Enabled by Scripture Community Time*
Different Culture	IP6		
Which enabled			
Personal Faith Development	QP7, QP13, FG2, IP8 All Interviews	Personal Faith Development *Liturgical Celebrations* *Pilgrimage* *Stronger Commitment*	Witness Personal Faith
Stronger Commitment	QP13, FG1, FG2		Teacher of Faith

Better Teacher of Scripture	All data	*Community* Teacher of Faith *Better teacher of Scripture* *PL Scripture* *Influence on Pedagogy*	*Personal Faith and Teacher of Faith* *Interwoven with each other and with Encounter and Transformation*
Change in themselves	QP6, QP12, QP13, QP14 All Interviews		
Scripture Learning	Multiple QPs All interviews	Professional Learning *Scripture Learning* *Jesus* *Interreligious understanding*	Transformation
Interreligious understanding – Respect, Tolerance	IP4, IP5, IP6, IP8, IP10, FG1, FG2, FG2V4R		*Interwoven with each other and with Encounter and Transformation*
Confident	QP4, IP6, FG2, FG1, IP4, IP8	Personal Learning *Respect* *Confidence* *Stronger* *Enthusiasm/purpose*	*Interwoven with each other*
Stronger	QP5, IP4, IP6, FG2V4R, QP7		
Enthusiasm/Purpose	IP4, FG1, FG2		

Other Codes

Organisation by DOSCEL	All data		Preparation
Quality Course	All Qs All Interviews	Jesus Place of Jesus – Geography	Professional Learning
PL Scripture	IP5, IP6, IP8	Influence on Pedagogy	
Interfaith – Judaism Islam	11 Qs All Interviews	Better teacher of Scripture Interfaith – Judaism Islam	
Learning is Broader than Scripture	QP9, FG2, V3	Enthusiasm/Purpose Stronger Commitment Respect Confidence Interreligious understanding	*It is all PL*

Influence on Pedagogy	QP15, All data	Influence on Pedagogy	Professional Development
Work with Staff	FG2, IP4, IP5, IP8	Work with Staff Work with Community	
Work with Community	FG1, V1, IP5		*Gap for improvement*

As a result of the complexity of responses, identifying the essence of their meaning, that is, what was at the heart of the many stories, became paramount in the analysis of data. Chapter Four's crafted story provides the backdrop for Chapter Five. The process of crafting this story was not merely another way to present the key themes, but to share the richness and complexity of the data and invite the reader to immerse themselves so that Chapter Five could be read with the holistic picture in mind, adding to the insights the identified themes provide. Coding data and identifying themes were difficult because they intersected many times. However, decisions were made regarding where data best fit. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) RTA provided a process for examining data, and gave the required flexibility for movement back and forth in order to identify and confirm key results, a process represented in the reporting of themes above.

Data analysis identified three distinct phases to the SSP experience. Phase 1 is the *Preparation* of participants by DOSCEL, Phase 2 is the *Professional Learning* that took place in Israel, and Phase 3 is the *Professional Development* that took (and has further potential to take) place post-SSP.

Phase 1, *Preparation* included data about meetings and practical instructions that enabled participants to be fully prepared take part in the SSP. *Preparation* included data on the selection process which showed that selection of candidates may need further consideration.

Phase 2, Professional Learning is an umbrella or overarching theme for Encounter, Witness, and Transformation. Encounter was enabled and enhanced by the sub-themes

Encountering Jesus, the Other and Self, Scripture Learning, Learning in Community, and being given the Time for Reflection. All of the themes and sub-themes of Encounter are linked to the Witness to faith theme. Two subthemes were identified in Witness, Personal Faith and Teacher of Faith. Within both Witness and Encounter, Transformation of participants was identified and coded as a separate theme. Encounter and Witness enable Transformation.

Phase 3 is *Professional Development*, what participants did with their learning on their return to schools. Within the theme PD are the sub themes *Post SSP Gatherings* and *Sharing with community* – colleagues, parents and wider community. I identified that there is room for program improvement in PD.

As stated earlier in this chapter, Phase Six (Braun and Clarke, 2019), producing a report, primarily takes place in Chapter Six where I explain the thinking behind the themes, and the connections to literature. Braun and Clarke (2019) state that this may be a way to "ensure that the final themes remain close to the data and answer the research question well … [and that the researcher is] … open to making further revisions to the themes' content, structure and names" (p. 857). All themes are so closely interrelated that they must be considered as a whole in order to make sense of the SSP experience and to answer the major question for this study: *What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, is it a means for transformative learning?*

Chapter Six:

Discussion of Results

The purpose of Chapter Six is to discuss the results presented in Chapters Four and Five in order to answer the major question: *What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, is it a means for transformative learning?* The results of this study fall into three distinct phases. Phase 1: Preparation of participants by DOSCEL prior to the SSP; Phase 2: Professional Learning (PL) obtained through the SSP experience of immersion in Israel and studying Scripture in context; and Phase 3: Professional Development (PD) regarding participants' opportunities to share their learning on their return to Australia.

6.1 Phase 1: Preparation

Phase 1 of the SSP was encapsulated in the data by one major theme: Preparation. This phase concerned the SSP pre-departure sessions conducted by DOSCEL to prepare SSP recipients for their time in Israel. DOSCEL ran two pre-departure SSP sessions covering practical information and cultural readiness material.

Preparation readied participants for formal study and for the different cultural context in which they were immersed for the SSP. As such, this phase aligns with Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) external domain of *Interconnected Model of Professional Growth*, which they describe as being concerned with anything outside a teacher's personal world, including something that is as a precursor and stimulus for PL. Indeed, participant data pointed to the vital importance of preparation where they considered themselves better prepared than non-DOSCEL participants in the course.

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) are critical of linear models of PL. In this study, however, the Preparation phase fed into the PL phase, acting as the stimulus for the PL that took place in Israel. Preparation gave participants advice on practical matters and cultural

readiness, which meant they could focus on learning from the moment they arrived. he Preparation phase was thus an opportunity to gain the required knowledge and lay the foundations for learning during the SSP. This is an element of effective PL outlined by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2012), the Victorian Institute of Teaching (2021), and Hargreaves and Fullan (2012).

Preparation was also important for initiating the sense of communitas (Turner, 1973), which results revealed as being important for learning, and social and emotional support during the SSP. This finding is supported by Turner (1969, 1973) and Carrasco (1996), who assert that embryonic communitas begin to form prior to a journey. Turner (1973) also states that these embryonic communitas continue to develop throughout the journey and may continue long after it is over. This was evident in the results because a number of participants experienced the SSP with friends or colleagues, having timed their applications to attend in the same year. These examples provided the embryonic thread enabling friendships and strong bonds with others from the Sale Diocese to be built relatively quickly, something that then grew to encompass fellow recipients from around the world into what Turner (1973, 1985), Donnelly (1992), Carrasco (1996), Davies (1988), and Wilson (2012) describe as like-minded communitas.

In light of the results, I suggest that the embryonic communitas formed during the Preparation phase and further developed during the PL phase aligns with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) Social Capital, which is about giving educators access to a network, access to other human capital. It is not inconceivable that these communitas formed during the Preparation and PL phases of the SSP could provide the social capital described by Hargreaves and Fullan because the group shared learning before, during, and after the SSP experience. This communitas, and other learning during Preparation, fed into Phase 2 Professional learning (see Figure 6.1), which is discussed in the next section.
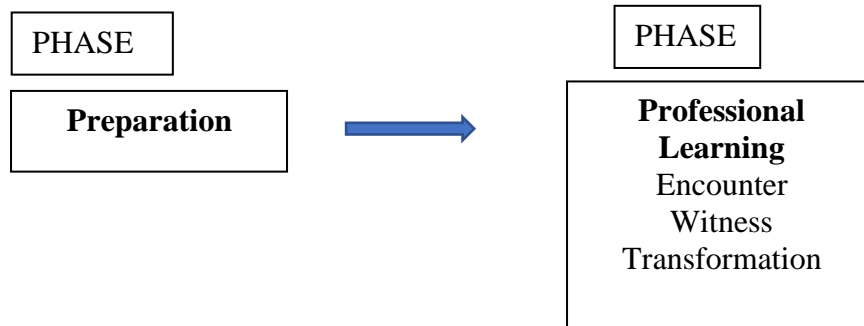
Figure 6.1

How Preparation supported Professional Learning

6.2 Phase 2: Professional Learning

The PL experienced by participants was characterised by three major themes: Encounter, Witness, and Transformation. These themes represent results that revealed PL as encompassing more than just the anticipated learning about Scripture. Visiting sites important to the Christian story and studying Scripture were identified as the impetus for all learning about Jesus, Self, and Other. In this study, "Other" is considered as all the people participants met from different countries, societies, and ethnic and religious backgrounds. "Other" could also be each participant, because they discovered something about themselves, an otherness that lay deep within. This understanding of Other is in keeping with the perspective of Mayor, a past Director General of UNESCO (Roger, Parinaud & Parinaud, 1996). Results showed that the learning encountered by participants influenced their ability to act as witnesses to the Catholic faith and that both Encounter and Witness enabled Transformation. These themes are discussed in the following sections.

6.2.1 Encounter

The use of the term Encounter as a theme title was influenced by Church documents such as the Congregation for Catholic Education (2017) which points to the importance of the dynamic between "personal encounter, knowledge and Christian witness" (para. 3). This

dynamic was revealed through data linked to participants' encounter with Jesus, self, and others in Israel, a unique hermeneutic space for rich encounters. Forms of Encounter took place on multiple levels and in multiple ways. Having the concentrated time to learn about Scripture with a faith communitas heightened the participants' learning and their personal faith. Results showed that to this day reflection and learning is ongoing: triggered by a Scripture text or a memento, their thoughts return to Israel. Each of these aspects of encounter – a hermeneutic space for encounter, encounter enabled through Scripture learning, encounter enabled through learning with a faith communitas, and encounter enabled through time for reflection – are represented in Figure 6.2 and discussed below.
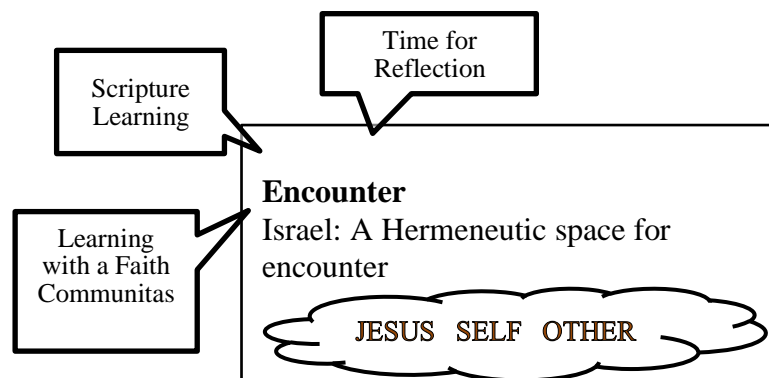
Figure 6.2

Encounter and its enablers

Israel: A hermeneutic space for encounter. This section, Israel: A hermeneutic space for encounter, serves as an introduction to content further explored in Phase 2, Professional Learning. Hermeneutics is understood as making meaning (Heidegger, 1962; D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2013), and Israel was the place in which participants made meaning. Therefore, Israel is considered a hermeneutic space for encounter.

Israel was identified as a unique setting central to the SSP experience and participants' learning. All participants acknowledged that Israel provided broader learning opportunities than just the anticipated Scripture knowledge. For example, participants in

Focus Group 2 described being pulled together by an energy they felt in Israel. Results

showed that Israel was particularly unique because it is the setting for the meta-narratives of

Christianity, the stories learnt since childhood (Feldman, 2014). Participants were able to

attend formal study sessions followed by visits to sites of religious significance: a form of

pilgrimage within the SSP (Turner & Turner, 1978; Tisdell, 2017; Post, 1996; Carrasco,

1996).

Adding to evidence of Israel as a hermeneutic space for encounter were stories of

tension and feelings of disorientation or being on edge that most participants expressed. This

highly prevalent data aligns with research about liminality (Turner, 1975, 1969, 1973, 1985),

and transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009; Ricoeur, 1992), which are discussed further

below. Results, also discussed further below, showed strong evidence for the promotion of

interreligious education in keeping with Church teaching (Pontifical Council for

Interreligious Dialogue, 1991) and research into interreligious dialogue (Cornille, 2020;

Boys, 2010).

Participants applauded and relished the opportunity to learn in context; they learnt

about Scripture from people of different faiths, from observation of everyday life in Israel,

and from fellow students. Taylor (2011) describes this as dialogue, engaging with self and

others, a medium for critical reflection on previous assumptions. A few participants

verbalised that their view of the world and their place in it had been transformed. Their

understanding of Judaism and Islam was enhanced and changed from previous perceptions,

particularly in relation to recognising the complexity of the religious and socio-political

context of Israel and the need for tolerance and respect for others.

On a personal and professional level, participants recognised that they went to Israel

for reasons of faith and that during their sojourn their faith was nourished and strengthened.

Collectively, these data suggest that transformation occurred through encounter (Cornille,

2020); but more than this, and in alignment with Gowdie (2017) and Sharkey (2015), it was encountering *with the heart* that had the greatest influence on participants' changed perspectives. As one participant observed, the SSP quenched a thirst they did not even know they had until they got there (FG2V1). The people, the place, the land, and the Word (see glossary) was a mantra I identified numerous times in the data, and it showed the centrality of Israel in all learning.

Encounter enabled through learning Scripture in context. Scripture learning enabled participants to encounter Jesus in a new way. An understanding of Jesus, the Palestinian Jew, came alive for them. This outcome was supported by what participants described as quality Scripture scholars in the SSP who provided academic rigour and the time needed to focus in depth on the one Gospel, something encouraged in the Congregation for Catholic Education's (2014) promotion of PL that provides "rigor and in-depth study" (para. 1g). All participants in every data set stated they had greater understanding of the inseparability of the Gospel to the land and the history of the people living in the land because their knowledge of Scripture and of Jesus had grown.

All participants considered the pilgrimage component a unique way of learning which even years later allowed them to visualise places, remember how they felt, and recall the sights, sounds, and smells. One participant was awestruck by antiquity and could barely comprehend he was standing in Jacob's field, the field of the patriarch (IP3). Others relished the opportunity to visit ancient sites in Jerusalem. Understanding geography and distances, experiencing the desert and the lushness of Galilee, all helped participants understand the human Jesus better and understand scriptural texts in both Old and New Testaments. All of this aligns with O'Loughlin (2006), who states that humans are embodied minds and that using the five senses aids learning.

Not only did embodied learning aid participants' understanding of Scripture, but results showed their faith was nourished through pilgrimage. In all interviews participants cried as they recalled experiences and feelings. They spoke of their faith being nourished and strengthened as witnesses to Catholic beliefs through the connections they had made to biblical sites and their many experiences. The SSP experiences touched their deeply held habits of mind (Mezirow, 1981, 1990, 1997), and as people of faith, it was their spiritual nature at the core of their being (Dirkx, 2006b; Claxton, Lucas & Webster, 2010; Schneiders, 2000; West-Burnham, 2002; Turner, 2012; Turner & Turner, 1978) that was moved.

Although the focus of the SSP was on New Testament texts, the results showed that participants understood better how the roots of Catholicism can be found in Judaism (IP4; IP6; IP5). One participant said that Catholics were poor at making connections between the Old and New Testament and that before the SSP they themselves had never seriously considered it. Participants attended lectures by Jewish and Muslim scholars who provided invaluable insights, reinforcing Pope Benedict XVI's (2010) message in his exhortation *Verbum Domini* that it is "[in] this dialogue with God we come to understand ourselves and we discover an answer to our heart's deepest questions" (para. 23). Encounter through dialogue with God, the Other (Taylor, 2011), and the encounter with the Christ of faith, is a means for a person to explore, examine, and consider their personal perspective.

All of the experiences cited above enabled participants to encounter Jesus in a new way. They show how the experience of studying Scripture in context provided rich learning opportunities that cannot be replicated in Australia. It helped them reflect on how they had previously understood the world of the texts and could consider new insights regarding what the texts now meant to them. Reflecting back on previous learning is in keeping with self-examination, critical assessment, and the beginnings of transformation described by Mezirow

(1991, 2009) in his phases of learning. All of this contributed to building professional capital in keeping with the description provided by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012).

Learning Scripture in context affected participants' confidence and passion and the way they taught Scripture on their return. These elements are discussed below in relation to learning Scripture within a communitas (6.3.1), in the themes Witness, Teacher of Faith, Scripture (6.3.2), and in also in Transformation 6.3.3).

Encounter enabled through learning with faith communitas. The learning community was integral to the experience of the SSP, and this was evident across all data sets, and across the many years that participants attended the SSP. The community was important in learning about Scripture, about Jesus, about self, and about Others both in and outside their immediate learning community. Given the strength of results around the role played by the community, the notion of communitas (Turner &Turner, 1978) and its influence is considered.

In keeping with the studies of Turner (1969) and Turner and Turner (1978), results showed that communitas provided support for participants as they tried to come to terms with a very different social and religious context, vital in aiding their understanding and easing their anxiety while away from home. Two participants mentioned that they were grateful for the support of others from the Diocese of Sale, people who had similar life experiences, as this gave them confidence; they felt that they were not alone in their sense of disorientation and they could talk things through with other members of the learning community.

Faith communitas promoted Scripture learning. The role of communitas was evident in two individual interviews where participants mentioned they were fearful of not coping with the academic rigour required for the focused study of Scripture. Participants felt confident to share their thoughts, and question and disagree with one another irrespective of their level of previous Scripture knowledge, and they stated that this promoted their learning

from each other. Their feeling of confidence was enhanced by the equal status within the group, one of the hallmarks of communitas (Turner, 1985; Davies, 1988; Turner, 1969). Respect and inclusivity were also revealed as key hallmarks of the bonding that took place between participants, which is in keeping with egalitarianism (Turner 1985; Turner & Turner, 1978; Donnelly,1992). Fullan, Hord & Von Frank (2014) promote the power of shared learning communities in schools and between schools. This could be applied to the SSP, where concentrated time is spent studying and sharing within a learning community.

     Faith communitas enriched personal faith. The majority of participants stated that the SSP experience strengthened their faith, suggesting they experienced a particular type of communitas: a faith communitas. Because all participants of this study, and other students in the biblical course, were Christians seeking to deepen their understanding of Scripture, they were bound together by faith. FG2 explicitly identified faith as the glue that bound them together. Participants purposely sought the SSP experience, which could be an unconscious search for the divine (Minehan, 1999). Faith, therefore, is the basis for the formation of the communitas that participants experienced during the SSP.

     Participants expressed a sense of freedom because they could share their faith openly. All data sets showed that openness to sharing faith stories was something the SSP participants found very different from their experiences in Australia. They found the freedom to express inner thoughts during the SSP, and subsequently spoke of how this nourished their faith. Because participants had voluntarily applied for the SSP, it is reasonable to suggest that an attitude of openness to faith, toward their search for the divine, may have already been present. This aligns with Donnelly (1992), who suggests that pilgrims show personal commitment by investing time and effort. It also aligns with the term 'liminoid', applied to pilgrimages by Turner & Turner (1978) because of the voluntary nature of pilgrimage. These in turn indicate participants' openness to faith nourishment.

According to participant data, the SSP was not merely a PL opportunity to gain knowledge about Scripture, but a broader opportunity for faith formation. Participants' stories showed they recognised that these experiences tapped into deeply held beliefs, causing them to rethink previously held perspectives, not just about Scripture but about their personal faith, their view of the world, and about themselves. As one participant described the SSP experience: "I will never lose that sense of the Holy Land where you actually see things through your heart" (FG2V2). The spiritual nature of faith, which is often at the root of a person's being (Turner, 2012; Turner & Turner's, 1978), points to bonding through faith at a very deep level; it is "a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being and finds in that root something communal and shared" (Turner, 1969, p.138). Further to this, Tisdell (2017) suggests that pilgrimage provides the opportunity for spirituality and cultural identity (which I suggest is a culture of faith) to transform learning.

Tapping into a person's deeply held beliefs links to Mezirow's (1991, 2009) phases of learning, which begins with a triggering event, moves into self-examination, recognition of discontent, and concludes with a new perspective. Together with the emphasis on the affective domain emphasised by Dirkx (2006a, 2006b), involving the unconscious self, I suggest that results showed it was deeply held faith (habits of mind) that unconsciously connected participants and formed them into a faith communitas. Therefore, encounter enabled through learning with a faith communitas enriched the dynamic between participants' personal encounter with Christ, their increased knowledge of Scripture and their faith, and their role as Christian witness. This aligns with the Congregation for Catholic Education's (2017) emphasis on the importance of this dynamic in faith formation.

Encounter enabled through concentrated time for learning and reflection.
Identified in all data sets in this study was that participants had the space and the luxury of time to undertake daily intensive learning, and to reflect on their learning. Studying in Israel

meant participants were separated from family and everyday concerns for an extended period, something that added to their sense of liminality (Turner & Turner, 1978). Living for a month in a different cultural and political context gave them time to adjust, and time to improve their understanding of the context. Despite feeling insecure at times, results showed that all participants acknowledged the positive side to separation. The importance of this dedicated time for learning and reflection provided an opportunity to move away from everyday life, its social structures and obligations, in keeping with the liminality described by Turner (1985).

