The Search for Success in a Charismatic Environment:

Senior Teacher's Responses to high stakes testing in Academically Successful Christian Brothers' Schools

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ABSTRACT

In Australia, traditionally a wide range of measures have been used to identify academically successful schools. The mix of these measures has varied from state to state. But recently, added to this mix, and perhaps becoming the most influential factor, has been the examination results of senior students. These have become far more available to the prospective parents and governing bodies. They are used to gauge the ranking of the school, and to whether parents can expect their children to gain entry into the more prestigious tertiary programs available. But these scores are also being used to rank staff, and in turn, the 'quality' of staff becomes yet another factor in identifying an academically successful school. In other words, the notion of high stakes testing is gaining wide spread use across all forms of schooling in Australia, including State, Independent and Catholic schools.

This thesis is about teachers in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools. It is an interpretive study that seeks to understand how these teachers respond to this form of assessment: high stakes testing. Their responses include emotional responses, how they change their teaching style and how they feel about teaching in Christian Brothers' schools striving for academic success. In this research I interviewed teachers and administrators at three academically successful Christian Brothers' schools in three different states in Australia. I developed three cases from these interviews and document searches, one drawn from each school, that indicate the range of issues that emerged, for them, as teachers in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools.

The specific use of high stakes testing was found to be very different in each of the schools. One school used high stakes testing as an accountability measure for staff, another used it as an accountability measure for students, and the third had no history of using high stakes testing. The study concludes that academic excellence can be achieved in Christian Brothers' schools whilst remaining faithful to the ethos that underpins these schools: the Charism of Edmund Rice. Significant factors in the determination of the successful implementation of high stakes testing in these schools were found to be: the effect of senior management; influence of the media; the influence of culture; and changing culture and the nature of the schools. The thesis concludes with a blueprint for a hypothetical Christian Brothers' school to follow that may lead to academic success.

STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety committees (where required).

Signed: Date:

M. Davies

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Finally I would like to acknowledge the contribution made to this study by the generations of Christian Brothers who have shaped so many lives. Their influence and live of teaching has been an ongoing inspiration for me.

DEDICATION

For my greatest gift, my loving family.

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CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH DEFINED

1.1 Introduction to Research

Transition points in any education system are critical nodes for the system as a whole, but equally for those students who make the journey through these nodes. Typically at senior levels of a system, this transition relies on some type of assessment of students' ability. In Australia in the final year of secondary schooling, this is the case. In recent times, the results of this form of assessment has not only been used to gauge the quality of students. In the 1980s, final year assessment results also began to be used to list schools publicly on so called "league tables of quality". More recently these results have been used at a third level: as a gauge of the quality of staff. Such a practice is one element of a movement termed "high stakes testing".

The high stakes testing movement has emerged from a body of work on 'quality schooling'. The issue of quality schooling has heavily influenced the Australian educational climate, in which these schools act, as with the educational climate in many other OECD countries. Furthermore, in the last 15 years 'quality teaching' has emerged as central to ensuring quality schooling for all students. Consequently, measures have been taken to evaluate and ensure teacher quality, which, reportedly, has wide reaching effects. A central pillar of improving teacher quality within the high stakes testing movement is the use of data driven assessment. At its simplest level, high stakes testing utilities the scores of senior students in order to assess the performance of their teachers.

In Australia, traditionally a wide range of measures have been used to identify academically successful schools. The mix of these measures has varied from state to state. But recently, added to this mix and perhaps becoming the most influential factor has been the examination results of senior students. These have become far more available to the prospective parents and governing bodies. They are used to gauge the ranking of the school, as to whether parents can expect their children to gain entry into the more prestigious tertiary programs available. But these scores are also being used to rank staff, and in turn, the 'quality' of staff becomes yet another factor in identifying an academically successful school. In other words, the notion of high stakes testing is gaining wide spread use across all forms of schooling in Australia, including State, Independent and Catholic schools.

Teachers can find this form of assessment extremely stressful and the motivational effects can be negative. It is widely reported that schools can change their curriculum and assessment procedures to increase their scores against high stakes testing criteria to the detriment of the student's educational outcomes (Amrein & Berliner, 2002a). Students can also experience a wide range of negative effects as result of the use of high stakes testing. They may be drilled to complete tests at the expense of skills, such as practical or laboratory skills that are more difficult or time consuming to test. However, there is a smaller, yet significant body of work that suggests the contrary (Wolf & Wolf, 2002). This research highlights increased motivational effects amongst staff and improved educational outcomes in some student bodies. It is against this backdrop of high stakes testing that this research is conducted.

In Australia there are a myriad of both Christian and Non-Christian denominations which have founded and continue to run non-Government schools. With many of these non-government schools, high stakes testing has been embraced. The research focuses on schools founded by the Christian Brothers; an order of religious dedicated to education and originating in Ireland. These schools are thus influenced by not only a current education climate focused on teacher quality and accountability, but also the Christian Brothers' tradition elucidated in documents such as *The Charter* (2004), which describes the cultural characteristics at the heart of Christian Brothers' schools. Teachers in Christian Brothers' schools are called to follow the cultural characteristics at the heart of a Christian Brothers' school. These characteristics have been identified to ensure that the day-to-day activity of these schools is informed by the message of the founder of the Christian Brothers, the Blessed Edmund Rice. His Charism calls teachers in Christian Brothers' schools in a unique way based on his philosophy of teaching, formed in Ireland of the nineteenth century. The Charism calls teachers to firstly encourage pupils to strive for scholastic excellence in a disciplined atmosphere; secondly offer a religious dimension that permeates the entire education available to their pupils; cultivate a strong devotion to Mary, the Mother of God; have a clear emphasis for the care and concern for each individual in the school community; and demonstrate a particular concern for the poor. This is expressed through service learning activities, where students are asked to go out into the community to feed the homeless, provide company for the elderly and raise funds for overseas development.

Clearly then, teachers at Christian Brothers' schools have a number of influences on them, that include not only the call of the Charism of Edmund Rice, but also the pressures of high stakes testing. The effect of a combination of these influences in a

single school is under-researched. While there are some synergies with one element of the Charism emphasizing academic excellence, other nurturing elements may be seen as in opposition to a school taking seriously high stakes testing.

As a past Head of Science and now Head of House at one Christian Brothers' school, I am acutely aware of a number of changes that have been made at the systemic, pedagogical, curriculum and assessment levels throughout my school over the last 10 years. My personal pedagogy has changed dramatically over this last decade as a consequence of the school's pursuit of academic success. I have found the way in which teachers have been managed to adopt perceived successful practices of great interest. Consequently, I became interested in how other Christian Brothers' schools have achieved academic success and, in particular, whether they had used high stakes testing, and if so how the staff had responded. Hence, it is an interest in the response of staff that teach in Christian Brothers' schools who seek academic success using high stakes testing, and the management by the College Leadership Teams in these colleges, which motivates this research.

In summary, this research is about teachers. Specifically, these teachers are senior staff members of the highest academically achieving Christian Brothers' schools in their state or region. To varying degrees, these schools assess their teachers using the scores of their Year 12 students; that is, they use variations of high stakes testing. It is an interpretive study that seeks to understand how the senior teachers at these schools respond to this form of assessment; that is, high stakes testing.

1.2 The Schools

The three academically successful Christian Brother's schools which form the research sites for this study into the senior teachers' responses to high stakes testing were: CBC Adelaide in South Australia; CBC Brisbane in Queensland and CBC Melbourne in Victoria. CBC Adelaide is a preparatory to year 12 boys' school of approximately 1300 students, whilst CBC Brisbane is a year 5 to year 12 boys' school of approximately 1200 students. CBC Melbourne is pre-preparatory to Year 12 boy's school of approximately 1400 students.

Central to the operation of the schools has been the Christian Brothers working within the Charism of Edmund Rice. Arising from the Greek word for gift, Charism is defined as a gift of grace given to people of faith to develop and renew people of God. Imbued with this Charism, Christian Brothers have firstly endeavoured to bring students to the faith, and secondly educate them. As the number of Christian Brothers that were active in schools decreased, lay (that is non-religious) teachers and Principals have taken on their role. Lay teachers practising at Christian Brothers' schools are charged with the task of carrying out their daily work in a Charismatic environment; that is staying faithful to the message and example of Edmund Rice.

Since the first school was opened by Edmund Rice in 1802, the Congregation of Christian Brothers has grown to 1900 schools in 29 countries. The first Australian school was opened in Sydney in 1843 and since that time, the Christian Brothers have moulded generations of students. The first schools brought education to the disadvantaged in the community, largely the immigrant Catholic communities. But

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gradually the Christian Brothers have opened schools that cater for the full spectrum of society, encompassing the whole socio-economic range.

Each of the three schools in this study is an excellent school by most measures. Each school has a dynamic lay Headmaster and a strong teaching staff. Their facilities are of the highest order; their teachers are well qualified and committed, and their education is broad and extremely well supported. In particular, the schools have magnificent grounds and facilities including sporting and performing arts spaces. Hence it is no surprise that they have each achieved remarkable success on the sports field across both summer and winter seasons, and all have innovative and proactive performing arts faculties. They all have very advanced pastoral care protocols and service learning programs where boys work in the community with the disadvantaged. They have all produced high profile members of the community including leaders in the world of business, politics, the law and academia. Their academic record is excellent in each state when compared with other Christian Brothers' schools, other Catholic schools, and indeed, other Independent and Public (state) schools.

Whilst there are significant differences in approach between the schools, they are all outstanding Catholic Boys Schools in the tradition of the Christian Brothers. However, this research will consider these schools excellent using only one aspect of the school, academic achievement as defined by the scores of their senior students. I have not looked at the value added assessment, purely the raw scores of the school as compared with all other Catholic, Independent and State schools. The schools chosen for this study are not only the academically highest achieving Christian Brother's Schools, but also very high achieving schools by any description.

1.3 Identification of Research Questions

Teachers in Christian Brothers Schools are subject to a huge number of influences. The teachers and administrators are continually making decisions about future directions; they are constructing their own reality on a daily basis. Their attitudes and perceptions are formed and reformed by external stimuli derived from parents, principals, senior management, and the Charism that permeates their school. I will concentrate on four foci in this study, the justification of which are developed in subsequent chapters.

Firstly, I seek to investigate senior teacher's responses in this atmosphere of change, challenge and construction, specifically the use of high stakes testing. I will look at any changes they have made to their teaching styles or practice, whether the are "teaching to the test" in all its various guises. I will investigate any changes made on a more systemic level to staff professional developments and feedback processes, to student enrolment to the school and specific courses. This focus gives a clear indication of the influence the high stakes testing has had on schools, it's teachers, and by direct consequence, it's students. It provides a framework for schools that may wish to improve their academic results. Informed by documentation and interview, it will provide baseline data for the degree of change exhibited by a school and its staff.

Secondly, I will highlight how the participants view these influences, including high stakes testing. This includes whether they agree with it in principle, with its methods or implications, and whether they think it is helping students becomes more academically successful. This focus provides a lens through which to examine any

changes made by teachers. The degree to which staff have embraced these methods

may have a direct influence on the degree to which they have enhanced their teaching.

This focus will enable an understanding to be gained of how well the use of high

stakes testing has been managed and to produce a framework for the use of this data.

It may inform practice in professional development and professional feedback

particularly in schools that are seeking to improve their academic scores at a senior

level.

Thirdly, I will draw the two major themes together that of high stakes testing and the

Charism of Edmund Rice, to illustrate how the resulting pressures to achieve

academically are perceived and acted upon by staff. Whether there is congruence or

dissonance between these pressures, and if so, how they have been addressed by

individuals and on a school systemic level, will be of importance within the

discussion.

Finally, if there is dissonance how has it been overcome? A consideration of this issue

may provide leadership to other schools who see themselves in a similar context to

one or more of the three schools studied in this project in the same situation where a

drive for academic success is perceived as being contrary to the value system of the

institution.

The research questions can therefore be summarized:

1. Have, and if so how have, senior teachers changed their teaching to achieve
   academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?
2. How do senior teachers perceive methods employed to achieve academic
   success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?

3. Given the Charismatic nature of a Christian Brothers School, is there congruence between the lived experience of the Charism and the goals of the school management as far as high stakes testing is concerned?
4. How can methods be employed to improve academic success whilst remaining congruent with lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their school?

1.4 The study

The purpose of this research was to review the experience of senior teachers from the three targeted schools and highlight ways in which teachers at these Christian Brother's schools have achieved academic success with their students without compromising their lived experience of Edmund Rice's Charism. Underpinning this purpose is the belief that teachers and managers of schools can help their students to achieve academic successes within the framework of a Christian Brother's School committed to the values of Edmund Rice.

Within this study the focus is on senior teachers. These are teachers who teach students in their final year of secondary school. The senior students are those who are taking their final year of schooling and will sit their leaving examination; for example the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in Victoria. These teachers, who may have vast experience or be in their first year of teaching, teach the most senior students in the school, and may therefore, be subjected to high stakes testing.

The key construct in the study has already been introduced, high stakes testing. The term high stakes testing is used to denote those situations where interest in assessment goes beyond the immediate sphere of educational measurement and beyond those individuals who sit the tests (Messick, 1999). The examination results of senior

students determine their entry to tertiary study or into the workplace; hence these examinations have significant importance for those sitting them. However, the results of senior students can be used to assess a teacher, thus the results are used beyond what they where initially intended for. Managers may use the data collected from final examinations to assess teacher's performance, as well as report on this data. The term high stakes testing has been used to describe this practice.

Although the majority of American studies cited in subsequent chapters refer to the actual examination being sat by the student as the high stakes test, I will speak from the point of view of the senior teacher who responds to the data derived from high stakes testing. I will therefore use the term high stakes testing to denote the tests given to Year 12 students that firstly, indicate student achievement, and secondly, the data generated from these tests are used to assess teachers. For example, the percentage of students in a class that achieve a Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) study score of 40 out of 50, or the percent of a class that get Very High Achievement (VHA) 1 to 10 in the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), are data that is then used to gauge the quality of the students' teachers.

The methodological structure that underpinned this research study was a collective case study. The case studies of each of the three schools were undertaken in order to better understand the phenomena of teacher responses to striving for academic success in a Charismatic environment. Data collection methods used in each of the three case study schools included: an interview with the Headmaster; an interview with the Director of Studies; interviews with individual senior teachers; and relevant documents regarding achieving academic success at senior levels and the Charism of

Edmund Rice within the lived experience of the school. Specifically, documents collection within each case study included: Official publications such as the College Prospectus, Handbooks, Year Books, along with periodicals to the school community; memoranda and correspondence concerning achieving academic success; memoranda and correspondence concerning the lived experience of Edmund's Charism in the school. Analysis of the data followed the interpretive model of thematic interpretation, described by Van Manen (1990).

1.5 Significance of the Research

The significance of the study lies in the belief that academic achievement matters in schools, and that measures employed to promote it, including high stakes testing, can provide a major positive impact on the achievement of senior students. It will be argued that teachers of senior students can be informed, guided and affirmed if high stakes testing is used in a formative and sensitive manner. This stance, whilst in no way decrying the importance of the self-motivation of the teacher, argues the importance of teacher accountability, rewarding success, and the sensitive use of formative feedback in a professional context. This view is a contested view. Important parts of the literature provide another reading and indeed the contrary view is suggested by many writers in the field. Chapter 3 provides both sides of the argument with the case for not using high stakes data providing compelling evidence. However, in the end the overall position taken in this thesis supports the sensitive use of measures for accountability. It is my contention that there is enough evidence to support the appropriate use of high stakes testing and given the implementation of a number of key moderators such as professional developmental and longitudinal use of

these data, that high stakes testing can improve the educational outcomes for senior students in contexts such as those found in the schools forming this research.

The study focuses on a number of issues regarding the response of teachers to assessment. As Kluger and DeNisi (1996) note, results from research in this field, although spanning back to the early twentieth century, are often contradictory and seldom straightforward. The conditions or moderators for positive teacher assessment are poorly understood and go far beyond the view that feedback interventions improve performance. This research highlights feedback interventions where the two main moderators, the pressure for academic success and the Christian Brothers' ethos, are shared amongst a number of schools. This research seeks to investigate the congruence of approach between the drive for success and the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in these schools, and ways of alleviating any ensuing problems. It is therefore of great relevance to Christian Brothers' schools who are addressing such issues.

Schools that are searching for congruence between a particular school culture and their academic aspirations may also be able to draw some insights from this research. The research may illuminate problems that need to be overcome, and the vehicles that may be used to achieve this process. In her Australian research, Credlin (1999) calls for more work to be done on the use of reward for teachers. This research will add to the body of knowledge regarding the benefits of using reward in terms of positive feedback and tangible means on the long-term performance of teachers. The effect of high stakes testing on a wide population within Australian schools is also an area where little research has been performed. Whilst research from the United Kingdom and the United States is well documented, effects such as teaching to the test, teacher

disaffection and the narrowing of the curriculum has yet to be fully investigated here. This research seeks to fill part of this void in academic knowledge.

1.6 Positioning the Researcher

A further issue is worth comment in this opening chapter. This relates to the researcher. As will be seen in later chapters this study is qualitative in nature, and within qualitative research the researcher is also the instrument of research (Patton, 1990). In this regard, Burns (1994) has outlined five skills needed by the case study investigator. The person needs to be able to formulate relevant and precise questions, to be a good listener, to be adaptive and flexible, to be able to grasp issues being studied, and to be open minded in interpreting evidence. As the researcher, I am conscious of, and have attempted to exercise, these skills. The degree to which my abilities as sole researcher have limited or advantaged this research can be drawn from the results. However, I was mindful of following a process well trodden by many other researchers and bringing to bear my ability to relate and communicate with others in my profession. Having an in-depth knowledge of the Christian Brothers' approach to education, and significant experience in a Christian Brothers' school did enable me to reduce the superficiality of questions that may be asked to get to the core issues. It helped create a more empathetic interview environment and provided me with a fundamental appreciation of each school's motivating factors. Having a well-developed view of the Christian Brothers' approach does lead to a potential significant limitation however. I was aware that I needed to be open-minded and resist the temptation to revert to preconceived ideas and prejudices. I was therefore pleasantly surprised by a number of outcomes that contradicted my preconceived

ideas and supported other research findings that received little acknowledgement. I am cognisant that my view on the use of high stakes testing is a minority view. It is a view that has been developed through practice and experience both in Australia and the UK. I have read extensively and have not reached this viewpoint lightly as it has a polarising effect in educational circles. Indeed many of my peers find my views on the subject quite confronting. Although left wing in terms of my own political leanings, I am aware that I take a conservative and seemingly right wing approach to the use of high stakes testing. The overwhelming weight of evidence garnered from literature on the subject of high stakes testing counsels against its use. I contest however that the way in which these methods are employed and reported on and the actions that occur post this intervention that are key moderating factors. I do not discount the unintended effects such as extra pressure on staff, however, I feel strongly that they can be significantly reduced by careful management and the benefits to the students far outweighs the negative effect on staff.

It must also be noted that this is an EdD and not a PhD. The research was undertaken from a professional rather than purely theoretical perspective. I am greatly interested in the management of schools and particularly the management of schools aiming for high academic achievement. The research was undertaken as a result of questions I asked myself regarding the long-term management of schools in light of a search for academic success. I am intrigued by the ability of some schools to consistently achieve high academic outcomes and this research enabled me to get access to some of these schools. It was enlightening for me as a professional educator to get an appreciation of the systems and processes that these schools have put in place. Moreover, it was through my involvement in Catholic education throughout my career

that I considered the ethos of the colleges in question. The ability of a school to retain an overtly spiritual aspect to their education whilst striving for academic success is of great interest to me, and will inform my own decision making processes as I hope to move into positions of greater responsibility within schools of this nature.

1.7 Outline of Thesis

The next chapter, Chapter 2, reviews relevant aspects of the literature. It is comprised of two main sections. Firstly there is literature on quality education, which generates a framework for the research by providing an overview of past and present developments in teacher evaluation, particularly the use of high stakes testing in teacher evaluation. Secondly, there is the literature on the affect these forms of evaluation have on teachers. This informs the observer of possible outcomes that can arise where teachers as evaluated using high stakes testing and provides the reader with a clear view of one of the major influence on senior teachers in an academically successful Christian Brother's school.

Chapter 3 is a review of literature on the Charism of Edmund Rice in Christian Brother's schools. Firstly, it enables the reader to gain a clear conceptual understanding of the other major influences on senior teachers in academically successful Christian Brother's schools. It also furnishes a rationale on which to base the notion that there may be some dissonance in Christian Brother's school striving for academic success.

The blueprint for the collection and analysis of the data is mapped out in Chapter 4. A theoretical framework is initially outlined where the epistemology and theoretical perspectives are discussed. Case study is presented as the research design. Data collection methods are explained along with a description of research participants. Issues associated with trustworthiness and reliability are also summarized. Data analysis strategies are then proposed. Finally, ethical considerations are reviewed.

Chapter 5 provides a step-by-step account of the analysis, from the preliminary descriptive analysis of the text through components of the analytical process to the representation of the themes that emerged from the interviews. The first section of this chapter explains the steps and processes used to make sense of the data, with guidance from the work of Van Manen (1990). It then demonstrates how the analysis was undertaken and informed by the work of Streubert and Carpenter (1999) and Atkinson (1996). It includes tables to demonstrate the steps in the analysis and how themes were developed from words to concepts and to sub themes then themes. It should therefore be possible for a reader to audit the decisions made throughout the analysis (Koch, 1994). Finally, themes that are common to all schools are identified along with those that are specific to individual schools.

Chapters 6 and 7 bring the thesis to a conclusion. In chapter 6, the results of the project are gathered together to answer the research questions and some recommendations for future research are offered. Chapter 7 develops a different end point, and presents a range of changes that could be made at a fictitious Christian Brothers' school that is seeking to improve the academic outcomes of its senior students whilst remaining congruent to the Charism of Edmund Rice. This chapter

presents some ideas for future practice for Christian Brothers' schools and other denominational schools who seek academic success whilst adhering to their founding religious principles.

In summary, this research is about three groups of teachers. They teach in the highest academically achieving Christian Brothers' schools in their state. To varying degrees, these schools assess their senior teachers using the scores of their Year 12 students. It is an interpretive study that seeks to understand how the teachers at the schools respond to this form of assessment; that is, high stakes testing. Their responses include emotional responses, how they change their teaching style, and how they feel about teaching in Christian Brothers' schools striving for academic success.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction and Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study is to investigate the responses of senior teachers to high stakes testing in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools. It is seems appropriate firstly, to illuminate the driving force for the use of high stakes testing; that is, the *Quality Schooling* movement. This literature provides a foundation for the research and generates an overview of the development of teacher assessment and evaluation. The methods employed to measure teacher quality are examined in this chapter along with their effects. This will add to a clearer understanding of the context and provide aspects of the significance of this research. It provides a rationale for the case study and anticipates some ways in which teachers may respond in each context.

It must also be noted that whilst there is a great deal of literature to support the drive for quality teaching there is still significant debate on how to achieve quality. Indeed, the vast majority of the literature presented in this chapter presents a negative of the use of high stakes testing to achieve quality and thus disagrees with my original contention. Both sides of the argument will be presented including the positive and negative effect that high stakes testing has on key stake holders such as students and staff.

A full review of the literature pertinent to Christian Brothers' Education is provided in Chapter 3. This will add to the context of the research and leads to some research

questions. The literature on the educational philosophy and practice of Christian

Brothers' schools enables us to tone the lens through which the reader and the

researcher can review the case study. The relationship between the three core

literature areas relevant to this study is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework of the literature review

Christian Brothers' Education

Theme 1:
Section 2.1-
Quality Schooling

Theme 2:
Section 2.2-
Teacher responses to
high stakes testing

Senior teacher responses to
high stakes testing in
academically successful
Christian Brothers' schools

Theme 3:
Section 3:
Christian Brothers'
education
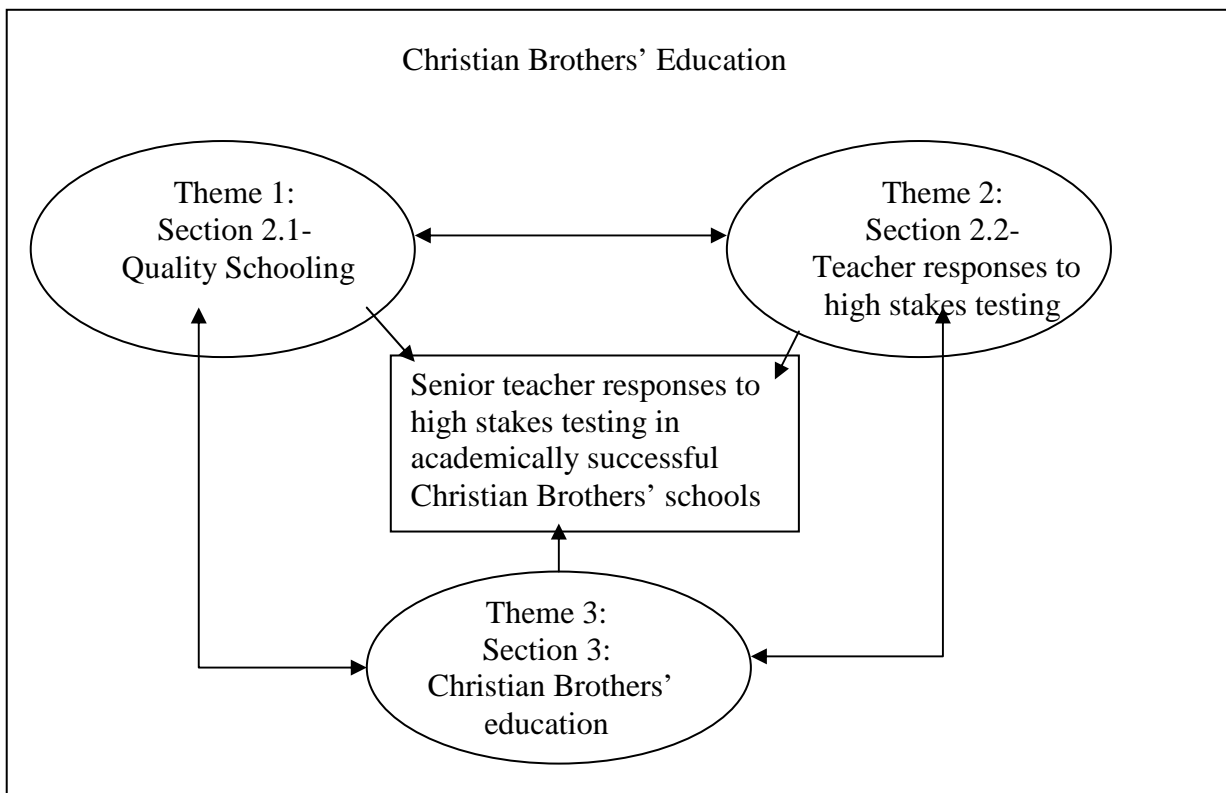
The three themes, namely Quality Schooling, Teacher responses to high stakes

testing, and Christian Brothers' education, create an interconnected network forming

the conceptual framework that underpins this research into the responses of senior

teachers to high stakes testing in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools.

The themes exist within the context particular to each school and the overall context

of each as Christian Brothers' schools following the Charism of Edmund Rice.