   Reflection is ongoing. The importance of reflection, whether in action or on action, with or without a mentor (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), is confirmed by results that for SSP recipients, reflection is ongoing. By the time I interviewed participants for this study, some were looking back ten years, and yet they saw the SSP experience as being just as relevant for them today as it was years earlier. This is in keeping with Brandenburg and Jones' (2017) contention that there is no single answer to what reflective practice is, for "reflective practice is an evolving, dynamic construct with no one beginning and no one end" (p. 265), and with that comes new learning (Brandenburg & Jones, 2017). This reflection also illustrates a continuation of the hermeneutic learning circle (Heidegger, 1962).

   Participants identified that even social settings in Israel provided opportunities to reflect, and to discuss events and new learning in order to internalise and understand. The importance of reflection and discussion experienced during the SSP stayed with many participants who wanted to continue this after they had returned home. A number of participants recognised that they must never forget the experience, that they had to keep in contact to keep it alive. Some put aside time to meet socially and others shared through social media in order to promote ongoing reflection and learning with fellow recipients. Since adult learning is complex and emotion plays a role (Dirkx, 2006a), it is not surprising that

participants wanted to extend the SSP experience. This may not be sustainable, however, as life often gets in the way (Higgins & Hamilton, 2020).

Reflection continues through mementos. Another finding in this study was how most participants held on to the SSP experience and continued to reflect on it through photos and mementos. Every participant said they took photos and most said they used them in the classroom. A number of participants enlarged and framed photos and hung them in their homes. Other mementos such as cushions and bibles were purchased with a view to displaying them in homes or schools. Anderson & Littrell (1995) refer to such objects as "a tangible symbol and reminder of an experience that differs from daily routine and that otherwise would remain intangible" (p. 328). These objects may provide a means to maintain spiritual ties and can act as a way to reflect on the journey, or even to develop a sense of self.

One participant said the mementos were a daily reminder not only of Israel but of their ability to undertake an experience far out of their comfort zone. The photos acted as proof of their ability to do something different and daring. They were also a daily reminder of the most faith-filled experience they had ever had. Like symbols used in liturgy, mementos pointed to a deeper meaning. They helped make the Holy Land real again and they allowed participants the opportunity to return to it in their minds through the memento trigger (Kaell, 2014 as cited in Higgins & Hamilton, 2020). Further to this, a number of participants said they found it hard to explain their feelings about the SSP experience to others, and some indicated that photos and mementos gave them the means and opportunity to reflect and remember on their own.

The need for support from the SSP community. Participants noted that the support of other SSP recipients was important when they returned to Australia. Their connection with one another helped to maintain the momentum of learning and to share information that could benefit schools across the diocese. Hence, they sought their own gatherings with other SSP

recipients. In light of the results, I suggest that participants needed the faith communitas experience to continue as they adjusted to life at home. They had been in a liminal state in a very different social setting for a month and were now in the post-liminal phase (van Gennep, 1960). Ongoing connections helped them to debrief. All data sets in this study showed that most participants felt they could not share with colleagues the depth of learning they had experienced. Indeed, some groups struggled to articulate among themselves what happened in Israel and why, let alone adequately share it with others. This links back to Turner's (1969, 1973, 1985) work concerning the formation of communitas whose members form strong bonds through shared experience.

For some participants, the experience of a faith communitas in Israel was in stark contrast to experiences on their return to schools. Participants' stronger faith, confidence, and passion was tempered by the difficulty of gaining traction with staff around content with a religious base when they returned to their schools in Australia. Some participants did not think the school community showed a great deal of interest in what they had experienced. Participants had experienced an openly religious way of life in Israel (Paz, 2014) and they had responded to this context supported by a faith communitas that seemed lacking in their school communities. Linked to this, most participants were disappointed that there were not more opportunities organised by DOSCEL to promote interactions between all SSP recipients, irrespective of the year they attended. This would also be important to shift the way Scripture is taught, because as Gowdie (2017) asserts, it takes a group of people working together, supported by leadership, with appropriate resourcing, to enact change. Results therefore indicated that a structured opportunity to reflect and continue learning at a system level would be beneficial for SSP recipients and beyond them into individual schools. This notion is explored further in the Professional Development section of this chapter.

Summary of Encounter

Ultimately it was the hermeneutic space that Israel provided that promoted opportunities to encounter Jesus, Self, and Other through Scripture, communitas, and time. As a hermeneutic experience, the SSP proved the opportunity to learn from and to learn about the people they studied with, and the people who lived in Israel. As a hermeneutic experience the SSP also provided formal and informal learning opportunities, the rigour of academic lectures, the time and space to reflect alone or with others.

As a result of the various encounters reported, participants themselves recognised that they returned from their SSP experience different, transformed in some way. Results indicate that this sense of transformation was underpinned by triggering events (Mezirow, 1991, 2009) linked to the forms of encounter they experienced. These triggering events included: 1) robust formal learning opportunities; 2) immersion into Israel, the setting for the Christian story; 3) learning in a faith communitas; 4) having concentrated time to focus on their learning; 5) experiencing a very different society and people of different faiths. These enablers enhanced participants' knowledge about Scripture, Jesus and his world, and supported an encounter that shone a light on their own faith, and their understanding of themselves in relation to other people with different world views and religious beliefs. They were challenged, and their worldview was disrupted.

Collectively, notions of encounter were key elements of the PL experience. In addition to this major theme, Witness was also identified as a significant contributing factor to PL in the SSP. Notions of Witness and its importance in the SSP PL context are explored in Section 6.2.2 below.

6.2.2 Witness

In order to avoid duplicating evidence and discussion already covered, Witness should be understood against results in the Encounter section, as the two are closely linked. It was

nevertheless decided that Witness warranted a separate theme because results showed that participants recognised their ability to give witness to personal faith as a result of their SSP experience, which in turn enhanced their ability to give witness as a teacher of faith. Figure 6.3 shows this connection. Giving witness as a teacher of faith cannot exist without giving witness as a person of faith. This is captured in Pope John Paul II's (2001) *Ecclesia in Oceania* premise: the success of Catholic education is "inseparably linked to the witness of life given by the teaching staff" (# 33). This section explores examples from the results of how participants' actioning of personal faith and as a teacher of faith had changed in relation to their giving Witness.
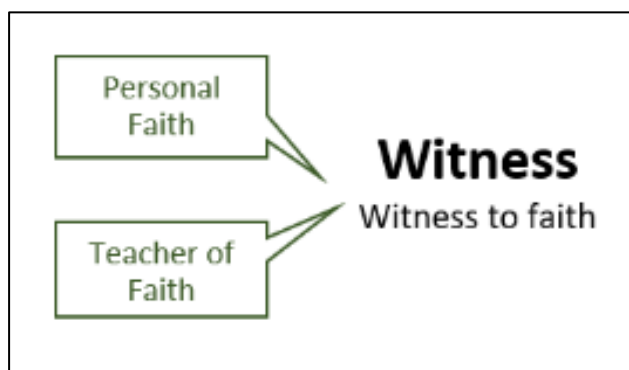
Figure 6.3

Witness: Personal Faith and Teacher of Faith

Personal faith. Seeing the SSP as a means for growth in personal faith was not surprising. What was unexpected was that results showed how participants recognised the SSP had strengthened their compulsion to actively live their faith. This was revealed through the data linked to participants' ongoing engagement with Scripture, the influence of the faith communitas and prayer, and connection to Catholic Church mission.

Scripture Engagement. After the SSP experience, participants were more engaged with Sunday Scriptures, and they actively pursued further learning. They recognised the

importance of improving Scripture knowledge to gain a better insight into how it spoke to them personally, which aligns with *Verbum Domini*'s (Pope Benedict, 2010) emphasis on Scripture, together with Church tradition, as a foundational source for faith.

The results showed that the SSP experience continued to influence participants as witnesses to the Catholic faith long after they returned home. Experiencing the land of Israel helped them recall Scripture knowledge through memories, and for many this made Jesus and the world of the Bible ever present when they read or listened to Scripture. Further to this, memories were easily recalled because the five senses were engaged in the physical pilgrimage aspect of the SSP. As O'Loughlin (2006) states, the world provides experiences that are sense-rich and this helps a person to understand and integrate with their worldview. Further to this, the body stores knowledge (Pallasmaa, 2007) which can be recalled: participants could recall the heat of the desert, the noise of the busy market, or the sight of the Sea of Galilee. These experiences reduced the mythical or mystical sense of Israel, and the reality of Jesus and his world strengthened their belief.

Together with embodied learning (O'Loughlin, 2006), rigorous study of Scripture texts provided new insights and understanding of Jesus' message and mission (Pope Benedict, 2010; PBC, 1993), so that participants' belief in the historical Jesus was further strengthened. Participants recognised they had a better understanding of the roots of the Catholic tradition. This was enabled by their lived experience of Israel, not only the land but also through meeting Jewish people, and through Scripture study that emphasised the connections between the Old and New Testaments (PBC, 1993; Pope Benedict, 2016; Boys, 2010). All of this strengthened personal faith.

The faith communitas and prayer. Results showed that the faith communitas greatly influenced and enhanced participants' personal faith. In the faith communitas participants experienced what it truly meant to be part of a faith community. They experienced and

witnessed people who were engaged with and committed to Christianity. This gave them the courage and determination to be more open about being a Christian while in Israel and on their return to their home country.

The many opportunities to pray in different ways enhanced personal faith. Praying with a faith communitas was identified as a strength of the SSP. This aligns with Gowdie's (2017) assertion that prayer strengthens the bonds in a community and connects people to the wider Catholic Church through the Jesus' story. Some participants spoke of setting time aside on their return home to contemplate Scripture, or pray using images to stimulate deeper engagement. Participants identified praying in the desert, Mass by the shore of Galilee, and experiencing the way of the cross as just some of the meaningful prayer experiences that nourished their faith. They recognised the importance of prayer life and experienced the positive effect it had on their faith.

All data sets in this study showed that participants relished the concentrated time and space to focus on themselves and their personal faith. Some said it was a luxury and not something that was always possible at home. Some also noted a new-found determination to find ways to make time for prayer after the SSP concluded. All of this ties in with the NCEC (2017) guidelines for PL, which point to the necessity of PL offering a formation of the heart through prayerfulness.

Connected to the mission of the Catholic Church. The word 'mission' in this study is understood as both proclamation and dialogue and takes several forms in the way it contributes to God's dream for humanity (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2013). Living and studying a gospel in Israel brought to life the historical Jesus and his mission, thus stimulating participants' sense of witness and their role in the mission of the Church (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997). This was made explicit in the words of FG2V3, who talked about how they gained a better understanding of their mission as a Catholic during their time in

Israel. This aligns with the NCEC (2017) guidelines for PL, which calls for formation that builds a better understanding of the mission of the Church in order to serve the mission of Catholic school education. In light of the results, I suggest participants' commitment to ongoing learning engaged them in a hermeneutic cycle and that this prepared them better to engage in the outward-looking nature of the Church's mission today (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2011) because they continued to reflect on what Scripture had to say in an ever-changing context.

Understanding the mission of the Catholic Church is enhanced through an understanding of Jesus' life and mission (NCEC, 2017). Evidence that participants were affected in mission-oriented ways is reflected in D'Orsa et al's (2019) work, where it states that mission is about "proclaiming, witnessing, dialoging, [and] actualizing" (p. 26). Results showed that through growth in personal faith and through their work as Catholic teachers, participants were better equipped to carry out these roles. Authentic witness is at the heart of Christian mission and is essential for the core purpose of Catholic educators aligning with in keeping with the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI (2010).

Teacher of Faith. Pollefeyt (2008) describes the teacher as *witness* because the teacher is the one who bears witness to their personal fusion of faith and life, a perspective particular to them. Teacher of Faith emerged as a sub-theme within Witness through the ways teachers bore witness in their Scripture teaching, as a result of their interreligious experience, and in the way they embodied authenticity in their teaching.

Scripture Teaching. In every data set, participants stated how the increased knowledge of Scripture positively influenced their ability to teach Scripture. This aligns with the call for teachers to be trained to teach Scripture accurately, as advocated by Stead (1996), and in Catholic Church documents such as *Dei Verbum* (1965b)*,* and *Verbum Domini* (2010). Formation that involves the head and heart is advocated by the NCEC (2017) as this forms

teachers for mission. This document also emphasises that PL, among other things, should be respectful, experiential, scripturally rich, contain theological content, and build communal Catholic identity. Results showed that participants understood the importance of employing an 'historical critical' approach to teaching Scripture advocated by Church documents (Pontifical Commission, 1993). This was in light of feedback from participants about changes they had made to the way they taught Scripture.

The interreligious experience. Participants were deeply moved by the religious and social context in Israel. A number of them subsequently expressed the need to hear all voices and not to criticise or condemn. This agrees with Lenehan (2016), who says that faith is about a face-to-face meeting with the Other, something that Cornille (2020) and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (1991) further support. Boys and Lee (2006) show that interreligious learning is an enriching experience for one's own faith if it is approached with understanding and respect. True dialogue enables critique of one's own particularity and the tradition of others. Interreligious learning is discussed further below in section 6.3.3, Transformation: Transformed understanding of Judaism and Islam.

Authenticity. Some participants pointed to their own improved knowledge, confidence, and enthusiasm as the reason why their students were more engaged. This aligns with the active participation of students in order to challenge and motivate that is promoted by the Congregation for Catholic Education (2014); credible witnesses are important to student learning about the Catholic tradition (Pope Benedict XVI, 2008). It was authentic witness that they were giving because teachers have no choice but to give witness to personal faith (Boeve, 2003; Gowdie, 2017). The knowledge they gained led participants to feel more confident (confidence is discussed in the Transformation section) and to be better teachers of Scripture by giving witness to their personal faith

Having greater confidence due to increased knowledge also supported participants' role as moderator (a guide in the process of making meaning about religion). As Boeve (2004) states, a person who is educated around matters of religion can "deal creatively, critically and reflectively with plurality, identity and fundamental life options" (p. 253).

This is how they gave authentic witness to the Catholic faith.

Results showed that faith formation during the SSP involved what the Congregation for Catholic Education (2011) refers to as the head and the heart, and this enhanced participants' ability to act as authentic witnesses in their personal and professional lives. Cognitively (head), participants were stimulated by lectures and field visits, and they responded to the learning emotionally or affectively (heart). Church documents such as *Dei Verbum* (Vatican Council II, 1965b) and Catholic educators Stead (1996) and Gowdie (2017) suggest that growth in faith benefits teachers' competency to teach Scripture, and the results from the SSP study showed that this is intricately linked to teachers who give witness to their faith.

There is congruence between the head and heart with cognitive and affective learning (Mezirow, 1981,1990; Dirkx, 2006a, 2006b; Owen-Smith, 2008). Therefore, the head and the heart, the cognitive and affective aspects of formation or PL, are confirmed in this study as integral to PL for educators in Catholic schools. Moreover, results showed that the SSP fulfilled this form of PL, promoting the formation of teachers of faith and authentic Witness.

Summary of Witness. The narrative in Chapter Four shows that participants were trying to understand how they were transformed. I suggest that Encounter triggered a faith response which transformed participants' ability to Witness faith, personally and professionally: two features closely intertwined and connected to the mission of the Catholic Church. Their ability to give witness to faith flowed through to students, where personal faith inspired participants as teachers of faith.

Boeve (2003) states that "Truth is a matter of relating appropriately to the intangible Truth, of giving witness to this Truth in the full awareness that it is ultimately inexhaustible, incomprehensible and inexplicable" (p. 99). Christ is central to the Christian perspective, the Christian as witness speaks from the perspective of a truth they live. Seeking Truth is about faith, and faith is an assent of the heart, not something that can be logically explained, "a knowledge which is peculiar to faith, surpassing the knowledge proper to human reason" (John Paul II, 1998). The SSP, with its focus on the story of Christ, provided the inspiration and the means for authentic witnessing, their assent of the heart to be nurtured in keeping with the Congregation for Catholic Education (2014).

Because of their Encounter experiences, Personal Faith was nourished because the SSP provided a type of spiritual formation. As Teachers of Faith, participants understood Scripture better and this gave them confidence and instilled a sense of passion to teach Scripture well. Their commitment to this task was evident in the ongoing learning that they undertook themselves. Their Personal Faith was enriched through opportunities for prayer that they expressed as an intention for making time for it on their return to Australia.

Encountering the different faith groups in Israel helped participants understand the need for openness to the other and inclusivity, and that they needed to give witness to their interreligious learning in the classroom. Just as I had made connections between Transformative Learning Theory and hermeneutic phenomenology with regard to the Witness and Encounter themes, I could now connect the theme Transformation because a transformed perspective was how Mezirow (1981, 1990, 1997) described the shift in attitude resulting in new perspectives. Israel experiences could be considered a powerful catalyst for transformation due to new encounters influencing habits of mind (Mezirow, 1981, 1990, 1997; Morgan, 2011). Encounter and Witness enabled Transformation to take place in

relation to Personal Learning and Professional Learning, which is described in the next section.

6.2.3 Transformation

I will explain Transformation in this section in relation to the results identified in the Encounter and Witness themes. This will be described under the headings Personal Transformation and Professional Transformation (see Figure 6.4).
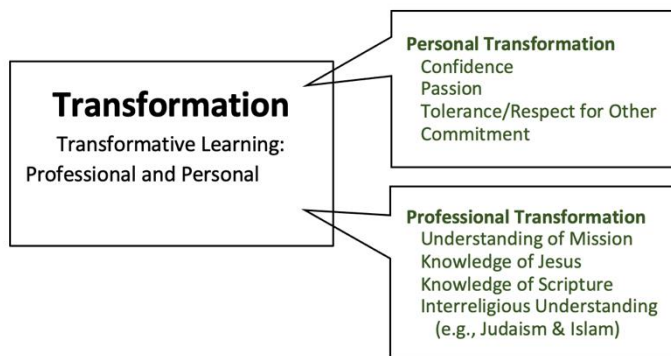
Figure 6.4

Personal Transformation and Professional Transformation

Results showed that participants experienced Personal and Professional Transformation. The transformation identified under Personal Transformation included confidence, passion, tolerance/respect for others, and commitment. Under Professional Learning the transformation that took place was understanding of mission, knowledge of Jesus, knowledge of Scripture and Jesus, interreligious understanding, e.g., Judaism and Islam. Personal and Professional Transformation were not mutually exclusive as there was a flow between them. For example, commitment or passion had the potential to influence and enhance Professional Learning. The converse is also possible as Professional Transformation could influence Personal Transformation. Transformation should be seen against the backdrop of Encounter and Witness themes, which discuss the transformation that took place in participants. This section, Transformation, serves to draw the discussions together to

identify the triggers for Transformation and to consider at a deeper level how participants were transformed.

Triggering events evident in the data that led to transformation were: 1) Robust formal learning opportunities; 2) immersion in Israel, the setting for the Christian story; 3) learning in a faith communitas; 4) having concentrated time to focus on learning; 5) experiencing a very different society and people of different faiths. It is important to say that another trigger or enabler for transformation was participants' openness and willingness to learn. This was evident throughout the results, shown most simply through participants' application for the SSP because, like a pilgrimage, it is purposeful and voluntary (Tisdell, 2017; Post, 1996; Carrasco, 1996).

Personal Transformation. Participants recognised that the SSP nourished their personal faith. They reported being different people when they returned, feeling transformed in some way. As one participant said, "it wasn't until I got over there that I realised there is a deeper depth to your heart that you can find in the right experience in the right place that I didn't know could go any deeper… until I experienced it, and I've come back quite different, and I can't go back to the way I was before" (FGV2V3). Based on results, I suggest that the conduit for transformation was participants' personal faith. It was through the eyes of faith that they encountered Israel, studied Scripture, bonded with others of faith, and met others of different faiths. Kegan (2000) raises the question of what forms actually transform. Results in this study showed that the triggers mentioned above spoke to participants' faith and transformed them at a deep level in keeping with metanoia (Meagher, O'Brien, & Aherne, 1979).

Faith was not only the conduit for transformation. It was also the recipient. Participants' faith was transformed, exemplified in the results when they: 1) recognised they now understood Scripture in a different way; 2) recognised that they were more passionate

about Scripture; 3) expressed the desire to learn more; 4) expressed a clearer understanding of the shared Catholic mission; 5) expressed the need for respect for others; and 6) recognised the need for interreligious dialogue and understanding. These outcomes emerged from transformations in participants' confidence, passion, tolerance/respect for others, and commitment to the Catholic faith.

To change one's world view within the space of a few weeks could be considered an epochal event in keeping with Mezirow's (2009) assertion that transformative learning may be sudden or dramatic. Developmental psychologists use the term "cognitive dissonance" when a person's experience exceeds their understanding, and they have to revise their worldview (Philibert, 1996). Epochal events and cognitive dissonance link with Turner's (1985) assertion that such moments exist in liminal spaces, and all agree with the results in this study. To illustrate the change to participants deep seated, often unconscious habits of mind (Mezirow, 2009), results showed deeply emotional responses, including tears and frustration during interviews.