Within each theme, I have chosen to focus on specific sub themes, peeling away layers until I reach a focal point within the theme. Within the theme Quality Schooling, I treat the worldwide view of Quality Schooling as a broad theme focussing on Quality Schooling in Australia. As a result of the review of this literature, a focus becomes Quality Teaching and from that, methods for evaluating quality teaching emerge. The final focal point in this study of methods looks at the method of evaluation of specific interest in this research; High Stakes Testing. The theme and sub themes and their relationship within Quality schooling are shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Sub themes within quality education
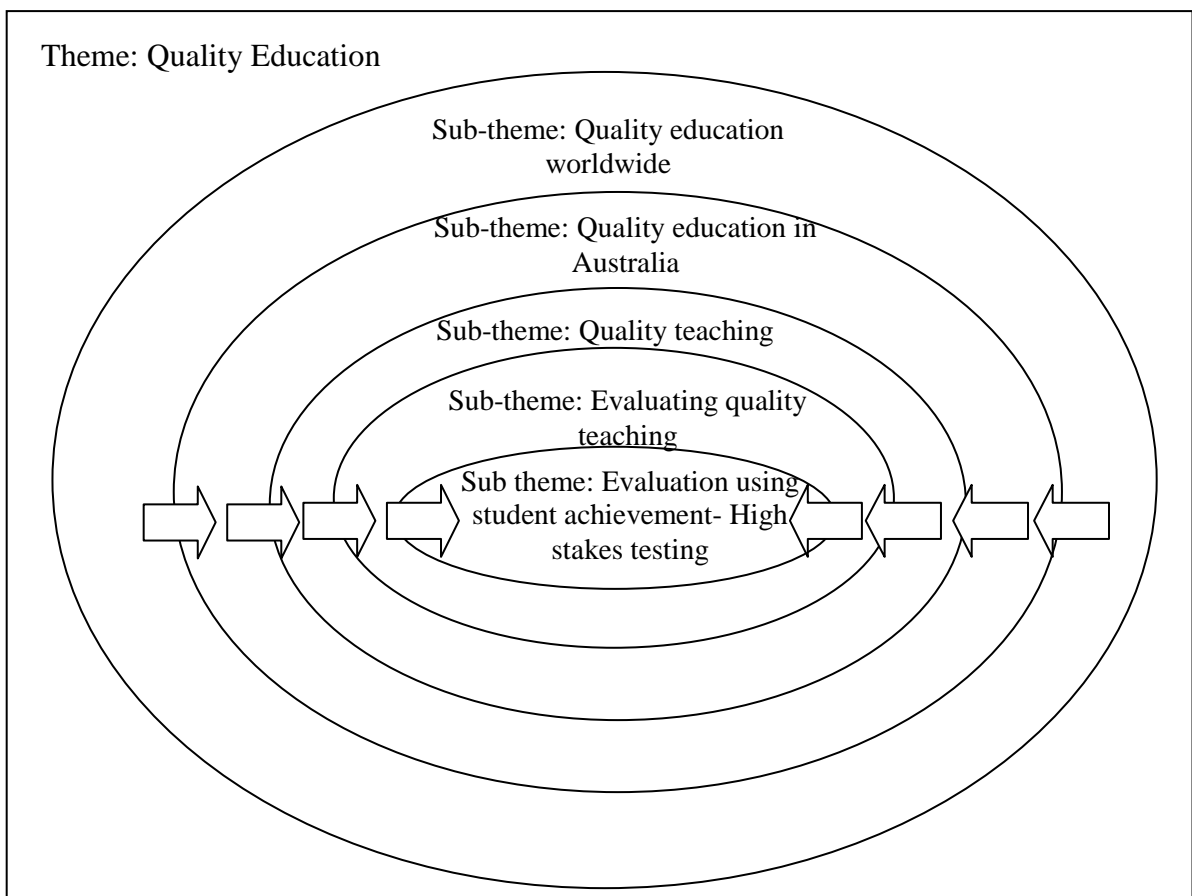
Within the theme Teacher responses to high stakes testing, I firstly chose to provide

an overview of high stakes testing by providing a definition and examples of its use

both overseas and in Australia. A sub theme emerging from this general literature

proved to be the effect of high stakes testing on specific groups or constructs within

education: students, schools, curricula and, most importantly for this research,

teachers. Since the research focuses on the responses of senior teachers to high stakes

testing, I chose to focus on a further sub-theme, teaching to the test, which is

particularly prevalent when teachers are subjected to high stakes testing evaluation. A

diagram showing the relationships between this theme and sub themes is shown in

Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3. Sub themes within the theme Responses to high stakes
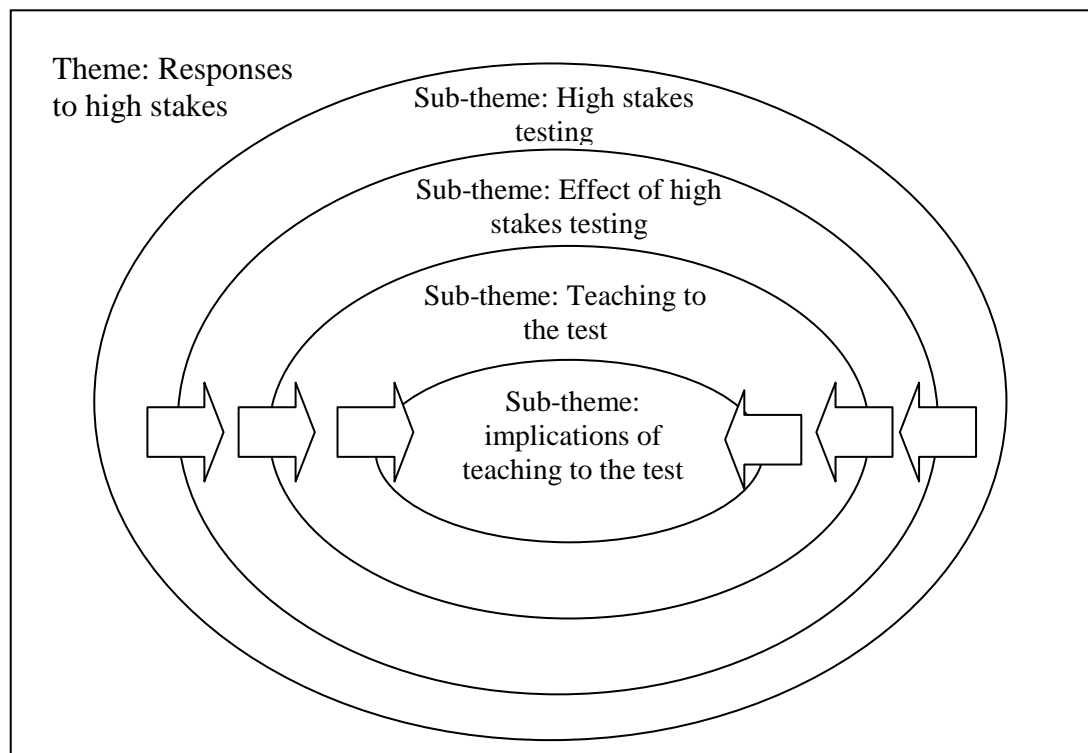
For this literature review I undertook a comprehensive search of the academic

journals, the Internet, and also the following databases: Ovid, Proquest, Informit and

Eric, together with other articles individually retrieved from the Internet. Search terms included "quality education", "quality teaching", "accountability", "high stakes testing", "teaching to the test", "Christian Brothers' Education," and "Edmund Rice's Charism". I also scanned library catalogues and local bookshops for recent publications on teacher accountability measures and high stakes testing. This chapter summarises existing research on quality schooling, high stakes testing, and teacher responses to evaluation. With the exception of some seminal texts, the literature review covers the period from 1990-2007. This time frame was chosen because extensive work has been published on these subjects during this time in the UK, US and Australia.

2.2 Quality in Education

The concepts of quality standards have existed since ancient times from the Egyptians and Sumatrans (Thonhauser & Passmore, 2006); however, it was in 1926 that work standards for industry were developed (Hoyle, 2001). The history of quality standards in the work place are well documented and lead to the current educational climate (Loya & Boli, 1999; Stimpson, 1998; Goestsh & Davis 2002, Van den Berghe, 1997; Tricker & Sherring-Lucas; 2001). There exists a significant body of current literature suggesting that following the widespread adoption of corporate management models in educational governance and the prevailing climate of outcome driven economic rationalism, policy activity related to accountability, assessment, standards monitoring and benchmarking, performance indicators, quality assurance, teacher quality school and teacher effectiveness are now widespread (Access Economics, 2005; Alton-Lee, 2002, 2005; Curtis & Keeves, 2000; Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005; Rowe,

Stephanou & Hoad, 2007). Invargson and Rowe (2007) remind us, however, that "political, economic and industrial issues surrounding educational effectiveness are sensitive" (p. 1), despite the level of non-partisan political consensus regarding macro and micro economic importance of teacher quality and quality teaching for equipping students adequately to meet the constantly changing demands of the modern workplace (for examples see Bishop, 2007; Macklin, 2006; Nelson, 2002, 2004).

It is argued by some commentators that the global economic, technological and social changes that characterise the modern world require responses from an increasingly skilled workforce, thus making high quality educational provision an imperative, especially high quality teaching (Invargson & Rowe, 2007). Whilst OECD education ministers have committed their countries to the goal of raising the quality of learning for all, this ambitious goal cannot be achieved unless all learners receive high quality teaching (OECD, 2001, 2005). It will be seen that the schools that form this research place great emphasis on high quality teaching and see quality teaching as central to high quality learning in the senior years of a student's education. Furthermore, I suggest that parents who exist in the current climate informed by measures of quality assurance are better informed and more likely to judge schools on educational outcomes derived from the scores of senior students. They expect current educational practices to deliver a "product" especially when they are paying private school fees and that "product" is high achievement in the senior years of schooling.

Despite the emphasis placed on the importance of teacher quality and quality teaching in recent OECD publications, as well as similar emphases in *No Child Left Behind* (US Department of Education, 2002), the bulk of international scholarly discourse on

quality education has largely ignored the importance of specifying evidence-based

standards in assessing quality teaching (Rowe, 2007a). With few exceptions (for

example, Bond, Smith, Baker & Hattie, 2000; Boskers, Kremers & Lugthart, 1990;

Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005;

Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005; Invargson, 2001; Invargson & Kleinhenz , 2006a,

b; Rowe, 2002 a, b) discussions that focus on what constitutes teacher quality in terms

of what teachers should know and be able to do are conspicuous by their absence. The

dominant emphasis continues to be characterised by "offerings advocating structural

changes for systemic reform" (Invargson & Rowe, 2007, p. 2) including curriculum

reconstruction, single sex schooling, and class size (Hattie, 2005b). It is my

contention that senior teachers should know how to guide their students to academic

success in their final years of education, indeed I would suggest that it is their core

business. I also support suggestions that schools should employ measures to

implement evidence-based standards. If the core business of senior teachers is to aid

their students achieve academic success in the final years of education then these

standards should be based on the measures of success of their students. These

measures of success may be raw scores, grades or value added approaches that will be

discussed later.

Since one of the major research foci is the effort to raise teaching quality, and hence

student achievement, through high stakes testing, it is worthwhile noting certain

methodological limitations that are prevalent to econometric research focussing on the

link between teacher quality and student academic performance. An extensive body of

research (see for example Hanushek, 2004; Leigh & Ryan, 2006; Podgursky, Monroe

& Watson, 2004, Rivkiin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005) indicates that the typical single

level econometric models fitted to available data employing general linear model techniques under ordinary least square estimations procedures are inappropriate. Not only do they fail to conceptualise, measure and evaluate teacher quality in terms of what teacher know and do, they also rarely account for the measurement, distribution and structural properties of the data for response and explanatory variables (Hattie, 2003, 2005). These oversights frequently yield misleading interpretations of findings for both policy and practice. Moreover, it can be argued that eradicating bad teaching practices does not always leave good teaching practice (Jackson, 2006). However, from my own experience in the UK and Australia, I suggest that promoting good teaching practices and the thoughtful implementation of teacher assessment makes the adoption of good practice more likely.

Particularly problematic is the failure to account for the "inherent hierarchical structure of the data" (Invargson & Rowe, 2007, p. 2). Findings from fitting explanatory multilevel models to relevant data consistently indicates that in excess of 40% of the residual variance in measures of student performance is at the teacher /class level (Embertson & Hershberger, 1999; Goldstein, 2003; Hill & Rowe, 1998; Masters, 2004b; Masters & Keeves, 1999; Rowe, 2000, 2004b, 2006b, 2007c).

In his meta-analysis of 500,000 effect sizes, Hattie (2005) identified the major sources of residual variation in students' learning and achievement progress are at the class/teacher level; they assist in specifying and evaluating teacher quality in terms of what teachers know and are able to do. Not only are such findings invaluable to informing the content of courses for pre-service and practicing teachers, but aid in forming a framework for this research. They provide a set of standards by which

teachers can be evaluated (Invargson, 1998, 2000, 2003; Rowe, Pollard & Rowe, 2005) and inform of a wide variety of teacher evaluation protocols (Invargson & Kleinhenz, 2006 a).

This research will investigate how teachers at academically successful schools have reacted to such evaluations. Since this research will focus on the affect of evaluating teacher quality, it seems appropriate therefore to investigate valid methods for assessing teacher quality, and particularly, their use in the Australian context. The next section gives an overview of current trends in Quality Education in Australia including a commentary on the political forces that continue to drive this movement. A focus will be given to documents pertaining to Queensland, South Australia and Victoria since the three schools that form the study are from these states.

2.3 Quality Education in the Australian Context

Much has been written on quality schooling in the Australian context from government policy documents (for example see Department of Education, employment and training, 2001; Department of Education and Training NSW, 2002; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002; 2007; Queensland State Education, 2006; Department of Education and Child Services South Australia, 2005) to academic papers (for example see Broadfoot, 1996; Crevola, 1999; Leigh & Ryan, 2006; Lyons, 2006; Invargson & Rowe, 2006b; Johnston, 2006; Koshland, 2006; Rowe, 2000a; 2000b;2002). From an Australian perspective, changes in approaches to quality in education were first signalled in the paper entitled "Strengthening Australia's Schools" (Dawkins, 1988) which called for a national focus on the

assessment of students and monitoring of standards. The emergence of specific

learning outcomes statements throughout the states, such as the Victorian Curriculum

and Standards Framework (Board of Studies, 1995; 1999), reflects the strong push

towards standards, outcome based education and measurable, quality education

(Crevola, 1999).

In his "Adelaide Declaration" Dr. David Kemp, the then Minister for Education,

Training and Youth Affairs, spelt out the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty

First Century. Dr. Kemp (1999) expounded the notion that:

> Nationally comparable reporting is vital in improving the
> effectiveness of all Australian schools. Better reporting and better
> accountability are crucial in providing parents and the community
> with the information they need to make informed choices about
> schooling. (p. 2).

Benchmarks have been published for all Australian schools (Department of

Education, Employment and Training, 2001); comparisons have already been made

and are filtering through to the community (Department of Education and Training

NSW, 2002). In Victoria, the Department of Education and Training has published a

report outlining the progress they have made in producing a set of goals and targets

for the improvement of educational and training systems (Department of Education

and Training Victoria, 2002). More recently the *Accountability and Improvement*

Framework for Victorian Government Schools (Department of Education and

Training Victoria, 2007) has been presented, "highlighting the need for a framework

for school accountability and improvement" (p.3) and a major focus for the

framework of school improvement emphasises quality teaching.

Likewise, Education Queensland has published the School Improvement and Accountability Framework (Queensland State Education, 2006) to "provide a quality public education system that delivers opportunities for all students" (p. 2). It includes details of key performance measures and performance indicators for schools. Schools are asked to develop Annual Operational Plans and report against them. Education targets set by Education Queensland, and school targets (determined locally) are used as benchmarks to assess the quality of the teaching being provided at each school.

In South Australia, the Department of Education and Children's Services has developed an Accountability Framework (2007), whose purpose is to "engage every child and student so that they achieve at the highest possible level of their learning and well being through quality care and teaching" (p. 2). It calls for a focus on learning, systematic thinking, shared leadership and interrogation of data to improve student outcomes. Throughout the document there is a call for accountability, and an increased focus of quality teaching.

It can be seen that throughout the literature of quality schooling a major factor or focus has been quality teaching. The senior teachers and schools who have taken part in this research find themselves in an environment of increased accountability calling for quality teaching. As a practicing teacher I have also found an increased level of awareness of standards amongst the general public and a higher degree of scrutiny from parents. I do however echo the literature delivered by the various education departments calling for an emphasis on quality outcomes for all students and agree that schools need to focus on quality teaching as a major factor in increasing the quality of schooling in general. I suggest that the quality of teaching received by a

student will impact significantly on their academic success even in the absence of other contributing factors such as facilities and technological support. The next section will define and investigate quality teaching by reviewing the large body of literature regarding this subject.

2.4   Quality Teaching

Many educationalists have tackled questions of defining quality teaching, and research on the characteristics of effective teachers and teaching are well documented (see for example Louden et al., 2005b; Richardson, 2005). Researchers have conceptualised teacher quality in diverse ways, including personality traits, teacher behaviours, and more recently, in terms of what effective teachers know and do (Louden et al., 2005a; Shulman, 1987, 1991; Berliner, 1992). Shulman (1991) has drawn attention to the complexity of what effective teachers know about, what they teach and how they help students to learn. As a consequence of this, research standards are emerging as a basis for defining levels of expertise in teaching and assessing teacher performance. These are reflected in the Australian Governments' move towards standards based assessment and certification of teachers (see, for example, Department of Education, Employment and Training, 2001; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002; 2007; Queensland State Education, 2006; Department of Education and Child Services South Australia, 2007).

In their analysis of academically successful schools, Mayer, Mullens and Moore (2004) identify 13 indicators of school quality that research suggests are related to student learning. They suggest that these factors "can affect student learning both

directly and indirectly" (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 1). These 13 indicators fall into three categories: the characteristics of teachers, the characteristics of classrooms, and the characteristics of schools as organisations. They highlight substantial research suggesting that teacher quality is enhanced when teacher characteristics include: firstly, high academic skills (see, for example, Ballou, 1996; Ehrenberg & Brewer, 1994, 1995; Ferguson, 1991; Fergusen & Ladd, 1996; Mosteller and Moynihan, 1972), secondly, teaching in the field in which they are trained (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber & Brewer, 1997; Monk & King, 1994), thirdly, having more than a few years experience (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rivkin, Hanshuk & Kain, 1998), and finally participating in high quality induction and professional development programs (Choy & Ross, 1998; Mullens et al., 1996, US Department of Education, 1999). As stated earlier, I content that inherent in the role of senior teachers is the application of their academic skills but also their skill in approaching the process of assessment in their subject. They should be adept at preparing students to complete their final years of schooling with a high degree of success. Part of their "on the job" training should include gaining in an appreciation of the form of assessment students will sit and guiding their students through the assessment for the best possible outcome given the students ability. I contend that the high quality induction and professional development programs that senior teachers may take part in should include those specifically aimed at end of year exam success.

Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) make a distinction between the quality teaching and successful teaching which is useful to this research, especially if measures of teacher quality are outweighed by measures of teacher success. It is feasible that when conducting this study some teachers will be interviewed that display high quality

teaching attributes without achieving academic success and vice versa. They remind

us that quality teaching is about more than whether something is taught; it is also

about "how it is taught" (p. 189). Successful teaching in the former sense may not be

"good teaching in the latter sense" (Invargson & Rowe, 2007, p. 7). Fenstermacher

and Richardson (2005) outline two different approaches to conceptualising teacher

quality and two different views on what teachers should be held accountable for: one

in terms of student achievement as is the case in this research, and the other, in terms

of the quality of opportunities for learning that the teachers establish in their

classrooms. Similarly what counts as performance varies; in this research performance

is based primarily on standardised tests of student achievement. Fenstermacher and

Richardson (2005) refer to successful teaching as:

> The learner actually acquires, to some reasonable and acceptable
> level of proficiency, what the teacher is engaged in teaching (p. 191).

Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) refer to good teaching as:

> the content taught accords with disciplinary standards of adequacy and
> completeness, and that the methods employed are age appropriate, morally
> defensible, and undertaken with the intention of enhancing the learners'
> competence with respect to the content studied. (p. 191)

For the schools forming this research, the main indicator of the level of proficiency

will be the results of senior students in their final Year 12 examinations. Many

schools however, suggest that evidence of a teachers' performance should be based on

observations of the quality of opportunities they provide for student learning in their

classrooms in relation to teaching standards. Since the focus of the research is student

achievement, I will further conceptualise teacher quality in terms of student

achievement while cognisant of the fact that the schools may take seek to promote

both academic success and quality teaching. In the next section, I will give an outline

of the worldwide trends in evaluating teacher quality, then focus on the specific

models of evaluation pertinent to this study, the performance management model.

2.4.1 Measuring teacher quality: Evaluation

There is a great deal of literature conceptualising the evaluation of quality of teaching

(see for example Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Holland & Adams, 2002; Kleinheinz,

Invargson & Chadbourne, 2001; Machell, 1995; Marshall, 2005; Peterson, 2000;

Marshall, 2005;Weiss, 1998). From this literature there is broad agreement that in the

current economic and political climates of the US, UK and Australia, there are

essentially two purposes for teacher evaluation: contractual obligation and

professional development (Rowe, 2002; 2007; 2007c).

The first purpose of evaluation purports to safeguard the educational interests and

welfare of students and ensure that their teachers are able to fulfil their contractual

duties (Invargson & Kleinhenz, 2006a). Based on the premise that teachers are

accountable in the push for quality schooling (Hanushek, 2002; Hanushek & Rivkin,

2004), standards are mainly generic and common to all teachers (Invargson &

Kleinhenz, 2004). Although exercised through bureaucrats and school managers,

responsibility for this form of evaluation rests with the state. This system may be

described as a performance management model (Blalock, 1999; Invargson, 2002), and

whilst authority for defining the role of teachers in this system rests with the

government, implementation rests with individual schools. The performance

management model evaluates teachers on an individual basis across a wide variety of

measures (Rowe, 2007c). The model may seek to encompass aspects such as

classroom management, pedagogical strength and student achievement (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000).

The second purpose focuses on the need for teachers to continually review their teaching practice in light of contemporary research and professionally defined standards duties (Invargson & Kleinhenz, 2006a). Responsibility for developing standards for high quality practice and certifying them usually rests with an independent professional body (Cizek, 2001). With a professional body, measures of good practice and responsibility for defining teacher's work stem from research within the profession (Invargson, 2002).

Whilst the method by which teachers are evaluated varies within these purposes, both purposes attempt to evaluate the quality of the teacher and assumes teachers are central to quality schooling (Rowe, 2007c). Although overlapping, the purposes that have been outlined distinguish two spheres of responsibility: the government and a professional body (Cizek, 2001). The first, the performance management model (which forms the basis of the accountability measures focused upon in this research) reflects teacher accountability to the government, school and to the general public; the second points to a need for the development of strong normative structures for accomplished teaching (Rowe, 2007a; 2007b).

Many educationalists have written in support of the performance management model (see, for example, Brunetto & Farr- Wharton, 2005; Lomas, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). They cite improved performance, transparency of procedure and ease of administration amongst other features of the performance management model as

significant positives. However a number of authors point to fundamental weaknesses in this model (see for example Collins, 2004; Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004; De Grauwe, 2005). Negative impacts on those undertaking evaluation in the performance management model include increased teacher stress, a lack of meaningful feedback to management and a perception of bias in the procedure from staff. A number of authors note that the process is inherently flawed because of a lack of trustworthiness (Invargson & Rowe, 2007).

The certification model has likewise received a high degree of scholarly scrutiny critiquing its relative merits. A number of authors highlight its strengths including the fact that teachers are evaluated against a set of criteria written by teachers as a significant positive (for example see Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004, Croninger, Rice, Rathbun & Nishio, 2007). However, some maintain that the certification model has significant drawbacks including an inability of studies to link high performance of teachers against the criteria with the performance of their students (Podgursky, Monroe & Watson, 2004; Smith & McLay; 2007; Leggett & Bunker; 2006). I content that any assessment should have a high degree of validity in that it will demonstrate a strong correlation between the performance of the teacher and the performance of their students. Furthermore it could perhaps be used as a predictor of success or otherwise. A key factor in this study is quality outcomes for senior students in their final examination and any assessment used for senior teachers shouls have the performance of their senior students as a key indicator. The next section will investigate the models used in the US, UK and Australia.

2.4.2 Evaluating teachers in the US and UK

The two approaches highlighted in the previous section: the performance management model and the certification model are commonly used in the US and the UK. Each depends on credible methods for assessing teacher performance, however, the UK follows the performance management model, whereas the US follows a professional certification model (Invargson, 2002).

As mentioned, in the case of the UK, the focus is on a comprehensive government performance management system for the teaching profession (Invargson, 2002; Perryman, 2006) where teachers are evaluated in isolation. Individual teachers are assessed by classroom observation, submission of work, review of planners and interview with an external inspector. The process, established by OfSTED (Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England) was designed to respond to falling standards across state schools and has caused a great deal of debate (for example see Jeffrey & Woods, 1996; Campbell & Husbands, 2000; Brookes, 2005; Lupton, 2004; Stensaker & Harvey, 2006; King, 2004). All schools in the UK are now evaluated across a number of measures including teaching and learning, administration and management. The inspection is conducted on a three-year rotation, over the course of a week, with inspectors producing a final in-depth report.

In the US the focus is on professional certification and recognition of quality teaching by an independent professional body (Invargson, 2002). The model relies upon a series of standards produced by the government against which teachers are judged. This in stark contrast to the isolationist model of evaluation favoured in the UK. A series of reports in the US expressed concerns about the capacity of the profession to

gain quality graduates and retain good teachers in the classroom (for example

Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Weiss & Weiss, 1998).

One of the most significant recommendations was the establishment of the National

Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Founded in 1987, with the

support of governors, teaching unions, administrators and concerned citizens, the

NBPTS's core function was to establish high and rigorous standards for what

accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, and to develop and operate a

voluntary system to assess and certify these standards (Invargson, 2002).

Both the performance management model and the certification model have merit and

aspects of each are prevalent in the evaluation of teachers in Australia. Whilst the

performance management model is most prevalent, the certification model has been

embedded in a number of states as will be discussed in the next section. The next

section provides a historical view of evaluation in Australia and the continuing trends

to evaluate Quality Teaching.

2.4.3 Assessing Quality Teaching in Australia

As has been mentioned, a key feature of the drive for quality schooling has been the

assessment of teachers. Australia has followed the paths first trodden by educational

administrators in the UK and US (Rowe, 2000a). Broadfoot (1996) claims

"Assessment is arguably the most powerful policy tool in education" (p. 21). Anyone

who witnessed the maelstrom that engulfed the public and politicians in the UK

following the publication of the National Curriculum tests in 1996, and the ensuing

report targeting teacher incompetence, might accuse Broadfoot of gross

understatement (Rowe, 2000b). There has been a very high level of scholarly

discourse in the area of evaluating Quality Teaching in Australia (see Bath, Smith, Stein, Swann, 2004; Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Hattie & Marsh 2004; Johnston, 2006; Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2006; Richardson, 2005; Yates; 2004) highlighting the strength and weaknesses of methods employed to evaluate teachers and a call for multiple methods to be employed. They agree that evaluation of teachers is evolving rapidly in Australia from a performance management model to a certification model.

From a historical perspective, the second half of the nineteenth century saw inspectors as a dominant feature of schooling in Australia. Although it would have been proposed at the time that their role was one of quality control, they were viewed to be filling the role of economic watchdogs. Gitlin and Smyth (1989) refer to teacher evaluation at that time as, "an example of scientific management and bureaucratic control at its autocratic best" (p. 17). They also maintain that, "the drive for efficiency was attributable, in part, to an attempt by the State to legitimate its right to be the 'proper' provider of education in the face of continuing hostility by the Church to maintain what it saw as its traditional prerogative (Gitlin & Smyth, 1989, p. 17).

In Australia, the purpose of inspection was the regulation and supervision of the system and a "payment by results" system was used in some states until the early 1900s. This system had been introduced from England in the middle of the 19th century. Teachers were paid a base salary, plus additional "bonuses" for the performance of their students on standard tests, on the regularity of school attendance - then regarded as being indicative of effective and successful teaching, and general observed classroom and administrative competence by the inspector (Dyson, 2005).

Although widely phased out, inspection was retained in both secondary and primary schools, until the mid 1970s in Victoria (Bates, 2005).

Since the 1970s there has been significant devolution of school management to the school site, with teacher evaluation being conducted in house. Principals, Deputy Principals and panels with some external representation are largely used to perform the task that was once fulfilled by inspectors (Nuttall, Murray, Seddon & Mitchell, 2006). As a result, it is likely that these evaluations touch the technical aspects of teaching such as the teacher's relationship with students, knowledge of the curriculum and various planning details. Largely based on the performance management model, teacher interviews, student achievement analysis, classroom observation, and more recently value added scores, have formed the basis of teacher evaluation from the 1970s onwards. Only in recent times in Australia has there been a move towards the certification model favoured in the US (Leigh & Ryan, 2006).

Kleinhenz, Invargson and Chadbourne (2007) offer a very recent snapshot of the current state of teacher evaluation in Australia. They sought to both document and identify the quality of some teacher evaluation processes by means of case study. They maintain that evaluation practices should take place over the five phases in a teacher's career: the pre-service phase; the phase of first employment; the induction phase; the career progression stage, and, (in some states) the highly accomplished teacher phase. Further detail is supplied by Invargson and Rowe (2007) who suggest that policies regarding teacher quality fall into two main groups: policy designed to affect the composition of the teacher workforce, and, policies designed to improve the capacity of the individual teachers.

Australia shares the problems of attracting and retaining the best graduates from schools and universities along with other OECD countries (OECD, 2001, 2005). Recent research (see DEST, 2006) highlights factors such as remuneration, workload, employment conditions and status contributed strongly in the decision of high achieving graduates to pursue non-teaching careers, leaving the lower achieving teachers in the profession. Implications for teacher quality, and hence quality teaching, may be inferred (DEST, 2006). However, since the focus of this research is on policies relating to improving teacher quality of remaining teachers, I will not dwell on those leaving the profession. I shall investigate the methods employed to improve the quality of those who choose to remain as practicing teachers, including performance interviews, written tests, value added measures and measures of student achievement.

2.4.4 Methods employed within the performance management model

Although relatively expensive and difficult to standardize, teacher performance interviews provide two-way communication between the interviewee and the interviewer (Kyriakides, Campbell & Christofidou, 2002) and is supported by a range of authors (see for example Peterson, 2000; Davis, Ellett & Annunziata, 2002). Dunkin (1997) provides support for this method when he states that teachers are given the opportunity to express their thinking, intentions and understanding.

However, notable authors highlight significant negative aspects of this approach (for example see Kleinhenz & Invargson, 2004; Greimel-Fuhrmann & Geyer, 2003; Mujis, 2006; Scriven, 1990). Whilst written tests are reported to give a clear view of a teacher's subject or theoretical knowledge and eliminate personal bias, the tests do not

give an indication of teacher's pedagogical acumen or classroom management prowess (Invargson & Rowe, 2007). A body of literature supports this negative aspects of using written competency tests to evaluate teachers (see Hughes, 2006) with the principal criticism being that this form of evaluation cannot give a view into the classroom; they give an indication of the academic strength of a teacher without giving an indication of their ability as a teacher. Test proponents, however, maintain that examinations guarantee a basic knowledge level and are legally defensible (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Kleinhenz & Invargson, 2006b).