Transformed passion and confidence. Results in this study contemporise the work of Stead (1996), who advocated for promoting teacher knowledge to increase confidence to teach Scripture (see Chapter 1). Increased confidence in Scripture teaching was an outcome reported by participants. Confidence, which Bandura (1995b) describes as a manifestation of increased self-efficacy, has the potential to motivate people. Participants in all data sets reported that their newfound understanding and confidence influenced the way they taught Scripture after the SSP experience. Two participants gave specific examples about students being more responsive to their teaching and put this down to their increased passion for Scripture. Increased confidence could also account for participants' commitment to teaching Scripture better, and to their increased passion for Scripture, which the results suggest was a motive for ongoing learning. This is an important finding given the issues associated with

low confidence, which has been found to undermine teachers' ability to teach Scripture well and limit their ability to be good moderators – those who encourage students to critique and consider how faith and life talk to each other (Stead, 1996; Pollefeyt, 2013; Sharkey, 2015).

The narrative in Chapter Four, together with results across data sets, provided examples of how participants returned to their home country as different people who explained how their students recognised their passion, enthusiasm, and love of Scripture. Confidence, like efficacy, concerns a belief in professional and personal ability to engage students and create a positive learning environment (Bandura, 1995a,1995b). This in turn enhanced their role as moderator between the Catholic tradition and the lived experience of students (Pollefeyt, 2008; Sharkey, 2015). Transformation of faith began with a challenge, or a disorienting dilemma or dissonance, in a place that made them feel on edge (Turner, 1985; Davies, 1988; Mezirow, 1997, 2009). Together, these experiences of dissonance created the grounds for transformation in participants' personal passion for Scripture.

Transformed commitment to the Catholic faith. Participants did not intentionally seek transformation of their faith, but results showed that this is what occurred. They were in awe of being in Israel, and expressed feelings of belonging: not only to the faith communitas, but also belonging to Israel. Participants experienced a profound comprehension of Christian identity, which aligns with Davies' (1998) assertion about the effect of pilgrimages. Participants reported an increased sense of Catholic identity and feeling of pride in their Catholicity. Having the necessary time to deepen their faith and to be able to express it openly was enhanced by the faith communitas (Donnelly, 1996). This emphasises the importance of a faith community for nurturing faith in keeping with D'Orsa and D'Orsa (2013), who suggest that "Catholic" should be seen as both institution and a community of faith. Results showed that a transformed perspective of themselves as Catholics also helped

participants make connections to the mission of the Church and to recognise the importance of giving witness to their faith in their personal and professional life.

Because Scripture is a foundational pillar of Catholicism, a transformed understanding of sacred texts would in turn support the results in this study that transformation occurred regarding personal faith and the church's mission. This ties in with the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) and the Congregation for Catholic Education (1997, 2007), which call for teacher formation, Shulman's (1987) advocacy for Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and the foundational nature of Scripture for faith formation advocated by Pope Paul VI (1965) and the Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993). In particular, the NCEC's (2017) call for scripturally rich PL opportunities in their *Formation for Mission* document serves to emphasise the importance of Scripture in teacher formation.

Participants wrote and spoke about the ongoing relevance of the SSP many years after their experience. I suggest that results indicated this was not simply because the SSP gave them experiences and information to teach Scripture better, but because it touched them so deeply and caused a shift in their thinking, a shift in their view of the world and of themselves, and in particular, a transformation of faith. This goes along with Mezirow's (1991, 1997) assertion that a person's individual frame of reference plays an important role in interpreting meaning. Faith as a frame of reference defined participants' world and influenced thoughts, actions, and emotions. These are the "boundary structures" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 4) that had formed them since childhood; the structures with which they left Australia and entered Israel, a new and unique hermeneutic space.

During the SSP, participants' boundary structures or frame of reference were extended, expanded, and, for some, demolished. This means their deep-seated habits of mind, their frame of reference, shifted. The SSP gave them time to reflect, alone or with a faith communitas. They had time to reflect in prayerful experiences and through robust

discussions. Reflection on previous understandings led to transformation. This is in keeping with Gowdie's (2017) premise that spiritual formation is transformational and reinforces the Congregation for Catholic Education's (2007) statement about the importance of PL providing formation of the heart.

As well as alignment with Mezirow (1991, 1997) and Dirkx (2006a, 2006b), regarding disorienting dilemma, reflection, and transformation, there is alignment with metanoia – a change in thoughts concerning faith (Capets, 2018; Meagher, O'Brien & Aherne, 1979). Together with this, there is congruence with the work of Turner and Turner (1978) and Turner (1985) concerning the possibility that liminal/liminoid experiences and communitas may lead to change. Results showed that participants responded to opportunities that challenged their thinking and influenced their worldview. This aligns with D'Orsa and D'Orsa (2011), who state, "Christian living has to be worked out in the dynamic context of culture, respecting, and at the same time challenging, the integrity of that culture" (p. 59).

Professional Transformation. The faith transformations reported above had the greatest influence on participants as teachers of faith because results showed they: 1) expressed commitment to teaching Scripture well; 2) were more confident about teaching Scripture; 3) took the time to learn more about Scripture; 4) saw the need to engender respect and understanding about people of other faiths; 5) recognised they were authentic witnesses to faith in students' response to their greater knowledge and passion for Scripture and the Catholic faith; and 6) were committed to sharing their learning. These outcomes emerged from transformations in participants' understanding of the Catholic school mission. Jesus and Scripture. and Judaism and Islam.

Transformed understanding of Jesus and Scripture. Learning about Scripture can be, and is, undertaken by teachers in various settings in Australia. However, the SSP provided not only the means to transform understanding of Scripture but also an opportunity for

formation of the heart. Such outcomes are in keeping with one of the principles for formation of mission (NCEC, 2017), and with the Congregation for Catholic Education's (2007) concerns about ensuring formation of the heart to encounter Christ and thus engender authentic teaching as a person of faith.

This in-depth study of Scripture enabled participants to move from a shallow to a deeper understanding of Jesus, and of how a Gospel links to the Old Testament and to their lived experience. One participant who expressed initial fear of studying the Gospel of John, said they came to love its wisdom and the images of Christ it evoked. This transformed perspective flowed into their role as leader of a school after the experience. This response in faith reflects calls to engage in the study of Scripture (Benedict XVI, 2010; Vatican Council II, 1965b) where the joy of the Gospel is important for mission because it "enlivens the community of disciples" (Pope Francis, 2013, para. 21).

Transformed understanding of mission. Results showed that participants gained a clearer understanding of their mission through the SSP, both personally as a Christian and as a teacher in a Catholic school. Such a claim was supported by notions of living the mission and bearing witness identified in the data when, for example, participants spoke of being proudly Catholic or proactively finding ways to share learning. This has congruence with D'Orsa and D'Orsa's (2020) statement that mission is fundamental to Christianity; it gives it meaning and purpose. It was evinced by two participants who said they had a better understanding of the mission of the Church and their role as Catholic educators. Other participants did not specifically use the word 'mission', but they showed a better understanding of Jesus and his mission, and had a sense of their role as witness in the mission of the Church.

As teachers who share the mission of the Catholic Church, participants could be considered better equipped to bridge the challenging gap between the pluralist and secular

context of today and providing students with meaningful experiences that show the Catholic Church has something worthwhile to say in this context (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014; D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2013).

Participants' transformed perspective regarding mission was similar to the shift described above in relation to faith. Once again this could be seen as metanoia (Meagher, O'Brien & Aherne, 1979) and evidence of TL (Mezirow, 1991, 1997). There is, hence, a connection between a transformed depth of faith and support for mission.

Transformed understanding of Judaism and Islam. Results showed that faith can be challenged, nourished, and transformed through experiences that are not centred on Christian tradition. They showed that participants' worldview changed and an openness to the Other, whoever that is, became a crucial quality they carried forward from the experience into their classrooms, enhancing their transformation as teachers of faith. Transformation was supported during the SSP by robust instruction on Islam and Judaism and immersion into a very different society from their home country.

The religious, social, and political situation experienced in Israel led most participants to a *reinterpretation* (Cornille, 2020) of their views about the different religious groups. Hence it was an interreligious dialogue (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 1991), a form of dialogue which Gadamer (1993) describes as a way to understand each other. Some participants recognised that their previous understanding was influenced by media and that they needed to give students a better understanding of other religions in order to counteract such bias. This is in keeping with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (1991), which points out that a lack of knowledge about other religions can be an obstacle to interreligious dialogue, possible misrepresentation, and an underappreciation of its significance.

Participants' recognition that their world view had shifted aligns with Ricoeur (1992) who theorised that venturing into the world of the Other causes a change in oneself. Results showed that the change in themselves was a greater understanding of the need for tolerance and respect: a respect engendered by a heightened awareness of the uniqueness of every person, a fundamental message of Christianity (Vatican II, 1965c; Roger, Parinaud & Parinaud, 1996; Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, 1991; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; Cornille, 2019; Pope Francis, 2013).

Christians, like participants in this study, can be transformed by liminoid experiences that highlight differences, creating feelings of dissonance. This is the hermeneutic gap, the hermeneutic or liminal space (Feldman, 2014; Turner, 1969; Turner and Turner, 1978; Pollefeyt, 2013; Sharkey, 2015) where participants were able to make meaning, where they learned, and where they were given the opportunity to develop their personal views (Cullen, 2019).

Participants experienced a hermeneutic gap between, for example, home and a different social context, one religious group and another, different Christian groups, and between what they believed and understood in the past compared to how they now experienced faith and how they now understood Judaism and Islam. These valuable gap experiences strengthened them as witnesses to the Catholic tradition because they came to understand the importance of inclusivity, a foundational Christian value promoted in both the Old and New Testaments (Isaiah 66:18-21 and Luke 13 22-30). This transformational experience was acknowledged by participants as influencing the way they approached interreligious learning and teaching in the classroom. This is in keeping with the culture of dialogue promoted by *Nostra Aetate* (Vatican II, 1965c) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, 1991), and by Boys and Lee (2006), who

state, "We must, therefore, teach in ways that form a religious identity vibrant and learned enough to cross religious borders intelligently and sensitively" (p. 8).

Participants' transformed attitude and the process they went through, the reasons for their change in attitude, such as teaching Scripture better and the need for greater awareness, respect and tolerance toward others, aligns with Mezirow's phases of transformative learning (2000, 2009).

Summary of Transformation. Results showed that Transformation occurred both personally and professionally. Faith was the conduit for transformation triggered by robust formal learning, immersion into the setting for the Christian story, learning in a faith communitas, having the time and space to concentrate, and experiencing a different social and religious context.

Personal faith was also the recipient of transformation as participants showed greater passion, confidence, and commitment to the Catholic faith. Transformed personal faith enhanced the effect of the SSP on Professional Transformation. Participants understood Scripture better, saw the need for ongoing Scripture learning, understood the Catholic mission better, recognised the need for tolerance and respect towards all others, and the need for interreligious dialogue and understanding. What participants experienced was formation, even a transformation, of the heart.

6.3 Phase 3: Professional Development

In light of the results, I identified that Preparation fed into the PL that took place in Israel and that PD flowed out of the PL experience. Figure 6.5 shows how I mapped the relationship between Preparation, PL and PD.

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┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
│              │        │   Professional   │        │              │
│  Preparation │ ─────▶ │    Learning      │ ─────▶ │ Professional │
│              │        │   Encounter      │        │ Development  │
└──────────────┘        │   Witness        │        └──────────────┘
                        │  Transformation  │
                        └──────────────────┘
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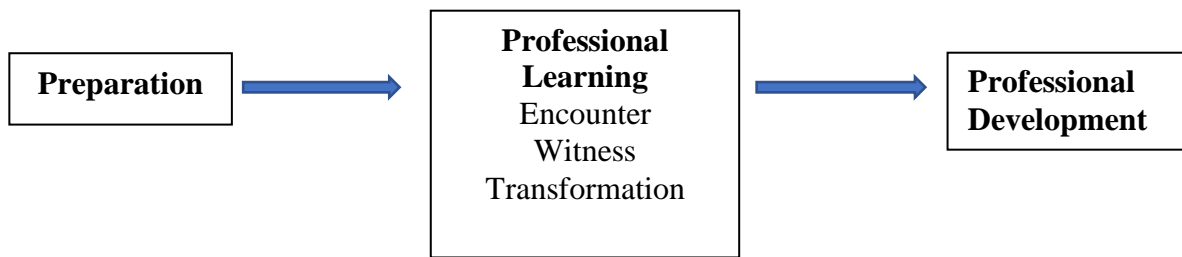
Figure 6.5

How preparation professional learning and professional development are linked

As already discussed in the PL phase, the hermeneutic space, Israel, gave participants opportunities to Encounter a unique, rich learning experience away from their home country. During the PL phase, participants' ability to give Witness to Personal Faith was nurtured and it influenced how they came to see themselves as a Teacher of Faith. In both the Encounter and Witness themes, results showed that participants had been Transformed. All participants, without exception, acknowledged that as a PL opportunity it had no equal, one they would probably never again experience. In this phase, PD, I will discuss how their transformed learning in conjunction with their transformed faith was actioned or animated on their return home.

Professional Development is explored here in relation to how participants eased back into life in Australia after the SSP experience, and how they engaged in opportunities for further formal and informal professional learning experience, including barriers they faced in accessing possible opportunities. PL and PD are terms frequently used interchangeably with varying degrees of meaning in the literature (Loughran, 2010; Dowling, 2012). In this study, PD is understood as participants putting the SSP PL experience into action on their return. As such, this study employed Fullan and Hargreaves' (2016) descriptions of PL and PD where PL is understood as "learning something new that is potentially of value" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016, p. 3) and PD as "growth in terms of who you are and what you can do"

(Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016, p. 3). Fullan and Hargreaves apply the term Professional Learning and Development (PLD) to the overlap between PL and PD. This overlap is acknowledged, but the decision was made to show PD flowing from PL because this phase takes place in the context of the home country. The PD component of the SSP is important because if PL is to be effective, ongoing, sustainable, and focused on the growth of communities, then teachers have to be closely involved with this work (Loughran, 2010; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016; NCEC, 2017; Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2021; Dowling, 2012).

PD also included data about participants' efforts to further develop their own learning through formal study, or through sharing knowledge and ideas with others in their broader circles of influence. The SSP was organised by DOSCEL for that very purpose, as learning to be put into action, shared with other teachers, so it could improve pedagogy around Scripture and generally flow out across the diocese. Results discussed below show how PD opportunities emerged on participants' return to Australia.

6.3.1 Easing back into life in the home country

The data in six questionnaires and all interviews indicated that participants wanted connection with other recipients of the SSP in order to share how the SSP had influenced their pedagogy, how they had passed on their knowledge, and primarily, because they wanted the opportunity to reflect and remember the SSP experience. Participants' faith had been deeply touched; their frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997) had shifted through the triggering events (Mezirow, 2009) they had experienced. Scripture study and spending a month in the land of Jesus provided rich learning opportunities and time to reflect, all of which align with Pope John Paul II's (1999) perspective on the Holy Land, what Donnelly (1992) writes about pilgrimage, and what Turner and Turner (1978) theorise about being in a liminal state.

Together, they had a momentous spiritual experience in keeping with Tisdell's (2020) description.

Some participants acknowledged they were looking forward to seeing their families, but the data did not show an urgency to return; in fact, some said they had not felt homesick because they had formed their own SSP family in keeping with the communitas described by Turner (1985) and Donnelly (1992). What the results did show was that returning home and transitioning back into home and school life was difficult for some.

In light of participants' descriptions of tiredness and disorientation on their initial return to Australia, I suggest that being in a liminal state for an extended period could perhaps explain the need to remain connected to others who shared their journey. Removed from everyday life, they had been suspended in a heightened state (Turner, 1985). As Turner and Turner (1978) contend, a pilgrimage is a "movement from a mundane centre to a sacred periphery, which suddenly, transiently, becomes central for the individual" (p. 254). In light of the results, I suggest the return to the mundane from the sacred could feel just as sudden and require support to transition back to one's home country. This is known as a form of reverse culture shock (Presbitero, 2016).

DOSCEL provided one follow-up meeting some weeks after recipients' return, but results showed that participants wanted more contact with fellow recipients and with others who had experienced Israel. A number said they wanted to discuss the experience because only those who had been there could relate to how they were feeling. In support of extending communitas-like support I point to Turner (1973), who asserts that liminality and the formation of communitas begins before the pilgrimage, continues through the experience, and extends into the time when people return home. Therefore, it could be argued that participants needed more opportunities for the communitas experience to continue upon their return, and DOSCEL was in the position to organise such gatherings of people from across the diocese. It

is, perhaps, an oversight of the program planning that DOSCEL did not do more to organise such opportunities.

The mementos discussed in the Encounter section are also tangible reminders of a spiritual experience (Higgins & Hamilton, 2020). Based on results, I suggest these mementos provided the most common comforting conduit for personal reflection because opportunities to gain support were essentially non-existent, except for those who worked in the same school or who organised their own small group gatherings.

6.3.2 From PL to PD: how participants shared learning and applied it on their return home

The natural formation of home country communitas. Results showed that many participants gathered socially with fellow SSP recipients in order to discuss and remember their SSP experience. This study employs the term 'home communitas' to describe the groups that gathered together because they provided support and comfort much like the communitas in Israel (Turner, 1973).

Home communitas supported their transition back to everyday life as well as providing ongoing opportunities to share how they were trying to influence the teaching of Scripture in their respective schools. Some groups continue to meet socially to this day, and report that they share memories, experiences, and what they are doing in their schools regarding teaching Scripture. Turner (1973) states that communitas may continue to meet like this long after the event. These home communitas also reflects Fullan and Hargreaves' (2016) notion of PD as application of learning, and van Manen's (1990) idea that the individual interprets society through an intricate network of persons. The home communitas are an example of how participants worked collegially in keeping with Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), the Department of Education and Training (2004), and Timperley (2011a, 2011b), all of whom promote the importance of teachers working together. The home communitas were

naturally changing into learning communities, further aligning with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) promotion of building professional capital through social capital.

Results showed that the formation of home communitas happened in every group, and in every year, so it was a common occurrence among all recipients. These groups were enthusiastic about Scripture, in keeping with Zepeda's (2008) assertion that learners share thoughts and learning when they are intellectually and emotionally engaged.

In light of the results, I suggest participants wanted to continue the communitas they had experienced in Israel. Participants' overwhelming, positive response to communitas, particularly faith communitas, may be their way of continuing the faith communitas feeling, especially given the difficulty they reported in trying to build a sense of community around faith in their schools. Some participants expressed the opinion that it would be good to establish regular gatherings of all SSP recipients from across the diocese in order to discuss Scripture: a logical idea, and one that needs system organisation and support in order to be sustainable in the long term (Higgins & Hamilton, 2020).

Formal Study. Extending the notion of PD, some participants were inspired to undertake further formal study in Scripture or Theology. Others applied their learning by ensuring they researched background material for teaching Scripture. These provide examples of the reflexivity between PD and PL, similar to a hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 1980; Gadamer 1993), because learning about Scripture engendered the pursuit of further learning. This also ties in with some of Mezirow's (2000, 2009) phases of transformative learning, which is explained in Chapter Seven. The ongoing search for continued learning speaks to the Victorian Institute of Teaching's (2021) position that high standards of competency should be set and maintained where teachers pursue their own PL so that they are well informed in their discipline area.

Sharing Learning in Schools. Results showed that the strongest elements of PD occurring in schools were in relation to what participants were doing in their individual classrooms. I identified that the PL experienced during the SSP translated into more time and enthusiasm being put into teaching Scripture. Therefore, their PL through the SSP was being applied as PD (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016).

It was also evident across a number of data sets that there was an underutilisation of participants' knowledge and expertise post SSP. Considering the known influence of teacher understanding on student knowledge and engagement (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014), it was surprising that not all school leaders were utilising SSP recipients to enhance religious learning in their schools. There was no mention of any sharing of learning with staff in six questionnaires, indicating that it either did not occur or was not viewed as an important part of the post-SSP experience. One participant mentioned sharing with parents, another at grade level planning sessions, and another said it enriched staff but did not explain how or why. One participant stated that teachers approached them for information, and another modelled teaching of Scripture for colleagues. One Principal mentioned having incorporated it into some work with staff. Considering that opportunities for teachers to further their professional growth are highly dependent upon the school environment (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002), results showed that this was an area requiring closer consideration if the SSP learning is to flow into the schools.

In summary, it could be said that the data indicates that PD, or the application of participant learning, was ad hoc and completely left to participants to carry out if they desired and could get the relevant opportunity. Since educational research shows that building learning communities is regarded as a powerful way for teachers to learn (Department of Education & Training, 2004; Dowling, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016; Fullan, Hord and Von Frank, 2014), the response of some school leaders is

out of step with current thinking. It is also out of step with Catholic thinking, which promotes networking and dialogue (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2017; Pope Francis, 2018).

This study has shown that Catholic educators thrive in a faith community where they have the opportunity to freely express their faith and to grow in their conviction. Therefore, the return to school life for many meant they lost their faith communitas. Despite the fact that they were working in Catholic schools, results showed that their loss of a strong faith communitas, one particularly enthusiastic about Scripture, added to their disappointment.

Sharing learning across the Diocese of Sale. Some participants wanted the SSP community to share their learning more widely. Two participants suggested facilitating Scripture sessions for leaders. One principal suggested that recipients of the SSP could provide PL for principals in the diocese as a way of strengthening sharing opportunities. More extensive or wider-ranging forms of sharing learning were either non-existent or unplanned, so the ripple effect of the SSP experience did not, nor could not, extend much beyond participants, nor perhaps beyond their immediate group of school colleagues. This highlights a gap in the current structure and expectations around SSP that limits its potential influence. Without a system framework initiated/supported by DOSCEL, this avenue for wider sharing is very difficult, if not impossible. The ever-growing SSP community in the Diocese of Sale has the enthusiasm, ability, knowledge, and resources to benefit many others.

The potential to do much more is an important finding. If the SSP is to make a difference to students' Scripture knowledge, then PL must be systematic, intentional, and supported by leadership (Timperley, 2011a). The underutilisation of their knowledge in the school, classroom, and in their leadership role, as discussed above, also illustrates that participants require system back-up and guidelines for schools that promote ways for SSP recipients to share effectively in their school community. There is room for growth in PD and that social capital, already happening incidentally in small clusters, can be built on so that

"improving as an *individual,* raising the performance of the *team*, and increasing quality across the *whole profession* … developing, circulating, and reinvesting professional capital" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 23) can make the SSP a PL opportunity more effective and efficient, both financially and in terms of widespread learning outcomes into the future.

Another important facet to sharing the learning is that all involved DOSCEL, SSP recipients, and school leaders must have a collective understanding of exactly *what* it is they want to change or influence in the area of Scripture. According to Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) this requires discernment, organisation, and planning: a constructive approach to identify and target exactly what the group want to change. Professional capital gained through the SSP must not stop with the experience itself: "To grow, professional capital must circulate freely, energetically and openly" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 23).

Gowdie (2017) proposes a model for spiritual formation for educators in Catholic schools called Transforming Encounter*s*. This model echoes some of the discussion in this chapter and puts into perspective what the SSP experience has done for participants in this study. She suggests that dynamic, authentic formation of teachers in Catholic schools today evokes the 'Walk to Emmaus' (Lk 24:13-34) as it is

> … a journey that still asks for a head, heart and hands response, a
> journey where we only make sense of the bigger story through our own
> story; and as disciples of Jesus, a journey where we learn who we are
> through the eyes of each other. And in a sacred company that will take
> us all the way home. (p. 175)

For this study, the Emmaus image evokes something of the SSP experience: of learning in community, of sharing the Christian story through the breaking open of Scriptures in the classroom, and the learning as participants walked through the land of Jesus. They were

transformed, their eyes were opened. But the potential to spread participants' learning, to build collective capacity is yet to be realised.

6.4 Chapter Summary

For participants in this research, Israel was a hermeneutic place of Encounter, a liminal time that offered space and time for reflection and learning about much more than Scripture. Alongside this was the influence the Encounter experience had on participants' personal faith. It took place in a faith communitas where they were able to share their learning and their faith. All of this in turn influenced participants as Witnesses to the Christian faith. The data indicated that as their knowledge of Scripture grew so did their confidence and passion. Participants recognised they had become authentic witnesses to the Christian narrative in the classroom. The SSP transformed their thinking about how to teach Scripture; it transformed their personal faith perspective and their commitment to Christianity; it transformed their worldview, and in many instances, they simply saw themselves as changed people.

It has to be stated that this was not seen as a lock-step process from Encounter through Witness to Transformation. Sometimes Witness and Transformation were almost simultaneous, sometimes there was a hermeneutic cycle evident as they reflected on experiences (even long after their SSP experience) and new learnings occurred. An overarching model of learning leading into, through, and resulting from the SSP is presented in a concept diagram (Figure 6.6). This model is informed empirically from the data in this study and comprises Figures 6.2 to 6.5 depicting the elements of Encounter, Witness, and Transformation, and the Phases of Preparation, Professional Learning, and Professional Development from results discussed in earlier sections of this chapter.

The theme, Preparation, feeds into the PL experience of the SSP because this prepared recipients to get the most out of their SSP experience. Professional Development is what

occurred when participants returned home, how they applied and, sometimes, extended their learning. Professional Development is coloured green in the concept diagram, but because a gap was identified showing that Professional Development did not go far enough, there is a section, coloured orange after the perforated line, to represent the unmet potential for PD.

All identified themes in the concept diagram are enclosed in a hermeneutic circle. Even though the SSP experience was a one-off opportunity for most, results showed that the learning continued to be built upon, to change, evolve, and grow through further study and reflection. This is in keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective which holds that hermeneutics, or meaning-making, is never static but continually makes explicit what is implicit in order to understand (Heidegger, 1980). People make meaning, which, in turn, continues to inform new understanding. Bridges continue to be built between experiences and meaning (Gadamer, 1993) in a continual movement toward Being (Heidegger, 1980). The hermeneutic circle is echoed in the Transformative Learning Theory of Mezirow (1981; 1990) because reflecting on previous understandings helps with new insights that result in a changed worldview. Memories are not discarded, just stored away, ready to surface as opportunities arise to envision new meaning, indicative of potential ongoing learning. Ongoing learning could be further enhanced by developing the PD aspect of the SSP so that other teachers are also drawn into the hermeneutic learning circle.

Figure 6.6 illustrates how I theorised the results.
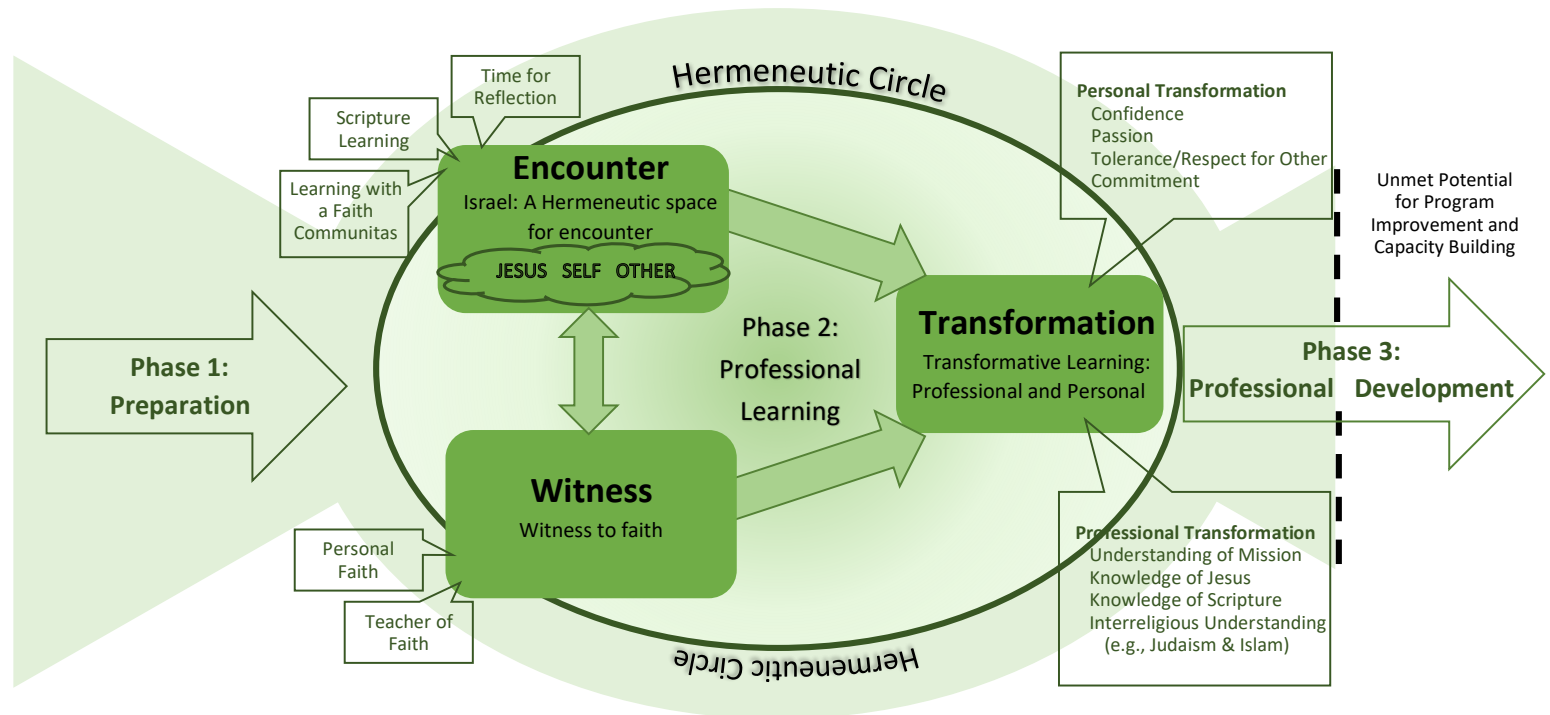
Figure 6.6

The SSP Concept Diagram

<center>**Chapter Seven**</center>

<center>**Conclusions and Recommendations**</center>

7.1 Introduction

The focus of this research was to consider the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture for four weeks in Israel. This study has provided insight into the triggers (see Chapter Six, 6.2.3) of transformative learning and the response of participants. Three phases have been identified: Preparation, Professional Learning, and Professional Development. Within the second phase, Professional Learning, the key themes of Encounter, Witness, and Transformation have been identified. In this chapter, the phases and themes are discussed in relation to how they answer the research questions (Sections 7.2–7.4). Following this, the study's limitations are identified (Section 7.5), followed by considerations of how the study contributes to broader knowledge and subsequent recommendations (Section 7.6). These are discussed, followed by recommendations for future research (Section 7.7). Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented to conclude the thesis (Section 7.8).

This thesis answers the major research question: What is the personal and professional response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel, is it a means for transformative learning? Key results are summarised through their themes, which are related to the sub-questions shown in Figure 7.1.
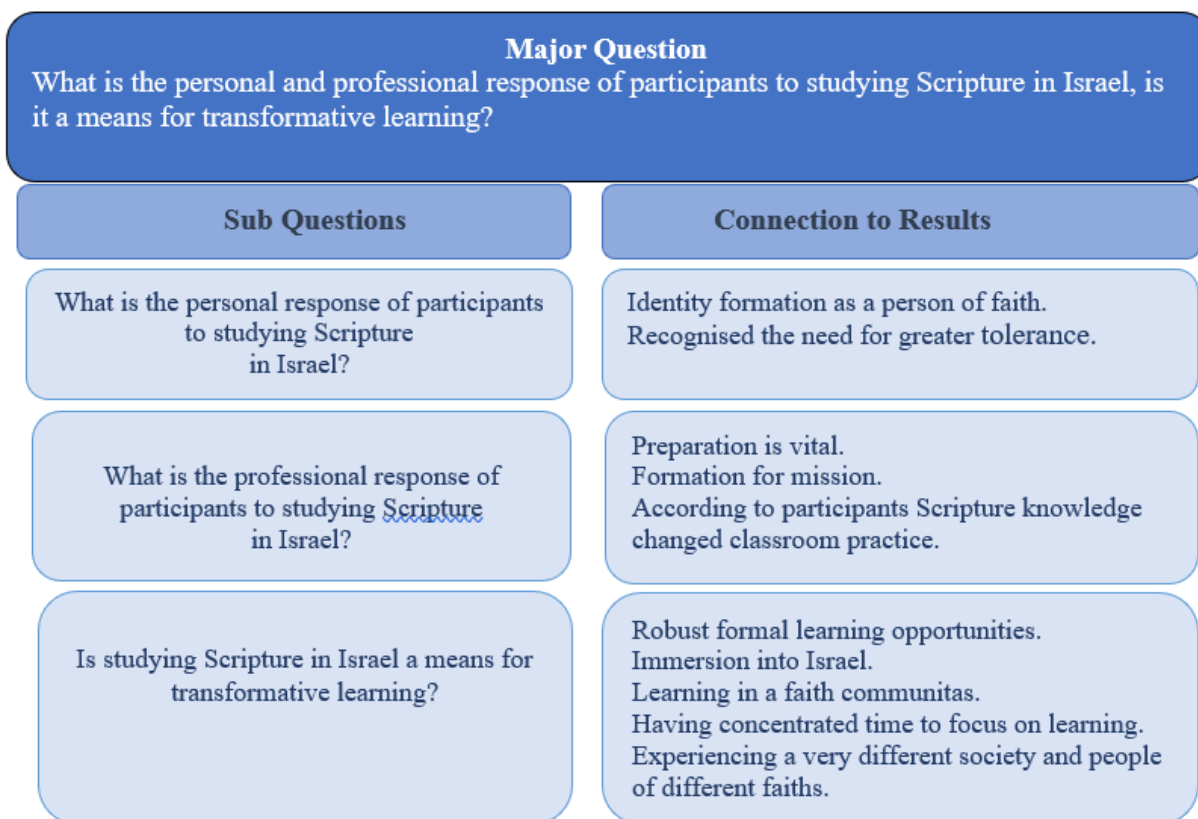
Figure 7.1

Major question and sub-questions in this study and connections to results

7.2 What is the personal response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel?

Overall, the personal response of participants to studying Scripture in Israel was seen through two overarching areas: 1) personal faith formation, and 2) personal awareness of the need for greater respect and tolerance towards those who are different from themselves.

7.2.1 Identity formation as a person of faith

Studying Scripture in context within a faith communitas (Turner, 1969, 1973, 1985; Donnelly, 1992; Davies, 1988) gave participants freedom and confidence to express their own response in faith. They were people who had come with a heart of faith to learn about faith. Formal classroom learning together with pilgrimage to significant religious sites allowed for a head-and-heart (NCEC, 2017; Hall & Sultmann, 2019) differentiated response to the learning. Time away from home gave participants the opportunity to focus on learning and to live and think (Timperley, 2011b) with their heart, which nourished personal faith (NCEC, 2017;

Gowdie, 2017). Cognitively, participants were stimulated by lectures and field visits, and emotionally, or affectively, their response to the learning. Faith was the frame of reference (Mezirow, 1991) that defined the world they encountered (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2020) and influenced thoughts, actions, and emotions. During their time in Israel, participants' frame of reference for their personal faith, their understanding of Jesus and of others, and of their own place in the world, was extended, challenged, and at times shattered. The faith perspective, or frame of reference that each held deep within, shifted and transformed (Mezirow, 1991, 2009).

Studying in a unique setting, experiencing a sense of awe about the timelessness of Israel, experiencing liminality (Turner, 1985) in a country so different from home within the comfort of a faith communitas, caused a metanoia response (Meagher, O'Brien, & Aherne, 1979). This in turn affected participants as teachers of faith. They responded emotionally to such a faith experience because it was the deep spiritual dimension of their being (Tisdell, 2017), one that they wanted to remember and share through their invigorated passion and their energised commitment to faith. They felt privileged to have been given the luxury of time away from responsibilities. Because of this they recognised they had a responsibility to share their new perspectives on faith when they returned home. Participants acknowledged that it was their faith that was nourished, something they did not even know they needed until they experienced the SSP.

7.2.2 The need for greater tolerance and respect

Having experienced a very different socio-political and religious setting (Paz, 2014) to home, participants' worldview expanded. They came to recognise that they were not equipped to judge the complexity of the situation in Israel, and nor were they equipped to judge others, whoever these might be. They returned with a healthy scepticism about how media presented information about the region, and the recognition that many in their home context were too quick to judge. They recognised that more tolerance and acceptance (Pontifical Council for

Inter-Religious Dialogue, 1991; Cornille, 2020) was imperative, for we are all different, yet we are all the same. It was clear from results that most participants returned home determined to promote the need for tolerance and respect for the Other. Some participants reported having already done this whenever the opportunity had arisen. One participant thought more should be done by DOSCEL to capture and disseminate this learning.

7.3 What is the professional response to studying in Israel?

Participants responded to professional learning opportunities evident in three distinct phases: preparation, immersion in Israel, and the return home.

7.3.1 Preparation Phase

Phase one, Preparation, organised by DOSCEL prior to departure, was highly valued, and indeed considered as vital to the PL experience. Two pre-departure sessions were offered as a part of preparation, and this readied participants in practical ways and prepared them to enter a different social culture. Preparation removed some of the fear of the unknown they were about to find themselves in and readied them for the professional learning experience in Israel.

The Preparation phase can be viewed as a form of PL because the focus of content during the two pre-departure sessions contained important cultural information and scriptural background. Considering the very different setting participants entered, results showed that some took longer to settle than others. Given this, it has to be asked whether two sessions are enough, and whether the format of these sessions allows for the opportunity to begin establishing a communitas. If recipients of the SSP were given additional opportunities to gather in more informal ways, to get to know one another before departure, the formation of communitas deemed integral to the SSP experience could be enhanced.

The preparation phase was also the perfect opportunity to begin to lay the foundations of extending and building social capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) beyond the group undertaking the SSP to their school community. Some participants reported that they took this

initiative upon themselves and that it was most successful. These participants regularly communicated with their school community while in Israel. Blogs, emails, and video clips were the preferred avenue of communication for those who connected with their school. Preparation sessions could ensure all recipients understood modes of communication. Examples from previous groups could be provided and information about setting up communication modes could be supplied by DOSCEL and/or by other recipients. During the Preparation Phase recipients could also discuss the possibility of combining their efforts and sharing generic communiqués with all schools across the diocese. DOSCEL has systems in place to enable this. It is also able to create a bank of information for all teachers to use.

7.3.2 Professional Learning Phase

Results in all data sets revealed only a wholehearted positive response to the SSP as a form of PL.

The SSP transformed participants' commitment to the Catholic faith and provided the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the Church's mission (D'Orsa & D'Orsa,2013; NCEC, 2017) and their own mission as teachers in Catholic schools. This led to participants' ability to give witness to personal faith and, subsequently, their ability to give witness as a teacher of faith was strengthened. From a professional perspective, the SSP provided rich learning which participants acknowledged covered more than Scripture.

The SSP transformed participants' understanding of Scripture and Jesus, which resulted in commitment to teach Scripture well. Participants reported a sense that the knowledge they gained informed their professional practice. This aligns with the Congregation for Catholic Education (2017), which states there is a dynamic between personal encounter, knowledge, and the ability to act as a witness to faith. It was clear from results that most participants returned home determined to teach Scripture differently. Participants reported that their students were more engaged in learning about Scripture because of this. They also reported that their students' responses to Scripture learning was enhanced through the efforts they took

to bring their personal experience into their teaching. Participants recognised they were authentic witnesses to the Christian narrative in the classroom and some acknowledged that their students recognised and responded to this.

Academically rigorous lectures delivered by quality lecturers provided deeper insights into Scripture. Participants reported using photos, maps, and other mementos gathered during their time in Israel to enhance their pedagogy. Participants also spoke of having opportunities for their students to respond to Scripture as part of the teaching and learning process. Because they had been invited to consider more deeply how the text was speaking to them, participants wanted to provide similar opportunities for their students to question and reflect, and to pray using Scripture texts.

Participants had a better understanding of Judaism and Islam, which transformed their understanding of themselves in relation to other people with different world views and religious beliefs, in keeping with Cornille (2020) and Boys & Lee (2006). This knowledge transformed their attitudes toward interreligious studies because they recognised its importance in promoting tolerance and respect – an important transformed perspective they felt compelled to promote in their own classrooms.

This study acknowledged the concern of other researchers (Stead, 1996) about knowledge and confidence in teaching Scripture. Results showed that as participants' Scripture knowledge grew, so did their confidence, but more than this, they became passionate about it. The knowledge they gained during the SSP, and the passion they had for Scripture, led many to continue to build on their learning through formal courses or personal research. Thus, participants were continuing to discover new meanings, which in turn informed new understandings, a hermeneutic cycle of learning (Crotty, 1998; Ricoeur, 1991; Gadamer, 1993; van Manen, 1990, 1997), and Mezirow's (1981, 1990, 1997, 2009). Participants recognised that memories were stored away and would resurface when triggered, for example when looking at pictures or mementos, listening to Scripture during Mass, or

researching and teaching Scripture. Such memories added to a better understanding of Scripture and prolonged the SSP experience in keeping with Higgins & Hamilton's (2020) assertion that such mementos are tangible reminders of a spiritual experience.

One of the strongest responses across all data was participants' response to the socio-political and religious reality in Israel. Encountering a context very different from their home country enriched their understanding of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. This in turn led to interreligious learning, and the need to bring this to the fore in their classrooms. They realised the importance of sharing with students their own experiences of getting to know people of other faiths. Participants' perspectives had changed when they had more understanding of other people, and therefore they wanted their students to be given the opportunity to better understand people of faiths other than Christianity.

7.3.3 Professional Development Phase

Results showed that some participants were given the time and support to provide PL for school colleagues, which helped them to debrief. Most participants took it upon themselves to find ways to share their experiences and their learning with school staff, students, and the wider community.