The ability of a teacher teaching in the classroom, it can be argued, will only be accurately judged by getting views from the classroom (Peterson, 2000). This may be achieved by classroom observation and by obtaining the views of the students. This is the most popular evaluation method, usually performed annually by school administrators for experienced teachers, but more frequently for beginning teachers (Kleinhenz & Invargson, 2007a). Observation reveals information about such things as teacher interaction and rapport with pupils that is unavailable from other sources. However, research exists that criticizes the technique, as potentially biased, invalid, and unreliable (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Coker, Medley & Soar, 1984; Brandt, 1996). Again, as with the teacher interview technique, the biases of the person conducting the observation may colour the outcomes of the evaluation. They may witness a perfectly good classroom but judge it poorly because it does not fit their view of a good class. Where one teacher judges a class to be engaged and working well, another may judge it to be too noisy (Coker, Medley & Soar, 1980; Brandt, 1996). The strength of this method lies in the fact that it gives teachers a chance to show their work in real life situations rather than under test conditions or explaining

theoretically (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). However, this is only one period out of hundreds that take place in a year, a small sample on which to make important decisions (Kleinhenz & Invargson, 2007b). The most common approach is the judicious use of a number of these approaches to minimise the negatives and emphasise the positives.

Finally, and most importantly for this research, schools, department and indeed governments may choose to judge the quality of a teacher by looking at the performance of their students in standardised examinations(Rockoff, 2004). The evaluation may be based on the raw score (Sanders, 2000) of the students or a value added score (Grissmer, 2000; Fryer & Levitt, 2004) that is achieved by comparing student performance to a predictive test of achievement for example the General Aptitude Test in Victoria (GAT). Since this form of assessment is central to this research it will be dealt with in a separate section that highlights how these measures are used and provides a critique of current scholarly discourse in this area.

As stated in the significance of the research, it is my contention that assessment has a place in all schools and I concur with state findings that quality counts. This is particularly pertinent if the underlying motivation of the school is improved student outcomes in their final years of schooling. The interventions used to assess staff must however, be handled delicately and deliberately. There cannot be a one size fits all approach and indeed longitudinal tracking of staff using a range of methods may be preferable. It is apparent from the literature that assessment cannot be conducted in a social vacuum with the greater context of the teacher taken into account as this provides the fabric of their lived experience. Furthermore, I endorse the evidence

proffered by Invargson and Rowe (2007) who counsel against a written test. I suggest that a teacher must be given the opportunity to show their pedagogical and class management ability as part of a balanced approach to assessment.

2.4.5 Conceptualising teacher quality in terms of student achievement

Although it seems plausible to use learning outcomes as a measure of good teaching and a basis for measuring teacher quality, the direct relationship between good teaching and learning outcomes is complex and is certainly not a one to one relationship with many other factors playing a role (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005; Mulford, 2003). Nevertheless, I suggest that teaching is certainly an important factor in this relationship. Successful teaching as defined earlier depends not only on good teaching but also on: willingness and effort by the learner; a social surround supportive of teaching and learning; and opportunity to teach and learn (Fenstermacher and Richardson, 2005; Invargson & Rowe, 2007). This particular piece of evidence supports my contention that successful teaching can be promoted and encouraged by the appropriate use of assessment. Furthermore, it has been my experience that the social surroundings also have an important, and in most cases, positive effect

There have been significant developments in attempts to use student achievement as a measure of teacher quality. Millman (1997) includes reports of four of these schemes in the US, each using different kinds of student assessment. Two of them used the "value added approach" for isolating and estimating school and teacher effects (Sanders & Horn, 1994). Access to detailed cross-referenced quantified information

has always been theoretically possible, but the time and energy required to provide it, often makes it too difficult. In Queensland (QCS), South Australia (GAT) and Victoria (GAT), each student completes a standardized test which purports to give a baseline indicator of their achievement. From this baseline data, statistical analysis can be performed to give a predicted grade in each subject for the end of school examination. Once the student has completed the end of school examination, a comparison can be made with the predicted mark to find whether the student has performed above, below, or exactly to expectation. Performing above such a prediction, and making a statistical allowance for other factors, is often interpreted that the teacher has had a positive influence on the student that is added value. Whereas, performing below perhaps indicates that the teacher has had a negative influence. A class average can be calculated and teachers allocated a positive or negative residual, or 'value added score', based on these data. It is important to note that proponents of these schemes claim they are able to separate the effects of teachers and schools from the effects of other important factors such as family and background (Invargson & Rowe, 2006b; McCaffrey, 2004).

The greater majority of scholars in the field suggest that value added schemes and those based on raw achievement of students do not provide a valid basis for high stakes decision making about the quality of teaching, such as those in performance related pay (Bosker &Witziers, 1995; Braun 2005; Goldstein 1997; Goldstein & Spiegelhalter, 1996; Kupermintz, 2002; Raudenbush, 2004; Rowe, 2000a; Saunders 1999). However, whilst some commentators see the use of statewide tests as an indicator of teacher quality as a weakness (Broadfoot, 1996), others see it as a possible strength (Bond, Smith, Baker & Hattie, 2000). If, as I suggest, the end of

Year 12 examination is seen as primary goal for teaching, it follows that the outcomes could be used as at least one appropriate measure of success. Therefore, if the teacher is specifically aiming for success on this measure, it will give a measurement of what they are trying to achieve (Bond, Smith, Baker & Hattie, 2000). Secondly, it does provide feedback to the teacher on what they need to know and be able to teach more effectively for such an outcome (Darling-Hammond, 1992, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). As senior teachers who work in schools that promote academic success at the senior level one of their primary goals is to aid senior students achieve success in their final exams. It is my contention that if one of the stated missions of the school is a focus on high achievement in senior classes then the use of Year 12 examination data is extremely appropriate. It is interesting to note, that each of the schools that participate in this research project for this thesis use the achievement of the senior students as an indication of the success of the senior teacher. Whether they are viewed as successful teachers or high quality teachers as a result will be enlightening.

2.4.6 Summary

So far in this chapter, I have presented and discussed literature on quality schooling, its definition and practice in the US, UK and Australian educational climates. This literature provides a rich backdrop for this study. It clearly identifies not only the pressures placed on schools to assess their staff, but the various modes of assessment that take place. The steady progression from a call for teacher accountability in terms of outcomes, to statistical analysis, and then to "value added scores" was highlighted. In a relatively short period of time, teachers and schools have become bound to a

system that uses student academic achievement as a prime indicator of the success, and by association, quality of a teacher. It seems now common practice to judge staff on the academic outcomes of their students. The tests given to Year 12 students has taken on an even more important role; not only are the students assessed on their outcomes, the school, department and teachers may also be judged on the results of these tests. Indeed, jobs, funding and future promotion may ride on the outcome. The stakes are high in the current educational climate and the outcomes of these tests have implications far beyond their original purpose. They have acquired a role beyond their original intention and have become known as high stakes tests.

As a practitioner and a parent I concur with the literature that suggests a greater awareness of quality education themes amongst the general public. Schools are judged on academic results. Australia wide newspapers report on the achievement of students in their final examinations and can make value judgments on the school based on these scores. I suggest that parents are far more likely to perform their own comparisons of schools and make decisions on enrolment, in part, using these data. Arguably, these data have become vitally important to schools like those who have taken part in this research as each is fee paying and reliant upon both the quantity and quality of enrolments.

The next section gives more detail on how high stakes testing has evolved both overseas, and in Australia, and highlights both the positive and negative effects high stakes testing has on the education. It shows how teachers, principals, students, curricula and whole schools can be affected by the use of high stakes testing.

2.5 Teacher Responses to High stakes testing

Since the purpose of this study is to highlight the responses of senior teachers to high stakes testing in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools, this section investigates the phenomenon of high stakes testing: what it is; its beginnings; its evolution; how it has changed the face of education in the US and its impact on the face of Australian education. Further, this section will show how high stakes testing has been implemented as a means of teacher evaluation in the drive for quality schooling. The effect that high stakes testing has had on all aspects of schooling will also be investigated. The effect on teachers, students, curricula and principals is critically examined in light of literature emanating from the US and Australia. On reading this evidence it will again becomes apparent that to the greatest extent educationalists counsel against the use of high stakes testing. However, I content that high stakes testing does have a place in senior schools and will increase the quality of teaching particularly at the senior levels. I will highlight both the positive and negative implications of using high stakes testing and draw parallels with the contexts in which the three Christian Brothers' schools find themselves.

2.5.1 High stakes testing

The term high stakes has distinct connotations for teachers and school administrators and has caused a great deal of academic discussion (for example see Airasian, 1987; Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Au, 2007; Barton, 2005; Bol, 2004; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Braun, 2004; Costigan, 2002; Gerwin & Visone, 2006; Harden, 2001; Luna & Turner, 2001; Segall, 2003; Smith, 2006; Watanabe, 2007). The term can be used to denote those situations where interest in assessment goes beyond the immediate sphere of educational measurement, and beyond those individuals who sit the tests

(Messick, 1999; McNeil, 2000). In this context it is not therefore the method of the test that dictates neither its high stakes nature, nor indeed its primary function of assessing students, but its secondary function, that of assessing staff. To be high stakes, the test has to be very important in the decision process, or to be able to override other information (Bol, 2004). For example, a student does not graduate if they do not pass such a test regardless of how well they have done in school (Au, 2007; Madaus, 1988). Utilising this definition of high stakes testing we can identify the final Year 12 examinations in the three state of interest; Victoria, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), in South Australia the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), and the QCS and QSA scores in Queensland as a high stakes tests (Rowe, 2000). Not only does the data derived from these tests determine the fate of the student, as I have already discussed it can be used to assess the performance of the individual teacher, department or indeed the performance of the school (McNeil, 2000). The results of individual students, classes or cohorts can be viewed in isolation or compared to baseline data to calculate the relative achievement of students (Clarke, Shore, Rhoades, Abrams, Miao, & Li, 2003) The baseline data is collected as a matter of course in their final year exams. The base line data is derived from the General Achievement Test (GAT) in Victoria, from the QCS in Queensland and the GAT in South Australia. With this data, school administrators do make judgments about the effectiveness of the teacher and the quality of education the students have received (Rowe, 2004).

To reiterate, it is not therefore the nature of the test that makes these high stakes in terms of this research, it the use of the student data that goes beyond its original intention. It is their use as a tool to assess staff that dictates the high stakes nature of

these tests. The assessment procedure for student varies markedly between states and there is no suggestion that they share the same preliminary method. However, what is common across all states is their potential use in assessing staff.

The roots of high stakes testing originated in the late nineteenth century in the US. Business and professional leaders who were concerned about accountability and standardization pressed for centralized administration of schools, particularly in urban districts (Togut, 2004). America's current faith in and reliance on tests has its roots in the cold war days of the 1960s following the achievement of the Russians to launch Sputnik and edge out the US in the race to space. As a result the politicians, journalists and public began to cast a questioning eye over the quality of the American educational system, including the advocacy for the increased use of tests to assess school learning (Kreitzer, Madhaus & Haney, 1989). The 1970's saw the instigation of the first minimum competency test. Its use was based on the assumption that a person passing this test would be able to become a productive citizen (Heuber & Hauser, 1999).

In the US during the 1980 s, the minimum competency test movement was almost entirely discarded. Concerns were raised using the argument that these tests promoted low standards in school rather than raising them. It was widely perceived that the tests were dumbing down the content learned in schools (Bracey, 1995). The publishing of the US National Commission on Education's *A Nation at Risk* (1983) saw a new focus for testing, calling for the end of competency testing and suggesting the use of high stakes tests would raise the nation's standards of achievement drastically. The document also argued persuasively that schools in the US were performing poorly in

comparison to other countries (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Despite its lack of scholarly credibility, and its authorship heavily influenced by business rather than educational interests, *A Nation at Risk* produced far-reaching effects. The National Commission for Education called for more rigorous standards and accountability mechanisms to bring the US out of its educational malaise (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). As a result of *A Nation at Risk*, educational standards were developed in every state with the exception of Iowa, and every state, but Nebraska, implemented assessment policies to check those standards (Quality Counts, 2001). In many US states, serious consequences were attached to tests in order to hold schools, administrators, teachers and students accountable for meeting the newly imposed high standards (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Quality Counts, 2001). Many states now require students to pass high stakes tests to graduate for specific year levels, graduate from high school as a supplement to course requirements. In his 1999 address, President Clinton promoted the Educational Accountability Act. This Act requires schools receiving federal funds to end social promotion, adopt higher education standards and hold school and teachers accountable for poor student performances (Togut, 2004).

Notable educationalists are following the development of high stakes testing regimes as is takes hold in Australia. Popham (2000) decries the widespread use of high stakes testing in the US citing that:

> US principals are currently being clobbered because of widespread but nonetheless deplorable use of educational tests. Increasingly, US principals and their teaching staff are being evaluated on the basis of students' scores on standardized achievement tests. If Australian principals can forestall such silliness in their own nation, they had best do. (p.1)

As has been noted, following the inception of high stakes testing in the US a great deal of literature has been generated on the subject in these contexts, as is the case in

the Australian context (see for example Ayres, Sawyer &Dinham, 2004; Barnes, 2000; Benard, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Davison, 2004; Goldstein, 2004; Jones, 2004; Mahanty, 2004; Thomson, Blackmore, Sachs & Tregenza, 2003; Shepard, 2000). In the US state mandated high stakes testing at high school level and league tables are the order of the day, whilst in Australia federal and state governments do not mandate this form of individual teacher assessment at present (Hursh & Martin, 2004). However, individual schools do use these techniques to a greater or lesser extent depending on the focus of the school leadership (Volante, 2004). Which leads to an interesting point regarding the principals of the schools taking part in this research. The principals may have differing views on the priorities of their schools in terms of development on the students. There may be a very focussed drive towards academic achievement, whereas another may have a more pastoral approach. I agree with Volante's assertion that this will have a significant effect on whether each school employs high stakes testing techniques to assess staff.

The known effect of high stakes testing in an Australian context is therefore very limited and raises the significance of this research. There are no recorded theses to date that investigate the use of high stakes data in Catholic schools in general, or their use in Christian Brothers' Schools in particular, this literature review therefore highlights a need for research in this area.

2.5.2 Responses to High stakes testing

In Chapter 1 I stated that academic achievement in schools matters and that measures employed to promote it including high stakes testing, can provide a major positive impact on the achievement of senior students. I proposed that teachers of senior students can be informed, guided and affirmed if high stakes testing is used in a formative and sensitive manner. This stance, whilst in no way decrying the importance of the self-motivation of the teacher, argues the importance of teacher accountability, rewarding success and the sensitive use of formative feedback in a professional context. The reader will have found however that scholarly discourse counsels against the use of high stakes data. Many commentators in the field highlight negative outcomes however; significantly, there are a smaller number of commentators who have highlighted positive outcomes associated with high stakes testing. Although small in number they confirm my own experience and, importantly, illuminate possibilities for practice. I do not seek to ignore the reported negative effects, however, I do caution against assessment using high stakes data that overlook such important facts as longevity, thoroughness and variety of assessment.

During the past decade, particularly in the US, results of tests have been used as the basis for rewarding and sanctioning individual students, teachers, and schools (Heubert & Hauser, 1999, Madaus, 1988; Schneider & Ingam, 1997; Orfield & Wald, 2000). Although testing and accountability are intended to improve achievement and motivate staff and students (McNeil, 2000), concerns have been raised in both the media and professional literature about the possible unintended consequences of these programs (Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey & Stecher, 2000). The effects of high stakes

testing are far-reaching and impact on a number of groups and systems (Airasian, 1987; Nichols & Berliner, 2005; 2007) Firstly, the high stakes nature of failing these tests will be felt most by the student. However, teachers can now be judged and held accountable for the performance of their students (Gradwell, 2006). Likewise the principals of an underperforming school as identified by these high stakes tests can face a raft of sanctions (Martin, 2004).

Educational researchers are far from reaching consensus about whether testing students for high stakes outcomes actually improves learning (see for example Amrein & Berliner, 2002a, 2002b; Grant, Gradwell, Lauricalla, Derme-Insinna, Pullano & Tzetzo, 2002; Merchant & Paulson, 2005). Some researchers focus on the failings of such an approach such as curriculum alignment, teaching to the test approaches and increased drop out rates of students (for example see Amrein & Berliner, 2002b; Groves, 2002; Kohn, 2000a; 2000b; Madaus & Clarke, 2001; Marchant & Paulson, 2005; Nichols, Glass & Berliner, 2002b). Others educational commentators highlight the positive impact of these measures such as students appreciating exactly what they need to know, teachers mirroring good practice that increases scores, and a higher degrees of motivation amongst teachers (for example see Barton, 2005; Clarke et al., 2003; Libresco, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Wolf & Wolf, 2002; Wollman- Bonilla, 2004; Yeh, 2005). However, a significant criticism garnered from the existing literature is the widely held contention that there is no compelling evidence for the "transfer of the specific knowledge and skills" (p. 49) to the students who undertake such tests (Armein & Berliner, 2002). In my experience the use of high stakes testing has a focussing effect on senior teachers and without the transfer of specific knowledge and skills success at Year 12 is nearly impossible. The positive effect on

teachers who have helped students gain good grades at Year 12 is quite tangible in my experience and is that which gives momentum to the following year. The task of a senior teacher is difficult at times and if a student fails to achieve their academic goals it can be a deflating experience for all involved in the process.

Many seem to agree that some key questions are not being asked (Sadowski, 2000) including, questions about the effects on students, curricula and staff. The next section critically examines the current literature on the effect of high stakes testing. The effects on the curriculum, on pedagogy, on teachers and principals and on whole schools are critically assessed. However since the primary concern of any teacher is their students (Madaus & Clarke, 2001), the use of high stakes testing in schools should firstly be viewed from the perspective of the students.

2.5.2.1 Effect on students

The academic literature regarding the effect of high stakes data on students is broad (see for example Airasian, 1987; Amrein & Berliner, 2002a; 2002b; Anagnostopolous 2003a; 2003b; Au, 2006; Bolgatz, 2006; Clarke et al., 2003; Grant et al., 2002; Groves, 2002; Hunter & Bartee, 2003; Lipman, 2004; Lomax, West, Harmon, Viator & Madaus, 1995; Nichols et al., 2005; Orfield & Wald, 2000). Carpenter (2001) argues that high stakes testing may have a positive effect on the students who are subjected to this form of assessment since they can be invaluable in helping to diagnose gaps in learning. The proviso however, is that these tests must be scientifically valid and trustworthy. If this is the case it is contended that high stakes tests can improve the quality of education (Carpenter, 2001).

To counter this, however, students can be subjected to relentless drilling on the content to be measured on the high stakes test. They may be given interminably long practice sessions with items simply mirroring those in the test (Popham, 2000). A disproportionate amount of student and teacher time and effort can be directed towards preparing specifically and only for the test (Smith & Fey, 2000). It is reported that in extreme cases, focus is directed to those just below specific cut off points, ignoring those well above or well below such cut off points (Rockoff, 2004). Some researchers report that high stakes testing can have a 'dumbing' effect on teaching and learning as worksheets, drills, and similar rote practices consume greater amounts of classroom time (Sacks, 2000; Kohn, 2000; 2001). However, I contend that an integral part of a senior teacher's skills must be concerned with taking the test and to ignore the skills of actually sitting the paper is to neglect a key factor in ensuring academic success in the final exams.

Also, insofar as tests assess only part of the curriculum, time spent on test-taking practice often overemphasizes basics and neglect higher order thinking skills (Herman, 1992). This is not the case particularly in Queensland where higher order thinking skills have be specifically woven into the fabric of the curriculum for senior students. More holistically, Kohn (1999) warns that an over reliance on high stakes testing sends a message to students that learning is remembering facts, and that intelligence is a function of how fast people can do things. Weaver-Dunne (2000) contends that students may be placed at increased risk of educational failure and dropping out and in response, Sloan (2005) calls for a renewed focus on the children rather than on ratings because it undermines quality and equity. In my experience at

one of these schools an increased focus on success in the senior years has led to a reduction in dropout rate and an increase in quality.

There is also a significant body of literature connecting high stakes testing specifically with increased drop-out rates and lower achievement of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students of colour (Armein & Berliner, 2002b, Groves, 2002; Madaus & Clarke, 2001; Marchant & Paulson, 2005; Nichols et al., 2005). Some research suggests that student's scores rise when teachers teach closely to a test, however, learning often does not change (Shepard, 2000; Neil 2003). But this point is contested by others research who suggest the opposite may be true (Au, 2007). Indeed, it is my contention based on experience in the UK and Australia that where teachers have taught closely to the test they have mirrored good practice and delivered the curriculum well.

In summarising the effect of high stakes testing on students we find there are wide ranging implications in terms of student achievement. The majority of reports suggest that there is an overemphasis on the basic skills needed to pass these tests so that the process inhibits students. The use of basic achievement measures sets a ceiling for teachers, rather than a bottom line. Whilst the use of such testing can highlight gaps in basic knowledge, it does not encourage acceleration or investigation. Students are all encouraged to focus on the fundamental aspects of passing the test, whereas higher order skills not covered in the test are not examined. Major implications include a reduction in variety pedagogical approach from the teacher, and whilst student marks might be high there may be a lack of real learning. It is worth noting that these findings relate primarily however to the nature of the test rather than the broad based curriculum that form the nature of the assessment found in Australia. We are fortunate

that in the Australian states the curriculum is sufficiently borad with a high degree of rigour and examine higher order thinking skills to some degree. This is in stark contrast to a number of cases in the US.

If the students carry out their tasks and complete all the prescribed outcomes in a given curriculum they would deem themselves, quite rightly to have achieved a well developed education. One might naturally assume that gaining high grades throughout school would adequately prepare a person to meet most academic challenges However, if the curriculum is limited and focussed on taking a specific test, the student may find their education has not prepared them for life beyond school. The effect of changes to the curriculum in the face of high stakes testing is the focus of the next section.

2.5.2.2 *Effect on curriculum*

The effect of high stakes testing on curriculum is profound and again is the source considerable debate in the field of educational research (see, for example, Armein & Berliner, 2002a; Anagnostopolous, 2003b; Barton, 2005; Clarke et al., 2003;Grant & Horn, 2006; Guthrie, 2002, Libresco, 2005; Luna & Turner, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Segall, 2003; Smith; 2006; Vogler, 2003; Wolf & Wolf, 2002; Wolman-Bonilla, 2004; Yeh, 2005). Some of these commentators note that important curriculum content is often eliminated because it is not addressed by whatever high stakes test is used (Armein & Berliner, 2002a). If there is no test for a particular skill or ability set, then any instructional attention to those skills and abilities simply evaporates (Popham, 2000). We are also told that the narrowing of curriculum is occurring because and that a great number of important areas are not included on high

stakes tests since they cannot be easily tested by such methods (National Centre for Fair and Open Testing, 2004). The American Evaluation Association (2002) likewise draws attention to the harm high stakes testing may bring to educational practices because of this outcome. It suggests that schools are drawn into narrow conceptions of teaching and education that leave children deprived of the history, cultural perspective, personal experience, and interdisciplinary nature of subject matter.

In the UK, Boustead (2003) contends that a major levelling off of standards in literacy is due to a narrowly focused curriculum which encourages surface teaching and teaching to the test rather than teaching to learn. Baker, Akiba, Le Tendre and Wiseman (2001) report that school resources are being focused on the areas covered by high-stakes testing, whilst those occupying areas outside the testing rationale are relegated to "shadow education" activities. They maintain that structured, after hours, activities to improve test scores on high stakes tests are becoming an enduring aspect of modern schooling.

The National Centre for Fair and Open Testing (2004) asks the reader to reflect critically on the uses of high stakes tests and their effect on teachers. It contends that the higher the stakes, the more schools focus instruction on the tests. As a result, what is not tested is often not taught (Klein, 2004). Whole subjects or topics may be dropped; important, but untestable skills such as laboratory expertise are ignored (Heubert & Hauser; 1999). Instruction, it states, start to look like the tests; moreover, structures are used in class that are redundant except when used on a particular high stakes test (Chudowsky & Pellegrino, 2003).

Another angle on this general point is the consistent theme emanating from the literature on the effect of high stakes testing on curriculum is the issue of content control. In his meta-analysis of research into high stakes testing Au (2007) indicates that more than 80% of studies contained the theme of curriculum content change as a result of the use of high stakes testing. Overwhelmingly, the content contracted to suit the content studied on the high stakes testing examination (also for example see Airasian, 1987; Amrein & Berliner, 2002a, 2002b; Bol, 2004; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Braun, 2004; Clarke et al., 2003; Debray, Parson & Avila, 2003; Fickel, 1994; Gerwin & Visone, 2006; Harden, 2001; Hillocks, 2002; Landman, 200; Madaus, 1988; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Perreault, 2000; Taylor, Shephard, Kinner & Rosenthal, 2001). However in a small but significant number the content expanded for the same reason (Anagnostopolous, 2003b; Luna & Turner, 2001; Segall, 2003; Smith, 2006; Volger; 2003).

Smith (2006) suggests that where high stakes testing dictates the curriculum, the positive aspect of curriculum alignment may prove persuasive. However, as has been discussed, this comes at a cost. The narrowing of curricula so that teachers stick rigidly to the prescribed material may reduce the educational experience of the children, inhibit enthusiasm and decrease achievement (Gerwin & Visone, 2006). Students and teachers responding to high stakes nature of the testing are reported to focus on key aspects of knowledge, ignoring non-testable skills (Nichols & Berliner, 2007).

The effect on curriculum can be viewed as a primary effect in terms of narrowing the actual material delivered to the students. However, the secondary effect of keeping a

teacher to a prescribed broad curriculum is more pertinent to this study. If, as is the

case in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, there is an arguably broad and

balanced curriculum, being limited to the curriculum would not be as narrowing as is

the case in many US states. It can be argued that the curriculum delivered in schools

should mirror the prescribed curriculum, mandated by the state or federal government

because it morrirs both practice and calls for invaluable core knowledge. The

secondary use of high stakes testing in the assessment of staff may make the teachers

focus more on the content of what must be delivered in a prescribed curriculum. If the

curriculum is sufficiently robust, broad and demanding in skill it is my view that it

would lead to improved educational outcomes for the students.

While the curriculum informs the material covered in classrooms, increasingly the test

is determining the curriculum, which in turn is having a profound effect on the way in

which the curriculum is delivered: that is the pedagogy employed by the teacher (Yeh,

2005). Under pressure for the students to perform in the tests, teachers are forced to

adjust their teaching method, effecting not only what goes on in the classroom, but

also their own perceptions of their teaching and their role as a teacher (Hillocks, 2002;

Clarke et al., 2003).

2.5.2.3 Effect on teachers

From an analysis of the scholarly research into the effect of high stakes data on

teachers and teaching (see, for example, Agee, 2004; Amrein & Berliner, 2002a;

Anagnostopolous, 2003a; Barton, 2005; Bol, 2004; Braun, 2004; Cimbricz, 2002;

Clarke et al., 2003; Costigan, 2002; Firestone, Mayrowetz & Fairman, 1998; Gerwin

& Visone, 2006; Gradwell, 2006; Grant; 2003; Libresco, 2005; Luna & Turner, 2001;

McNeil & Valenzuela; 2001; Nichols & Berliner, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004), it becomes clear that where high stakes testing is used in an accountability system, the instructional focus of the teachers and the principals narrows (Linn, 2003). Popham (2000) attests

> America's educators are being obliged to participate in a contest
> they cannot win. The contest is called " the score boosting game"
> and its object is to have educators raise students' scores on
> standardized achievement tests (p. 12).

There is evidence that teachers place a greater emphasis on the material that is covered on a high stakes test than they do on other materials (Stecher & Hamilton, 2002) and the fragmentation of the content into test size units (Au, 2007). Taken to one extreme, good teachers can be discouraged by the overemphasis on high stakes testing and leave (Nichols & Berliner, 2005).

A very high proportion of the research indicates that there is a significant influence not only on the curriculum but also the way in which the curriculum is delivered in a high stakes environment ie the pedagogy of teachers (see for example Hargreaves, 2001; English & Steffy, 2001; Kohn, 2000; Smith & Fey, 2000; Stecher, 2002). Whilst the majority of research into the effect on pedagogy suggests that most pedagogies became more teacher centred (Au, 2007), a smaller number of studies indicate there was an increase in student centred pedagogy (Clarke et al., 2003; Libresco, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Wolf & Wolf, 2002).

In a qualitative study, Smith (1991) concluded that teachers achieving low scores on high stakes testing feel a negative emotional effect. Similar results reported by Cheng and Couture (2000) in their study of teachers work in a culture of performance, cite a loss of teacher autonomy, a focus on teaching to the test, a proliferation of

commercial cramming schools, increased external control over educational systems

and a reduced emphasis on critical thinking. If this is the case does it not become

incumbent on the schools to help teachers achieve high scores? In the case of poor

results should schools offer professional development opportunities or networking to

improve their abilities in regarding to teaching senior classes?