The support of other SSP recipients was identified as important in debriefing because only those who had experienced the SSP could relate to the depth of emotions and sense of meaning that participants experienced. They expressed the desire to gather regularly with fellow recipients to remember and to share how they were implementing learning in their classroom and sharing with school staff. They also wanted opportunities to build on their personal learning. Results suggest that recipients of the SSP need support from school leadership to gain traction with staff and address otherwise limited opportunities to share learning in their schools.

7.4 Is studying Scripture in Israel a means of Transformative learning?

Data showed that participants underwent a transformative learning experience which altered their worldview, including their perspective as Witness to the Catholic faith through their Encounter with Jesus, Self, and Others. Throughout this study, Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1981; 1990; 1997) has been discussed in relation to what participants experienced to ground the study within the broad notions of what happened to them during the SSP. For example, when they spoke about being disoriented, or feeling out of their depth in a totally different culture, I recognised the disorientation of Mezirow's theory (1997) and Turner's (1969) description of liminality and feelings of dissonance (Philibert, 1996). I identified this as a trigger for participants to construct new learning (hermeneutic phenomenology).

During interviews, participants themselves were exploring what it was about the SSP that changed them. With very little prompting, participants explored why they were so deeply touched, indicating that the SSP experience transformed something deep within. They found it difficult to express what had happened, but they knew they had been changed; they recognised that they saw Scripture and the meta-Christian story in a new way. Thus, they were verbalising Mezirow's theory, building on existing meaning, establishing new assumptions, and making meaning in the process of constructing new meaning.

Based on results from Chapters Four and Five, and discussions in Chapter Six, Figure 7.2 depicts how the SSP was a means of transformative learning aligned with Mezirow's (2000, 2009) phases of learning.

Triggering Events
- Robust formal learning opportunities biblical sites related to Scripture study
- Immersion into Israel, the setting for the Christian story
- Learning in a faith communitas
- Having concentrated time to focus on their learning
- Experiencing a very different society and people of different faiths.

Opportunities for Reflection and critical assessment of assumptions
- Space and time to focus on learning without distractions
- Space and time for personal reflection for example:
    - Prayerful experiences in settings meaningful to Christians
    - Daily Mass
    - Meditative prayer in the desert
- Space and time to discuss new learning within a faith communitas
- Socio political, interreligious experiences led to reflection on why they held such assumptions
- First-hand experience of people of Islam and Judaism led to better understanding
- Robust learning about Scripture

Recognising a disconnect and exploring new ideas
- Scripture learning called into question previous understandings and inaccuracies
- Moved from lack of confidence to confident
- Better understand the importance of interreligious dialogue
- Recognise the need to promote interreligious understandings amongst students
- Determination to teach Scripture differently
- Ongoing relationship with other participants for personal and professional support
- Looked for ways to share their learning on their return home with school colleagues and wider community and nourished faith

Planning a new course of action
- A Gap: Participants frustrated about limited opportunities to share learning in schools and across the diocese

Acquire knowledge and skills to implement your plan
- Recognised the need to continue to learn about Scripture through formal courses and informally through personal reading
- Looked for ways to reconnect with other SSP recipients

Trying new roles, building competence and confidence and reintegrating into life
- Participants reported they were implementing learning in the classroom
- Participants reported they were sharing learning with colleagues, although findings showed they consider their skills underutilised
- Reported ongoing work to enhance pedagogy related to Scripture
- Reported more confidence around sharing knowledge with colleagues and teaching Scripture
- Participants think differently about Scripture as a teacher of Scripture and as a person of faith they have greater knowledge and confidence

Figure 7.2

Transformative learning in the SSP

What also emerged from the results was how the theoretical framing of the study in hermeneutic phenomenology (Crotty, 1998; Ricoeur, 1991; Gadamer, 1993; van Manen, 1990, 1997) overlaid the transformative learning that participants experienced. The hermeneutic phenomenological circle of Experience, Construction, and Interpretation, arriving back at the start with a new perspective, was present in various components of the TL phases (Mezirow, 1997 2009). In the results I recognised Experience aligning with the TL phases of disorientation/liminality; the Construction phase of hermeneutic phenomenology aligning with dialogue/reflection and building on existing meaning; interpretation aligning

with establishing new assumptions and meaning-making. Back at the start of the circle there was a transformed frame of reference, a transformed perspective with which to view the next Experience. The alignment between these elements is depicted in Figure 7.3, providing a combination of elements to consider when discerning how the SSP was a means for transformation.
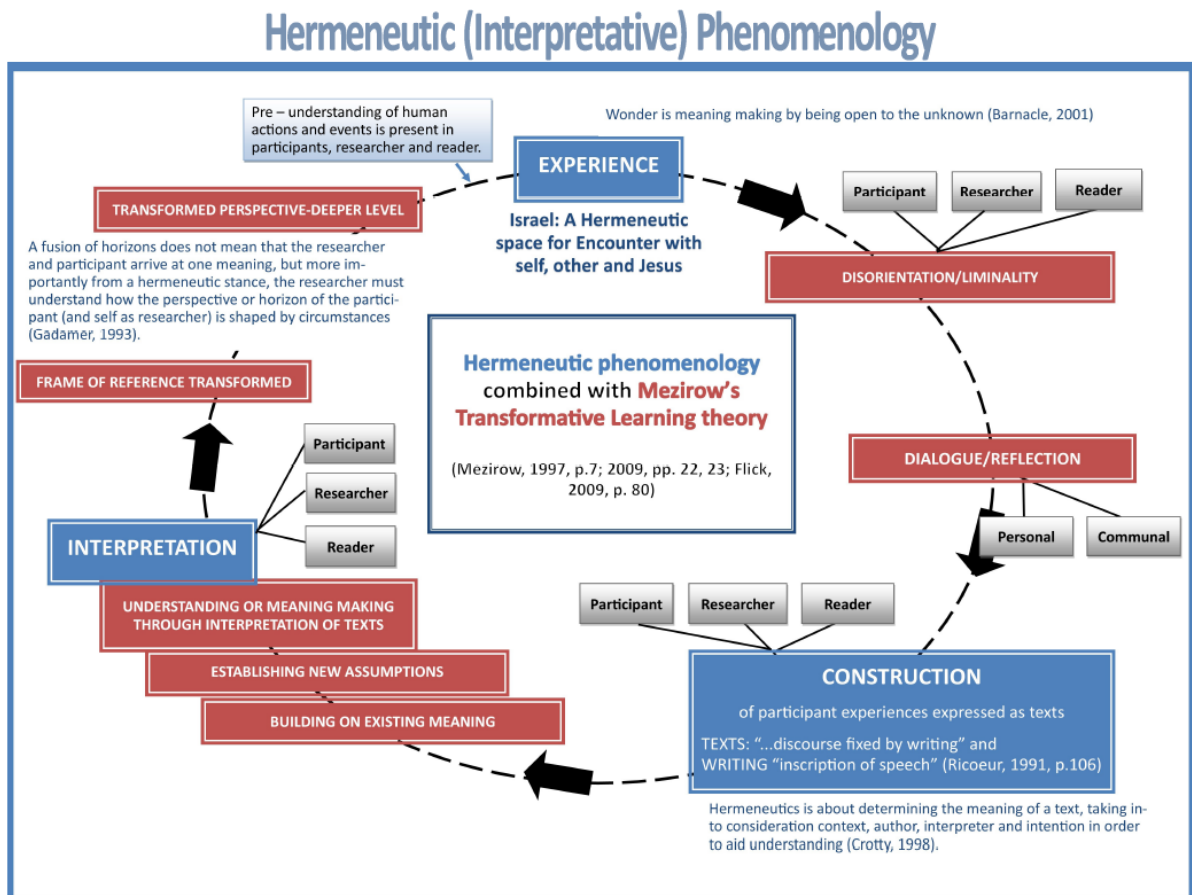
Figure 7.3

Hermeneutic phenomenology with connections to Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

Figure 7.3 was developed over the course of this study and assisted the final analysis of data. It contains key indicators from a theoretical perspective that show the flow of learning that took place. It is not lock-step. When exploring the elements of learning I identified that participants flowed back and forth between them. For example, participants described their Scripture learning as continuous, never ending. They explained that when they heard or read Scripture, or studied it, it triggered further reflection and new insights. Therefore, they

perhaps moved from the *still building new assumptions* phase or from the *transformed frame of reference* phase back to the *reflection/dialogue* phase; and perhaps back to recollecting the original experience, the triggering event. This back-and-forward movement was identified in results as a continuation of learning that is ongoing.

Results showed that participants entered into both the cycles of Mezirow's Transformative Learning and a hermeneutic phenomenological experience (Crotty, 1998; Gadamer, 1993; Flick, 2009; van Manen, 1990, 1997). The diagram bringing them together aided the construction of this study and can perhaps be applied to other studies, particularly those focused on learning experiences associated with faith. When applied to faith it provides insight into the importance of Scripture speaking to people in different ways at different times in their life, the importance of quality PL to create a sound foundation which can be built upon, and the importance of reflection in faith formation.

7.5 Limitations

This study is limited to one program, the SSP, a unique form of PL compared to other PL for Scripture. It is unique because it took place in Israel, where participants could visit sites related to their study. It also provided access to high calibre scholars in Christianity, Islam and Judaism and an extended period of time to observe the everyday life of these groups.

This study is limited to teachers and leaders in Catholic primary schools in the Diocese of Sale, Victoria, Australia. Participants in this study came from schools spread across the diocese, 75% of which are situated in rural areas. According to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) the average number of people who identify as Christian across the rural areas is approximately 51%. The average number of people who identify with religions other than Christian in the rural areas was approximately 13%. Parts of the diocese closest to Melbourne show approximately 49% identifying as Christian and 20 % as other

than Christian (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016) Therefore, the majority of participants in this study would have had little exposure to religions other than Christianity.

It is also important to note that participants in this study have a particular framing of religious education that might influence the ways in which they experienced and interpreted their experiences in the program that may not extend to other faiths including other Christian faiths. For example, participants faith and understanding of Scripture was shaped by previous approaches to RE: Kerygmatic, Life Centred, Shared Christian Praxis, and Outcome Based (Buchanan, 2010; Engebretson, deSouza, Rymarz, & Buchanan, 2008). Stead (1996) and Grace (2003) point to inadequate teaching of Scripture during these eras, this would have influenced the perspective of participants in this study.

I acknowledge that the data gathered in this study is the response of participants at a particular point in time. This must be acknowledged as a limitation because if participants were to be interviewed again the results may be different given their personal perspectives could have changed. What was important to them during this study may be replaced by other memories with the passing of time.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study may be of interest to other organisations. Preparation before an immersion program out of country was identified as vital. Participants described feeling better prepared than other non-DOSCEL participants in the program. Immersion in a context that brought the Scriptures to life could be applied to other Christian and non-Christian denominations. Faith organisations may be interested in results that showed the importance of studying with a like-minded faith community for an extended period. A community experience enhanced participants' learning and nurtured their faith, and the luxury of time supported both as it meant the opportunity to reflect and discuss faith openly. Immersion in a context where faiths other than Christian can be studied and experienced in day-to-day living heightened by awareness of the need for tolerance and respect toward others. In order to facilitate any relevant transferability, thick descriptions

(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) of procedures are described in Chapter Three and results are discussed in relation to literature in Chapter Six.

7.6 Contribution to knowledge and recommendations

7.6.1 Contribution to knowledge

Exploration of the literature revealed a number of studies on pilgrimages and immersion programs in general, but this study addresses a gap in the literature about the personal and professional response of Catholic primary school teachers to studying Scripture in Israel, and is therefore considered unique. It adds to the body of knowledge because it has found that exposure to a different culture provided the opportunity not only to learn about Scripture, but to reflect on and question prior assumptions about the Other and their world. This in turn led to a transformed understanding of their own place in the world, and the need for respect and tolerance towards all. This was identified in relation to learning about Judaism and Islam and participants' lived experience during the SSP. The depth of participants' response was indicated by their emotions and their determination to ensure that interfaith learning flowed through to students.

This study extends the work of Stead (1996), Carswell (2006), and Grace (2003) because it showed that improved Scripture knowledge leads to greater confidence and passion, and a commitment to sharing this learning with students and colleagues. Scripture study in Israel transformed participants' personal understanding of Scripture and Jesus, and according to them, this transformed their pedagogical approaches to religious education in the classroom. Participants reported that their faith was enriched and their enthusiasm as authentic witnesses to the Catholic faith was evident to students. Therefore, this study not only supports literature that emphasises the importance of faith formation in teachers to enhance their ability to give witness to the Catholic faith, but shows how immersion in the place of Scripture writings facilitates the formation that engenders this ability to give witness.

This research showed that transformation occurred because participants had a greater understanding of the context of the Christian stories, which promoted a better understanding of Scripture. The land, Israel, was fundamental to their transformed understanding. Learning about Scripture in the setting for the meta-Christian story provided a combination of cognitive and embodied learning: the head and the heart. The literature has shown that formation for Catholic teachers must involve the head and heart and this study reinforces that claim. This study identified that studying Scripture in context meant that memories of places integral to Scripture stories can be evoked long after the experience, and this promotes ongoing learning. Encountering Scripture in the land of Jesus strengthened participants' faith and their ability to give witness to the Catholic faith and to understand more clearly their role in the mission of the Catholic Church.

There is an abundance of literature on liminality and communitas, including from a religious perspective. This study supports the effects of these notions and the recognition that teacher formation in the Catholic tradition is best served by ensuring that teachers undertake PL in the midst of a Catholic community. This study extends these ideas because it showed the importance of the faith communitas in enhancing learning about Scripture. The egalitarian nature of the communitas allowed participants to question, learn, and discuss Scripture on an equal footing with all members of the study group, irrespective of their previous level of knowledge. Israel was a hermeneutic space for learning and the faith communitas was an integral part of this.

This study identified that opportunities for interaction with the faith communitas were not limited to formal lessons but extended into free social time. Participants acknowledged that discussions that took place after hours were just as important as the formal studies; the learning never stopped because the communitas provided ongoing, limitless opportunities to reflect and learn. Formal lessons and pilgrimage visits were discussed at length among the

faith communitas in order to understand Scripture better and try to comprehend the unique social and religious context of Israel.

This study affirms the recognition that PL for teacher formation is best served by giving ample time and space to focus on study without the usual distractions experienced at home. In addition, it identified that time for reflection included opportunities for daily prayer. Celebrating Mass or praying in settings significant to the Catholic tradition were recognised as faith-enriching opportunities as well as opportunities to reflect on their studies. All of this faith formation effected a transformation of participants' views of Scripture, themselves, and the world. It enriched their understanding of faith, their commitment to faith, and their role in the mission of the Church.

The theoretical model, Figure 6.6, encapsulates how I theorised the results, it is a distinctive contribution to knowledge. Others may find this model helpful when considering PL for teachers of religion, or for planning immersion programs generally.

In addition, Figure 7.3 was developed over the course of this study and assisted the final analysis of data and discernment around if and how the SSP was a means for transformation. Others may find this theoretical framing of hermeneutic phenomenology overlaid with Mezirow's phases of TL helpful when exploring adult learning and discerning if TL has taken place.

7.6.2 Recommendations

In Figure 7.2 *Planning a new course of action* is blank because it is the gap in PD identified in results. Participants were unable to effectively plan how they would share their learning in the PD phase which flowed out of the PL phase. This needs system support and organisation. The contribution to knowledge and recommendations of this study may be of interest to organisers of other programs including study undertaken out of home country, pilgrimages, or other immersion programs.

To ensure the PD gap is addressed, recommendations are made to improve the Preparation phase and the PD phase. Addressing the gap in the PD phase acknowledges the value of studying Scripture in Israel and gives appropriate recognition of, and support for, this experience; particularly in relation to how a transformed understanding of Scripture enhanced faith, strengthened participants as witnesses to the faith and, according to them, enhanced pedagogy and student engagement around Scripture. If the PD phase is given appropriate system support, then this will provide an organised rather than an ad hoc approach to shared learning in schools and across the diocese, thus supporting the importance of faith formation for mission for Catholic teachers promoted by the NCEC (2017).

Addressing the PD gap also acknowledges and supports participants' learning about Judaism and Islam. Encountering a very different religious and cultural experience from that of their home country triggered a resolve to incorporate interreligious teaching into their classrooms. This cannot be done without a framework that supports their endeavours and enables them to disseminate their learning in their school community and across the diocese. PD may happen accidentally, but it is recommended that the following be considered in order to improve PD so that it is a more deliberate, effective, systematic, ongoing, sustainable, and collaborative process.

The ad hoc approach experienced by participants in this study regarding their ability to share learning (PD) could be partially addressed during the Preparation Phase. The organising body must ensure that participants will have opportunities to share their learning on their return. Such assurance could be included in the letter of endorsement of a candidate.

To further enhance the learning experience for the whole community, all recipients could be informed during the Preparation Phase about modes of communication with their school or organisation in their home country while they are away. These could include blogs, internet sites, or other means for participants to share the experience on a regular basis and to disseminate information and resources. The organising body, previous recipients, or those

familiar with the destination venue could assist with this information. Participants could also discuss the possibility of combining their efforts and sharing generic communiqués with all schools across a diocese or organisation.

During the selection process it is important to ascertain the interpersonal skills of potential recipients in order to enhance the formation of communitas deemed integral to an out-of-country experience. Such information could be attained from school principals or leaders of organisations. Further to this, selected recipients could be given the opportunity to gather in a more informal setting to get to know one another, also enhancing the formation of communitas and providing a support network for a liminal experience.

On their return home the first step to enabling participants to plan a new course of action (PD) is to include some form of reorientation back into their home country. Participants in this study expressed the need to debrief and to reconnect with fellow participants on their return. This could be extended to recipients from other years because only those who have been to Israel can truly understand the experience and provide the necessary support. This study has shown that being in a liminal state for an extended period and experiencing a very different social and religious culture changed participants' perspectives about Scripture; but more than this, their strong reaction to the socio-political and religious reality of Israel altered the way they thought about themselves, their place in the world, and about others, and the need for tolerance and respect. Support for debriefing is therefore deemed vital in the PD Phase, particularly if participants have experienced tension such as that experienced by participants in this study. Therefore, an organising body should create such opportunities to debrief on their return.

On returning to their home country participants reported that PD, or application of participant learning, was ad hoc and completely left up to them to carry out if they desired and if they could find the relevant opportunity. To further improve the PD phase in a school setting, organisers could provide guidelines and examples for sharing learning on their return.

Opportunities should include providing resources and information to colleagues to support the teaching of Scripture in the classroom. For example, information could be disseminated at staff meetings and grade-level planning meetings.

To disseminate information beyond the school, the organising body could establish PL opportunities to share learning with school leaders, teachers, and the wider community with a view to building social and knowledge capital to share across the primary and secondary school sectors. Vital input from participants would enable a collaborative approach regarding identification of relevant material to be shared. This would bring together a wealth of knowledge on different gospels and other learnings such as interreligious learning. Working collegially, a bank of online resources and information could be assembled and made available to all leaders and teachers for PL purposes, for classroom use, and as additional resources incorporated into the RE curriculum.

7.6.3 Recommendations for further research

To build on this study, further research could examine pedagogy before and after the SSP in order to ascertain the effect, if any, in the classroom. Future research could also examine how participants share their learning with colleagues in the school and disseminate information to a wider audience in order to build professional capital.

This study has shown that being in a liminal state in a society very different from the home country for an extended period has implications for organisations to support people to reorient. Further research could examine what support is needed and what form this could take.

Future research could consider post-Covid 19 possibilities: research into Covid-friendly access to the SSP or other programs conducted overseas by pivoting some experiences online. For example, what input could the Sion Sisters and high-calibre Scripture scholars provide? How might visiting religious sites be incorporated in a virtual way?

Associated with this is the importance of time and space to focus on studies and to reflect on learning in a community of believers. Future research could examine how Catholic education systems could provide extended time for faith formation, and what might be the long-term benefits.

7.7 Chapter summary

This chapter began with Figure 7.1 which stated the major question and sub-questions of this study and showed how they connect to the results. Each of the sub-questions and connections to results were explained in more detail in the next sections (7.3, 7.4 & 7.5). Following this, Figure 7.2 was presented and explained. This figure showed alignment between Mezirow's TL theory and hermeneutic phenomenology, the theoretical perspective underpinning this study. The elements in both guided my thinking while discerning the answer to the major question and sub-questions. What followed focused on the results of this study, showing how these aligned with Mezirow's phases of learning (Figure 7.3), in order to answer the major question in the affirmative: Israel is a means of personal and professional transformation and here is how it enabled that transformation. This chapter concluded with contribution to knowledge and recommendations.