Dworkin (2001) examines the exacerbating effect high stakes testing has on the

phenomena of teacher burnout. The data for the paper came from teachers in a single

Texas school district, the largest in the state and the seventh largest in the US which

employs in excess of 12,000 teachers and serves more than 210,000 students per year.

Dworkin defines burnout as:

> A response to job stress and related to a sense of
> meaninglessness and powerlessness, burnout is a malady of
> human service professionals who are denied professional
> autonomy, status, and respect (p.76).

Dworkin's findings contend that burnout becomes more prevalent where teachers are

subjected to high stakes testing. He reports that this burnout does not lead to teachers

resigning from their positions, instead the teachers learn to adapt and even to

overcome the reforms.

However, Cozart and Gerstl-Pepin (2002), present evidence directly supporting my

contention when they report a positive impact of high stakes testing if it is linked with

intensive professional development. The high stakes testing in question views teachers

as professionals capable of improving curriculum and practice, which in turn raises

the morale of the teachers and improves practice (Cozart & Gerstl-Pepin, 2002).

Echoing the findings of Yeh (2005), I find that the resilient nature of teachers

therefore comes to the fore; they learn to adapt and retrain in the face of high stakes

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testing. It is with this sense of faith that I have in my peers that I promote th euse of high stakes testing and believe that it leads to improved outcomes for students. Teachers are highly trained professionals who care about their students' futures. They want their students to do well, particularly their senior students. I have found the great majority of teachers to be very open to any avenue to improve practice, from organised lectures to more informal workshops and involvement in cluster meetings.

This raises the question of the availability and suitability of professional development programs (McNeil, 2000; Schoenfeld, 2004). If teachers are looking to retrain in the face of evaluation using high stakes testing, does it become incumbent upon those using the evaluation measures to provide or facilitate these professional development opportunities? This becomes one of the major research questions in this study.

The effect on teachers cannot be underestimated. The powerful impact of high stakes testing creates additional stresses on teachers who on the whole seek to adapt to the situation and overcome any inability that they have by retraining. This raises an important issue for those wishing to use high stakes testing as part of their teacher evaluation: once the teachers have been evaluated how will they be supported in the efforts to improve or adapt their skills? The choice to implement high stakes testing takes on a wider implication for whole school epistemology and indeed funding.

Having reviewed the impact on individual components within the school the next section investigates the effect on the whole school is the subject. Issues of the effect of scores on external funding will be addressed, how that funding could be used, the effect on morale and on enrolment at the school will also be discussed.

2.5.2.4 Effect on Schools

The scholarly discourse regarding the effect of high stakes testing on schools will be reviewed from two perspectives: the effect due to external perception of the school and the effect due to a change in the epistemological stance of the school (Heubert & Hauser; 1999; Lipman, 2004).

The first perspective, the view held by those outside the school, could directly influence the funding the school receives from the state or federal government, or impact on enrolment (Jacob, 2005). A school that underachieves in the eyes of the funding body can have their funding reduced. This has been the case for a number of years in the US. Gordon (2000) voices her concern about the influence high stakes test score will have on the economic funding of schools. She explains that President Bush wanted to link funding to test scores, so that underperforming schools will lose funding and those achieving good scores will benefit. Again in the US, Ananda and Rabinowitz (2001) found the primary measures by which schools are held accountable where shifting from "inputs (e.g. ratio of certified staff to students) to outcomes (i.e. student achievement)" (2001, p. 1). This change has required a change to the data being collected and its interpretation. At school level the quantum of data produced pertaining to student attainment demands that schools have to develop new skills in organization and analysis of data before it can be used to inform decisions (Stiggins, 2000).

In the US, high stakes testing and public accountability are still the predominant driving forces in educational change. Some commentators such as Schrag (2000)

express concern over examples such as the "Texas Miracle," and other celebrated successes are based on embarrassingly low benchmarks. Amrein and Beliner (2003) found from a study of 18 American states that high stakes testing resulted in "no measurable improvement in student learning as indicated by four different independent measures" (2003, p. 37).

Of more direct consequence for the schools in this research is the enrolment of students. Poor results reported in the press may lead to a reduction in numbers or quality of applicants rather than the reduction of funding from the state as is the case in the US.

The second perspective; from the epistemological stance of the school, refers to how a school views its role in the education of its students and this, I suggest, is more pertinent to this research. Woodard (2002) suggests that where high stakes testing is prevalent, schools may push for academic success as measured by these tests above more holistic measures or indeed at the expense of worthy, but non-examinable, skills. In the UK there has been an evolution over time of the OfSTED procedures to address concerns that the process did not fully support teaching and learning (Woodward, 2002). However, fears in the UK about the adverse effect of high stakes testing regimes are well documented in the national press. Budge (2000), writing in the *Times Educational Supplement*, contends that American research has confirmed what many teachers in the UK had suspected but could not prove; increased emphasis on scores can reduce the quality of school education, even when results seem to be improving. He goes on to say that the findings have triggered alarm bells in the UK where national tests and the literacy strategy are said to be squeezing the time available for more creative work. In the context of this research I suggest that fears of curriculum

shrinkage would be unfounded with the likelihood of curriculum alignment being much higher and more preferable.

In summary we can see that despite claims to the contrary, the evidence strongly suggests that curricula will narrow, fragmentation of content will occur, test taking will increase and pedagogy will be more teacher centric as a result of using high stakes testing. It must be noted however, that there are some incidents where the use of high stakes testing have led to beneficial effects such as an increase in student centred pedagogies, and an improvement in the level of content taught. This has been my experience when high stakes testing has been used in a thoughtful manner and used over a significant period of time. The use of high stakes testing has also resulted in dialogue to identify strategies that assist students in passing these examinations early in high school (Billinger, 2004). As a result, one of the major implications of high stakes testing in the US and the UK is the practice of teaching to the test, where teachers and curricula are structured to maximize a students' achievement in a particular test, sometimes but not always to the detriment of other learning outcomes and holistic goals. It is my contention that a great deal of the material offered speaks of high stakes testing in terms of its primary role that of assessing students. Where it reports on assessing staff, a parallel can be much more easily drawn. There are significant incidences where the positive implications of teaching to the test are reported as negatives. For instance I suggest that it is a positive when teachers teach from the prescribed curriculum and teach what is to be examined. It is has been reported under the banner of curriculum shrinkage but it is more likely in the Australian educational climate to appear as curriculum alignment. Some

commentators decry the notion of preparing students specifically for the final examination and have labelled it teaching for the test the subject of the next section.

2.6 What is Teaching to the Test?

Issues of teaching to the test - what it is, how often it occurs, and whether it is acceptable in any form – are becoming more serious and controversial as a result of state and federal educational reforms (Agee, 2004). Modern academic research has contributed significantly to understanding the issues raised by teaching to the test (for example see Agee, 2004; Clarke et al., 2003; Crocker, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Downing, 2002; Elmore, 2000; Firestone, Schorr & Monfils, 2004; Guskey, 2003; Hamilton, Klein & Stecher, 2002; Luxia, 2005; Pedulla, 2002; Posner, 2004; Popham, 2001). To help clarify these issues, the Centre on Educational Policy in the US reviewed studies of the impact of testing, as well as press reports of real situations involving cheating, coaching and good, middling and bad forms of test preparation. The tests in question were limited to state-mandated, district mandated or standardized tests; as defined in this paper this is high stakes testing (Kober, 2002).

The Centre's first finding was that many people are confused or disagree about exactly what the term "teaching to the test" entails. In its extreme form, it means cheating (Sturman, 2003), for example giving students actual questions from a secure version of the test (Stecher, 2002). In its more common form, teaching to the test means direct preparation for a particular test, such as drilling students in practice questions; teaching students in great detail how to fill in answer sheets; or, focusing

instruction on a limited subset of skills and knowledge most likely to show up on the test (Kober, 2002).

In teaching for the test, students may be asked to review vocabulary words that are likely to be used in test questions on the test (Gulek, 2003), and learn how to pace themselves (Firestone, Monfils, Camilli, Schorr, Hicks & Mayrowetz, 2002). They are taught not to worry over difficult questions for too long for fear they will not have enough time to answer the questions they find easier (Drummond, 2003). Students take practice tests to sharpen their skills and are taught to circle "do" words in essay type questions and to check them off after they accomplish what the question has asked them to do (Downing, 2002). Some spend extra class time on specific skills covered in the test or access extra tuition aimed at skills covered in the test. They may even learn skills unique to the test distinct from what would be generally taught in that subject (Guthrie, 2002)

The lines between proper and improper test preparation are not always clear and well publicized (Gruenewald, 2003; Spillane, 2002). In the US, policies vary among different states, with some policies quite ambiguous. It is no wonder so many teachers, administrators and parents are perplexed (Kober, 2002). Kober (2002) contends that test preparation practice is inappropriate if it raises test scores without also improving students' mastery of the broader subject (Firestone et al., 2004). In the US, one nationally representative survey reported that 79% of teachers said they spent "a great deal" or "somewhat" of their time instructing students in test taking skills, and 53% said they used state practice tests a "great deal" or "somewhat"

(Education Week, 2001). Most teachers have reservations about this trend, with two thirds feeling their teaching had become too focused on state tests.

From a comprehensive review of the literature on high stakes testing, I have constructed a spectrum of practices that can be used to raise test scores on high stakes tests. The spectrum ranges from bad practices, through middling practices to good practices. At one end of the spectrum, bad practice includes getting hold of actual test questions from a current test form and teaching the students the answers or giving students actual test answers for drill, review or homework (see for example Jacob & Levitt, 2003; Stecher, 2002; Amrein & Berliner, 2002a; Settlage & Meadows, 2002). Teachers exhibiting bad practice may also copy, distribute, or keep past versions of tests that have not been officially released as practice examinations (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003).

As middling practice teacher may show students how to fill in the bubbles on an answer sheet, narrow down choices in a multiple-choice question, write a short answer response, or pace themselves. Teachers could also assign homework and practice questions that resemble real test items (Stecher, 2000), give written assignments in the same format as the writing portions of a specific test (Abrams, Pedulla &Madaus, 2003) and drill students in basic knowledge and skills, while giving relatively less attention to more advanced skill (Tomlinson, 2000). They may choose to teach topics or aspects of a subject that have been covered on past examinations (English, 2000), teach students phrases to use in their open ended or essay test questions (Firestone et al., 2004) or spend significantly more class time on subjects that are tested and less time on subjects that are not (Luna & Turner, 2001).

The characteristics prevalent in good practice include covering the most important knowledge, skills, and concepts contained in the standards for a specific subject (Linn, 2000). Teachers may also choose to address standards for both basic and higher-order skills (Shepard, 2003) and use test data to diagnose areas where students are weak (Bulkley, Fairman & Martinez, 2002), focusing instruction on those areas. They may also give students diverse opportunities to apply and connect what they are learning and demonstrating true mastery of standards (Popham, 2001). It is worthwhile to note that studies in the US have shown that in states where high stakes testing is the norm, middling strategies are more often used than in states where moderate to low stakes testing takes place (Pedulla, 2002). It has been my experience in the UK and Australia that where high stakes testing is used to assess staff a wide spectrum of practices have been employed by staff, from bad to very good. However, where specific, high level professional development has been implemented as part of the high stakes testing process good practice is prevalent.

Volante (2004) reminds us that the job of any teacher is first and foremost to promote learning in their students. Ideally, students should be able to develop the skills necessary to take what they have learned and apply that knowledge in a novel situation. Volante (2004) however, contends that, in the US, high stakes testing procedures have interfered with this process, since they are used to measure student knowledge and gauge the effectiveness of instruction. US Secretary of Education, Ron Paige said, "Some worry that instructional practices are based on 'teaching to the test'. But there is nothing wrong with teaching to the test if the tests are testing something that the students need to learn." (Sept. 24th, 2003, Press Club, cited in

Deresz, 2003). As a result of high stakes testing, teaching to the test has become commonplace in the US and the UK.

In Australia as mentioned each state has a road curriculum that specifies a wide range of knowledge, skills and processes that are examinable. Students face a raft of assessment that requires them to apply that knowledge in novel situations within internal and external examination. I suggest that the use of high stakes testing to assess staff will encourage staff to not only teach the knowledge component but alos the higher level skills needed for success at the senior level.

With the greater reliance on high stakes testing tools in Australia, it is worthwhile considering what implications aspects of teaching to the test have on the Australian educational climate in light of experience overseas.

2.7   Implications of Teaching to the Test

As schools embark on evaluation using high stakes testing, with teaching to the test as a significant inherent effect (Pedulla, 2002), this section identifies the implications that teaching to the test have for education in Australia. In cases where the system in place has well designed and well aligned standards curriculum, and tests worth teaching to, teaching to the test maybe a positive experience for both teacher and student (Ayres, Sawyer & Dinham, 2004). In contrast in the US most states standards are not sufficiently focused or prioritized (Popham, 2000). Without these characteristics, the tests often take precedence over the standards it is meant to represent, or the learning it is meant to motivate (Pedulla, 2002).

Considering a positive aspect of teaching to the test Bushweller (1997) introduces a new perspective called curriculum alignment. He maintains that the phrase teaching to the test has always been heresy to teachers; it puts too much emphasis on standardized tests, it stifles creativity and encourages cheating. However, curriculum alignment means to teach knowledge and skills that are assessed by tests designed largely around academic standards set by the state (McGehee & Griffith, 2001; English, 2000). Those who ignore what is "valued" by a state mandated test and teach to a different curriculum, can learn a painful lesson. At the beginning of the year, teacher's overall evaluation can be based on standardized test scores, a significant motivator for teaching to the test (Bushweller, 1997). Bushweller (1997) quotes Nancy Grasmick, Maryland's State Superintendent of Schools, when she states: "If you're teaching to the test you are mirroring good teaching that will enhance learning, then we don't see anything wrong with that" (p. 1). I agree with Grasmick who does not agree with the argument that teaching to the test stifles innovation. She points to a number of examples in the US where innovative approach are interwoven into a pursuit for good results in high stakes tests. I suggest that teachers at schools using innovative approaches under high stakes conditions realized that teaching for the test includes schooling the students in appropriate methods to draw upon in an examination situation. They are taught not to linger too long over tough questions and sharpen these skills in practice examinations.

Success stories from the US are numerous (see for example Bassey, 2000; McNeil, 2000; Skrla, 2001) linking high stakes testing with high school achievement (Bushweller, 1997). Some have exploited the situation and now instruct other teachers on how to effectively teach to the test and get good test results. The key, as reported

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by educational researchers, is to be aware that test scores are the driving force behind accountability (Linn, 200). They are intended to ensure that all students, whether in a traditional or innovative institution, are taught the basic skills (Langer, 2001). In this light it would seem difficult for schools to justify developing a curriculum while ignoring what is necessary to remain accountable. The present climate of high stakes testing dictates that the main ingredient for remaining accountable is good performance on these tests (Bushweller, 1997). Bond (2004) likewise, encourages us not to bemoan the inclination to teach to the test but to take advantage of it. He calls for the production of exercises "so compelling, and so powerful as exemplars of the domain, that honing ones ability to solve them represents generalisable learning and achievement" (p.1)

However, there are negative connotations to teaching to the test. Bushweller (1997) reports that teachers in Texas view the use of high stakes testing with suspicion and teachers report a stifling of approach. Unfortunately, it is also reported that when narrow tests are used to hold schools accountable, evidence shows that teachers will leave low performing schools where they are needed most (National Centre for Fair and Open Testing, 2004).

In her article for *The Times Educational Supplement* (2002), Kober supplies a general rule to govern teaching to the test. She maintains that any form of teaching to the test is inappropriate if it raises test scores without also increasing students' knowledge and skills in the broader subject being tested. MacBeath and Myers (1999) caution that following the path of the US where testing has become such a tyrannical force that it has undermined teachers, schools, higher education and the quality of learning.

2.8 Summary for the Chapter

The term high stakes can be used to denote those situations where interest in assessment goes beyond the immediate sphere of educational measurement and beyond those individuals who sit the tests (Messick, 1999). To the greatest extent, academic research highlights significant negative effects due to high stakes testing. In the US, UK and Australia, notable educational authors cite a raft of reasons not to use high stakes testing due to its effects on students, teachers and schools. There are however, a number of significant pieces of research that maintain positive outcomes can be drawn from the use of high stakes testing.

Evidence from the US and the UK show that whilst high stakes testing can identify gaps in education (Carpenter, 2001) it could also have a raft of negative effects on students (Sacks, 2000; Herman, 1992 and Shepard, 2000). The effect on the curriculum can also be positively or negatively impactful. If the designated test produces alignment to a well-constructed state curriculum that can be desirable, however, if the curriculum sets low standards the overall "dumbing down" of the school curriculum can be disastrous (Boustead, 2003).

Schools may be economically disadvantaged by bad results or boosted by bonuses (Gordon, 2000), but an overall increase in the quality of education at the school cannot be guaranteed due to the use of high stakes testing (Budge, 2004). One implication of the use of high stakes testing is the increased incidence of teaching to the test to improve their classes' grades and as a result their own measure of teacher quality (Bushweller, 1997). Teaching to the test takes the forms from outright

cheating where students answers are changed by teachers, to increased time spent on examination taking technique (Kober, 2002).

Examining the body of literature on quality teaching and using high stakes testing, we can identify the characteristics of teachers that may become apparent in their approach to teaching and pedagogy. When subjected to high stakes testing a teacher may reduce the curriculum taught to focus instruction only on the skills that are tested; aim instruction and preparation at those on the borderline of success and increase the amount of time given over to specific examination preparation or hothouse in after school activities aimed at examination preparation (Kober, 2002). Other reported effects were noted to include a reduction in future applicants to principal's positions (Thompson et al., 2002). Teachers experiencing negative emotional effects (Kober, 2002), may experience burnout and some may leave the profession (Budge, 2004).

With such a wide body of research decrying the use of high stakes testing would any school chose to adopt it to improve academic success? The research looks at three schools that have implemented high stakes testing to greater or lesser degrees. The merits of the system in each case are measured against academic success and the effect on staff, the school and students. The implication of high stakes testing and their effect on the whole school have therefore become major issues for this study. The wider effects on staff, students, curricula and school practice become a major focus for the research, particularly in light of the sparsity of knowledge in this area. The lack of research that has taken place in the Australian context on the effects of high stakes testing is notable. The significance of this research is again magnified in light of the total lack of research into high stakes testing and its effects in Christian

Brothers' schools. We now turn to a consideration of Christian Brothers' schools in particular.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study as stated in Chapter 1, is to review the responses of senior teachers to high stakes testing at three academically successful Christian Brothers' schools, and hence, to highlight possible ways in which schools can achieve academic success in a Charismatic environment. The research seeks to explore the methods by which the teachers, and the schools as a whole, pursue academic success, and potentially provide a model for other Christian Brothers' schools.

In this chapter, a number of dimensions of context contributing to an understanding of the study are reviewed. Context forms an important means of situating action within research, and of grasping its wider social and historical import (Dey, 1993). Moreover, context can be seen as a key to meaning since "meaning can be conveyed 'correctly' only if context is understood" (Dey, 1993, p. 32). Several dimensions of the context are now examined in light of the proceeding chapter on quality teaching and high stakes testing. In particular these dimensions firstly situate the research in the wider historical setting; secondly by highlighting specific pressures faced by schools to achieve academic success; thirdly by describing the environments of the three Christian Brothers' Schools involved in the study, and finally, characterising that which informs the approach of all Christian Brothers' Schools, Edmund Rice spirituality. The dimensions are outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: The three dimensions of the context

Three dimensions of the context	
Dimension 1	Catholic education in the Christian Brothers' tradition
Dimension 2	Edmund Rice Spirituality: the Charism of Edmund Rice
Dimension 3	Backgrounds of the case study schools selected for the research

This chapter opens with an examination of the first Dimension, Catholic Education in the Christian Brother's tradition. It maps the history of Catholic education in Australia post Vatican II, and what that implied for Christian Brothers' schools. Following that, the foundation of the Christian Brothers' is also considered; from its roots with Edmund Rice in Ireland to the expansion of the order throughout the world. In considering, Edmund Rice's spirituality, particular emphasis is paid to the Charism of Edmund Rice, which informs the practice of Christian Brothers and lay staff working in Christian Brothers' schools. What it means to teach in a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition is explored in the following section and the cultural characteristics at the heart of Christian Brothers' schools at discussed. Finally, Dimension 3, the backgrounds of the case study schools selected for the research, are described offering insight into each of the schools, including each school's managerial structure, history, governance, academic history, method of examining senior students, and their relationship with other independent schools associations. A concluding section discusses how the literature review informs the research and draws out and refines the four research questions, which guide the research.

3.1.1 Dimension 1: Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition

July 2004 saw an important chapter in the story of the Australian Catholic Church close, and a significant footnote to Australia's social history was written when the Christian Brothers were instructed to release many of their members from schools to work with the disadvantaged and marginalised. In a letter to the Western Province, of which Australia is a central component, the Christian Brothers' worldwide head, Brother Philip Pinto, observed that the "need that saw us setting up our schools in many of our current ministry sites is now being adequately met by others, in many cases by the state itself" (McGillion, 2004). Christian Brothers' schools will continue to operate in all states of Australia and lay people will carry on much of the work started by the Brothers. The cases being studied in this research are such institutions, where lay Principals lead the schools with few (if any) Christian Brothers now occupying roles within the main body of the staff.

As a lasting poignant guide to those charged with the future of the Christian Brothers' schools, the Christian Brothers' Congregation Chapter of 2002, held in Rome, recognized the call to educate the minds and hearts of the young is at the heart of every Christian Brother. The Chapter leaders proclaimed a Charter to enable schools to authenticate their endeavour in the tradition of Edmund Rice. The Charter aims to "inspire school communities to foster energetically the vision of the charismatic leader, Blessed Edmund Rice, in the Spirit of Christ and the education mission of the Catholic Church" (*The Charter*, 2002, p.1). To understand the distinctive context in which the cases for this research study are situated, the educational and cultural characteristics that underpin Catholic education, and particularly Christian Brothers' education, will be examined.

3.1.2 Christian Brothers in Australia

To fully understand the characteristic of a modern Christian Brothers' school, it is necessary to briefly examine the historical background of the Christian Brothers at the foundation, their focus on education and their history in Australia. Central to this examination is Edmund Rice's work in foundation the Christian Brother's view of education and their history in Australia (for example see O'Toole, 1984; 1985; Coldrey, 2001a; 2001b; Gill, 1926; Blake, 1996; Jacob, 1979; Kearney, 1960; Keogh, 1996; Kyne; 1996; Kelly, 1999; Feheney, 1996; Garvan, 1996; 1976b, 1971; 1976; 1978, 1979; Callan, 1977; Wilson, 1991; McLaughlin 2007; Kent, 1988; Rushe, 1981; 1995).

The Christian Brothers are an international congregation of consecrated brothers within the Edmund Rice Family. Founded in 1802 by Blessed Edmund Rice in Waterford, Ireland, the Congregation has grown to about 1900 brothers in 29 countries. Edmund Rice opened his first school in 1802 and over the next twenty years, a large number of men joined him from all walks of life. Eventually Pope Pius VII formally approved the Christian Brothers Congregation in 1820 (Blake, 1994).

The first Christian Brothers arrived in Sydney in 1843, 40 years after the order was founded. By 1900, there were 826 Christian Brothers in the country, and by 1965, nearly 4000. Without their dedication, the Church would have struggled to accomplish its essential mission for the 20th century, which Melbourne's Archbishop Daniel Mannix defined as building a future where Catholics may hope to secure the part of the lucky country and what it had to offer (McGillion, 2004). Education was seen as

the key, but whereas the Jesuits got the "cream of the crop", the Brothers took "the dregs like me, who were the sons of railway men, manual workers and clerks" (McGillion, 2004, p.1). Over the years, the Christian Brothers propelled legions of working class Catholics into the middle class and the professions, offering a model of masculinity that was "neither beer swilling nor self consumed and played an important role in assimilating migrants at a time when integration was socially if not politically incorrect" (McGillion, 2004, p. 2).

Changes in social attitudes generally and attitudes towards religious life more particularly also hit the Christian Brothers hard. In 1980, there were still some 2800 brothers in Australia; but by 2008 there are fewer than 500. The vast majority are well over 60 years of age, and the number of men who have entered the order in the last five years is extremely low (McGillion, 2004). It is against this backdrop that Brother Pinto gave his edict. However, the withdrawal of the Christian Brothers from Catholic schools does not mean a withdrawal of their influence. Through *The Charter* the Christian Brothers have outlined what it is to be part of Catholic Education in the Edmund Rice Tradition.

3.2 Dimension 2: Edmund Rice Spirituality

To understand the Christian Brothers' message is to understand the message of their founder the Blessed Edmund Rice (Blake, 1996). Through his vision and calling he created a worldwide Brotherhood informed by a deep faith and devoted to service to others (Kyne, 1996; Garvan, 1996, Normoyle, 1976b). The following section tells Edmund's story and that of the Christian Brothers. It examines the message that

underpins the work of Christian Brothers and those who work in Christian Brothers' schools.

3.2.1 Edmund's Story 1762-1844

There is a significant body of work that sheds light on the life of Edmund Rice (for example Gill, 1926; Blake, 1996; Jacob, 1979; Keogh, 1996; Kyne, 1996; Garvan, 1996; Fitzpatrick, 1945; Kearney, 1960; Humphreys, 1963; Coldrey, 2001a; 2001b; Rushe, 1981; Normoyle, 1976b; 1978; O'Toole, 1984; 1985; Vercruysse, 2004). Edmund Ignatius Rice was born during the Penal Times on 1st June 1762 in Callan, Ireland (Keogh, 1996). Many writers report that under the governance of the English, Irish Catholics suffered a range of inequities (O'Toole, 1984; Coldrey, 2001b; Normoyle, 1976a). For example O'Toole (1984) suggests that:

> The situation of the Catholic poor was indeed desperate. In the first place they were handicapped by their poverty as victims of an unjust social climate made worse by oppressive penal laws. In addition they were debarred from the benefits of Catholic education by deliberate state policy, while at the same time they were subjected to the material temptations of a government-supported proselytizing campaign. (p. 68)

Edmund Rice however, was not from poor stock and his comfortable upbringing was far from the struggles of the poor and homeless of Ireland (Burton, 1962; Callan, 1977; Carroll, 1999; Feheney, 1996; Fitzpatrick, 1950; 1953; 1964; 1969; Hickey, 1982; 1997; Hurley, 1982; Kearney, 1960a; 1960b; 1961; Nolan, 1989; 1990; Normoyle, 1976b). We are told that whilst a privileged life for a Catholic in Ireland at this time was a rarity, in a small number of cases the opposite it true (McLaughlin, 2007; Vercruysse, 2004). Indeed, at the age of 17, Edmund joined his Uncle Michael in the business of supplying ships from Waterford; then the second busiest port in Europe. When he was 23, Edmund married Mary Elliot also from a well to do family.

To a great extent under English rule, Catholics were refused the basics of education and entry to a wide variety of jobs (Fitzpatrick, 1945; Kelly, 1999, Hickey, 1982; 1997; Hurley, 1982; Kearney, 1960a; 1960b; 1961; Nolan, 1989; 1990; Normoyle, 1976b). Edmund, as quoted by Keogh (1996) describes how Catholics face extreme punishment if they try to educate others,

> The poor of this country want education very badly. Among the many cruel penal laws, which enacted against Catholics of Ireland since the reformation, there was one that forbade any Catholic to teach school or even to be a tutor in a private house under pain of transportation for life! His being detected in the act of teaching any one subjected him to this terrible punishment without even the formality of a trial…. It was in force for an entire century, and you will judge, it must have great power in demoralizing the people. (p. 37)

Unfortunately, after less than four years of marriage, tragedy struck and Mary died after giving birth to a daughter, Mary, who was disabled in some way (Coldrey, 2001a; Normoyle, 1976a). Edmund Rice was a changed man and while heavily involved in business, his thoughts and actions followed a much more spiritual path than before (McLaughlin, 2007). We are told that Edmund called his stepsister Joan Murphy to help him care for his disabled daughter; while he developed the business further which he inherited from his uncle in 1795. However during this time his attraction to and care for the poor of Waterford took on a new intensity (O'Toole, 1984).

> His prayfulness deepened and his reading of the scriptures and other spiritual books grew more constant. In God's time Edmund challenged by a Friar's love of prayer one night as they sat in a room in a country Inn on one of his business trips. Edmund determined then to become a monk in a monastery in Europe. However, when he shared this desire with a woman friend in Waterford, she challenged him not to shut himself away in a monastery, but to do something significant with the many poor "quay kids" of Waterford (Christian Brothers website).

This passage and others suggest that Edmund's transformation came out of prayer and reflection on the Scriptures. His calling was formed through spiritual enlightenment and moulded by identification of needs in the material world (Normoyle, 1976a). Edmund subsequently turns his back on his privileged upbringing, comfortable life and family and devotes his life to the poor and destitute. He provides education and so as they could improve their lot in life (Vercruysse, 2004). Indeed O'Toole (1984) pointed out that Edmund Rice's concept of a religious community would "break through the cloistered monastic mould of religious life to reach out to the poor underprivileged living in the midst of the world, so as to bring them Christian help and hope" (p. 88-89).