I too have been transformed as a result of my research. I have a deeper understanding of the importance of research and how this informs educational practice. Having engaged with the work of learning theorists such as Mezirow and Dirkx, and philosophers such as Ricoeur and Heidegger, I now have the language, confidence, and knowledge to process ideas and concepts related to learning and my work as an Education Officer. The concepts of hermeneutics, dialogue, encounter, and reflection are words used frequently in relation to pedagogy in RE. I have a deeper understanding of these concepts and how they are applied in learning and teaching situations which enables me to speak with conviction and confidence when promoting, for example, an inquiry learning approach in schools, or when I share insights with my DOSCEL team members about the importance of dialogue in the process of

making meaning. I now see authentic dialogue as an openness to the Other. Just as participants in this study returned home determined to promote the need for tolerance and respect for the Other, I too recognised this need. An example of this has been in relation to providing an authentic Indigenous voice in the RE space, so I reached out to DOSCEL's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officer to help teachers connect at a more personal level, which increases their capacity for self-reflection and, in turn, their learning, transforming work in this space. This is why the crafted story is central to this research. It reflects my transformed understanding of the importance of situating learning and ourselves against the backdrop of the holistic, big picture. We need to situate learning and ourselves in a broader story or narrative in order to question it and ourselves, and then, with reflection, learn from that. Encountering the stories of others is not only a way to learn, but also a way to develop personal faith, tolerance and respect for the dignity of all, irrespective of race, creed or colour.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE
DIOCESE OF SALE
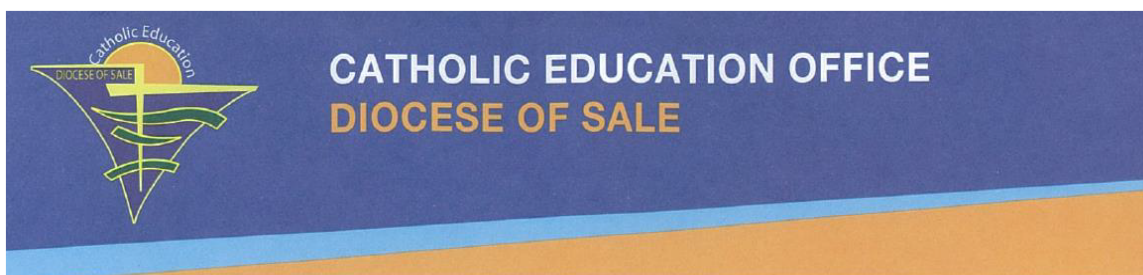
2 June 2015

Alice Youlden

███████████████

Dear Alice

Re: **Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning. What is the impact of journey as a means of rich learning about Scripture?**

Thank you for your application dated 2 April 2015 in which you have requested permission to conduct a research project entitled *Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning* involving Catholic primary schools from the Diocese of Sale.

I am happy for you to approach these schools and members of CEOSale staff in this diocese, pending approval from ethics. Once you have obtained ethics approval would you please email the document to the address below before you begin your research. It is important that you understand that the final permission for you to undertake this work rests with the Principal.

This *in principle* approval is subject to the attached *Research in Catholic Schools – Standard Conditions*. In particular, please note items 3 and 4 which state that participation in the survey must be sought from participants on an *'opt in'* basis. Further, it is a requirement for researchers working on a one-to-one basis with children in schools, to present a current *Working With Children Check* (item 4) to the school principal.

Should you require further information please contact Marg Shiels at this Office, email mshiels@ceosale.catholic.edu.au or phone 5622 6648.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

███████████████

Maria Kirkwood
DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION
DICOESE OF SALE

Faith ... Learning ... Growth

6 Witton Street Warragul VIC 3820 - PO Box 322 Warragul 3820 - Phone: (03) 5622 6600 - Fax: (03) 5623 4258 - Email: director@ceosale.catholic.edu.au

PRINCIPAL INFORMATION LETTER

PROJECT TITLE: Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Helga Neidhart
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Alice Youlden
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Education

Dear Colleague,

I am writing in regard to my forthcoming research project entitled *Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning* to seek permission for me to invite member/s of your staff to take part in this research

What is the project about?
The purpose of the project is to explore the impact from the participants' perspective of the Sion Scholarship Program (SSP), a professional learning (PL) initiative organised by the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Sale in Victoria.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by Alice Youlden and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Education at Australian Catholic University under the supervision of Dr Helga Neidhart

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
There are no foreseeable risks to participants or their school. The researcher will respect the individual and their viewpoint in an empathetic manner that takes into consideration the possibility of an emotional response. Any risk will be mitigated by access to a counsellor if required. Confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher at all times.

What will Teachers be asked to do?
As part of phase two of the research I am inviting recipients of the Sion Scholarship to complete a questionnaire to gather demographic data and invite initial response to questions. It will include open questions in order to gain initial insight into participant perceptions which will inform phase three. Example of questions:

Please respond to the following open questions:
- Describe how the experience of journey (on any level) impacted on you?
- Describe any particular events or experiences that had an impact on your learning? Why?

It is important you be made aware that your teachers may also be invited to take part in phase three of the research, either as a member of a focus group semi-structured interview, OR a semi-structured

individual interview. These will be conducted, with your permission, either at your school, or in the case of the focus group, at a venue convenient for all participants.

Example of questions:

Open question examples for interviews
- What had the greatest impact on you and why?

Probe question examples.
- What surprised you?
- If you had to describe what you have learnt to someone in your school, in your family, in your town, what would you say?

From an ethical standpoint the role of researcher and Education Officer will be separated as much as possible in order to avoid undue influence. Questionnaires will be returned to a third party who will remove identification and assign an ID. Interview participants will be selected by an independent panel from CEOSale to ensure a cross section of gender, age group, previous knowledge of Scripture and role in the school. Interviewed participants' identity and school identity will be known only to the researcher. Interviews will be recorded. All written and audio material will not be stored at the Catholic Education Office CEOSale, but in a locked cabinet in the chief supervisors office. Transcripts and written responses will be stored in a computer not owned by CEOSale and will be backed up on an encrypted site not associated with CEOSale.

How much time will the project take?
It is anticipated that the questionnaire will take no longer than 45 minutes to complete. Semi structured individual and focus group interviews are of one hour duration.

What are the benefits of the research project?
This research will be the first of its type conducted in the Diocese of Sale. It will provide CEOSale with information about the impact the SSP has on participants in order to understand more about the program and its impact and effectiveness as a PL experience. This study aims to gain insight into its transformative effect, if any. It will also provide information for future professional learning in the diocese, and perhaps be of value to other diocese and to the profession of teaching, particularly in religious education. This research may be of value to systems authorities who are aiming at developing RE leadership by providing effective PL

Can participants withdraw from the study?
Participation in this study is voluntary, if a response to the questionnaire is submitted this cannot be withdrawn as it is non-identifiable; otherwise they are free to refuse to take part at any stage of the research without having to justify their decision.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?
In the future, the substance of the questionnaire and interviews will be used in the thesis and published materials in a way that does not identify the school or participants involved.

Will participants be able to find out the results of the project?
A summary of the results will be made available to participants upon request

I have documentation from the Director of Catholic Education, Diocese of Sale and ACU indicating approval to contact you with the request for members of your staff to participate in the research. I will follow the protocols as set out by ACU Human Ethics Research Committee and the principles and procedures contained in the policy document Catholic Schools' Board Diocese of Sale: Research in Catholic Schools (2.12).

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

Alice Youlden (Student Researcher)

Email: rayoulden@dcsi.net.au

Dr Helga Neidhart rsc (Chief Investigator)
Senior Lecturer
Education Victoria
Australian Catholic University
FITZROY   VIC   3065. Locked Bag 4115
TELEPHONE: +61 3 9953 3267
FACSIMILE: +61 3 9953 3515
EMAIL: helga.neidhart@acu.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2014). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059
Ph.: 02 9739 2519
Fax: 02 9739 2870
Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au
Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If teachers want to participate! How do they sign up?
If teachers agree to take part they are to email a third party, manswerth@dcsi.net.au and a copy of the questionnaire will be sent to them. Consent forms (included with their invitation) and questionnaire are to be returned in the stamped addressed envelope provided. If teachers prefer, an electronic copy of the questionnaire can be requested in their email. Participants will be contacted by post if they are invited to take part in an interview.

How do I, as Principal give my consent for the researcher to contact staff?
Please complete the attached consent form and return it to the researcher, Alice Youlden in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Thank you in anticipation of your approval.

Alice Youlden
(Researcher)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER
(For group and individual interviews)

PROJECT TITLE: Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Helga Neidhart
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Alice Youlden
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Education

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?
The purpose of the project is to explore the impact from the participants' perspective of the Sion Scholarship Program (SSP), a professional learning (PL) initiative organised by the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Sale in Victoria.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by Alice Youlden and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Education at Australian Catholic University under the supervision of Dr Helga Neidhart

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
There are no foreseeable risks to participants or their school. The researcher will respect the individual and their viewpoint in an empathetic manner that takes into consideration the possibility of an emotional response. Any risk will be mitigated by access to a counsellor if required. Confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher at all times.

What will I be asked to do?
As part of phase two of the research I am inviting you as a recipient of the Sion Scholarship to complete a questionnaire to gather demographic data and invite initial response to questions. It will include open questions in order to gain initial insight into participant perceptions which will inform phase three.
Example of questions:
  Please respond to the following open questions:
  - Describe how the experience of journey (on any level) impacted on you?
  - Describe any particular events or experiences that had an impact on your learning? Why?

It is important you be made aware that you may also be invited to take part in phase three of the research, either as a member of a focus group semi-structured interview, OR a semi-structured individual interview. These will be conducted either at your work place, or in the case of the focus group, at a venue convenient for all participants.

Example of questions:

Open question examples for interviews
- What had the greatest impact on you and why?

Probe question examples.
- What surprised you?
- If you had to describe what you have learnt to someone in your school, in your family, in your town, what would you say?

From an ethical standpoint the role of researcher and Education Officer will be separated as much as possible in order to avoid undue influence. Questionnaires will be returned to a third party who will remove identification and assign an ID. Interview participants will be selected by an independent panel from CEOSale to ensure a cross section of gender, age group, previous knowledge of Scripture and role in the school. Interviewed participants' identity and school identity will be known only to the researcher. Interviews will be recorded. All written and audio material will not be stored at the Catholic Education Office CEOSale, but in a locked cabinet in the chief supervisors office. Transcripts and written responses will be stored in a computer not owned by CEOSale and will be backed up on an encrypted site not associated with CEOSale.

How much time will the project take?
It is anticipated that the questionnaire will take no longer than 45 minutes to complete. Semi structured individual and focus group interviews are of one hour duration.

What are the benefits of the research project?
This research will be the first of its type conducted in the Diocese of Sale. It will provide CEOSale with information about the impact the SSP has on participants in order to understand more about the program and its impact and effectiveness as a PL experience. This study aims to gain insight into its transformative effect, if any. It will also provide information for future professional learning in the diocese, and perhaps be of value to other diocese and to the profession of teaching, particularly in religious education. This research may be of value to systems authorities who are aiming at developing RE leadership by providing effective PL

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation in this study is voluntary, if a response to the questionnaire is submitted this cannot be withdrawn as it is non-identifiable; otherwise you are free to refuse to take part at any stage of the research without having to justify your decision.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?
In the future, the substance of the questionnaire and interviews will be used in the thesis and published materials in a way that does not identify the school or participants involved.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?
A summary of the results will be made available to participants upon request

I have documentation from the Director of Catholic Education, Diocese of Sale, from your Principal and ACU indicating approval to approach you with the request to participate in the research. I will follow the protocols as set out by ACU Human Ethics Research Committee and the principles and procedures contained in the policy document Catholic Schools' Board Diocese of Sale: Research in Catholic Schools (2.12).

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
Alice Youlden (Student Researcher)

Email: rayoulden@dcsi.net.au

Dr Helga Neidhart rsc (Chief Investigator)
Senior Lecturer
Education Victoria
Australian Catholic University
FITZROY   VIC   3065. Locked Bag 4115
TELEPHONE: +61 3 9953 3267
FACSIMILE: +61 3 9953 3515
EMAIL: helga.neidhart@acu.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2014 xxxx). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059
Ph.: 02 9739 2519
Fax: 02 9739 2870
Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?
If you agree to take part please email manswerth@dcsi.net.au and a copy of the questionnaire will be sent to you. Consent forms (included with this invitation) and questionnaire are to be returned in the stamped addressed envelope. Please request an electronic copy of the questionnaire in your email if you prefer this mode of response. You will be contacted by post if you are invited to take part in an interview.

Thank you in anticipation of your participation

Alice Youlden
(Researcher)

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM
Questionnaire and Interview
Copy for Participant

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR):   Dr Helga Neidhart

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Alice Youlden

I *...* (the participant) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in a questionnaire which should take approximately 45 minutes to complete, realising that once submitted it cannot be withdrawn as all identification will be removed and data is therefore non identifiable. I also agree, if invited, to participate in either a focus group interview of one hour duration OR an individual interview of one hour duration, realising that I can withdraw my consent to be interviewed at any time without having to justify my decision. Interviews will be audio recorded for research purposes. 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 am willing to be interviewed if invited
	I am not willing to be interviewed

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: ....

SIGNATURE ....   DATE

....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR):..

DATE:………………………..

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: ....

DATE: ……………………………

CONSENT FORM
Questionnaire and Interview
Copy for Researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR):   Dr Helga Neidhart

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Alice Youlden

I .... *(the participant)* have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in a questionnaire which should take approximately 45 minutes to complete, realising that once submitted it cannot be withdrawn as all identification will be removed and data is therefore non identifiable. I also agree, if invited, to participate in either a focus group interview of one hour duration OR an individual interview of one hour duration, realising that I can withdraw my consent to be interviewed at any time without having to justify my decision. Interviews will be audio recorded for research purposes. 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 am willing to be interviewed if invited
	I am not willing to be interviewed

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: ....

SIGNATURE ....   DATE

....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR):...

DATE:………………………..

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: ....

DATE: ....

PROJECT TITLE: Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Helga Neidhart
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Alice Youlden
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Education

Questionnaire:

Age: Gender:
Years of experience in Catholic Education:
Previous Scripture study:

Position in school when you attended the Sion Biblical Studies Program e.g., class teacher/REL:

I attended between (please mark)
2005 – 2008
2009 – 2012
2013 – 2015

1. Describe how the experience of journey (on any level) impacted on you?

2. If you had to describe what you have learnt to someone in your school, or in your family, or your town, what would you say?

3. Describe any events or experiences that had a particular impact on your learning. Why?

4. Has this experience impacted on your teaching, your students, colleagues and others? If so, how has it impacted? If not, explain why not.

5. How did you generally respond to this way of learning? What do you consider to be the benefits or drawbacks?

6. Has your understanding of Scripture or your attitude to the teaching of Scripture changed in any way? If so, how?

7. Describe any changes you would make to the program or any suggestions to improve the preparation, learning experience, or follow up.

8. Other comments

Copy of Sample Interview Questions sent to participants and used during interviews

PROJECT TITLE: Exploration of Journey as a Means of Richer Learning
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Helga Neidhart
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Alice Youlden
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Education

Semi Structured Interviews (2 focus groups and 4 individuals)

Open question examples for interviews: First tier.

- How do you think the journey experience of the SSP impacted on you?
- What had the greatest impact on you and why?

Probe question examples.
- What aspects of the SSP did you enjoy the most?
- What surprised you?
- If you had to describe what you have learnt to someone in your school, in your family, in your town, what would you say?
- How did you generally respond to this way of learning?
- What were the benefits?
- What were the drawbacks?
- Has your understanding of Scripture changed in any way?
- How has it changed?
- What impact (if any) has this experience had on your teaching? Why or why not.
- What impact (if any) has this experience had on colleagues, school community, parish community, others? Why or why not
- Did this experience excite or stimulate any future plans, or ideas?
- Do you consider this experience could be improved? Why/why not? In what way?

English Biblical Program – GOSPEL OF LUKE – Nickolas King – JUNE 2018 – JM/MZ rev'd 30 May. 2018 30 May MZ

SUNDAY 03 June	MONDAY 4th June	TUESDAY 5th June	WEDNESDAY 6th June	THURSDAY 7th June	FRIDAY 8th June	SATURDAY 9th June
June 02: Nick King arrives @ 15:00 BA 165	ARRIVALS 12.30: Lunch EH 18:00 Welcome and tour Aperitifs - Terrace 19.00: Dinner EH	Welcome Orientation Prayer Lunch PM **Opening Lecture:** **Luke** **17.00 Opening Liturgy** In Basilica 19:00: Welcome Dinner	6.45am: Breakfast Guide: **Jared Goldfarb** 8:30: Excursion: Temple mount: Southern Excavations, City of David 12:30 Lunch EH PM – Four Quarters 19:00 Dinner EH Havrutah	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00: Intro.to Midrash & Jewish Lectionary - ML 12:30 Lunch EH 2:30 - **Luke** PM TORAH READING DAY 19:00 Dinner EH Havrutah	**8:30- Parasha Study Debbie W.** 10:00 – Break **10:30 – Luke** 12:30 Lunch EH KOTEL 19:00 Dinner	**8:30 – Luke** 10:30 – Break **11:00 – Church Documents** 12:30 – Lunch EH 15:30 – **Luke** 18:00 Liturgy - Basilica 19:00 Dinner EH
SUNDAY 10th June	MONDAY 11th June	TUESDAY 12th June	WEDNESDAY 13th June	THURSDAY 14th June	FRIDAY 15th June	SATURDAY 16th June
FREE (option) Israel Museum 19:00 Dinner EH	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00: Shabbat & Jewish Lectionary - ML 12:30: Lunch EH 14:00: MT OF OLIVES and Kedron Valley Russ 19:00 Dinner EH Sion History & Charism	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00: Jewish/Christian Relations – **Debbie W.** 12:30: Lunch EH PM – **Luke** 19:00 Dinner EH Havrutah	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00:Jewish Lit. Calendar 12:30: Lunch EH 2:30: **Luke** 19:00 Dinner EH Havrutah	8.30 Excursion: Qumran, Dead Sea, Ein Gedi Guide: **Jared Goldfarb** Eid-Al-Fitr 19:00 Dinner EH	**8:30: Intro. to Oral Torah – Debbie W.** 10:00: Break **10:30: Luke** 12:30: Lunch 2:30: **Luke** Synagogue: e Kol HaNeshama ? 19:00 cold Dinner EH	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00:Entrance into Sunday & 8th Day **Sr. Ann Catherine** 12:30:Lunch PM: **Luke** 19:00 Dinner EH
SUNDAY 17th June	MONDAY 18th June	TUESDAY 19th June	WEDNESDAY 20th June	THURSDAY 21st June	FRIDAY 22nd June	SATURDAY 23rd June
Mass at Dormition or Peter in Galicantu	8:30: Yad Vashem Guide: **Debbie W.** 12:00: Lunch, Ein Karem Visit Visitation/John the Baptist before/after lunch	**8:30: Luke** 10:00 Bethlehem 11:00 Visit University of Bethlehem 12:30 Lunch	Guide: **Gila Yudkin** 6:30 Depart via Jordan Beit Shean Arrive Nazareth Basilica Lunch – Petit Freres Magdala	7:45 City of Dan Visit nature reserve Remember 10:30 Banyas Caesarea Philippi **11:00 Luke** 12:30 Lunch Lebanese Restaurant	8:30 Capernaum 11:00 Mt of Beatitudes **11:00 Luke** Visit site 13:00 Picnic lunch at Greek Orthodox Church 14:30 Primacy of Peter 15:30 Tabgha Church	Eucharist at Pilgerhaus 7:00 Breakfast 8:00 Nof Ginosar Museum/Ancient Boat 9:00 Boat journey on the Sea of Galilee Picnic lunch PM Visit Zippori

19.00 Dinner EH	Debriefing Return to Jerusalem 19:00 Dinner EH **Havrutah**	13:30 Nativity Church and Jerome's cave Guide: **Kamel** 14:45 Shopping 15.00 Depart 19:00 Dinner EH	**5:00: Luke** Pilgerhaus: Dinner & Overnight	13:30 Visit Falls 15:30 Return via Golan, Quenitira and Druze villages Pilgerhaus: Dinner & Overnight	Loaves & Fishes 16:30 Eucharist at Tabgha Pilgerhaus: Dinner & Overnight	14:00 Depart for Jerusalem 19:00 Dinner EH
SUNDAY 24th June	**MONDAY 25th June**	**TUESDAY 26th June**	**WEDNESDAY 27th June**	**THURSDAY 28th June**	**FRIDAY 29th June**	**SATURDAY 30th June**
Mass at Cenacle Franciscan Chapel 19:00 Dinner EH	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00: Bk of Acts - ML 12:30: Lunch 2:30 – **Luke** 19:00 Dinner EH	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00: Session 12:30: Lunch EH 2:30 – **Luke** 19:00 Dinner EH **Havrutah**	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00:Bk of Acts - ML 12:30: Lunch EH 2:30 Holy Sepulchre Guide: **Dan Bahat** 19:00 Dinner EH	**8:30: Luke** 10:30: Break 11:00: **Acts** 12:30: Lunch EH 16:00 Islam **Michael Fitzgerald** 19:00 Dinner EH	6:00 Way of Cross 8:30 Church Documents cont 10:30: Break 11:00:Church Documents con't 12:30: Lunch EH 16:00 Islam Pt 2 **Michael Fitzgerald** NK dep. @16:35 19:00 Dinner EH	AM – Jewish Christians Relations 10:30 – Break 11:00 – Integration/ Evaluation Time 12:30 – Lunch 5:00 Closing Liturgy Presentation of Certificates in Basilica 18.00 Aperitifs 19:00 Farewell Dinner
SUNDAY 1st July	**MONDAY 2nd July**	**TUESDAY**	**WEDNESDAY**	**THURSDAY**	**FRIDAY**	**SATURDAY**
Breakfast Free 9 Departures Kehila 6.30pm for those who wish 19:00 Dinner EH	Breakfast DEPARTURES					

Havrutah: The root *meaning* of the Aramaic word *havruta* is "friend." It is a traditional rabbinic approach to Talmudic study in which two students analyze, discuss, and debate a shared text. The pair struggles to understand the *meaning* of each passage and discusses how to apply it to the larger issues addressed and even to their own lives.