In 1802, Edmund began a night school for the uneducated boys from the quayside at Waterford. It is reported that his deep desire was to found a religious order of men who would educate these poor boys so that they could live with dignity and high self-esteem (Humphreys, 1963; Garvan, 1996; Normoyle, 1976a, Wilson, 1991) "He knew that the only hope of improving the status of the poor was through education" (Normoyle, 1976a, p. 42). But his volunteer assistants resigned in the face of difficulties, as did the paid teachers that were later employed (Normoyle, 1979). Just when his spirits were at its lowest, two men from his native Callan joined him not only to educate his poor boys but also to found a religious order (O'Toole, 1984).

 Edmund and his growing number of companions went ahead, and in 1808, seven of them took religious orders under Bishop Power of Waterford (Keogh, 1996). They became the Presentation Brothers, and gradually, a transformation took place in the "quay kids" of Waterford. Edmund and his Brothers educated them, clothed them and

fed them (Blake, 1996). In this way, Edmund Rice and his Presentation Brothers had a significant effect on these destitute boys. Rushe (1995) refers to the praise received from the Reverend R. H. Ryland, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral. Ryland lauds Edmund in these words:

> In the schools established by Edmund Rice, esq., for the education of the poor Catholic children, we have a splendid instance of the most exalted generosity…among a distressed and unemployed population, where religious opinions militate against the system of education offered them by their Protestant brethren, these schools have been of incalculable benefit: they have already impressed upon the lower class a character which hitherto was unknown to them, and in the number of intelligent and respectable tradesmen, clerks and servants which they have sent forth, bear the most unquestionable testimony to the public services of Edmund Rice. (p. 55)

It is reported that Edmund Rice's schools were, unified, enlightened and progressive. His schools emphasized essentials and correct spelling, accurate and expeditious calculation, skillfully written prose and a thorough knowledge of bookkeeping (Vercruysse, 2004). Edmund also emphasized the importance of instruction in the Catholic faith in his schools. He expected each boy to grow in knowledge and virtue. For Normoyle (1976a), the schools were principally means by which a student would be given knowledge of the faith: "Even during reading lessons opportunity was taken to speak about honesty, justice and charity" (p. 56.)

Edmund Rice was finally given approval to become Superior General of the order and from this time on they were called Christian Brothers. By 1825 there were 30 Christian Brothers working in 12 towns educating 5,500 boys. We are told that Edmund endured many and severe trials until at the age of 76 when he retired. He went on to live in Waterford where he died on 29th August, 1844 (McLaughlin, 2007). Edmund had devoted his life to the education of the poor (Kelly, 1999). He began a legacy that he has expanded and spread throughout the world (Garvan, 1996).

He was declared to be Blessed Edmund Rice in Rome on 6th October 1996. Finally, he can best be described as "astute business man, loving husband, devoted father, grieving widower, innovative educator, courageous founder, compassionate champion of the poor" (Christian Brothers website).

3.2.2 The Charism of Edmund Rice

When reading the literature on the Charism of Edmund Rice (see for example Gill, 1926; Blake, 1996; Jacob, 1979; Keogh, 1996; Kyne, 1996; Garvan, 1996; Fitzpatrick, 1945; Kearney, 1960; Humphreys, 1963; Coldrey, 2001a; 2000; Rushe, 1981; Normoyle, 1976b; 1978; O'Toole, 1984; 1985; Vercruysse, 2004), we must firstly identify what the term Charism means. Thompson (1998) notes that the word Charism is Greek and means "gift". In contemporary Catholic usage, it refers specifically to a spiritual gift, which is a free gift of grace. Moreover, Catholic scholars agree that a Charism is not solely for the benefit of its direct recipient, rather it is a supernatural gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit for the building of communities (Thompson, 1998). Whilst Thompson's (1998) work gives an appreciation of the modern day usage of Charism, its origins lie in early Christianity, a viewpoint expressed by St. Paul.

> About the gift of the Spirit, brothers, I want you to be quite certain.
> There are many gifts, but it is always the same spirit. There are
> many different forms of activity, but in everybody there is the
> same God who is at work in them all. The particular manifestation
> of the Spirit the granted to each one is to be used for general good.
> To one is given from the Spirit the gift of utterance expressing
> knowledge, in accordance with the same Spirit; to another, faith
> from the same Spirit; and to another, the gift of healing through
> this one Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another
> prophesy; to another the power of distinguishing spirits; to one the
> gift of different tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.
> However, at work in all these is one and the same Spirit,
> distributing them at will to each individual. (Corinthians 12:1-11)

In this context, the following points may be made to clarity the term Charism. The origin of every Charism is the Holy Spirit, whilst its impetus is distinguished from the action of the Holy Spirit in other ministries for example, the sacraments. Moreover, Charism is a special grace or gift given to anyone of the faithful and its purpose is the renewal and development of the people of God with the authenticity of the Charism tested and judged by the hierarchy of the Church (Watson, 2001).

As previously alluded to, Charism, in its theological usage, refers to a gift of the Spirit. When given and received by a person, the person has insight to recognize and value, and also demonstrate openness to respond to unique Gospel values (Cashman, 2003). When imbued with the Charism, a person thus becomes a special vehicle of God's grace and providence for others. The discovery of Charism can be made in others; it can be made in oneself, through prayer meditation, generous good works, or by suggestions received that direct one's mind in a spiritual way and to a special task (Coldrey, 2001b).

O'Toole tells us that authentic religious founders are imbued with an original Charism which "shapes the ideal of apostolic service to which a particular founder is called" (p. 65). Carroll (1975) suggests that the Charism imbued on religious leaders is the greatest of all gifts of Charisms. Their greatness he suggests lies in the fact that "they continue to flourish and to bear fruit in the Church sometimes even centuries after the particular founder has passed away" (p. 1).

The Charism usually proposed for Edmund Rice is that he heard the cry of the poor (O'Toole, 1984). There has been an emphasis on his clothing, feeding and teaching

the poor and marginalized within the urban underclass (Rushe, 1995). However, whilst it is true that the marginalized needed bread and education, it is often overlooked that the rich and middle class as much as the marginalised, require Christ. Coldrey and Kilmartin (1989) offer two views of Edmund's Charism, firstly that "The Charism…is to the poor-the stress on clothing, feeding, teaching the ultra poor of the displaced country folk; to help the goaled, the condemned, the deprived" (p. 4). The second view they offer includes ideas of faith; stating "Edmund addressed the spiritual ignorance of the Irish youth as his first priority and their material poverty second" (p. 6).

Edmund Rice was not drawn to spiritually blind social activism (O'Toole, 1984). His Charism was born out of an intangible spiritual quest for an unseen God (Coldrey, 2001a). The Charism of Edmund Rice was to instruct ignorant boys and young men in the Catholic faith. He addressed the spiritual ignorance of the youth firstly, and their material poverty, second (Keogh, 1996). Rising from the strength of his personal spiritual life, the Charism of Edmund Rice was a conversion experience (O'Toole, 1994), which rendered his personality receptive to the call of God as it arose through local circumstances (Coldrey, 2001a). First and foremost a call for the awakening of the spirit in youth, the Charism calls people to recognize the Holy Spirit in them and to act accordingly (Keogh, 1996). The vehicle for this has been education of the poor and disenfranchised (Blake, 1984; O'Toole; 1985) but we must be cognizant of the fact that the Charism calls people first to be spiritual beings, and secondly to be educators (Hickey, 1981; Wilson, 1991).

The Congregation of the Christian Brothers have repeatedly attempted to crystallise the Charism of Edmund Rice and its meanings for those teaching in Christian Brothers' schools. In their *Constitutions* (1985) the Congregation of the Christian Brothers report the findings of its first International spirituality conference held in Ireland, on efforts to reach an agreement on the Charism and the spirit of the Congregation. The Charism statement was reported:

> Deeply aware of the Father's providential presence in his life,
> EDMUND RICE WAS MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO OPEN
> HIS WHOLE HEART TO CHRIST PRESENT AND APPEALING
> TO HIM IN THE POOR [emphasis in the original]….He was given
> grace to respond by identifying through Christ with the poor in order
> to evoke in them a deep awareness of god's loving presence…would
> raise the poor to an awareness of their dignity as children of God.
> (CFC, 1985, p. 52-53)

Carroll (1992) wrote two versions of a watershed articles entitled, "From Charism to Mission to Ministry" in which he offered a definition of Edmund Rice's Charism by quoting Boff: "A true charism blossoms where individuals place all that they are all that they have and all that they can do at the service of God and their neighbour"(p. 21). In the article Carroll (1992), demonstrates that a Charism emerges from the framework of a specific mission and for Edmund Rice that mission was to the poor Catholic boys whose faith was not being developed. For Edmund Rice this mission led him to a life long ministry of Catholic Education on behalf of the poor. The next section will investigate how schools are informed by Edmund Rice's Charism and provide Catholic Education the Edmund Rice tradition.

3.2.3   Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition

Although sharing its tradition, mission and communion with its local Church, education in the Edmund Rice Tradition should be seen as existing as part of the evangelizing mission of the universal Catholic Church (*Charter*, 2004). Whilst the efforts of the Brothers are mainly in secondary education, they are involved in a wide variety of educational ministries (Vercruysse, 2004). Edmund Rice schools give emphasis to "liberation through empowering service of education, for the sake of the kingdom and the promise of abundant life for all" (*Charter*, 2004, p.5). Indeed the similarities between the thoughts of Edmund Rice and the Church's current views of schooling are quite striking (Vercruysse, 2004). Moreover he maintains that "The influence of the Christian Brothers and their lay colleagues in ministry portray a vital role in passing along faith in the schools" (p. 63). We are told that from the very beginning however, Edmund Rice viewed his schools differently than the state run schools or those operating by other religious societies (O'Toole, 1985). For Edmund Rice, education was a religious work in the formation of youth; training that would give a new morale to the children of the poor and lift them socially (Kent, 1988). O'Herlihy, Griffin, O'Donnell and Devereaux (1995) contend that "For Rice, education was not just a means to affluence and prestige, but was for the ends of personal liberation and social change" (p. 5). Importantly for this study Blake (1994) asserts Rice's practical vision for education in his schools includes; "what was needed to equip young people mentally, morally, and religiously to stand on their own two feet and to change the society that caused and allowed them to be poor"(p.7).

 In 1988, Br. Raphael Bellows, CFC, assistant to the superior General of the Congregation of Christian Brothers, gave a presentation in which he presented five characteristics that are common to all Christian Brother's schools. He suggested that

these characteristics aid the schools because they "help identify them as inheritors of the spirit and traditions of Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian Brothers" (p.185). They are:

1. The encouragement given to pupils in our schools to strive for scholastic excellence in a disciplined atmosphere
2. Christian Brothers' schools offer a religious dimension that permeates the entire education available to their pupils
3. The cultivation of a strong devotion to Mary, the Mother of God
4. The emphasis given to the care and concern for each individual in the school community
5. Christian Brothers' schools demonstrate a particular concern for the poor (Bellows, 1988, p. 185-189)

These five distinctive characteristics of Christian Brothers' schools are "an essential part of the educational patrimony which the Christian brothers' schools have inherited from Edmund Rice and his early followers" (Vercruysse, 2004, p.78).

Over the years, the Christian Brothers' communities attached to the schools has decreased in number, and hence, the need has arisen to translate Edmund Rice's Charism for lay colleagues (Cashman, 2003). The North American Christian Brothers Provinces developed a document entitled *The Essential elements of a Christian Brother Education* (EECBE) (CFC, 2000). Since then provinces around the world (including Australia with *The Charter*) have developed other such documents (see CFC, 1997a; CFC, 2000, CFC, 2002a; CFC, 2002b; CFC, 1997b; CFC, 2004). The essential elements that emerged reflect the local culture and tradition of each province, as well as the background and experience of the persons in each constituency (Vercruysse, 2004). Table 3.2 shows the worldview of *The Essential elements of a Christian Brother Education* (EECBE) (CFC, 2000) including a brief summary for Australia, drawn from *The Charter* (2004), the document which provides the essential elements of Christian Brothers education for the Australian context.

Table 3.2: Worldview of *The Essential elements of a Christian Brother Education*

England	Americas	Ireland	India	Australia
Awareness of the spiritual	Collaboration and shared responsibility	Good relationships	The School as good news	Spirituality
Building of a Christian Community	Community of faith	Leadership	Building a school family	Community
Compassion for the weak	Stands by marginalized	Care for weaker pupils	Compassion for the weak	Pastoral care, at the margins
Concern for the whole person	Celebrates the dignity and nurtures development of whole person	Holistic development of pupils	Concern for the whole person	Holistic education
Teaching as a Christian vocation	Proclaims and witness to its Catholic identity	Catholic ethos	Teaching as a call and gift from God	Stewardship and reflective practice
Striving for excellence	Pursues excellence in all its endeavors	Academic achievement	Striving for excellence	Striving for excellence
Evangelizing the modern world	Evangelizes youth within the mission of the church	Understanding Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers legacy	Awareness of god in our life	Faith in action
Education for justice		Effective discipline	Education for justice	Being just

The Charter identifies key cultural characteristics by which one can identify a

Catholic School operating in the Edmund Rice tradition. These characteristics that can

be used as beacons for a Christian Brothers' school to follow and are outlined in the

next section.

3.2.4. Cultural characteristics of at the heart of an Australian Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition

As a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition, Australian Christian Brothers'

schools are called to exhibit characteristics that exemplify the virtues of Edmund Rice

and mirror the founding principles of his mission for youth. The characteristics are not

meant to set Christian Brothers' schools apart from others schools, but they do

provide a touchstone to which these schools can refer. The characteristics encompass

all aspects of life in Christian Brothers' schools from academic to spiritual, pastoral to

co-curricular. The cultural characteristics at the heart of an Australian Catholic school

in the Edmund Rice Tradition are spelt out in *The Charter* (2004). They are: Holistic

Education; Spirituality; Faith in Action; Community; Pastoral Care; Service to Others;

Being Just; At the Margins; Compassion; Stewardship and Reflective Practice. To be

truly authentic to the Edmund Rice Tradition, the educational practices at the school

must embrace a holistic approach where integrated development occurs through

quality teaching and learning. In particular:

1. A Catholic School in the Edmund Rice tradition provides a curriculum attentive to the needs of each person.
2. Each person's need is best served by teaching and learning experiences that are relevant, authentic, dynamic and creative.
3. Religious education, faith development experiences and service learning are fundamental components of a holistic curriculum.
4. Programs offered include a balance and integration of teaching and learning experiences that promote the development of the whole person.
5. All members of the school are encouraged to work to the best of their abilities, to realize their potential and to strive for individual excellence.
6. The school provides a sound learning culture that enables students to experience success within a safe and healthy environment.

(*The Charter*, 2004, p. 9)

Pastorally, the school should conduct all aspects of school life in a manner that is

sensitive to the needs of each student and to the common good. The school should

promote service to others, by way of significant learning experiences, as basic to

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fulfilling Christian life. Staff should recognize that their principle vocation is to serve students and families (The Charter, 2004). The curriculum and activities of a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition should enable students to experience and value a critical awareness of social justice issues.

3.2.5 Congruency and dissonance in Christian Brothers' schools

The central messages of Edmund Rice, the lived experience of his Charism and what that means for education in Christian Brothers' school has been well documented and reviewed in previous sections. The underpinning of the *Essential Elements of Christian Brothers Education* (CFC, 2000), and indeed, the cultural characteristics at the heart of an Australian Christian Brothers' school given in *The Charter* (CFC, 2004) provide a strong framework for all Christian Brothers' schools within which to operate. The formation of this framework and the induction of teachers into this framework, leads to questions about its actual implementation in schools. In other words, to what degree do schools continue to follow the framework on a day to day basis. If schools are following these ideas on a daily basis they could be described as acting in congruence with what it means to be a Christian Brothers' school. But teachers may endeavor to follow this framework, and indeed have a lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their daily lives, however they also have to follow guidelines set down by state government, and at another level of school authorities, potentially causing dissonance between their goals and the goals of the school.

In Australia there seems to be very little research into this critical question. Vercruysse (2004) writing in the US context is an exception. Vercruysse's (2004) research into the congruency of Edmund Rice's Charism with the EECBE in Christian

Brothers' schools across the US investigated the degree of congruency between the Charism of Edmund Rice, and the culture found in US Christian Brothers' high schools.

In his review of seminal works on Edmund Rice (see Normoyle, 1976a; 1977; Keogh, 1996; Rushe, 1981; O'Toole, 1984) Vercruysse (2004) conducted a content analysis to discover themes describing the Charism of Edmund Rice such as: Rice's humanity; apostolic spirituality, presence to the poor; practical approach to education and vision of Catholic education. From these emerged the sub themes: zeal for Christian education and pay school/free school. The theme that was most apparent in the texts proved to be "Practical approach to Education" and somewhat surprisingly "Presence to the poor" was least emergent. This seems at odds with the Congregations emphasis of serving the poor (CFC, 1996), but may well reflect a movement over time and in response to cultural change. However, whilst it is evident that Rice's concern for the poor and his involvement in alleviating their plight was a major factor in founding the Christian Brothers (CFC), this theme did not receive much attention in the seminal works (Vercruysse, 2004). One reading of this finding suggests that the emphasis on the themes "Practical approach to education, and Vision of Catholic education" illustrate that education for Edmund Rice was the means to accomplish his desired goal in providing religious education and faith formation to those who were in most need. Vercruysse (2004) reports that the *Essential Element* "Call for collaboration and shared responsibility in its mission" was the least evident. One reading of this result suggests that the *Essential Element* was written post Vatican II and the theme was not favoured by any of the churches.

When checking for similarities with the EECBE and what were the realities in Christian Brothers' schools, Vercruysse (2004) analysed written responses and responses offered in focus groups with teaching staff at 10 Christian Brothers' school in the US. The respondents to the questionnaire and focus groups of teachers were asked to what extent are the *Essential Elements of a Christian Brother Education* (EECBE) evident in their high schools. Vercruysse (2004) found that the theme, which received most support, was "Pursues excellence in all its endeavors". Another important finding was that there was a high degree of congruence between the EECBE and the lived experience of teacher in the 10 US schools.

Vercruysse (2004) identifies a demonstrable level of congruency and states that those in leadership roles in these Christian Brothers' schools should be encouraged by its results. However, in reviewing this research it is important to note that the questionnaires and the interviews ask broad questions regarding the *Essential Elements* without asking for specific detail regarding how the *Essential Elements* impact on general teacher pedagogy or on specific issues such as examination preparation. The study asked for teachers to recognize the *Essential Elements* in their role; however, this research into the response of senior teacher to high stakes testing is characterized by staff being asked to reflect on their teaching first and then make a comparison with what the *Cultural Characteristics* call them to do in their teaching. One reading of the responses in Vercruysse's (2004) study indicates a general and somewhat superficial knowledge of the Charism of Edmund Rice as a lived experience in the US schools used in the study amongst the teaching staff. Although the teaching staff is aware not only of the story of Edmund Rice, and also the

existence and some of the content of the EECBE, they seemingly have only a superficial grasp of the meaning of the Charism of Edmund Rice in modern schools.

Another implication raised by the study holds great interest for this research. Vercruysse (2004) suggests that a set of "particular behaviors and practices specifically relating to the Charism of Edmund Rice" (p. 192) surfaced from the data. Furthermore he suggests the formation of a document outlining the "behaviors and practices with the provision for determining the extent of the evidence of behaviors and practices" (p. 192) could be used in an evaluation of Christian Brothers' schools.

3.2.6 Summary

 The literature on Catholic Education within the Edmund Rice tradition highlighted major issues such as a ministry centered on Christ's vision for humanity, focused on authentic human growth and given expression through principles of faith tradition, *quality service* and developmental *excellence* (Charter, 2004). The tradition and history of Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers in Australia detailed their influence on Australian and worldwide society (McGillion, 2004). The contribution of the Christian Brothers to their schools outlined in *The Charter* (2004) particularly highlighted the Cultural Characteristics at the heart of a Catholic School in the Edmund Rice Tradition. As well the characteristics and implications for lay staff teaching in Edmund Rice schools are clearly outlined in *The Charter* (2004). Therefore, the literature on the Christian Brothers' Education and its meaning for teachers in Edmund Rice schools, is significant to this research in that it offers the schema for how a teacher should act in a Catholic School within the Edmund Rice tradition. It is clear from the literature that as fewer Christian Brothers minister in the

schools the Charism of Edmund Rice T*he Charter* (2004) goes a long way in achieving this. However, as Vercruysse's (2004) research shows whilst there can be great congruence in the roles of teachers and their perception of the Charism of Edmund Rice, those perceptions can be superficial and in some cases far too generalized.

3.3 Dimension 3: Backgrounds of the Case Study Schools Selected for the Research

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the three schools were specifically chosen because they were academically successful Christian Brothers' schools. Their level of academic achievement was based on the scores of the their senior students in their final Year 12 examinations. Over a long period of time each school was not only the top performing Christian Brothers' school in their state but also amongst the highest performing school for all Catholic, Independent and State schools in each state.

3.3.1 CBC Adelaide, South Australia

CBC Adelaide is a day and boarding facility and has an enrolment of over 1200 students from Reception to Year 12. The main entry points for new students are Reception and Year 8. It is a non-selective school academically. It is the highest fee paying Christian Brothers' school in South Australia.

Central to CBC Adelaide's mission is to offer students "the opportunity to make optimum use of their gifts and talents, thereby enabling them to develop their capacities and to come to self-knowledge and self-acceptance" (Senior School

Curriculum Handbook, CBC Adelaide, 2006, p. 3). CBC Adelaide has had a strong academic profile over number of decades, drawing students from quite affluent backgrounds and professional parents. However, in recent years there have been a decrease in academic results, although there have been some exceptions in this general trend. For example, academic results in 2002 were very high and some of the highest performing students in the State attended CBC Adelaide.

The curriculum profile is separated into three levels Junior, Middle and Senior schools. The curriculum at each level is broad, offering a wide variety of subjects to serve the widest range of students' interests and abilities. The current Headmaster has been at the school for four years and during that time CBC Adelaide has introduced some key initiatives. One has been the introduction of Vocational Education and Training programs (VET programs). Hence the College can now more easily cater for those at the College who wish to follow a more vocational, less academic pathway. As well, a great deal of capital investment has taken place, particularly in the Science and Technology areas. The school is well resourced and facilities are of a very high order. CBC Adelaide finds itself under the auspices of the Christian Brothers' as an Independent Catholic school, not directly governed by the Catholic Education Office.

Students may choose to sit the SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) comprising examinable HES (Higher Education Selection subject) courses; non-examinable HES Restricted Courses, VET courses, or combinations of the three. Most students usually take SACE Stage 1 in Year 11 and SACE Stage 2 in year 12, although there are variations to this general pattern.

There is a very strong emphasis on service learning with students actively engaged in community works both locally and globally. Fundraising and charitable activities have a very strong emphasis and students are called to be "men for others". The term "men for others" is often used at CBC Adelaide by both staff and students alike to identify one of the central missions of their schools.

CBC Adelaide is part of the Independent Schools Sporting Association (ISSA), which brings a large number of the independent schools in Adelaide together for sporting competitions. However, this is the only affiliation CBC Adelaide has to the other independent schools. This association acts as an organisational body only, rather than providing an association to which Independent school belong to guide other aspects of school life.

The newspapers and media in Adelaide do not cover all schools when they report academic achievement. Schools may chose to advertise their own achievements but there is not a statistical breakdown and analysis of performance as is reported in Victorian newspapers. CBC Adelaide does not choose to report its students achievements in the newspaper, but it does keep the community informed through its own publications, including the College magazine, and on its website.

3.3.2   *CBC Melbourne, Victoria*

CBC Melbourne consists of a primary campus, a main secondary school campus, a separate Year 9 campus, and a shared early learning centre with a nearby Catholic Girls school. The stated aim of the College is "to provide its students, both past and

present, their families and the staff with an experience of true Christian community based on the living out of gospel values" (Mission Statement, n.d.).

Whilst informed by and associated with the Christian Brothers, CBC Melbourne operates under the auspices of the Melbourne Catholic Education Office (CEO) with some other secondary Catholic school including Marcellin College, White Friars College and De La Salle College. However, CBC Melbourne also acts within the Association of Private Schools (the APS), which includes Geelong Grammar School, Melbourne Grammar, and Scotch College. The only other Catholic School within the APS is Xavier College. CBC Melbourne competes against the other APS schools across a wide variety of sports.

A broad curriculum at primary and secondary levels is promoted at CBC Melbourne. Fields of study include: Religious Education, English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Languages other than English, The Arts, Studies of Society and Environment, and Technology. Moreover, the school prospectus states that students attempting the Victorian Certificate of Education at CBC Melbourne "are consistently successful and enter a wide range of tertiary courses" (School Prospectus, p. 7).

Central to the school's mission is excellence in learning, recognition of the family and the desire to achieve fullness of life (Mission statement, n.d.). Importance is placed on the development of the whole person, where spiritual development, academic success, cultural awareness and sporting participation are integrated in the context of the Catholic tradition (CBC Melbourne, n.d.). All students are strongly encouraged to be

involved in fund raising and community service activities. There is particular emphasis in supporting the needy overseas through fundraising activities such as sponsored walkathons; interaction with local communities through outreach programs; aid for newly migrated Australians from Africa in tutoring initiatives and work with the displaced and homeless through the St. Vincent DePaul society.

The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is the final set of examinations that senior students sit. Students study 5 subjects each of which has 4 units, Units 1 and 2 are normally taken in Year 11, with Units 3 and 4 taken in Year 12. At the conclusion of their course the student is assigned a Study Score for each subject out of 50, with 40 and above being considered an excellent result. Each of the study scores contributes to their final ENTER Score, which is calculated out of 100. As well as sitting subject specific examinations, students sit a GAT (General Achievement Test), which gives an indication of their general natural ability. The Victorian Board of Studies (VBOS), now the VCAA, uses the data from the GAT as a moderating tool.

First founded to guide high achieving students from Christian Brothers' schools through their final secondary examinations, the school has had a strong academic profile. However, during the early 1990s its academic achievement at the senior level was poor in comparison with all other APS schools and many other Catholic Schools. In 1995, a new Christian Brother was appointed as Headmaster and he brought a strong academic focus that he engendered at the College. Under his auspices a wide range of teacher accountability measures were gradually brought to bear on senior teachers. From 1996 the academic results have improved every year until CBC Melbourne was placed first in the APS for academic achievement, setting a new

record for study scores above 40 in 2005. Academic results have remained a high priority for the school leadership team and CBC Melbourne is now recognised as a highly academic school.

Academic scores are reported widely in the local press in Melbourne, particularly the *Herald Sun Newspaper,* the most popular newspaper in Australia. *The Herald Sun* carries a full list of statistical data for all schools in Victoria, and follow-up stories about high achieving schools and students. It reports, amongst other things, on the highest achieving State, Independent, Catholic, single sex and coeducational schools. Hence the College's achievements are commented on in a public manner. The College also informs the public of its academic success through its own publications and website.

3.3.3 CBC Brisbane, QLD

CBC Brisbane is a single sex, day school situated very close to the centre of Brisbane and occupies a main site for the junior and senior school with the Year 9 campus in close proximity. The stated fundamental aim of CBC Brisbane is to provide a Catholic education for boys in the Edmund Rice Tradition.

Whilst informed by and associated to the Christian Brothers, it acts within the Great Private Schools (the GPS), which includes Brisbane Grammar School and other well-regarded private schools. The only other Catholic School within the GPS is CBC Brisbane, Nudgee. CBC Brisbane competes against the other GPS schools across a wide variety of sports including rugby, cricket and debating. CBC Brisbane has the

highest fees of all Christian Brothers' School in Queensland and draws its students

from homes with high socio economic profiles.

CBC Brisbane has a long history of fund raising and community based initiatives.

Students are reminded, "to whom much is given, much is expected" (*CBC Brisbane*

Prospectus, n.d.). A wide range of initiatives raises funds for overseas development

and awareness of issues in their local community. Students are engaged in a number

of local community service programs including preparing breakfast on site for the

areas homeless.

Students at CBC Brisbane study a very broad curriculum, which includes English,

Mathematics, Religious Education, The Arts, Languages other than English including

Japanese, Information Technology and Physical Education. Gifted and talented

programs are offered in a variety of extension classes and enrichment opportunities.

The academic achievements of the College have been widely reported.

> CBC Brisbane is extremely proud of the students Overall
> Performance (OP) scores achieved in the past. An impressive
> number of students have been awarded prizes…among them
> seventeen young men who have gone on to be awarded the
> coveted Rhodes Scholarship.(*CBC Brisbane Prospectus*, p.7).

CBC Brisbane prides itself on the academic achievement of its students and " As an

academic community, CBC Brisbane strives to lead the way in innovation and

achievement" (*CBC Brisbane Prospectus*, n.d., p.7). All students in Year 12 are

assessed in two ways. Firstly there is a raft of 4 examinations that test their English,

Mathematical and General Knowledge based on the broad curriculum, and finally

Thinking Skills encompassing 49 key elements. Combined, these are called the QCS with these examinations written by the Queensland State Education Authority. The QCS gives students a score against which their other classroom-based studies are scaled. It not only ranks the students, but it provides a rank for the school's cohort to compare it with other schools in order to attribute the final marks, Overall Performance (OP) scores, to students. The second method of assessment is based on the subjects covered in the classroom for example, English, Physics or French. The subjects are examined using a series of assessment tools produced by CBC Brisbane and they contribute towards a QSA score. Taken together the QCS and QSA scores provide the Overall Performance (OP) score. OP scores range between one and twenty, one being the highest possible. Historically CBC Brisbane is the highest academically achieving Catholic school in Queensland and only its close geographic neighbour, Brisbane Grammar has a higher academic success rate. CBC Brisbane's average OP score is typically between 7 and 8. The number of Op1s achieved is an important statistic particularly to prospective parents; CBC Brisbane achieves in the range of 12-21 Op1s

In the last two years the main Brisbane newspaper *The Courier Mail* has carried information about the academic achievement of senior students at each school in Queensland. However, the newspaper only reports the percentage of students who get an OP score of fifteen or above.