APPENDIX H

From: Jan Bouwens <Jan.Bouwens@theo.kuleuven.be>   Sent: Fri 1/11/2013 9:15 AM
To: Alice Youlden
Cc: Didier Pollefeyt; Rose Duffy; Byrne, Tony (TByrne@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au)
Subject: RE: Permission to use a graph

Message   PCB Scale DIFF 2011+2012 WITH TREND LINES.png (66 KB)   PCB Scale DIFF 2011+2012.png (64 KB)

Dear Alice

Prof. Pollefeyt and I are pleased that you would consider using the PCB Scale graph in your research paper.

May we suggest that you use the attached graph, which shows the combined results from the 2011 and 2012 research rounds, that was included in the ECSIP 2012 school reports? Not only the sample is much bigger, but the results are also more recent.

However, before you do so, we suggest that you contact the *ECSIP Steering Committee* to get their formal permission.
Usually we contact Mr. Tony Byrne, who is the point of contact for all ECSIP issues. I have taken the liberty to include Tony in CC.

Many Greetings to the CEO Sale staff!

With kind regards,
Jan Bouwens

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Sint-Michielsstraat 6 3000 Leuven (Belgium)
jan.bouwens@theo.kuleuven.be

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With kind regards,
Jan Bouwens

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Sint-Michielsstraat 6 3000 Leuven (Belgium)
jan.bouwens@theo.kuleuven.be

NOTE Permission granted by Mr Tony Byrne

ECCE HOMO
BIBLICAL PROGRAM
REVIEW 2015

1. What are two things that you liked about the Holy Land experience?

 I. The people of the Old City, particularly the Palestinians. They were beautiful
 II. The Sea of Galilee. Such a beautiful, peaceful part of a country torn apart by conflict.
 III. The sisters, Bernadette and Trudy. Inspiring

 I. The study of the Scripture – the gospel of St Luke. I have not done scripture study for a long time and Fr. Chris Monaghan has inspired me to do more through YTU. I really felt that the way we went through the Gospel made for an understanding I haven't had before.
 II. "Living" in the Old City for 41/2 weeks really got to have insight into the culture of the place.

 I. The reminder that Jesus was actually present in this land. The wondering, every day, the appreciation, the spirits of the land. – Galilee
 II. Meeting the people who come from all walks of life.

 I. The Sea of Galilee experience
 II. Renewal of Baptismal promises in the Jordan River.

 I. Learning the geography and history on the spot.
 II. Meeting and listening to people, experts and locals, who know Israel in a very diverse way.

 I. The Desert experiences. Tho [too] short time on the high cliff. After the guides informative talk. The stillness, silence, space, vast open expanse. Soaking in Jesus' desert experience
 II. The Galilee experiences. The life and coldness of the River Jordan. The walk around hills, old sites of Biblical meaning. The Sea of Galilee where Jesus really was. His place. His land. His home.
 I. Jerusalem being the centre of multiple faiths – I had been so Christian focussed in my thinking of it.
 II. The desert

2. What are two things you found challenging?

 I. The call to Prayer every morning!
 II. Using spare time effectively. There were times I just didn't feel like going anywhere!

 I. The way the Palestinians are treated by the Israelis – listening to the talk by the Palestinian psychiatrist (name?) and the Bednon [Bedouin] leader was very challenging.
 II. The day we were at the Temple Mount and the Muslims were telling us not to sit down (hot day) and were chanting at a group of Jewish people.
 III. Yad Vashem. The Dome of the Rock.

 I. Hardship of the people

II.   Disconnecting from home, mobile phones, emails etc – Yad Vashem
III. Tourism – Holy places are more tourist sites
IV.   Catholic churches have built 'Church's'
I.   Yad Vashem
II.   The feeling of unrest and uncertainty – particularly at the beginning.

I.   Not know languages
II.   Not enough time in some places.

I.   Getting luggage, personal xxx (boiled water – bottles) at the point of departure.
II.   Walking up steep hills. (I didn't really see it as a challenge. It was all just part of the experience I went for. Just part of being there). Others were so helpful to me at such times – Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

I.   I'm finding the challenge somewhat new
II.   I feel agitated by it – where do I put the energy
III. Hearing Samah's story and feeling gutted – it was harrowing – how do I help?

3. **From the Information Sessions we had beforehand, what are two things that you were glad you know about?**

I.   The security interviews at Hong Kong
II.   Knowing to get an Arab taxi directly to Ecce Homo rather than to the gates of the Old City.

I.   The housekeeping issues
II.   The travel to and from Tel Aviv (being aware we'd be asked questions on arrival at Hong Kong before heading to Tel Aviv was helpful – kept us calm.)
III. Water

I.   Airport security / questioning
II.   Book

I.   The airport procedure
II.   The presence of the soldiers / armed soldiers entering the bus / going to places such as Bethlehem.

I.   Practical information on airports and getting around
II.   The book had some great info in it

I.   I was not part of the information sessions but Bernie kept in contact by email. It made me feel part of the group even before I meet up with everyone.
II.   The list of what to take as essential items.

I.   All of it! We were spoilt!!
II.   The airport
III. What to expect and hydrolytes
IV.   Logistics and symbols

4. **Is there any additional preparation we could have given that could have assisted you?**

Probably not. We had time to get to know each other beforehand but it is really important that we go with eyes wide open so we can make up our own minds as to the situation there.

NIL – We were very well prepared.
Trudy and Bernadette – how great they were.
Catholics / Christians

- Perhaps tell people are likely to lose bags due to delayed baggage handling. Pack clothes in carry on for a couple of days, just in case.
- 3am wake up – whispering Jack?
- Noise? – the cats?

No, I feel that our preparation was outstanding

Some basic Hebrew and Arabic: greetings, thank you, yes / no for general use in places.

No.
Hats can be bought anywhere along the way. Also hydration tablets are easily available around Jerusalem.

Making more

5. **Any other comments?**

No comments - except for my eternal thanks to the CEO for making this trip accessible. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to experience such a life changing pilgrimage.

I loved the book we received at one of the sessions. Us Sale people shared this book with others during the time we were there. The Melbourne principals, in particular were going to suggest that it be given to participants who attend in the future.

Just an amazing experience. Thank you for the CEO's involvement / funding

This was a life changing and incredible experience. I feel so very blessed to have been given this opportunity.

As a "non-CEO" traveller it was wonderful to be invited to the CEO preparations and debriefed and to be considered to be a part of the Sale gang. Thank you

Inspiring experience

APPENDIX J

Israel Journal Reflection (FG2V4R)

Israel speaks to the visitor in so many ways. At times it shouts for all to hear, echoing the past, respecting the differences and exposing us to the traditions and cultural rituals embedded as heavily here as the stone upon which we walk. Many of us bought a t shirt…I walked my feet off in Jerusalem. So apt for the experience of being a pilgrim. I was both in awe of the place and challenged to take on all that I saw and learned and become a lens for those who have not seen and yet believe.

When we first saw the blandness of colour throughout Jerusalem we were conscious of the fact that we were definitely in for an experience unlike anything we had seen before. We spent the first 2 days before the pilgrimage began, staring at the soldiers spread throughout the streets with their guns loaded and eyes alert for any change in mood or routine. We walked the streets of the souk from one end to the other, through, around and back again, getting ourselves used to the busyness, bustle, pushing, selling efforts of shop keepers as they beckoned us into their shop…each with a unique style of enticing us to look at and purchase their products. We quickly learned what to do and definitely what not to do. We moved together as a group from the Sale diocese, there were 9 of what would eventually become a group of 40. Safety in numbers enabled us to visit all areas of the Old City, from the Holy Sepulchre to the Jewish quarter, the Armenian quarter and the Christian quarter. Our accommodation at Ecce Homo was in the Muslim quarter.

What I immediately discovered was the tolerance between religions. In a country where religion is so divisive, the daily lives of the Israeli people sees them interacting throughout the city of Jerusalem with a shared understanding, enabling each to practice their faith in relative safety and peace. When the Muslims were heading like salmon swimming upstream, in massive numbers toward the Dome of the Rock to pray, everyone moved out of the way to enable them to move through. When the Jewish people went to the synagogue to pray they did so without incident. Perhaps the most overwhelmingly obvious place that religious tolerance was demonstrated was the Holy Sepulchre church where 13 religions celebrate their faith. I was watching in awe on the second day when I asked a policeman what the big box in the middle of the main room was. He told me that it was the tomb of Jesus. I asked how it was that I was watching a group of Egyptian Coptics celebrate on one side of the tomb and Greek Orthodox on the other…and where were the rest of the religions celebrating? He explained how it all works…the Armenians were over there, the Catholics were through there and so on. I said to him that I was amazed at how peacefully they were able to worship within the one building…to which he replied, "That is why I am here. I am the head of the force…I am like the United Nations of the Holy Sepulchre. If I am not here there is much fighting." This became my reality for the next 5 weeks as I found that everywhere I went and every experience I shared, I was constantly reminded to be watchful as the peace I was seeing had the potential to turn very quickly. I was grateful for the presence of the police and soldiers at every turn and even began to say good morning and hello when I would pass by. They were a great sense of security and comfort to these naïve travellers.

I cannot do justice to the experience I have had in a few minutes, nor could I really do justice to Israel if you gave me freedom to speak for hours. The experience of sailing on, swimming in and celebrating Mass on the shores of the Sea of Galilee I will forever cherish. Renewing my Baptismal Promises as I stood in the River Jordan with my fellow pilgrims was an honour. Sharing 29 days exploring the heights and depths of Israel was profound as we heard the gunfire and bombs, and watched the smoke as the bombing in Syria raged. I felt very

challenged on the borders of Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine and marvelled at the wonders seen through the eyes of our guides and the heart of our faith. I cannot comprehend the injustice I saw at Yad Va Shem, the Holocaust Museum, the sense of the demolitions or the destruction of peace in the Garden of Gethsemane. I cannot ask you to understand Israel as I have seen it but perhaps the words are, as often is the case, left for our young students from Bethlehem University who, after taking their summer holiday time to travel to the university to speak to us about being Palestinians, summed up their feelings. I asked them what we can take back to our countries, our schools and our communities that would allow their voices to be heard. They asked me to please tell everyone who will listen that they are not terrorists, they are peaceful people who want peace and harmony in our world. They want the world to know that they do not support the acts of violence and that they are trying to make a difference, they know that if the future will be good it will be up to them.

I ask you to take these thoughts with you as they have become a part of who I am.

Scripture is one continuous story of God's love…in all who celebrate faith.

If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at will change.

God is too big to fit into one religion.

According to Huston Smith…The Golden Rule is…

If we take the worlds' religions at their best we discover the distilled wisdom of the human race.

Before I left Australia, Catholicism was largely the depth of my knowledge of God. Having had lectures from Jewish women, learned about Ramadan and the importance of faith from a Muslim woman, discovered the joy and generosity of sharing a meal with a Bedouin family and listening to their story, visiting Bethlehem and listening to the voices of our young people and their pastoral leader, celebrating Shabbat with a Jewish community, going to an Armenian celebration, attending Mass in Hebrew, Italian and French, tasting the best that Israel has to offer and coming away with a knowledge of the desperate need for our world to accept each other, celebrate who we are as a people, a community of faith and custodians of stories, cultures and beliefs that make us who we are. Each time I celebrated Mass…on the shores of Galilee, in the Basilica, at the Holy Sepulchre, in French at St Annes, wherever it may be, I felt a great sense of belonging, of peace and of comfort for I knew that Jesus walked where I walked and prayed where I prayed and knew that God was with me at every turn. I will be forever grateful, forever richer and forever blessed that this experience came to me and I embraced it in every way I possibly could.

Please take this message with you as you leave here…Christ has no body but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out on the earth, yours are the feet by which he will go about doing good…and we must do this wisely and sensitively. We must remember that words create worlds.

Throughout these 5 weeks we studied the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Luke's constant theme was…Don't lose heart. I invite you to revisit Luke's Gospel and Acts with bare feet, sensing him in the land, the culture and the history that was his landscape and allow him to speak to you through his narratives. And in the blessing that Fr Tony from Pakistan gave us…Jesus is in me, I am in Jesus, therefore I am in peace. As a group we studied Jerusalem from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from the desert to the Sea of Galilee. We focussed on the land, the people and the word of God. Throughout this journey I have watched, listened, shared, discussed, challenged, read, felt, prayed, laughed, cried and grown…I have changed.

May peace be with you and I thank you most sincerely for allowing me to share my journey with you.

Excel Question Number, Cell Number, General themes identified in data.	THEME
QUESTION 1 Describe how the experience of journey (on any level) impacted on you? 2. Scripture learning 3. teaching 4. personal reaction - lasting impression 5. People/Learning/ Faith 6. Scripture Learning 7. Scripture Learning/confidence 8. Scripture /Learning about place 9. personal reaction - amazing 10. personal reaction - lasting impression 11. Faith/teaching/Land - Israel Issues past and present 12. Confronting Place 13. Learning about Scripture setting 14. Pilgrimage 15. Socio political and religious tension 16. Personal response - tolerance 17. Scripture learning/connected to the place 18. Faith response to Jesus 19. Personal Response - Thirst for Overseas travel/perhaps confidence 20. Personal response - amazing 21. interfaith/tolerance /about Scripture setting 22. Personal - not judging/injustice 23. Learning - Religious complexity. Personal - Need balanced view of religious tension 24. Away from family/ Different culture	Themes identified. **ADULT LEARNING ABOUT SCRIPTURE** (ALS) • This is often closely tied to Place as participants described Scripture learning in association with place or context. Decisions were made if their response was specifically about learning due to context, rather than just about the land or places visited. It is important to note the close connection between Place and Adult Learning about Scripture • Further study

25. Socio Politicical - sensed danger of region
26. Journey in Faith/Place of Jesus/hard to believe
27. Geography/people/place of Jesus/customs/climate/Place of Scripture/Place of Jesus
28. Personal - life changing growth in self-confidence & self-belief
29. Faith growth
30. Scripture place /Jesus place/life changing
31. Experiencing place
32. Geography
33. Scripture learning/enriched liturgy
34. spiritually, educationally, knowledge wise, geographically, emotionally, personally
35. Personal - challenging/ enriched life
36. Faith - nourished, deepened
37. Teaching/learning
38. Faith - part of universal Cath Ch
39. Faith learning
40. Learning through group/beliefs challenged
41. Faith matured/scripture learning - real not parrot
42. Personal - Life changing
43. Personal - new to travel experience
44. Personal - Holy L & Sacred sights amazing
45. Liturgy enhanced
46. Learning broadened horizons/firsthand experience
47. Socio Polit - empathy
48. Personal - incredible/valuable
49. Place of Jesus
50. Faith - more confident to witness
51. Faith - happy to witness/important for leaders
52. Scripture learning/Jesus learning
53. Personal - challenged life and how to contribute

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING (PL)

- Participant
- School Staff

TEACHING (T)

- Pedagogy

STUDENT SCRIPTURE LEARNING (SSL)

PLACE (P)

There were many comments in the questionnaires about this theme. The criteria for deciding whether they belonged in the them Place was if they were unique to Israel. The researcher identified different themes and two in particular were further colour coded. Each alphabetical code has the letter P at the beginning to denote Place.

- socio political tension (PSPT)
- religious tension (PRT)
- Geographical places (PG)
- Places visited that impacted (POI)
- people met (PPM)

PERSONAL FAITH (F)

Question 2 If you had to describe what you have learnt to someone in your school, or in your family, or your town, what would you say?

Scripture place/context

Personal /awesome

Place understanding

learning about place

place/complexity/geography

Scripture place/context

Encouraged others

personal/amazing/ described to others

Personal Faith response

Scripture learning/Impact on Mass participation

Deep learning/place linked to Scripture/enduring learning

Place/Socio political tension

personal/faith response to complexity

Personal faith deepened

learning about Jesus as a Jew

place /socio political/religious

place/different to Aust history

Group bonding/learning from each other

Personal growth/faith growth

Scripture learning/faith & prayer strengthened

personal enthusiasm/Jesus became a reality

Pilgrimage/place of Jesus/prayer life

scripture learning/teaching/Mass

scripture learning

Place/religious tension/reality of place

learning about faith/endurance

Program organisation/hope

Group bonding/enduring learning

place/tension

- includes Jesus responses because he is central to faith
- includes responses about the reality of Holy Land the place of faith
- includes faith witness comments
- includes prayer/mass
- Pilgrimage because it's about going to a Israel a place significance for Christian believers (this could also have fitted into place.

INTERFAITH EXPERIENCE (IF)

- Includes comments about learning about other faiths.
- Some religious tension inclusions could also be situated here.

PERSONAL RESPONSE (PR)

This theme was included because there were many comments that could only be described as personal response to the experience. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach seeks to delve into a particular phenomenon through

place of hope & resilience/pilgrimage
faith sharing/place of Jesus
Learning/ continuing/sharing/faith journey
personal faith /other faiths/professional enrichment
respecting other faiths/insight into enrichment of life of Israelis
Learning about Jesus
place - scripture learning/Jesus life/context of Jesus
Place/ Scripture understanding
deep impact of socio political & religious tension/ current injustice like Jesus time
Faith/spirituality/enlightenment/links to Jesus life
Personal/ indescribable experience
Teaching Scripture in RE
bonding with participants from other years
Learning/ Place of Jesus
Place/contextualising Scripture/deeper understanding
Learning/ Jewish faith of Jesus
Learning/Scripture/Jesus/faith/message for today

Question 3 Describe any events or experiences that had a particular impact on your learning. Why?
Geography/desert
Geography/Judean hills/desert/shepherds/prayer/Dead Sea/amazed/prayerful/with God
Jerusalem/living scripture
Group bonding/walking the streets/program organisers/food/churches/garden of gethsemane
Ecce Homo church/mass celebrated there
Group/ Experiencing Mass with different clergy
Group/ Experiencing Mass with different clergy?
Bethlehem/checkpoint/church/history/university/people they met/interest in world/lucky
Holy sepulchre/different religious groups
Holy sepulchre/different religious groups/sad
Yad Vashem/understanding the Jews /disempowered/powerful/lasting memory
Yad Vashem/Hebron/powerful juxtaposition of plight of Jews and Palestinians/
questioning own place in the world/personal active faith response/learn more

participant reactions and responses, therefore the researcher decided to sift these responses to identify if some were related to a change the participants identified in themselves.

THE COURSE (C)

- Presenters, fellow students, group bonding
- Organisation by nuns
- Organisation by CEOSale

personal/happy to write

good guides & teachers/best way of learning

Meeting local people/listening to them

Understanding of complexity of long term tension

Local people/learning about socio political tension/raised awareness around media reports

Galilee / Jesus real there

Place/reality/visualise/teaching/learning

Scripture learning/meaningful

Scripture learning/place

Place/scripture learning/context

Yad Vashem/Hebron

Clear learning/intolerance/hate

Personal learning/listening/patience achieves more

Learning about Jewish people/changed attitude

Desert/close to God/Personal learning felt insignificant

Ein Gedi/heat/place of history

Stations of the cross/Old City/convergence of religious groups

place/socio political tension/personal appreciation

Mass at Shepherds field

Hebron/Place/ Socio Political tension/witnessing abuse

Jericho/place of scripture text made real/geography

Jordan River/Place of Scripture

Gethsemane/ Personal prayer/Place of scripture

Ein Karem/peace/tranquility/Wall around the Old city/visual sights

Sea of Galilee/Place of Scripture

Places/Mass/formal learning

Place/cf Galilee & Jerusalem

Place of Jesus/Scripture understanding

Place/different religion

Program/ Rich learning in formal setting

Program/ Quality presenters/interfaith experience

Personal - breathtaking/place/unreality

Place/Wilderness/Sense of harshness

Place/Holy sites

Stations of the cross/Personal - emotional overwhelming

Place/ emotions/Jordan/Faith/Mass/Jesus place/People/Interreligious

Yad Vashem/Personal - incomprehension & struggle

Learning/unimaginable/change

Teaching/witnessing

Place/Desert/desolate/powerful/land of Jesus/reality of his place

Sea of Galilee/Place of Jesus/faith response

Place / Interfaith learning/Understanding Jesus

Formal learning

Place/ desert silence/Galilee boat/Gethsemane

Personal /learning/ powerful impact

Place of Jesus/entered Scripture

Personal - feelings/impact on learning/Change - better witness & Teacher

Formal Learning/Place of learning subject/Sea of Galilee/ Mass/ prayer settings/

people/interfaith & social learning

Question 4 Has this experience impacted on your teaching, your students, colleagues and others? If so, how has it impacted? If not, explain why not.