3.3.4 All Christian Brothers schools, but very different

These three schools that comprise the case studies in the following research project each follow the Christian Brothers' tradition. Whilst their central messages are based on the same characteristics carried in the Charter, their details are significantly different. The context in which they are situated also varies quite markedly. Five characteristics are now commented upon which show some of the similarities and some of the differences between some of the three schools.

The clientele at each school is drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds; however, CBC Brisbane does seem to cater for the more affluent members of the Catholic society in Queensland. Historically when comparing Catholic schools, Ignation schools tended to cater for the more affluent Catholics, whereas the Christian Brothers' deliver education for the less well off. CBC Brisbane does not have an Ignation rival school in Brisbane. However, both CBC Adelaide and CBC Melbourne have Ignation Boy's schools as close neighbours. CBC Adelaide tends to cater for a broader spectrum of clientele, seemingly less affluent and less academically inclined. CBC Melbourne lies somewhere between the two in terms of its clientele, but its parent body has become more affluent over the last decade, partly because of its renewed emphasis on academic success as noted above.

All the schools in the study have a strong emphasis on community service and service of others. It is gratifying to see that all young men who are educated at these schools are encouraged to look to help others in the community and think beyond themselves. Each school not only reaches out to the broader community; they welcome them into

the own community and the lives of the students. This is done through fund raising, out-reach programs, community service and social justice initiatives at all the schools. An inspection of each school web site and their prospectus indicates that each school reaches out to the marginalised in their own society and in societies overseas: a central tenet of education in the Edmund Rice tradition.

The academic emphasis of each school is also slightly different and will be the subject of more detailed discussion in later chapters. However, whilst there is an extremely strong emphasis on academic excellence at from both CBC Melbourne and CBC Brisbane, CBC Adelaide emphasises opportunity and equity for all learners, without neglecting academic success. It attempts to furnish every student with an opportunity to succeed in a wide variety of pathways, both academic and more vocational.

The governance of each of the schools and their associations within others bodies the GPS, APS and ISSA, are on first reading very similar, however on closer inspection significant differences are discovered. All schools lie within the governance of the Catholic Education Office in their respective state and are informed by the Christian Brothers. Each is part of a broader association of local schools: CBC Brisbane in the GPS (Great Private Schools), CBC Melbourne in the APS (Association of Private Schools) and CBC Adelaide in the ISSA (Independent Schools Sporting Association). The influence of each of these associations on the schools is significant. CBC Brisbane was one of the founder members of the GPS and sees itself as firmly entrenched and a leading school within the GPS. CBC Melbourne was a latecomer to the APS while CBC Adelaide has only sporting affiliations within its group. Again

this aspect of the context of each school will be examined in further detail in later chapters.

The public reporting of examination performance is also markedly different in each context. CBC Melbourne is subject to close public scrutiny in the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* newspapers, which publish a wide range of statistical data on the performance of the Year 12 cohort from all schools in Victoria. The relative performance of each school in Victoria can be examined and is well known in the public arena. This is not the case for either CBC Brisbane or CBC Adelaide. In Queensland the *Courier Mail* prints the percentage of the schools' population that score between 1-15 on their OP score. This has been described as a "blunt tool to dissect a complex issue" by staff at the college. Whereas in South Australia there is no public reporting of Year 12 results unless individual schools wish to highlight their own achievements.

In the next section, the dimensions of the context covered in this chapter and the themes from the literature review from the last chapter are drawn together. I will synthesise the individual parts of the literature review and the context to identify systemic specific issues that frame this research. Finally, this section again notes the series of research questions that guide the overall research.

3.4   Refining the Research Questions

Public interest in the scores of senior students is at an all time high. With increased transparency the inevitable comparisons made between schools puts pressure on principals, and by transmission, the teaching staff. Parents looking for the best school for their child may not necessarily choose on the basis of league tables and value added scores, but they are instructed by the media to use these data in their decision making process. It is in the best interest of the school to be portrayed as academically successful or to cater for a specific market. Private schools compete not only for the number of students to fill classrooms but the best students to keep their academic profile high. In order to do this they must portray a strong academic standing. Whilst the marketing of these schools is undertaken through their own publications, in a number of State's newspapers and other media a great deal of information regarding the achievements of senior students, and therefore schools, is available.

How schools achieve "good results" varies enormously from state to state and school to school. Some have addressed the issue by instituting accountability measures for staff based on the performance of the senior students in their final examinations. These data have been used not only to furnish students with a final indication of their achievement but also allow senior management to undertake statistical analysis of the achievement of the teacher. This use of high stakes testing whilst prevalent in the UK and the US is relatively little used in Australia, but all indicators point to an increased use. Teachers have been awarded for high results and castigated for low results. Measures of the value added by a teacher to a student's performance have been used. Teachers have in many cases evolved their teaching method to enable their senior

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students to achieve academic success. These methods have wide reaching effects on the curriculum taught at the school, the nature of how teaching takes place and the subject matter. Examination preparation and examination technique are valued skills and are explicitly taught, often at the expense of other valuable skills and knowledge not required for the examination.

The three themes that form the conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) underpinning the research into senior teachers responses to high stakes testing, create an interconnected network that not only links the themes to the research topic, but also the themes with one another. Firstly the literature on quality education and teacher accountability generates a structure for the research to consider the context in which the teachers in this study operate. Secondly, the literature reviewed regarding the outcome of assessment, particularly the outcomes of high stakes assessment, offers a spectrum of responses that manifest itself when teachers and schools are assessed. Positive and negative effects on teaching, learning, curriculum and schooling were identified and discussed. Lastly in this chapter, literature on Catholic Education in the Edmund Rice Tradition and its meaning for modern teachers operating in Australian schools was explored. It furnishes a framework of characteristics for educators in the Edmund Rice tradition to follow in their daily practice.

The systemic issues that arose from the literature review not only informed the structure and method of this research, but also lead to some pertinent research questions. Table 3.3 outlines two clusters of ideas, which arose from the review of the literature and seem pertinent to this project.

Table 3.3: Principal Ways the Review of the Literature Informs this Research

Systemic issues

- The effects of accountability systems including high stakes testing on teaching staff
- The issues that arise in preparing for high stakes testing in the Charismatic environment offered by Christian Bother's Schools
- The ways in which schools can strive for academic success and be faithful to the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice.

Specific Issues

- How do teachers feel about these systems?
- Do members of staff teach to the test?
- Perceived benefits of teaching to the test
- The effect of leaders and managing high stakes testing
- The effect of the media
- Dissonance
- Support Structures for staff

As noted in Table 3.3 accountability processes impact significantly on teaching staff. Day to day procedures within classes change as a result of these processes. Teachers are more likely to teach to the test if high stakes testing is employed to assess the success of the teacher. Valuable, but un-testable, skills are not taught, whilst an overemphasis on specific examination technique is most likely to be employed. Curriculum alignment is a major effect of high stakes testing as is the reliance on past paper examples.

Whilst assessment can have a positive effect on staff, the literature attests to a particularly negative effect when the form of assessment is linked to high stakes testing (Linn, 2003). Staff members are reported to experience increased levels of stress and rigidity in their teaching, a lack of satisfaction and are less likely to seek promotion to principalships (Dworkin, 2001). These observations combine to give an initial line of inquiry regarding the forms of assessment experienced by the senior

teachers at the schools and the impact of assessment on a day-to-day basis. It will seek to reveal what changes have been made in classrooms and examination preparation practices by senior teachers to facilitate achieving academic success at the senior level, and draw out specific issues regarding teaching to the test. The question will probe for any elements of teaching to the test that are undertaken at the school, whether this is on an individual teacher-by-teacher basis, a departmental level, or across the school as a directive from senior management. **Question 1 therefore becomes: Have, and if so how have, senior teachers changed their teaching to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?**

The second question examines how staff members feel about any changes that have been made to attain academic success. The changes could be to assessment procedures employed by the school, enrolment policies, teaching practices employed by individual teachers or systemic changes. The question highlights not only satisfaction levels of staff but could lead into an investigation of the suitability of these practices in Christian Brothers' schools. It gives rise to a number of specific issues. Shedding light on the reasons for employing these methods such as the influence of the Principal, parents and Old Collegians, the media or prospective parents. **Thus, Question 2 arises from the literature: How do senior teachers perceive methods employed to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?**

The literature pertaining to the Catholic Education in the Christian Brothers' tradition highlights the historical background of the educational order and its renewed emphasis in developing nations (Vercruysse, 2004). The Charism of Edmund Rice as

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a lived experience of teachers within these schools was also examined. Its emphasis on quality education for all, holistic and genuine relationships and bringing students to God through education were strong themes that resonated throughout the literature.

Table 3.4 summarises the characteristics of each of the themes within the conceptual framework i.e. Characteristics of a teacher in the Edmund Rice tradition and characteristics of teachers who experience high stakes testing.

Table 3.4: Characteristics of Teachers within the Conceptual framework

Teachers Experiencing High-Stakes Testing	Teachers in Edmund Rice Tradition
• Reduce the curriculum taught to the prescribed testable curriculum. • Focus instruction only on the skills that are tested • Aim instruction and preparation at those on the borderline of success • Increase the amount of time given over to specific examination preparation • Hothouse in after school activities aimed at examination preparation • Reduce future applicants to principal's positions. • Experience negative emotional effects • Some may experience burnout • Some may leave the profession (Dworski, 2001).	• Provide a curriculum attentive to the needs of each person. • Provide teaching and learning experiences that are relevant, authentic, dynamic and creative. • Provide Religious education, faith development experiences and service learning that are fundamental components of a holistic curriculum. • Provide programs that include a balance and integration of teaching and learning experiences that promote the development of the whole person. • Work to the best of their abilities, to realize their potential and to strive for individual excellence. • Provides a sound learning culture that enables students to experience success within a safe and healthy environment.

An examination of these sets of characteristics highlighted a number of significant differences between the approaches. Mindful of these differences, teachers at a Christian Brothers' school that are drawn towards academic success through high stakes testing methods may experience dissonance between these approaches. In exhibiting the characteristic of one method, they may be acting in a way that directly

contradicts another approach sanctioned the Charism of Edmund Rice. **Question 3 rises from this potential contradiction: Given the Charismatic nature of a Christian Brothers School is there congruence between the lived experience of the Charism and the goals of the school management?**

For many schools to maintain their numbers or to grow they must achieve academic success at the senior levels. Earlier sections of this chapter have discussed the influence of the media in publishing results and a well-informed prospective parent body demands a quality education for their children within a Christian Brothers' environment. Christian Brothers' schools that are now lead by lay people exist in a context where academic performance is a key aspect of their marketability and continued success. The task of maintaining the Charism of Edmund Rice as a lived experience, not only for the staff but also for students whilst achieving ongoing academic success, is a difficult management task. Methods employed to achieve academic success must link with the underpinning aspects of *The Christian Brothers' Charter* (2004). Dissonance experienced by staff exhibiting teaching characteristics outside those espoused by the Christian Brothers should be reduced. This becomes a specific issue for senior management at the schools and for this research. Some Christian Brothers schools are extremely successful academically and the current research seeks to highlight how they have achieved these results within the Christian Brothers framework. **From the literature on the Christian Brothers' education Question 4 becomes: How can methods be employed to improve academic success whilst remaining congruent with lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their school?**

3.5 Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to identify the underlying context of each site that

forms the research. The broad themes that bind them all including Catholic Education

in the Christian Brothers' Tradition and the Charism of Edmund Rice were discussed.

Individual details of academic history, their association, governance, their clientele

and examining systems were also highlighted. The chapter concluded by synthesizing

the concepts raised in the Literature Review from Chapter 2 with those identified in

this chapter so that four research questions evolved. The four resulting questions will

be used as a guide for the research. The next chapter, Research Plan, will use the

research questions, and evidence identified in the context to construct an appropriate

methodology, which informs the collection and analysis of the relevant data.

CHAPTER 4

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study as stated in Chapter 1, is to review the responses of senior teachers to high stakes testing at three academically successful Christian Brothers' schools in order to ascertain whether this aspect of these schools policies contributes to their academic success in a Charismatic environment. Underpinning this purpose is the proposition that Christian Brothers' schools can achieve academic success whilst pursuing the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their schools. The research seeks to highlight the methods by which the teachers and the school as a whole pursue academic success and to provide a model for other Christian Brothers' schools.

The review of literature in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 highlighted and evaluated material pertaining to teacher responses to high stakes testing and Christian Brothers' education, forming the framework underpinning this research. Four questions evolved from this review to provide the focus for the conduct of this study. To reiterate they are:

Have, and if so how have, senior teachers changed their teaching to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?

How do senior teachers perceive methods employed to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?

Given the Charismatic nature of a Christian Brothers School is there congruence between the lived experience of the Charism and the goals of the school management? How can methods be employed to improve academic success whilst remaining congruent with lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their school?

It is essential that the methodology adopted supports, and is consistent with, the spirit of the thesis (Smith, 2000) and reflects the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher within the context of the research. Since the research attempts to explore the responses of senior teachers to high stakes testing in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools, it is largely concerned with the words of the senior teachers and Leadership Team at the three schools that became the sites of the research.

In addition, the study is context specific. Each school is situated within a different state, an Independent Association, is guided by the Charism of Edmund Rice, exists in a market place where parents are more informed and the media has a great deal to say about the quality of these schools. Thus the environments of the schools and the broader community at the three sites are investigated and reported upon. The research is also characterised by an involvement of the researcher as an instrument of data collection. These characteristics suggest an approach that is predominantly qualitative, interpretive in its nature, and planned around a collective case study using hermeneutic phenomenology.

This chapter will give details and justification for the theoretical framework underpinning the research; the research design guiding the research; an overview of the research participants; a full exposition of the data collection techniques employed;

an indication of the trustworthiness of the project; the method of analysis and finally the ethical considerations that have been fulfilled.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

When constructing the theoretical perspective, Guba (1990) encourages the researcher to reflect upon their own underlying ontological stance; their particular epistemology within the context of the research; and once these have been identified, this should led to a specific methodology for the research. Guba (1990) has identified three questions that may be used as a guide. This section details how I employed these questions to guide my decision process and plot the research framework for this particular research project. The questions gave me a starting point for reflection and reading and gave structure to the decision-making process.

The questions are: What is the nature of knowledge (an ontological question)? What is the relationship between the knower and the inquirer, and the known or knowable (an epistemological question)? How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge (a methodological question)? Responses to the first question enable me to provide a picture of my ontological stance, whilst responses to the second question shed light on my person epistemology in relation to the research. The third question led to the methodology, and finally, the choice of appropriate techniques used to gather data.

4.2.1 Ontology: What is the nature of knowledge?

In addressing the first of Guba's (1990) questions, I reflected upon my concept of the nature of knowledge in the context of this research: the knowledge held by the participants at each site. I believe that, whilst varying according to the pattern of life by which it is formed, knowledge and meaning is constructed by the individual as a response to their environment (Geertz, 1973). Also, situated in a specific context (Riessman, 1993), meanings are continually constructed and deconstructed (McCormick, 1999). The specific knowledge held by the teachers at these sites pertaining to this research, I believe, is formed at least in part, as a response to high stakes testing. This knowledge has been constructed as part of their lived experience and deconstructed in the telling of their stories. The process of knowledge construction and deconstruction is particularly important to be cognisant of as I chose to tell the story not only of teachers but also of whole communities as they search for academic success within a Charismatic environment.

Since the research seeks to find meaning in the response of those being researched and with the realisation that the ontology of this research is based on relativism with local and constructed realities, it seems fitting that the ontological paradigm in which this research is situated is **constructivism** (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). With the knowledge that the ontological paradigm that situates this research is constructivism, further reflection on the epistemology of the research is called for using Guba's second question (1990).

4.2.2 Epistemology: What is the relationship between the knower and the inquirer?

In response to Guba's (1990) second question, I reflected on my personal

epistemology and the underpinning epistemology that will guide the research. Firstly,

I realize that I entered into this research study viewing the process with my own lens

that has been coloured by my own experiences and the context in which I exist: as a

senior teacher at an academically successful Christian Brothers' school. As Ball

(1990) attests, one cannot make research researcher proof; neither the research nor the

researcher is value free (Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindell, 1994). It is

likely that the relationship between the researcher and the participants will have a

bearing on the responses elicited from each site and, therefore on the outcome of the

study. In this way it is likely that my relationship as researcher with the participant

may be influenced by the fact that I am a teacher at one of the research sites. This may

be a positive or a negative influence, but probably aspects of both.

Secondly, the nature of the research focuses on the responses of senior teachers

mainly from interview situations. It is by its nature a conversation that takes place

between the researcher and the researched. It is clear, therefore that this research is

qualitative in its nature. The particular paradigm in which this research is situated

must enable patterns that exist between the participant and the phenomenon in

question to come to light (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Moreover, this research will seek

to answer questions that illuminate how the social experiences of senior teachers are

created and given meaning in an environment where high stakes testing is used. It is a

view of the whole phenomena as a result of the culmination of the parts. It is apparent

that the research demands an inherent flexibility and holistic approach that seeks to describe phenomena in words.

The underlying epistemology of this research exhibits foundational principles: stressing socially constructed realities, their intimate relationship with the researched context, and importantly, the situational constraints that shape inquiry. As a consequence, it can be recognized that the specific tradition that underscores this inquiry into teacher responses to high stakes testing is **interpretivism** (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Interpretivism rests on the philosophical doctrine of idealism. Idealism holds the view that the world around us is the creation of the mind and it is by understanding the individual experience of subjective interpretivism that one can appreciate why human beings behave the way they do. Interpretive social science is deeply rooted in the empathetic understanding of everyday lived experience of people in their specific context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The use of interpretivism is particularly fitting in this research since it seeks to explore and understand the lived experience of senior teachers in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools using high stakes data. With the realisation that the research is situated in interpretivism, the particular research perspective consistent with this paradigm was considered and became clear in light of Guba's (1990) third question.

4.2.3 Particular research perspective (methodology): How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?

Guba's (1990) third question drew me to reflect on the nature of research and how it should be carried out, starting with the particular research perspective. Perspectives are crucially important as they make it possible for people to create sense and order out of the world they observe and experience. Perspectives form an optical lens that sensitises the reader and guide their perception of reality. Perspectives can be described as conceptual frameworks; that is a set of assumptions, values and beliefs used to organise one's perceptions and control one's behaviours (Charon, 1998). The particular theoretical perspective must be congruent with the purpose of the research and justifies the selection of particular methodology and methods to fulfil that purpose and answer the research questions. The theoretical perspective provides a logical basis for the processes involved with the research; it structures the research design; it gives direction to the data to be collected; and it provides a basis on which analysis of the data findings can proceed. Furthermore, it allows the unpacking of assumptions, which are buried within the research methodology (Crotty, 1998).

Within social science there are a number of theoretical perspectives, which emphasise different elements of human action. One such theoretical perspective, and the one that underscores the approach in this study, is **symbolic interactionism**. Symbolic interaction arises from the qualitative tradition called Interactionism which views people as active creators in their world (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionsits assert that people are unique in their ability to define their situations and shape their world. Furthermore, whist the experience of people are unique to individuals, the symbolic interactionist tradition recognises that people who share common situations will

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develop shared perspectives of the situation because of common definitions. Although it is recognised that each participant in this study has developed a unique personal knowledge though experience, their shared experience of senior teaching in a common context indicates that they will probably develop a common stock of symbols which may incorporate gestures, facial and bodily expressions, rituals, routines and myths, and particularly in teaching, common language and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Senior teachers could thus be expected to develop common approaches to achieving academic success as a result of assessment using high stakes data, because of their shared experiences, problems, successes and interactions. Consequently it is appropriate for this study to utilise symbolic interactionism in order to understand the meanings teachers have of their responses to high stakes testing.

How these meanings inform their practice is important to the study. Thus it is the multiple responses of senior teachers that are of interest to this study, and in particular, those responses that are common across all groups or common within specific groups. However, the individual responses that are not incorporated into group responses will also be of crucial importance to identity. The implication of the symbolic interactionist approach is that the individual's perspective has to be taken seriously and the meanings that they attach to events must be understood from their perspective. To undertake research as a symbolic interactionist one must research from the standpoint of the researched (Crotty, 1998).

With this in mind the next section explores the specific qualitative approach that will be used to generate data in this context. It highlights the particular paradigm in which

the research method is situated in order to investigate both spoken and written responses from the view point of the participant: Hermeneutic phenomenology

4.2.4 Hermeneutic phenomenology

The major data for this study will be drawn from the stories of senior teachers in this study, with documentation at each school forming another source. These data will be derived from the school prospectus, school annuals and periodicals, staff and faculty documentation and from the website of each school. The research will not only use these data to triangulate evidence of findings from the interviews, it will seek to draw meaning and motivation from the text. Traditionally a hermeneutic approach is called for, however, since this research seeks to understand a particular context specific phenomenon, this research is also grounded in the orientation of hermeneutic phenomenology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Hermeneutics is traditionally concerned with the interpretation of texts. The term "hermeneutics" originates from the Greek word *hermeneutikos* meaning to interpret (Linden & Cybulski, 2006) and has its origins in ancient times. More recently it has emphasised the importance of self-reflection and identification of bias, the critical review of collected data, and finally has moved to the critical review of the methods of collecting data (Linden & Cybulski, 2006). One of the notions central to hermeneutics is the concept of a horizon understanding, which describes one's vision of a phenomenon, and hence the rise of hermeneutic phenomenology.

Understanding is a dynamic process and therefore horizons are not rigid frontiers. This process of understanding brings together the horizons of the original text, and the horizon of the interpreter, which is represented as a derivative text of the original. The process of understanding is iterative in nature and continues in cycles by interpreting parts and their relationships rather than moving to better understanding of the global context and then moving to a better understanding of each part. The circular process of interpretation continues until there is a fusion of all horizons forming a complete understanding of the phenomenon (Linden & Cybulski, 2006) or until it is realised that such a fusion is not possible within the specific context.

Turning now to Phenomenology, this word is derived from the Greek word *phenomenon*, meaning, "to show itself. The origin of the word holds the essence of phenomenological research: to seek the core of the experience (Ray, 1994, p.119). Whilst Morse and Field (1996) describe phenomenology as the study of experience, Cohen (1987), talks in terms of the study of phenomena or the appearance of things. One could take the more simple view that phenomenology is the study of a thing or entity (Roberts & Taylor, 1997) or a qualitative research tradition with roots in philosophy and psychology that focuses on the lived experience of human beings (Polit & Hungler, 1999).

The tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology has a rich history in social research. It has also been suggested that hermeneutic phenomenology can contribute to the practice of educational research by unpacking the meaning participants have of particular strategies, models or phenomena (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenology was therefore deemed particularly appropriate to use as an approach

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for this study into the responses of senior teachers to high stakes testing in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools (Crotty, 1998). Having identified the particular qualitative approach, the specific method by which data was collected was identified. In this interpretive inquiry, using hermeneutic phenomenology set in three schools it was deemed appropriate to employ a case study approach. The next section justifies this selection.

4.3 Research Design: Case study

A number of methodological approaches can be situated within the interpretivist theoretical perspective. The approach deemed most applicable to give a snap shot of the three schools was based on the **case study** research design.

As a research design, case study is most appropriate because it is very flexible and can employ open-ended data gathering techniques. It was also consistent with the symbolic interactionist approach, as it attempts to illuminate details from the viewpoint of the participant (Tellis, 1997). It seeks to understand parts or patterns within cases by understanding the relationships between parts and thus how they form a whole. In this way, not only is the voice of a single participant heard, but the voice of groups and the interaction between groups.

Stake (1994) reports that Louis Smith, one of the early ethnographers, helped define the case as a bounded system, drawing attention to it as an object rather than a process. He goes onto say that a case can be a single child, a group of teachers, or indeed a group of schools "one amongst others" (Stake, 1994, p. 2). It is worth noting

that the case can be a system, and whilst the parts in the system may not work and the purpose may be irrational, it is still a system. The distinctive need for case studies arises out of a desire to understand complex social phenomena and the case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon in question is not readily distinguishable from its context (Yin, 2003). Since the phenomenon in this case is the response of senior teachers in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools, the use of case study as a method is appropriate.

This research has a number of distinct characteristics that impact on the specific methodology: it is context specific, rich in data and conducted across three sites. The inclusion of the context does have distinctive technical challenges however since the richness of the ensuing data may have more variables than data points (Yin, 2003). Moreover, the richness of the data in this research dictates that multiple sources of data collection must be employed. Also, even if all the variables are qualitative in nature, distinctive strategies will need to be employed for the research design and data analysis (Yin, 2003). The particular nature of this research with its multiple sites calls for a specific form of case study method to be employed: the collective case study. Stake (1994) distinguishes three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective.

Intrinsic and instrumental case studies are based on research into a specific case, which the researcher wishes to understand better, or which provides insight into a precise issue or refinement of a theory where the case is of secondary interest. The collective case study however involves exploring a number of cases jointly in order to examine a phenomenon, population or general condition. Particular cases in the

collection are chosen to enable a better understanding about a still larger case. Since the phenomenon being explored in this study is senior teacher's responses to high stakes testing in Christian Brothers' schools, the cases, teachers in this context, are chosen not only to understand their responses, but it may also illuminate potential responses in other schools exhibiting a similar Charismatic environment. The major feature of a case study is its concentration upon a particular incident; therefore, this case has its focus on a particular group of senior teachers who experience assessment using high stakes data. The changes that they make to their teaching practice and their experience in senior classes can be viewed as single cases and as linked events within the school. The case study evolves around a series of linked events over a period of time. In this case the particular incident is the search for success and the time frame is context specific for each school. Thus this research study fits the description of a collective case study.

It has been proposed that the case study can only be generalised in a more naturalistic way if the reader uses the case study to extend their own experience so that they gain a tacit knowledge from reading the case study (Stake, 1994). However, for the naturalistic generalisation to be made possible, the researcher must endeavour to document all characteristics of the known case so that generalisation to a new case may be made. The identified strengths and weaknesses of the case study, therefore, serve as a guide for the conduct of the research document in this thesis. The issues of context generalisability and usefulness as they pertain to trustworthiness are further addressed later in this chapter.

Yin (2003) furnishes us with a list of required skills for a potential case study researcher. He calls the researcher to ask good questions; be a good listener; be adaptive and flexible; have a firm grasp on the subject being studied and be unbiased by preconceived notions. This advice will be adhered too, but first the research participants will be introduced.

4.4 Research Participants

The research study investigates the response of senior teachers to high stakes testing in academically successful Christian Brothers' schools with particular focus on the affect these measures of success have had on the approach of teachers to teaching and learning. Academically successful Christian Brothers' schools therefore formed the site for the studies. Their measure of academic success was based on the performance of their senior students in their final examinations compared to other schools, both Christian Brothers' schools and non-Christian Brothers' schools, in their state. The schools chosen have performed to a very high academic standard in terms of their senior students' final examination results when compared with the other Catholic, non-Catholic, State and Independent schools in their state.

As defined in Chapter 1, senior teachers are those who teach students in their final year of schooling. Each school had 25 to 45 senior teachers from which the sample was chosen. The sample is drawn from the senior teachers at each site. To aid in the process, the Director of Studies at each college was contacted prior to my visit, and asked to assemble a list of names of teachers who would be willing to take part in the study. To increase the richness and depth of the case study, in-depth interviews were conducted with a number of teachers. The interviews were conducted with the

Headmaster, the Director of Studies, and at least five individual senior teachers at each site.

After considering the list prepared by the Director of Studies, I approached the particular Heads of Departments and individual staff members. My selection criteria ensures that each group should have a broad range of senior teaching experience, varying levels of personal and departmental academic success, and that each individual teacher should have the ability to give clear, interesting and coherent responses to the research questions. The teacher's availability on the days I was free to collect data at the schools also played a role.

In an attempt to protect the anonymity of the senior teachers, I will not specify the exact nature of age, sex, and role of individual staff members. If the specifics of the participants were reported to a greater degree, it would be quite straightforward to identify the person who gave the data. I also collected data from two key individuals at the school: the Headmaster and the Director of Studies. Clearly individually and together these two members of staff were crucial to the introduction and implementation of high stakes testing and teacher evaluation in each school.

4.5   General Overall Strategy

In conducting the research and the subsequent analysis of the data I employed a general overall strategy as defined by Yin (1994). Following the theoretical proposition that underpins this research, I shaped the data collection plan and gave priorities to the relevant analytical strategy: Van Manen's (1990) thematic approach.

The proposition that guided the initial inquiry is the belief that Christian Brothers' schools **can** achieve academic success whilst pursuing the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their schools. The purpose and design of the collective case study was based on this proposition and reflected in the set of four research questions that can be grouped into two purposes. Figure 4.1 shows the four questions grouped into two purposes (see p.131).