Teaching of Scripture

Confidence/teaching RE/new approaches to teaching Scripture

impact on Liturgy & prayer in school/teaching Scripture/PL for teachers/refreshed RE role

changed approach teaching scripture especially background

use photos in teaching

New enthusiasm for staff PL, planning & Scripture teaching

Impacted on incentive to undertake further study

teaching/PL for colleagues in scripture teaching

better understanding of scripture/understood place better

enriched faith/witness

sharing knowledge and images with staff & students

on-going impact on teaching/connectedness to Hland and Jesus

continuing impact on faith

course content remembered

sharing knowledge and images with staff & students

places impacted: Jerusalem, Jordan, sea of G, Garden of G, Temple M, Kedron V. Things: Mustard seed

applies impressions of place to Scripture teaching

thinks about experience nearly every day/uses experiences, photos and aids to teach Scripture

Uses maps, mats bought in teaching

Paints mental picture for students/Geography/places

Thankful/encourages others to go

comfortable teaching, discussing sharing

Huge impact on teaching

relates Scripture teaching to personal experiences and learning/students more engaged

Relates places visited to Scripture teaching/student learning impacted

aids purchased helps teaching

presented to colleagues/powerful impact/sharing helps other understand impact on them/shaped who they are now

positive response of students/parents want to know more due to students' response

disappointed in opportunities to share at school

easier to teach scripture/enjoyable teaching/sharing mementos with others

difficult for others to be enthusiastic, appreciative about Scripture with no experience

Staff PL/expertise underutilised

sharing experiences with other SSP participants

better knowledge of Scripture aids teaching

students impacted in both life and faith

students ask questions/they tune in to current events in Israel

came back different

share information knowledge/confident/physical/ geographical experiences

aid setting for teaching Scripture

faith more real/tangible presence (of Jesus)/want to witness

Scripture came alive/wanted to share with students
wanted to share with colleagues/witness/wanted to impact on their story
scripture read in the land they were set/Good news indeed

Question 5 How did you generally respond to this way of learning? What do you consider to be the benefits or drawbacks?

first and only experience of this type of learning

Personal - enjoyed/learnt most through field excursions/recall clearest
sense of heat brought Scripture alive
Course - varying quality of lecturers/different people responded to different
things or ideas
Time to study/reflect

challenged by heat

Positive response to this mode of learning

Course - balance of lectures, excursions, discussions, Faith – liturgies ISRAEL

Course - lecturers knowledgeable @ Scripture. Muslims, multifaith context ISRAEL

Course - time to read/emailed notes during course ISRAEL

PL/withdrawn from normal life responsibilities - no distractions
Personal - loved every minute/Type of PL more relevant, meaningful
Personal/PL - Challenging - physically, mentally, morally

Family support/no fear for safety
PL/place - immersion immeasurably beneficial
Place - concept of distances
PL - blessed by combination of class/excursion/ learning- refined
understanding, deepened knowledge
PL/place/learning - combined knowledge and experience/enabled deep
knowledge/faith spiritual response
Learning/place/course - experiences combination with context/engaged with
learning
Responded enthusiastically/ Course mixture of lectures & excursions ISRAEL
worked well/debriefing helped challenging outings ISRAEL

sometimes difficult to stay focused - distracted by sights

PL - best ever way to learn
Personal/Learning/place - feel the experience, land, people of scripture/

seep into skin go deep into who you are

Course/PL/Faith -Time away from busyness/time for contemplation

PL/place -relate events to place best way of learning

Course/PL - Benefits outweigh drawbacks - if there are any

Personal - privileged /Learning - visiting places of Jesus/ Faith/place - praying where Jesus prayed. PL - Immersed in people and place/ faith - to worship in this place/Personal - soaked it up/ Time - a whole month

Personal - openness to experience and sharing with other pilgrims

Personal - moved, changed. Course - Focus on me not any other role in life

Personal enlightening experience/ bonding with others

Course/PL - no drawbacks / Personal - **WE** Benefited more deeply than could have been imagined

PL - ideal

PL - lecture + discussions - excursions beautiful blend

Faith - regular mass/Consolidated learning

PL/ Course - Good mixture class + excursion

Course - lecturers + Guides provided deeper explanations/ Personal - made them even more interesting

PL - particularly beneficial

PL/ time Course - Leaving family + worries

Course - Drawback - particularly busy/scheduled/hard to take in

PL/Course - Time away beneficial - took time to settle in

Personal - incredibly grateful

PL - responded amazingly well

PL/Course/Place/ - culture shock. Successful way of learning

Course - full timetable, lot to take in, no down time

Question 6 Has your understanding of Scripture or your attitude to the teaching of Scripture changed in any way? If so, how?

Scripture learning/change

scripture learning/personal - exciting

Teaching/change

Teaching/ expertise/trusted

Teaching resource

Faith - Liturgy visualising

Learning - Further Scripture study/ personal -Thirst

Scripture learning/Teaching -Confidence/further learning

Teaching - confirmed approach to Scripture

Learning - deepened knowledge and ability

Jesus - deeper understanding of Jewishness of Jesus

Teaching/witness - inspired/ Jesus - radical model then and now

Teaching Scripture - love/Learning more about Scripture/Time - teaching and learning love grown more

Learning - Scripture/Personal - love of scripture/Faith - enhanced liturgy

Teaching - pedagogy impacted, sharing knowledge

Faith/Scripture - reading it, positive, trust in God

Learning - deeper understanding/ Teaching - enjoy teaching scripture

Faith/change/witness - Scripture life giving, enthusiastic

Learning - to look deeper/Teaching - more knowledge/PL - passing it on to staff/ Faith - Liturgy

Learning - greater understanding/ Teaching - practical resources

Learning- greater understanding/ Teaching improved pedagogy for engaging students

Learning - Importance of Scripture context

Faith - open, comfortable to share/ Learning - open to more, learning together

Teaching - Pressure to be expert removed, a catalyst for learning, seeking, understanding

Learning - more mature understanding

Personal - interesting / Learning - aided further study

Learning - context important/ Change realisation literal not helpful formessage

Teaching - improved, ongoing stimulus to continue to learn in order to teach

Personal - excited to teach it/ Teaching - understanding brings reality, impact, feel the story/Faith - witness

Learning - greater understanding of place, context/Teaching - more meaningful for students

Learning - understanding grew significantly/Teaching - this understanding is important for teaching

Learning - Land important as it tells a story/teaching - images important

Personal/ Learning - Scripture has come alive / Teaching & Witness - passionate, easier to teach

Question 7 Describe any changes you would make to the program or any suggestions to improve the preparation, learning experience, or follow up.

Preparation good / follow up with people they bonded with good FOLLOW UP

Unique experience Difficult for other to comprehend effect/follow up with people good - got different things out of it ISRAEL / FOLLOW UP

Course / Lecturers /PL Learning - different cultures, would not have learnt as much without opportunity ISRAEL

Nothing to change OVERALL

right balance learning experiences & free time ISRAEL

well prepared by CEOSale in all aspects PREPARATION

Pre-reading of book PREPARATION

Book helped their journey PREPARATION

Pre-reading book prepare   for visits to places and further Information PREPARATION

All aspects good   OVERALL

If changed then for better if possible   ISRAEL

uncertain of how it's now run so can't comment ISRAEL

no change needed / Follow up study and social session useful OVERALL/ FOLLOW UP

Had time for reflection/wanted to visit refugees   ISRAEL

University visit and meeting students

No changes OVERALL

No changes OVERALL

good as it is/ preparation - no other way than current method ISRAEL PREPARATION

Follow up course at box hill very good   FOLLOW UP

Course - more time to share experiences ISRAEL

No changes OVERALL

wonderful balance on pilgrimage ISRAEL

Time - needed the month to immerse ISRAEL

well prepared PREPARATION

Personal - blessed, amazing experience

Preparation - well supported, prepared, secure in knowledge others creating the experience / Course throughout pilgrimage everything possible taken care of PREPARATION/ ISRAEL

No change/ Personal - grateful for opportunity, embraced it ISRAEL

Course/Personal - Every aspect of Preparation and course provided support and wonderful PREPARATION/ ISRAEL

No changes OVERALL

Personal - amazing experience for those fortunate to take part

thoroughly covered everything PREPARATION / ISRAEL

No changes OVERALL

happy with preparation - novice traveller PREPARATION

travel arrangement easy to follow / Buddy good idea PREPARATION

thorough, / felt safe PREPARATION

amazing studies and excursions ISRAEL

lots of thinking and planning evident, well prepared PREPARATION

Could ask question about how they followed up with students in class FOLLOW UP

Interfaith - could lead to deeper understanding, need to build this today FOLLOW UP

how they have promoted interfaith dialogue in class FOLLOW UP

more free time but not so it impacts content ISRAEL

precious well planned, not dramatic changes needed ISRAEL / PREPARATION

Post experience - time for reflection FOLLOW UP

Post experience - annual get together, relive journey, further explore after time and more life experience
FOLLOW UP

Question 8 Other comments

Personal - grateful for opportunity to study in this way

Recommends it to others

Faith / Learning - deepened, long lasting

Personal - privileged

Teaching - renewed

Faith - renewed Mass experience

Change - more tolerant of other faiths and races Personal - thank ypu

Personal - forever thankful/ will encourage others to go

Personal - would go back if they could

PL/ Faith - exceptional experience

PL - still relevant after 9 years

preparation and course great / Personal heartfelt thanks

Personal - hope it continues

Personal / PL one of most wonderful generous learning experience

Personal / Faith/Greatest experience, enriched faith life, still unfolding

Personal - blessed, want to go back

Personal - privileged

Challenge to share experience/unique to everyone

Faith / Personal - internal, positive

Personal - blessed

Course - sisters do a wonderful job organising and running it

Learning/Place/ Scripture/Interfaith/ - Valuable learning experience living amongst people and seeing interfaith work of sisters and others

Personal - life changing

Personal - gratitude for opportunity and impact on life

Teaching - enriched /personal - changed forever because of its impact/ others feel same

Personal/teaching/PL - pilgrimage wonderful gift, ongoing impact on others, shared, others richer for their experience

Personal - wants to go back
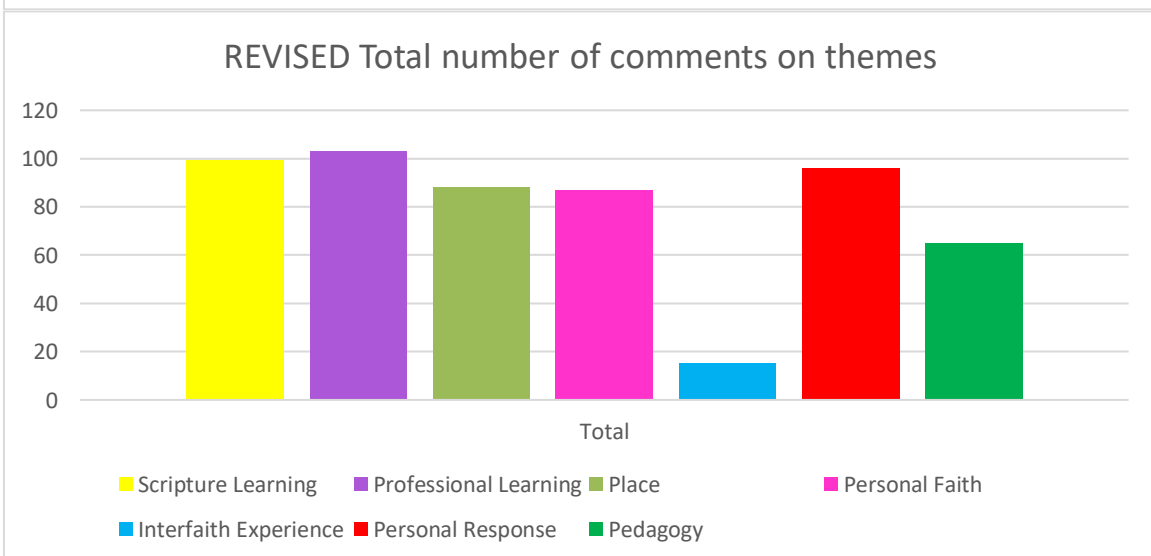
Personal - forever grateful

PL - Has to be right time professionally and personally to be worthwhile

Personal / Faith - Unique gift to me and faith

Personal - completely grateful to diocese/ teaching - want to give back to diocese through improved teaching and leadership

Personal - brilliant experience, blessed for journey opportunity /all teachers would benefit from

Theme chunking of questionniare comments

Total number of comments on themes

REVISED Total number of comments on themes
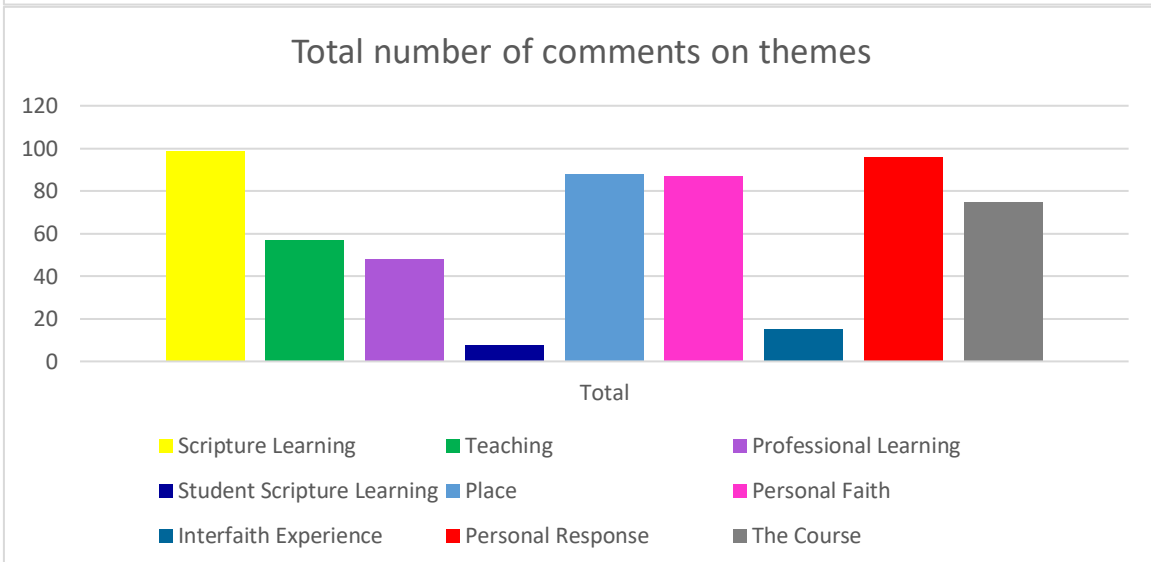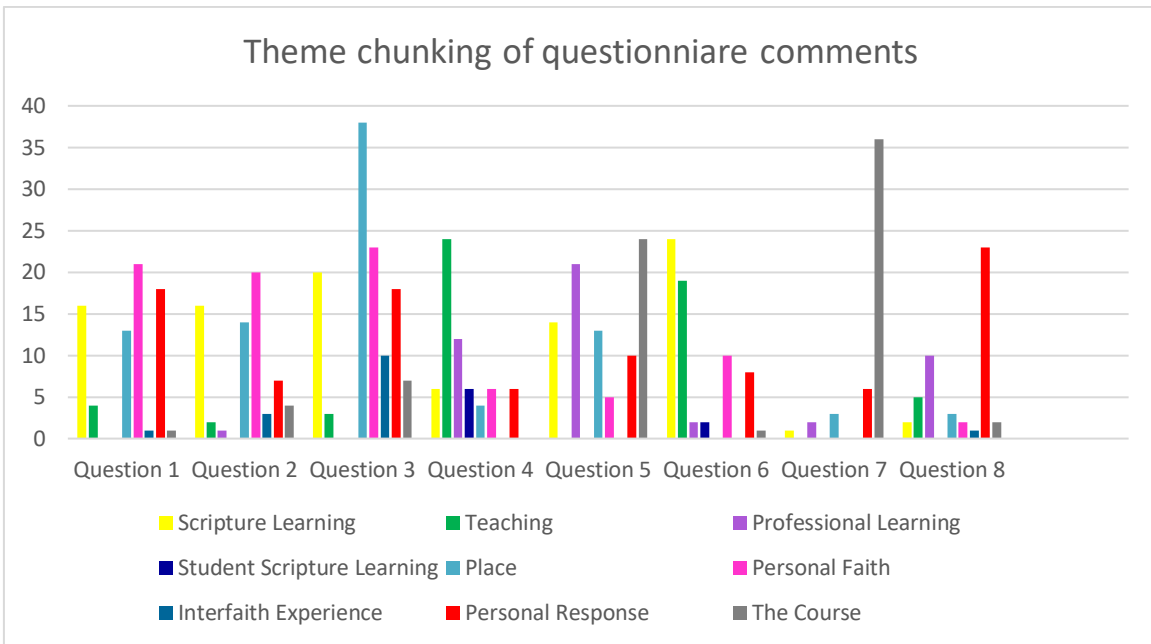
Major Themes	Code	Sub Themes A	Code	Sub Themes B	Code
Journey to Israel (a unique place?)	**J**	Scripture Learning	**JSL**	Adult Learning	**JSL**
				Pedagogical Impact In schools	**JSLPI**
		Faith	**JF**	place of pilgrimage	**JFP**
				NEW: sense of ownership of land through faith	**JFSO**
				place of Jesus	**JFJ**
				celebration of Liturgy	**JFC**
				witness	**JFW**
		Interfaith	**JI**		
		A place:	**JP**	**of** Socio-political tension	**JPSPT**
				of Religious Tension	**JPRT**
				where they Met People	**JPPM**
				of particular Geographical places of scripture	**JPG**
				NEW Unique	**JPU**
				NEW: Where strong bonds were formed	**JPB**
Adult Learning	**AL**	Professional Learning	**APL**	~~course~~ SSP organisation in Israel	**APLPOI**
				NEW: SSP organisation in Australia	**APLPOA**
				Personal Response to this PL experience	**APLPR**
				NEW: Quality of course	**APLQ**
		NEW: supports movement to PCB Stance in teachers	**ALPCB**		

		[and students]			
		NEW: System Follow up to course	**ALSF**		
		NEW: Perspective change	**ALPC**	Keep in mind FG1 led 1 to raise money, one to study and one to do masters special edn	
		NEW: effect of experience on Scripture learning & teaching	**ALELT**		
		NEW: As PL for leaders	**ALPLL**		
Journey	Scripture learning	**JSL**		To be immersed in … a very powerful learning program and to also be immersed in the places the Scripture was, or the stories were set, was very powerful.IP5 So … you can go to Israel today and live the Scripture because it's happening still.IP5 But just all that, to put dirt into the story, to sew the threads together of our life story, because … when I grew up there was no Scripture, the Protestants studied Scriptures, and we went to a Catholic school, you don't do Scriptures FG2	Related to Place Childhood images changed, related to changed perspective There is something here about lack of Scripture experience in the past in contrast to the rich experience provided by the lecturer and the place that seems to satisfy a yearning. Also related to personal faith and group bonding
		Pedagogical Impact in schools In schools	**JSLPI**	So this morning I put the reflection on again, and when it finished I said would you write what my trip has meant to you, to the kids in my class, and they all wrote these pieces you know, we learnt that the old Jerusalem has four quarters and said what they were, and we learnt that…	Is it related to evangelisation? This is also linked to witness.

				it would often come back that <u>the kids had talked about what we had done in RE at home. And the parents were really amazed by that because I was teaching littlies, and they were going home and talking about these places.</u>	Brings in the reality of the place where Jesus lived. Perhaps perhaps this is important to help children see the reality of the Jesus story.
	Faith	Place of pilgrimage	**JFP**	<u>But it comes down to place again, some people invest a lot of energy into this is the actual [emphasis] spot.</u> we weren't tourists, we were definitely students but there were also elements of … of pilgrimage that [lecturer] brought in, and they were depthed [deepened] by [guide] who was, the tour guide for want of a better word. So as tour guide he wasn't just so much showing us the places, he lived and breathed the story as well.IP5	Also related to uniqueness of place Links to course organisation too
		Place of personal faith	**JF**	<u>Do you go there sort of empty?</u> FG2V1 [very long pause, a sigh is heard]	What is it they are aching for – identity? Freedom to be who they are? Faith?
				Somehow, <u>it's almost like that aching spirit to have been in the place,</u> this Jesus fella, whoever he be, we've been brought into this faith, everybody was like that … oh just to say so many times through that five weeks … I'm Christian, I'm Christian, I've never said it that many times. FG2V3	Impacted on faith provided a sense of community of likeminded people – also linked to witness Faith is part of who they are Also fits in to JPB bonding with group
		Witness?		And when we're doing gospel stuff and they'd say "(gasp) that was near the Sea of Galilee wasn't it, aw I know how you would have felt when you were there". FG2V4	Strong sense that the place was the key.

				you knew you're in a Holy, sacred space and we just knew it … the connection of being there for a common purpose, but all for very It's got to be part of what I am or I'm not who I'm supposed to be. And it's changed at school, my teaching, changed the way I am as an RE leader, changed the way I am as a leader in the school in so many ways. FG2V4 different purpose. FG1V	The community and experience gave courage to witness faith Note there is a sense of a changed perspective.