The general strategy is informed by the six methodological procedures outlines by Van Manen (1990) that I found extremely helpful in conducting this research. The six methodological procedures are:

1) Turning to a phenomenon of interest

2) Investigating experience as we live it reflecting on the essential themes that characterise the phenomenon

3) Reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon

4) Describing the phenomenon- the art of writing and rewriting

5) Maintaining a strong and orientated relation to the phenomenon

6) Balancing the research context be considering the parts and the whole

(Van Manen, 1990, p. 30)

These steps are linked by time in a sequential process: in that there is a logical progression to them. However, an opportunity also exists to move backwards and forwards through the data that is a feature of the hermeneutic cycle and inherent, therefore, in this research project (Gadamer, 1975). The circular interpretation is dynamic, and the nature of play (Gadamer, 1975), where the researcher is absorbed into the research, is constructed to join the researcher and text to avoid subject-object distinctions (Walsh, 1996). Therefore play and the fusion of horizons, the prejudice of fore-knowledge, interplay like the light and shade such as you may find in an Impressionist painting; brings a freshness and vitality which enables the researcher to enter the circle and interact with the data to create a new understanding (Walsh, 1996). It is with the full knowledge of some prejudice of fore knowledge, as I am a senior teacher at one of the schools, but imbued with the spirit to become absorbed into the research, that I conducted the data collection, analysis and interpretation, following the six methodological procedures. I will now consider each of these six procedures in more detail.

4.5.1   Methodological procedure 1: Turning to a phenomenon of interest

For a successful journey to start, we need to choose a direction for the first step. The first methodological procedure is, therefore, to choose some aspect of human existence and then attempt to make sense of it: so begins the quest of a phenomenological researcher. Van Manen (1990) describes phenomenological research as being "given over to a quest" (p. 31), a true task, a deep questioning of something, and that phenomenological research does not exist in a disembodied, distanced fashion. It is always the research by someone; an individual who sets out to

make sense of an aspect of human existence. We must be cognisant of the fact that in this research the phenomenological interpretation is the interpretation performed by one person and there will always be room for other interpretations that may be deeper, richer or complimentary (Van Manen, 1990).

In this research project the phenomenon of interest is the response of senior teachers to high stakes testing at academically successful Christian Brothers' schools. This is based on the proposition that Christian Brothers' schools can achieve academic success whilst pursuing the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their schools. The proposition leads to two purposes: firstly to investigate how senior teachers have responded to the pursuit of success in schools that follow the Charism of Edmund Rice in the Christian Brothers tradition, and secondly to highlight the ways in which Christian Brothers' schools can achieve academic success in a charismatic environment. Fundamentally, this first methodological procedure involved the formulation of the research title, provided a framework for the literature review, out of which evolved the research questions (see section 3.4).

4.5.2 *Methodological procedure 2: Investigating the experience as we live it*

With the structure for the "quest" in place, the researcher can move to the next phase of their investigation, the lived experience. It must be remembered that phenomenological research aims at establishing a renewed contact with the original experience. In essence, the researcher actively explores the chosen phenomenon of the lived experience in all its modalities and aspects (Van Manen, 1990).For example, conducting interviews with senior teachers at academically successful Christian

Brothers' schools. Whilst conducting the research I attempted to enter the lives of the staff using a variety of methods. I chose semi-structured interviews with the staff to seek their experience. The senior teachers were asked to tell, in their own words, their responses to high stakes testing in a Christian Brothers' school. I also spent time at each of the sites, witnessing, absorbing and recording some of the cultural cues and atmosphere at each school. These more subtle cues, along with the large amount of documentary evidence that was collected at each site, were combined with the interview data collected at each site. However, the primary source of data from the schools was the interview data. The documentary data identifies confirming and disconfirming instances from the interview data. Once the data was collected at the three schools that form the collective case study, I could read and reflect on the data then start the process of analysis and interpretation, methodological process three, reflecting on essential themes which characterise the phenomenon

4.5.3 Methodological procedure 3: Reflecting on essential themes which characterise the phenomenon

Van Manen (1990) asks a researcher to be circumspect in their treatment of data. He requires that for a true reflection of the lived experience the phenomenological research must make a distinction between "appearance and essence" (p. 31). Thus the third procedure requires the researcher to make sense of the data collected by bringing into focus what tends to be obscured or evade the intelligibility of our every day life. Consequently, a researcher can gain a clear understanding of the phenomenon using terms of units, structures, themes or meanings (Van Manen, 1990). The data analysis in this research project is characterised by its use of selected statements, words or

phrases gleaned from re-reading or repeatedly listening to the audio taped individual interviews. These statements or phrases form the beginnings of sub-themes and themes that give meaning to the phenomena. Once these major themes and then sub-themes have been identified they point towards an understanding of the particular phenomena in question. The themes and subthemes are formed by the nature of the research and questions and sub-questions as highlighted in Figure 4.1.

However, unexpected themes that lie outside these questions may also be revealed using this process. The research moved from this analytical stage to an interpretive stage: methodological procedure 4, describing the phenomenon. In this initial stage of analysis the data can be viewed in terms of answering the research questions and then returning to identify those themes and sub themes that are disconfirming or unexpected. It will not seek to link sites or form comparisons. This stage of the analysis, the third methodological procedure, will categorise the data using the four research questions and identify other emergent themes whereas the fourth procedure will describe the phenomenon, using shared experience from across all sites to highlight the response of the senior teachers to high stakes testing.

4.5.4   Methodological procedure 4:Describing the phenomenon

Conducting phenomenological research involves bringing to light a thoughtful description of a phenomenon in written form. Writing, we are reminded, is a vital aspect of research and intended to make the feelings and thoughts of the researched visible to the reader. In this case the reader wishes to learn of the responses of senior teachers to high stakes testing in Christian Brothers' schools (Van Manen, 1990). To

describe the phenomenon as a whole, themes that link or separate sites must be identified and this analysis forms Layer four of the analysis framework (see Figure 4.1).

To make the responses of senior teachers to high stakes testing in Christian Brothers' schools visible I include chapters outlining the nature of the context in which they work, I outline the nature of high stakes testing at their school and the influence of the wider community. Their initial responses are grouped for each school in themes relating to the research questions and reported in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. A discussion of the themes that are common across all the schools are discussed in Chapter 5 with answers to the research questions in Chapter 6. The implications for Christian Brothers' schools seeking academic success are highlighted in a hypothetical situation in Chapter 7.

4.5.5 *Methodological procedure 5: Maintaining a strong orientated relation to the phenomenon*

One of the greatest demands on phenomenological researcher is their unwavering devotion to the fundamental question or notion that underpins the research. They cannot afford to be side tracked in any way. It is important that they approach the task with integrity, be animated by the research and not settle for superficialities and falsities (Van Manen, 1990). Whilst retaining a strong, orientated relationship with the phenomenon under investigation, the researcher must be cognisant of their own preconceived opinions, conceptions, memories and experiences. To this end, a researcher may chose to keep a journal or diary through out the research process, and

to be aware of the difference between their preconceived notion and the responses of the participants. It is therefore made possible to include these thoughts as data though the "fusion of horizons" process outlined by Gadamer (1975).

In the spirit of Koch (1994), I have included an audit trail of data to aid in establishing the rigour of the research. The audit trail consists of examples of data at different stages of analysis that included in the appendices. Koch (1994) suggests that the trustworthiness of the study can be established if the reader can observe the thoughts, actions and decisions of a researcher, and so these are included as part of this thesis.

4.5.6   *Methodological procedure 6: Balancing the research context by considering the parts and the whole*

The cyclic aspect of hermeneutic phenomenological investigation encourages the researcher to revisit individual parts of the study and view it as a whole exposition of a phenomenon rather than steps in a process. The researcher must be constantly aware of the balance and significance of the parts in relation to the whole (Van Manen, 1990). This process of revisiting each stage, re-grounding in the initial propositions and re-reading the data with the whole in mind, enabled me to establish many thin veneers of understanding of the phenomenon, building to a final thick, rich appreciation of the lived experience of senior teachers in the schools.

Having given an overview of the fundamental processes that guided the research, the following section highlights the methods used to firstly collect and then analyse the data more concretely.

4.6   General Data Collection Strategy: Multiple Method Approach

Having described the general research method, I now address the specific methods by which data were collected in more detail. The procedures for data collection and subsequent analysis are guided by the research design. The data collection methods used in each of the three case study schools were: an interview with key informant staff members from the College Leadership Team being the Headmaster and the Director of Studies; an interview with identified staff members outside the College Leadership Team, and a search of the schools' documentation focusing on methods employed to achieve academic success.

The primary source of data collection was conducted over a two-day visit to each research site. The visit comprised of two meetings with the Director of Studies, a series of interviews with members of staff and an interview with the Principal. The initial meeting with the Director of Studies gave me an opportunity to choose members of staff for interview and gain a greater appreciation of the context of the school. The staff were chosen to represent a wide range of departments, experience and also those able to give coherent responses. I was able to ask questions regarding high stakes testing, teacher accountability, the style of examination in the final year of schooling, the examination preparation that existed at the school and the academic ethos of staff and students. Interviews were then conducted with staff and the Principal. A final interview with the Director of Studies was conducted to finalize questions, request further documentation and give some feedback from the process. Prior to the visit it was important that the protocol for each method of data collection

was firmly entrenched in the process and the next section highlights how this was achieved.

4.6.1   Interview Strategy

It will be recalled that two types of interviews were undertaken: one with key school administrators and the other with senior teachers. The time period available for data collection was in September 2006. Participants' availability and a lull in the schools' hectic year determined the suitability of the time. The protocol for conducting the in-depth interview is drawn from Patton's (1987) example of how to perform qualitative evaluation. A number of considerations must be taken into account when performing the interviews particularly with the Headmaster and the Director of Studies. These included the limited time available at each site, the complex issues broached by the research and the politically sensitive nature of the research.

The planned aim of the interview with the members of the College leadership team was to investigate the degree to which high stakes data was used as an assessment tool and to gauge the academic climate of the school. To this end a set of questions with formed an interview guide were developed. These are found in figure 4.1. The final draft of questions was constructed after consultation with a number of key informants including my co-supervisors, a former EdD student and trialed on a former member of staff who had taught senior classes at CBC Melbourne.

With permission, a tape recorder was used to record each interview. The purpose of the recording was to increase the accuracy of the data collection, and to enhance the interactive nature of the interview by not having to take verbatim notes. I did,

however, take abridged notes to enable me to keep track of the research questions that had been covered in depth, and any issues that needed revisiting. The tape recorder was not large and was placed on a table in the room where the interviews took place. The machines volume and the clarity were tested immediately before the interview commenced. Full transcripts of each conversation were made and sent to the interviewee, with a request that they check the interview for accuracy, as they recalled the interview, and for any other written comment that the were prepared to share. All transcripts were returned but very few alterations were made, and they were minor in nature. Few extra comments were also appended to the transcripts.

4.6.2   Document search strategy

Document analysis was used to add to the "thickness" of description in the case study. Documentation regarding high stakes testing, its implementation and response was attained from schools and school departments, state and federal sources. School documentation regarding the ethos of educational success, particularly in light of the role of Christian Brothers at the College and the Charism of Edmund Rice was examined to add to the researchers knowledge of the specific context. Documents looked for included official publications such as the College Prospectus, Handbook, Year Book and periodicals to the school community (see Table 4.1). Before visiting each school their website was thoroughly examined. Once on site, I asked for, and was readily provided with, documentation from the schools that aided my research, from the school prospectus to examination data and examples of school reports. Reading the material I sourced before arrival at the sites enabled me to have a clearer view of the context in which the schools act, the method of assessment experienced by the students and the history of the schools

Table 4.1: Documents used in the document search at each College

Timing	Document used
Pre visit	Website and School prospectus
During	College Mission Statement Faculty documentation Newsletters and Annuals
Post visit	Periodicals

Having completed my second sweep of the data gathered from the interviews, I returned to the documentation and searched with a focus on the themes I had drawn out from the interview data. Evidence to support the themes was added to the results and disconfirming data was also added. A final read through of all the data following the writing of the final research results finalised the process and added to the trustworthiness of the results.

4.7 Data analysis: General Analytical Strategy

According to Patten (2002) phenomenological analysis seeks to grasp and make clear the meaning, structure and essence of a lived experience of a phenomenon for a person and a group of people and transform data in to findings. In this research, the group of people are senior teachers in Christian Brother's schools and their lived experience of the phenomenon that is high stakes testing. To aid the analytical process I found Van Manen's (1990) methodological procedures helpful during the analytic approach phase (see figure 4.1), but I remained aware that the outcome remained unique to this inquiry according to the fusion of my horizons, which develops as I interacted with the data (Gadamer, 1975; Van Manen, 1990).

Figure 4.1: General analytic strategy for this research

Proposition
Christian Brother's schools can achieve academic success whilst pursuing the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their schools.

Purpose A
To investigate how senior teachers have responded to the pursuit of success in schools that follow the Charism of Edmund Rice in the Christian Brothers Tradition

Purpose B
Highlight ways in which Christian Brother's schools can achieve academic success in a Charismatic environment.

Research Question 1
Have, and if so how have, senior teachers changed their teaching to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?

Research Question 2
How do senior teachers perceive methods employed to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?

Research Question 3
Given the Charismatic nature of a Christian Brothers School is there congruence between the lived experience of the Charism and the goals of the school management?

Research Question 4
How can methods be employed to improve academic success whilst remaining congruent with lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their school?

Sub questions
- Do you teach to the test?
- Is there emphasis on exam technique?
- Is there emphasis on exam preparation techniques?
- Do you use the study design more as a result of high stakes testing?
- Do these measures change the way you teach either individually or departmentally?

Sub questions
- How influential are they in decision making processes?
- Have final scores improved as a result of using these? Are these measures valid in the eyes of the teachers?
- Are these measures an accurate indication of the success of the teacher?
- How do teachers measure their own success?

Sub questions
- Is there dissonance between the school view and the view of the Charter?
- Do you think the school has got the balance right?
- Has the message got through?
- Was it always there?
- Is there a need to reiterate on a regular basis?

Sub questions
- Are these measures good for teachers?
- Are these measures good for students?
- What PD/back-up is implemented for unsuccessful teachers?
- What happens as a result of poor scores?

Data Collection
Document Search
Interviews senior staff Interviews Leadership Team

Data Collection
Document Search
Interviews senior staff Interviews Leadership Team

Data Collection
Document Search
Interviews senior staff Interviews Leadership Team

Data Collection
Document Search
Interviews senior staff Interviews Leadership Team

Purpose C
How can schools achieve success and retain a Charismatic environment?

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The following section highlights the steps taken in analysing the data as a whole using Van Manen's procedures (1990) as a guide within the general analytical strategy (Yin, 1994). The general analytic strategy gives an indication of how the layers of analysed data are constructed: from the least sophisticated, Layer 1; to the most, Layer 4 (see figure 4.2). The section will then focus on the analysis of the two distinct types of data collected: interview data and data from the document search.

Figure 4.2 Analysis framework for data collection

Layer 1: Database: Interviews with senior teachers, Headmaster, Director of Studies and Document Searches

Data

Layer 2: Descriptive analysis using research questions

Feedback from document search   Feedback from document search

Categorisation of data using the 4 research questions and other emergent themes

Hermeneutic circle   Hermeneutic circle

Layer 3: Five themes identified from data

The effect of school leadership	The influence of the media	The influence of Culture and Changing Culture	The nature of the schools	The Use of High Stakes Data

Layer 4: Applicability to Christian Brothers' schools

Schools searching for academic success in a Charismatic Environment

4.7.1 Organising the Data

A four-layer analysis of the data was conducted with a series of feedback loops involving both the interviews and documents (see figure 4.2). In each of the three schools, data was collected from various sources and, in its unanalysed state, formed Layer 1. Using the research questions as an initial lens, themes relating to the questions are reported. Other themes that are identified as contributory factors came to light as a result of the initial analysis. These themes where identified and used as a further level of data, with fundamental linkages and grouping in terms of key words based on the research questions, forming Layer 2. From further analysis of the categorising data (Layer 2), a matrix of 5 themes was built, more sophisticated in its grouping and relative linking, forming Layer 3. The themes from Layer 3 were then combined to provide insights from the three schools which may be useful for other Charismatic schools searching for academic success forming the most sophisticated layer of data in terms of analysis and interpretation: Layer 4. In the next two subsections, a more detailed description of the analysis of the interview transcriptions and documents using this four-step approach are given.

4.7.2 Overall strategy for analysing interview data

The analysis of the data started during the interview itself. The nature of semi- structured, taped interviews enables the interviewer to follow lines of inquiry that were not apparent before the interview took place. Unexpected and disconfirming themes were of great interest and, although not covered in the research framework, participants were eager to give their lived experience unencumbered by a series of constricting questions. At the conclusion of each interview I hastily made notes of any unexpected themes that I could include in the following interviews, whilst seeking to ensure the integrity of the data

collected in the next interview. Contaminating the views of the following participant with those of the preceding interviewee would, of course, decrease the trustworthiness of the study. After each day of data collection, I started by reading the data from each site to gain a general picture of the links and attempt to produce some themes. The initial links and themes from each interview were drawn out, and posted on an electronic note board. Once the themes for all interviews were identified I cross-referenced across all the interviews producing an initial flow diagram of themes for the site. Having produced this flow chart I re-read the data checking for misconceptions.

On returning to Melbourne, I completed an in depth thematic analysis of the data from all sites with no referencing to my initial on-site preliminary analysis, and compared what I had produced with my initial flow charts. There was a very high degree of congruency between the initial and the final analysis. Whilst the later analysis benefited from the repeated in-depth reading of the data the initial analysis captured the spirit of the school more succinctly. The final analysis sought both to encapsulate the detail of the later thematic analysis and capture the essence of the schools that was represented more clearly in the initial response.

The following section identifies the in-depth analysis of the data that took place on return from each of the research sites. I include the four-step approach that I utilised when analysing the interview data. A resultant four-layered data set was constructed.

4.7.2.1 Step 1: Reading the data in Layer 1-primary data

On return from each site, the first part of the analysis consisted of a thorough reading of the data collected. At this point the data was organised by site, data type (document or interview), then by source (senior teacher 1 etc.). The data was therefore organised, but

not analysed; indeed, the data was in its most elementary form. This unsophisticated data formed Layer 1 in the general analytical strategy: the primary data.

Reading, according to Dey (1993) is not a passive act in the qualitative data analysis. It is compared to digging the soil before preparing a garden; the soil is loosened and it is possible for seeds of analysis to put down roots and grow (Dey, 1993, p. 83). One may have a few ideas already germinating in the soil, but the fruits of these may be slow to emerge and take on a different form to what was expected. My own ideas began to germinate during the data collection, strengthen during the reading process, but altered their shape and hue during the analysis and interpretation phases. Indeed as Patton (2002) suggested the analysis direction and method might become more solid as the research matures during the data collection phase. Even though I had decided upon a thematic approach, the nature, number and depth of themes and sub-themes only became fully apparent as the data collection progressed. Indeed, the fluid naturalistic nature of this research allowed for a far less absolute distinction between the data gathering and analysis phases. Even when listening to the participants talk or reading through school publications, I found key phrases, common terminology and connecting thoughts appearing across sites and across schools. For example, in CBC Adelaide many people used the term "men for others" in speaking about the importance of their community service. This informed the area of service learning but was also an early indicator of the influence of the Principal at each site and the use of strong messages repeated often. Once the first step of reading the information was completed I moved to the second step: performing a descriptive analysis of the data using the research questions as my guide.

4.7.2.2 Step 2: Descriptive analysis of the data using the research questions- Layer 2

In terms of this study, it will be recalled that interviews were arranged at each site with the Principal, Director of Studies and 5 senior teachers. After each day of data collection I started by reading the data and producing a concept map from each site to gain a general picture of the themes. Reading and re-reading the transcripts of the senior participants, replaying the audiotapes and viewing my own notes in the following months I began the process by writing and analysing all the interviews in isolation. Each was treated as an individual case rather than parts of the whole at this stage. At stage two of the Layer 2 analysis, the data was read in light of the research questions without seeking to find other messages in the text. The primary outcome for this step was to find answers to the underlying questions that form the inquiry for each site, such as "how have teachers changed their teaching in response to high stakes testing at their school?" The data collection generated by this analysis formed the second, more sophisticated layer of information. However, further analysis across sites using a thematic approach was to prove even more enlightening.

4.7.2.3 Step 3: Development of sub themes and themes- Layer 3

Once the descriptive analysis of the data using the research questions forming Layer 2 had taken place, the data was ready to be analysed between sites and with greater rigour. Links became sub themes and these coalesced and reshaped into themes. At the core of qualitative analysis is a process of describing and classifying concepts and seeing how they interconnect (Dey, 1993). Van Manen (1990) provides the most appropriate method by which this process was completed in this research. He calls for a thematic approach to interpret the data. Defining a theme as "an element that appears frequently in the text" (p. 78). Eruditely, he describes themes as being "more like knots in the webs of our

experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through meaningful wholes" (p. 90).

Theme analysis involves an iterative process of scanning for categories and for relationships amongst the categories, developing working typologies and hypotheses upon examination of the initial case, then modifying on the basis of subsequent cases (Smith, 2000). Burns (1990) suggest that we chunk data into categories before the interpretation of part or the whole of the data. These categories can be reassembled as has been done in this study, not only to provide data for the research questions but also to shed light on other important issues that were not central foci in the initial research framework. Van Manen (1990, p. 92) describes three methods for isolating thematic statements: using a detailed reading approach, a selective or highlighting approach, and the wholistic reading approach. The detailed reading approach requires a reader to look at every transcribed sentence or cluster of sentences to search for meaning to illuminate the phenomenon. The selective or highlighting approach encourages the reader to isolate specific statements that appear to be especially revealing about the phenomenon, whilst the wholisitic approach encourages the researcher to capture the essence of the whole text in a single term.

Key words and phrases from each interview were drawn out, and posted on an electronic note board and I searched for implicit and explicit themes. This process involved extracting and tabulating words, statements or ideas from participants into sections that were grouped under key words, termed links; concepts; sub themes and themes. This search for sub themes and themes involved a coding process as I was reading and continuously interacting with the data. In an attempt to go beyond appearance and appreciate the essence of the phenomena, the result was a mixture of data reduction and data complication (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Although worthwhile, it was an involved

process, taking considerable time to complete. However, with the data reduced to sub themes and concepts, I was able to retrieve chunks of data that shared common meaning (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Once the themes for all interviews were identified I cross-referenced across all the interviews producing a table of themes for the site. Having produced this table I re-read the data checking for misconceptions. The final step for this process goes beyond an analysis of the date, to an interpretive phase, where the messages the data holds for other Christian Brothers' schools searching for academic success are elucidated.

4.7.2.4 *Step 4: Interpretation of the data-Layer 4*

Interpretation of the data deals with the meanings that came out of the data and how those meanings have been translated through this process. In this a phase, statements can be made not only about the data, but also about what the data means in light of intentions, methods and processes of the research (Patton, 2000, p. 480). The process has gone beyond the face value of the data, significance has been attached to it, and sense has been made of findings, conclusions drawn and extrapolations to other contexts formulated. The interpretation in this thesis starts in Chapter 5, and continued in Chapter 6 where, using the hermeneutic circle and the interaction between the parts of the data and the whole, I discuss and interpret the differences and similarities between the schools. Following that, Chapter 7 gives a possible blue print for Christian Brothers' schools searching for academic success in light of this research. It takes the lessons learnt at the schools forming the collective case study and crystallises them in an attempt to plot a route map to the successful implementation of high stakes testing in a Charismatic environment. Having highlighted the analytic and interpretive methods used in for the interview data; the next section seeks to do the same for the data produced from the document search.

4.7.3 Analysing the documents: Pragmatic and rhetorical reading

When reading in research we seek meaning, possibilities, even truth. There are many ways to read, interpret and criticise texts some include attending to sub texts such as gender, pattern identification, metaphor and other structures (Cherryholmes, 1993). It is important therefore to state the epistemological suppositions that colour the research findings in my reading of the texts, and any preconceived views of the data that I take into the analysis phase of the research.

In reading the data I intended to tell the stories of the participants, interpreting their responses and constructing a view of their realities. I sought to be explanatory, insightful and identify causal effects. In seeking to clarify meaning, I had one eye focussed on the phenomena that are context specific, whilst trying to find meaning in these phenomena, which are the responses of senior teachers. I am mindful of secondary issues such as achieving academic success and the language of success that permeates the documentation. I read the data with the research questions at the forefront of my inquiry and the proposition that Christian Brothers' schools can achieve academic success whilst pursuing the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their schools. Also, my scientific background calls me to get "the facts right" if possible, whilst seeking to deconstruct the documentation in an attempt to offer insight.

With this epistemological stance in mind I identified what I read the data with a pragmatic approach. As a pragmatic reader I choose to repeatedly read the data and attempt to clarify meaning. I chose data deliberately amongst the meanings suggested by the documents to find the basis for their purpose and further illuminate the case study (Cherryholmes, 1993). That is not to say, however, that my mind was closed to disconfirming or unforseen themes. To read pragmatically is to be concerned with the

holistic consequences of my actions and report themes that illuminate the "truth" of the case being studied.

Within the method of pragmatic reading I identified that I pursued a rhetorical investigation of the text. Rhetorical investigations seek to identify how the text seeks to convince people to act upon those tests. The texts collected from each school are viewed through the lens of the affect they have on senior teachers and the whole community in influencing academic success. Thus, the analysis pursued a rhetorical investigation of the themes underpinning academic success within school documents. Reading pragmatically with the four research questions as a primary lens, I identified texts supporting the findings from the four research questions also texts supporting disconfirming and unforseen findings. All themes were identified, grouped and linked as part of a thematic approach in the mould of Van Manen (1990).

The specific methodology that took place involved a number of clear steps and a commitment to rereading texts. A preliminary document analysis was conducted at each site with the view of constructing themes using the four research questions. The data collected before the visit was read four times using a greater degree of pragmatism on each reading as the themes held within the texts became more apparent. Unexpected themes or disconfirming themes were noted and subsumed into the thematic response to the research. The initial thematic analysis was kept deliberately wide in its focus to keep an open mind when interviewing at each site.

Whilst at the site and following the visit to each school a hermeneutic circle was employed to refine and support findings from the interview data using themes from the written documentation, websites and other school sources. The reader will remember from earlier sections that the process of understanding is iterative in nature and continues

in cycles by interpreting parts and their relationships rather than moving to better understanding of the global context and then moving to a better understanding of each part. The circular process of interpretation continues until there is a fusion of all horizons forming a complete understanding of the phenomenon (Linden & Cybulski, 2006). Feedback loops following the data collection from each site ensured the congruence of the findings and the preliminary responses to individual schools and provided the research with the necessary triangulation of data. The documents collected throughout the research were reread in light of the interview findings and confirming or disconfirming text passages were highlighted and reported upon. A final rhetorical reading of all the texts once the full research findings were written completed the analysis of the data.

4.8   Building Trustworthy Data

To increase the trustworthiness of research findings a number of strategies were included in the study design (Bickman & Rog, 1998). Most of these strategies operate not by verifying the research conclusions, but by testing the trustworthiness of the conclusions and the existence of potential threats to those conclusions (Campbell, 1988).

Scriven (1974) describes the modus operandi approach as the approach used by a detective to solve a crime. Rather than dealing with alternative possibilities or trustworthiness threats as variables, they may be kept constant in order to determine their effect (Bickman & Rog, 1998). Thus a researcher, who is concerned with the trustworthiness of an interview because of internal pressure being placed on the respondent, may investigate these pressures and try to identify their affect on the data collected.

Another avenue to test the trustworthiness of conclusions is given by Miles and Huberman (1994). They describe the method of searching for discrepant data and negative cases as a way of testing proposed conclusions. In all social research there is a strong and unconscious tendency for researchers to notice any helpful or supporting inferences or data and ignore those that are contrary to their expected findings. Thus a researcher needs to develop an explicit and systematic strategy for making sure that they do not overlook data that may highlight flaws or inconsistencies in their reasoning or conclusions (Bickman & Rog, 1998).

Systematic distortions inherent in the use of only one method can be reduced by triangulation of data (Bickman & Rog, 1998). Fielding and Fielding (1986), emphasize the fallibility of any method since no single method is completely free of all possible threats to trustworthiness. Soliciting feedback from a variety of sources is an extremely productive strategy for identifying threats to trustworthiness, the researcher's assumptions and biases and flaws in the research method (Bickman & Rog, 1998). In this research triangulation was achieve in part by combining the findings of the interviews with senior teachers, interview with senior staff and information gleaned from the document search and from the schools websites.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) promote the use of member checks as a form of identifying threats to trustworthiness. Feedback is solicited from members of the research cohort about the conclusions and data produced by the research. Misinterpretations of participant's responses by the researcher can be eradicated.

Developing rich data can reduce threats to trustworthiness. Rich data are data that detailed enough to give a full and revealing picture of the construct in action in the particular setting: an example of rich data includes verbatim reproductions of interviews.

The key function for rich data is to provide a test for your developing theories rather than a source for supporting summations (Bickman & Rog, 1998).

In regard to this particular study, a number of techniques were drawn upon to increase the trustworthiness of the data. To increase the credibility of the data (the degree of confidence that the truth that the participants have in the findings) I elicited data from a variety of sources through using two different data collection methods. Since member checks also increase the credibility of the data, I asked interviewees to review the transcripts of their interviews and provide feedback. Not only were two data collection methods and data sources employed, I also chose to interpret and present the data in different forms to paint a more complete picture of the case. In Chapter 5, the analysis of the data as a whole is described in detail identifying the stages of the analysis and presenting examples of the data as the analysis progresses. It also gives a more in-depth example of how the initial interview data was analysed and sub themes and themes drawn out in light of the research questions.

4.9 Generalisability

A great concern that arises from this study is the degree to which its results can be generalized across other Christian Brothers' schools or indeed any school with a Charismatic influence that seeks to increase its academic success. Kvale (1996) points to three forms of generalisabilty in research: naturalistic, statistical and analytical. Whilst natural depends upon personal experience, statistical is formal and explicit and analytical can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation. Analytical generalization is based on analysis of similarities and differences of situations. Since this is a collective case study it is most appropriate to consider the analytical generalisabilty of the data.

To increase the analytical generalisabilty of the data, a strategy of purposive sampling was employed, not only in carefully selecting the schools but also in carefully selecting the participants in each of those schools. The schools were chosen specifically not only for their adherence to the Charism of Edmund Rice and their tradition of the Christian Brothers, but also their academic achievement over a number of years. They have been not only the top academically performing Christian Brothers school in their state, but amongst the most successful schools of any description in their state. Each school does have its own characteristic and leadership message; significant points of difference that set the schools apart. The schools were therefore chosen not only for their ability to "replicate" each other in terms of high academic success, but also for their potential to add different perspectives on ways senior teachers may react to high stakes testing.

The study may also lack an element of generalisabilty across all schools due to the specialized nature of the schools in the case study, however, there may be many schools who value this work because it highlights a number of issues including:

1. How academic success has been achieved at the senior level

2. How high stakes tests can be used in a sensitive way

3. How high stakes data can be used as part of a wider method of staff professional development

4. How spiritual concerns are dealt with against a backdrop of accountability.

5. How teachers in modern day religious school are informed by the Charism that formed them.

4.10 Ethics

The ethical considerations pursued in this research followed the ethical principles offered by Robson (1994). In the course of the research no participant was involved without their knowledge, coerced to participate, had information withheld from them about the true nature of the research, were induced to commit acts to diminish their self esteem or was exposed to physical or mental stress. Moreover, they did not have their privacy invaded, have any benefits withheld nor were they treated unfairly or without consideration or with respect. The research was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Australian Catholic University Human research Ethics Committee (1997) from which ethics approval was obtained. In particular:

1. Permission was obtained from each of the three school Headmasters.

2. Individual staff members outside the Leadership Team were not identified. The Anonymity of staff was ensured through the allocation of aliases.

3. Before the commencement of the study the participants received an information sheet summarising the research procedures and the potential benefits.

4. Participants completed consent forms prior to their involvement

5. All records of interviews and questionnaires have been stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal supervisor's office at ACU.

The permission letter provided by the ACU Ethics Committee and other relevant documents are to be found in Appendix 8.

4.11 Summary

Epistemologically, I hold an interpretive perspective of human actions: actions have reasons. The actions I will research are those taken by senior teachers in response to high stakes testing. As Phillips (1987) notes, actions are preceded by intentions and hopefully accompanied by reflection. The intentions that premeditate these actions are formed by

the teacher in response to outside influences (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). However, I acknowledge from the start that it is difficult to know whether all the intentions and outside influences are known and indeed knowable by the participants including the researcher. I will examine the influence (if any) that measures employed for academic success have upon these intentions. Since the research attempts to illustrate and illuminate how and why staff have changed their teaching method in a response to a search for success in a Charismatic environment, the research is based upon a number of premises. The research process attempts to:

1. Generate new knowledge about the effects of a search for success in a Charismatic environment.
2. Reduce ignorance of the issues in this context.
3. Give individuals the opportunity to communicate their realities.
4. Identify meanings in a specific context.
5. Use multiple sources of evidence to investigate contemporary phenomena in a real life context.

This research will be characterised by:

1. A concern for research in a broad sense, including evaluation.
2. An empirical approach relying on the collection of data
3. Use of multiple methods of data acquisition.
4. A focus on the phenomenon in context.

It is clear from the description of ontology, epistemology and methodology described by Wagner (1993) that the study should involve empirical investigation of particular contemporary phenomena within a real life context using multiple sources of evidence.

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The methodology for the research was therefore an interpretive investigation of multiple sites, employing principally the data gathering methods of interviews and documentary analysis. It employed a hermeneutic phenomenological method and a thematic approach to the interpretation and analysis of the data was used in the mould of Van Manen (1990) with a pragmatic reading of data was employed to identify themes within a hermeneutic circle approach to text analysis.

Having clearly identified the methodology employed in the research the next chapters will highlight the results of the interview and documentary search. Chapter 5 provides a step-by-step account of the analysis from the preliminary prescriptive data analysis of the text through components of the analytical process to the representation of the themes that emerged from the interviews. The progression from raw data to sub themes is again highlighted but in a more narrative approach in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. The identification of sub themes and a summary of findings from each school are shown in-depth using the words of the interviewees to substantiate analytical steps. In Chapter 6, I present a comparison of the schools using the research questions as a format.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis in detail and highlights the themes emanating from this research. As Guba and Lincoln (1989) observed, a study is credible when it presents faithful descriptions and if any differences should be observed, it should be clear that the researcher can show how each theme was derived from the descriptions (Koch, 1994). In this chapter I have attempted to do just that, by returning to the original text to make sure that the interpretations and conclusions accurately represent the information provided by the participants.

This chapter provides a step-by-step account of the analysis, from the preliminary descriptive analysis of the text through components of the analytical process to the representation of the themes that emerged from the interviews. The first section of this chapter explains the steps and processes used to make sense of the data, with guidance from the work of Van Manen (1990). It then demonstrates how the analysis was undertaken and informed by the work of Streubert and Carpenter (1999) and Atkinson (1996). Finally, the chapter highlights and discusses the themes that emerged from the research findings. I have included tables to demonstrate the steps in the analysis and how themes were developed from words to concepts and to sub themes then themes. It should therefore be possible for a reader to audit the decisions made throughout the analysis (Koch, 1994).

5.2   Overall Analytical Strategy

As described in section 4.7 (see in particular Figure 4.1) a four-layer analysis of the data was conducted with a series of feedback loops involving both the interviews in the first case, and then supported by documentary evidence. Alongside this analysis, the Gadamerian concept of prejudice, where judgement is formed before the phenomenon has been thoroughly examined (Gadamer, 1975), was used. I was conscious of my own prejudices as a teacher in an academically successful Christian Brothers' school and experience evaluation using high stakes testing. Noting these prejudices helped me to be aware of them, so when interviewing teachers at the three sites I was careful to adopt a non-directive mode of interviewing. In analysis, I was acutely aware of my own pre-knowledge of the experience of high stakes testing and its effects in my own school and used that when I examined the data within the hermeneutic circle. I made notes of my ideas and prejudices, and measured them against the text as I worked. At times the horizons of my prejudices and the views of the participants fused very well, and at other times I found myself discarding old ideas, based on the new information from the text.

The fusion of ideas became very important as I undertook the early phases of analysis. The first horizon was my prejudice; which expanded in the early phase of analysis to fit the experience of the senior teachers at the schools forming the collective case study. As a result, I had to re-examine my own prejudices in light of what I had found. For example, I had thought that stringent use of high stakes testing would deter people from taking senior classes. However, I found that there was quite a 'waiting list' of people hoping to take VCE classes at CBC Melbourne. My first horizon of understanding had

been to assume that staff would prefer not to be subject to the pressure of evaluation using high stakes testing. I was very interested to learn that there was a broad acceptance that this "came with the territory". Consequently my horizons of understanding needed to expand to include this new data in the analysis, and to find a new name for this concept, which was "acceptance" and a sub-theme where it belonged "teaching to the test" within the major theme of "Use of high stakes data".

5.3   Isolating Thematic Statements

As described in section 4.7, I was guided by Van Manen (1990) in his suggestion of isolating thematic statements when seeking themes. Van Manen (1990, p. 92) describes three methods for isolating thematic statements: using a detailed reading approach, a selective or highlighting approach, and the wholistic reading approach. The detailed reading approach requires a reader to look at every transcribed sentence or cluster of sentences to search for meaning to illuminate the phenomenon. The selective or highlighting approach encourages the reader to isolate specific statements that appear to be especially revealing about the phenomenon, whilst the wholisitic approach encourages the researcher to capture the essence of the whole text in a single term. The following sections highlight the steps taken to analyse the data and produce the various layers. The method employed for step one, reading and organising the initial data are described in the next section.

5.3.1   Step 1: Reading the data in Layer 1-primary data

The early analysis involved viewing each interview separately, or going from the parts of the text to the whole (Van Manen, 1990). Layer 1 (see figure 4.2) was formed from data in its least sophisticated form. It consisted of the raw data organised by participant and

site and the analysis took the form of indepth and detailed reading. As a result of the detailed reading of the data, I highlighted key words and grouped them to produce a list of concepts (see Table 5.1). An example of this comes from the interview with Ann (pseudonym)[1] from CBC Brisbane (pseudonym)[2]. An example of her words were:

> Teachers would say that there is pressure on them to maintain very high standards and to make sure that their results are up to par.[3]

The key words in this passage were "there is pressure on them to maintain very high standards" and the concept was "Pressure on teachers". Key ideas such as these were taken together for each transcript. Further examples of these preliminary developments of the data from Ann at CBC Brisbane are shown in Table 5.1.

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[1] All teachers names used in the text are pseudonyms
[2] All school names used in the text are pseudonyms
[3] All indented text is actual quotes from interviews

Table 5.1: Representing the early analysis, with Ann from CBC Brisbane as an example

Ann's responses	Linking Key word	Concept
Parental expectation is high. The expected pathway for these boys is from here on to tertiary study in the University of Queensland. **Our post school profile is heavily skewed towards tertiary**. The marketing is pitched at "Every boy will achieve" and I agree with that. The **perception amongst the school and wider community is that the boys are more likely to achieve at CBC Brisbane.**	Expectation, post school profile, perception, achieve at CBC Brisbane	Academic Nature of the school
For me at the end of year 12 that the majority of the boys **achieved their first [University] preference**…I want the boys to walk away from here with **options** and the ability to make choices.	First [University] preference, options	Qualifying academic success
Even though people think CBC Brisbane is a great school, there will be parents out there putting pressure on us to **lift our numbers in terms of Op1s**. Something about putting it in **black and white changes the perception.**	Emphasis on Op1s, effect of the Courier Mail	Effect of the media
Teachers would say that there is **pressure on them to maintain very high standards** and to make sure that their **results are up to par**.	High standards, results compared (up to par)	Pressure on Teachers
I think you might be **invited to have a discussion** with either Director of Studies or, the Director of Studies would encourage the Head of Faculty. She would ask the Head of Faculty what's happening with this person**, is there anything wrong, can we do anything to help?**	Discussion, within context, supportive	Feedback to teachers
We've tried to lift the profile of the **high level thinking skills (within QCS)** and do that **across the school**.	Embedding skills down the school	Response to high stakes testing
the **explicit preparation** of QCS starts through Year 11 assemblies, **QCS lessons** if you like talking them through how you go through the **multiple choice, the short response, different people go through different things.**	Explicit examination preparation, examination style questions	Teaching to the test
No, it doesn't seem to be the way at all. Should it? Belonging to an elitist group like the GPS it is an opportunity to **stand up** and be **who you really are in any situation**	Lack of Dissonance, opportunity	CB school within the GPS

5.3.2   Step 2: analysis of the data using the research questions

The progression from Layer 1 to Layer 2 involved viewing the data in light of the

research questions. The research questions for this research were:

1. Have, and if so how have, staff changed their teaching to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?
2. How does the teaching staff perceive methods employed to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?
3. Given the Charismatic nature of a Christian Brothers School is there congruence between the lived experience of the Charism and the goals of the school management?
4. How can methods be employed to improve academic success whilst remaining congruent with lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their school?

Informed by the work of Gadamer (1975) I viewed the texts in terms of the research

questions using them as one particular horizon. I used the data that had previously been

collated in terms of concepts to answer the research questions provided in the initial

framework. The resulting data, Layer 2, is presented in detail in Appendices 1, 2 and 3

and forms the basis of the data structure that enabled me to move to Layer 3:

Development of sub themes and themes.

5.3.3 Step 3: Development of sub-themes and themes- Layer 3

The transformation of data from Layer 2 to Layer 3, from concepts to sub themes and

themes, was informed by the work of Streubert and Carpenter (1999) and Van Manen

(1990) when isolating thematic statements. Coffey and Aitkenson (1996) also provided

useful advice on coding ideas by grouping them in similar categories with key words and

links which helped me move from the grouped thoughts of the participants, to concepts,

sub themes and themes.

Once the identification of patterns of meaningful connections was completed, I read the text as a whole (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999) cutting and pasting meaningful and relevant words onto a separate document. The resulting document was then read and reread and groups of ideas were classified in columns of a table as "Words of Participant", then the "key words" and "concepts" (see Table 5.2). These concepts from the preliminary analysis were then grouped together in an additional column of the table, and pooled with similar concepts to form sub themes and themes.

Table 5.2 provides an example how the 5 themes were developed from the interview with the Principal at CBC Melbourne. I discovered through the pragmatic process of reading and rereading the data, a similarity in sets of ideas formed from the words of the participant. The five themes that arose from this analysis were: the effect of school leadership; the effect of the media; the influence of culture and changing culture; the nature of the schools and the uses of high stakes data. Tables in Appendices 4 and 5, demonstrate how the five themes evolved from keywords, concepts and sub themes developed from interviews at CBC Adelaide and CBC Brisbane.

Table 5.2: Development of themes and sub-themes from interview with Principal CBC
Melbourne

Words of participants	Key Words	Concepts	Sub theme	Theme
Results **are closely analysed** we have got people saying when **can I get my chance** at it [teaching VCE]."	Acknowledge the degree of analysis but still want a to teach VCE	Acceptance	Teaching to the test	Uses of high stakes data
been a criticism ..that we are too **driven by Year 12 results**,….**teaching styles at 7 and 8** are dominated by what we want to **achieve at Year 12**	Top down approach, year 12 success starts at year 7	Teaching style		
Some people have been **disappointed** when they have been moved off. It is unquestioned some have **bounced back.**	Disappointment initially but some have worked hard to get VCE teaching back	Reaction to high stakes data		
I think we genuinely need to **analyse** [staff results]. There is more **pressure** in teaching VCE	Additional pressure on VCE teachers with analysis of their students' results	Teacher accountability	Messages and emphasis	Effect of school leadership
"**It [academics]** has been the **focus** of the College…it has been **overtly stated** that this is what we were trying to do."	Overtly stating that academic success is a focus for the college	Achieving academic success		
There is **legitimacy** for **all those** other **measures** that we use; the number in the top 1% of the state, the percentage of boys with studies scores over 40.	Legitimacy in using data to qualify success	Qualifying academic success		
Our reputation as a school …has been **enhanced** dramatically because of the **attention** we've received"	Increased academic profile due to public knowledge of good results	Publishing scores	League tables	Influence of the media
That last one is probably the one of **least statistical importance**, but it is the **one used by the press**	Importance placed on the above 40 scores because it is used by the press	Effects of media	Public perception	
Healthy tension and it is a tension. I am at **ease** with it	There is tension between being CBs' school and APS a good fit	Christian Brother's School within another association	Congruence & Dissonance	Influence of culture and changing culture
If we produce young men with a **social conscience** then we are **staying true to our origins."**	Students of high socio economic profile with a social conscience in the tradition of Edmund Rice	Charism of Edmund Rice	Men for others	
We've **shifted school culture** in terms of … **academic climate** done to a particular level **right down to year 7**	Managed a change of academic climate, raising academic standards	Academic Profile	Academic nature of the college	The nature of the schools
Year 12's said this year they **felt under pressure**	Senior students under pressure to achieve results	Student accountability		

The process of concept identification that lead to sub themes and themes was intuitive and can best be described with the use of examples. The theme "Influence of the Media" arises out of a number of participants' responses, including those of the Headmaster of CBC Melbourne. As the Headmaster states:

> There is no question that the **press exerts a significant influence**. Our **reputation** as a school with a strong academic performance has been **enhanced dramatically** because of the **attention** we've received because of our top performance.

On reading this response it becomes apparent that there is public interest in the performance of the school though the media in Melbourne and that CBC Melbourne has benefited from this exposure. The direct effect of the media at the school by the use of the percentage of boys scoring 40 or higher in their final VCE score is illuminated by another quote by the Headmaster of CBC Melbourne

> We can rely on a number of measures… the percentage of boys with studies scores over 40. That last one is probably the **one of least statistical** importance, but it is the **one used by the press** and the one that has been used for the longest time

From the words of the participants, key words are identified and concepts coalesce to form similar groups of thoughts from the participants. The groups of thoughts emerge are concepts that can be linked together to form sub themes and the analysis of each participant's transcript lead to a table of words, concepts and sub themes. Once the tables for each participant in every site were completed, I looked at the tables within sites to find linking themes. There was a high degree of similarity of sub themes across participants in each site and indeed across sites, since the each participant was responding to the research questions. However, due to the open-ended nature of the interviews, not all participants shared every sub themes and concepts. Table 5.3 shows how the concepts from all the participants at CBC Melbourne inform the sub themes, which are interpreted to form the major themes. Similar tables for CBC Adelaide and CBC Brisbane can be found in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5.

Table 5.3: Development of sub themes and themes from concepts at CBC Melbourne

Concepts ——▶	Sub-theme	Theme
Acceptance	Teaching to the test	Uses of high stakes data
Teaching style		
Reaction to high stakes data		
Teacher accountability	Messages and emphasis	Effect of school leadership
Achieving academic success		
Qualifying academic success		
Publishing scores	League tables	Influence of the media
Effects of media	Public perception	
Christian Brother's School within another association	Dissonance	Influence of culture and changing culture
Charism of Edmund Rice	Men for others	
Academic Profile	Academic nature of the college	The nature of the schools
Student accountability		

Although I found using the tables to be a simple and straightforward approach to organise and represent the data, I acknowledge that this is a reductionist technique to solve a complex problem. Despite the fact that interpretation is reductionist by nature, I was continually conscious of re rereading the whole to retain both the essence of the narrative and to retain small key details that may have been overlooked. The table helped me to

pick out a sub-theme or ascertain whether more data was required to substantiate the inclusion of a sub theme. The reading, rereading and analysis of the data was time consuming but fascinating. The process of un-weaving the data to reveal the sub themes and themes appealed to me as a scientist seeking answers from a complex situation. Over a period of months I constantly created feedback loops that allowed me to revisit the raw data in light of new understanding. After a number of attempts the sub themes and themes crystallised in the first site, and with this experience the last site seemed to be less time consuming. However, I was cognisant of not taking findings from one site to another in the analysis stage. I read the data from the new site without preconceived ideas gained from the other sites. The next section discusses the themes, using examples from the three schools, in light of the literature review and highlights commonalities and differences across each site (last column of Table 5.3).

5.4   Theme 1: The Uses of High Stakes Data

The use of high stakes data is not a new phenomenon; however, it has become more prevalent in Australian schools. When data such as Year 12 examination results are used beyond their original purpose, for example to assess senior teachers, that data becomes high stakes (Messick, 1999; McNeil, 2000). In the three schools that form this study, the data derived from Year 12 examinations is used to a greater or lesser extent for different assessment purposes of teachers.

CBC Brisbane has a distinguished history of using data to improve the outcomes for its students. However, unlike CBC Melbourne and CBC Adelaide, CBC Brisbane uses the high stakes data to inform student accountability. The Director of Studies at CBC Brisbane reported that as a school "we don't target teachers we target students" (Appendix 2, section 1.4.5). Mrs Brown also suggested that taking teachers out of senior

classes led to problems of staffing these classes with the appropriate teacher and filling the senior teacher's classes with junior classes.

> You can't let them sit out and you must be able to replace them with someone from your staffing budget. (Appendix 2, Section 1.3.5)

Mrs Brown is cognisant of the morale of teachers who are moved from senior teaching roles as she attests, "you try to value the dignity of someone who has been teaching a long time."

In this way CBC Brisbane is able to track students very closely and to adjust its examination preparation very quickly to suit the particular needs of a specific cohort. It is an iterative process whereby the tool informs ongoing development. The data that comes out of the Year 12 examination is also used to inform teaching practice on a classroom level, particularly in preparation for the QCS. As Anne says

> the explicit preparation of QCS starts through Year 11 assemblies, QCS lessons if you like talking them through how you go through the multiple choice, the short response, different people go through different things. Then there's a lot of practices. We are explicitly giving the boys skills in how to use the material to their advantage. (Appendix 2, Section 1.4.7)

There has been a remodelling of some of the middle school content to reflect needs of the QCS with explicit teaching of skills and knowledge required at Year 12. It is only a recent development that this data has been used to inform staff accountability measures, and is still in its infancy.

CBC Melbourne, on the other hand, has made great strides in embedding the use of high stakes data to inform staff accountability measures. As the Director of Studies of CBC Melbourne attests the process was "very confronting" (Appendix 3). Some staff were given the opportunity to teach Year 11 classes rather than Year 12 classes, whilst some opted not to teach senior classes of their own volition. There was an acceptance by senior

management that short term pain for staff would lead to long term positive outcomes for the students. It seems that the process of assessment has been absorbed into the fabric of the school and all senior teachers know their results will be subject to close scrutiny and public reporting. Notwithstanding, there is a waiting list of teachers eager to take senior classes. However, this does not disguise the fact that there has been a very difficult process of adjustment for at least some senior staff members who have remained at the College over this period and fine themselves "a bit more under siege" (Appendix 3, Section 3.5.4). But now there is a general acceptance that these measures are there to stay, and new teachers, although initially confronted, accept that this is part of teaching senior classes at CBC Melbourne as is spelt out by the Headmaster.

> It produced some real angst, the hardest interviews would have
> been the ones from 1998-2000, because by the time we got to 2003
> people's acceptance of the fact this was a reasonable assessment of
> the year was there. (Appendix 3, Section 3.1.7)

The effect on the morale of the staff was also mentioned by a number of key interviewees. The overall impression given was that the morale of individual teachers would have been impacted upon in the short term, especially those who had gained poor feedback in terms of student scores. Indeed there is apprehension in the first week of every year as Year 12 scores are dissected in the public forum and "graphs of shame" are shown for the results of the whole spectrum of subjects and teachers.

CBC Adelaide is testing the water in its use of high stakes data. The new Director of Studies is using it to inform senior staff performance and to guide "conversations" with those deemed to be under performing. As he says:

> You try to make the conversations as un-confrontational as possible,
> more of a chat because there's no pressure on Heads of Faculty to
> perform or get their faculty to ensure that students get certain marks
> so you don't feel you have to pressure the faculty members…You
> handle them (the interviews) with kid gloves…staff are very
> protective of their results some do come up very quickly with
> excuses. (Appendix 1, Section 1.4.5)

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Staff had been removed from senior classes, but this was a rarity and was not based

purely on the scores of senior students as Mr Arnold attests, that movement would:

> .. normally be as a result of one of those intense conversations the year
> before. They might have had another run at it again and the second time
> no better, so it doesn't come as any great surprise. It's just a
> conversation that says "Look let's try and eliminate the factors". We
> might use someone else in the faculty next year and see what happens to
> the results. (Appendix 1, Section 1.2.6)

In one instance the effect on a teacher's morale was not good and Mr Arnold

said that the staff member had "not bounced back" and has responded poorly to

what they perceived as demotion. However on the whole as Alan suggests, there

is no real pressure on the staff at CBC Adelaide in terms of the scores of their

senior students.

> Nothing is said, a personal goal what you strive for. There is verbal
> recognition of those whose students achieve a perfect 20, however it's
> never looked at in what proportion have achieved that score.

Of the three schools, CBC Melbourne has been through the process of assessing staff

using high stakes data and has emerged through the difficult transition. Teachers report

that there is "tremendous pressure to perform starting with the first three days of the

school year." There has been a significant paradigm shift in culture at the school where

teachers are far more accountable for the performance of their students than in the past.

As Brian from CBC Melbourne says,

> The message was very strong, we were an academic school first, and
> we were classroom teacher above all else. We had to get the classroom
> right in terms of climate, work ethic and results. When the measures
> were introduced it gave us a concrete goal to shoot for even though we
> thought at the time it was probably unattainable. (Appendix 3, Section
> 3.4.3)

This paradigm shift was deemed necessary because the Leadership Team at the time felt

that the students at the College were not reaching their potential. They felt that the

teaching staff were not deriving the best from their students and questions of teacher

accountability were raised. It was felt that steps had to be taken to increase the

effectiveness of teachers with the hoped for results of academic results increasing as well.

Teachers were put under far more pressure and were confronted by the process. Some

teachers were taken off senior classes and some dropped out of senior teaching of their

own accord. Mr Collins the Headmaster at CBC Melbourne acknowledges that staff have

faced disappointment,

> Some people have been disappointed when they have been moved off.
> It is unquestioned some have bounced back. They have gone away and
> there are instances where staff have been taken off Year 12 and given
> another go a few years later. (Appendix 3, Section 3.1.7)

The process did initially cause a considerable degree of angst amongst those staff taken

off classes. However; to the greatest degree they have returned to teach senior classes

after a period teaching Year 11 classes. As Brian, a senior teacher from CBC Melbourne

asserts:

> Of course if you are not getting the marks no matter what you do, you would
> be pretty upset. People have stopped teaching VCE or been asked to take a
> break as it were. Some people have really bounced back well on the other
> hand through professional pride I suppose…. However, there are plenty of
> people queuing up to teach VCE, the staff are pretty driven I think.
> (Appendix 3, Section 3.4.3).

In an effort to manage the process, senior teachers who were removed from senior classes

were given support in a wide variety of forms. The process was a difficult one, which

needed to be managed with firmness but sensitivity. It is a credit to the leadership and the

senior staff that this process has reached a successful steady state.

Both in the literature, and as seen at CBC Melbourne, successful accountability measures

can be based on hard data and managed in a transparent manner, with the understanding

that these measure were put in place for the good of the students rather than the detriment

of the staff (for example see Barton, 2005; Clarke et al., 2003; Libresco, 2005; Rex &

Nelson, 2004; Wolf & Wolf, 2002; Wollman- Bonilla, 2004; Yeh, 2005). The data was used to identify problems, but at the same time it was set against a context of the teacher's personal and professional history. Knee jerk reactions are to be avoided with a view to look for trends rather than peaks and troughs in a teacher's performance. Most importantly accountability measures needed to be linked with high quality professional development (Cozart and Gerstl-Pepin, 2002). An example of such professional development can be drawn from CBC Melbourne where staff are encouraged to become VCE markers and attend sessions where specific examination techniques were addressed. Mr Christian, Director of Studies suggests that staff who have been taken off Year 12 classes receive wide ranging support. He says:

> Is there any way we can support you? Do you want to visit other schools? Do you want to mark VCE exams? We highlight a range of options. I try to make it as constructive as possible. It's about seeing what they need and how we can help.

Both CBC Brisbane and CBC Adelaide have a very collegial and strong teaching staff. To introduce such measures in each school are likely to cause the same angst as was witnessed at CBC Melbourne. CBC Brisbane has a history of using data driven change in improving the scores of its students through student accountability measures. Its staff members trust the data collection and analysis protocols and may be more open to this form of assessment. However, they are not used to a process of using this student formal assessment of them as teachers and will be initially challenged. As their students' examination results are already very high, the teaching staff may not see the necessity of this tool. However, this may act as encouragement against complacency or move people out of comfort zones.

CBC Adelaide has protocols for neither staff nor or student accountability, and this would, no doubt, bring similar issues to the fore as at CBC Melbourne in the mid 1990s. The current climate at CBC Adelaide of sporadic academic achievement mirrors that of

CBC Melbourne at that time; however, the focus of the Headmaster of CBC Adelaide is not first and foremost on academics:

> What I would want are boys to leave CBC Adelaide with a strong sense of the interconnectedness of knowledge and skills, with a greater desire to work in teams rather than individuals and with an increased reliance on interdependency. This is what I believe future young men will need to survive in society. It's not just about the score. (Appendix 1, Section 1.2.5)

In contrast, the Headmaster of CBC Melbourne at the time (1990s) saw the improvement of the academic side of the College as his first priority. CBC Adelaide's Headmaster has put more effort into the spiritual life of the College, its facilities and its vocational courses. Evidence suggests that it is unlikely that accountability measures of this sort would embed effectively without the full backing and drive of the Headmaster.

5.5   Theme 2: The Effect of School Leadership

The effect of school leadership in delivering the message that a Christian Brothers' school can use high stakes testing to achieve academic success cannot be underestimated. It was clear that the language used by a number of staff at each site mirrored that used by the Headmaster. Members of staff had become familiar with the message of the Headmaster and used common language to express their views about the school.

For example at CBC Adelaide, many staff talked about CBC Adelaide students being "men for others" (see Appendix 1) highlighting the College's focus on service learning. Senior teachers at CBC Adelaide were keenly aware of the school's focus on breadth of the curriculum and making the educational experience at CBC Adelaide accessible to all students. This is spelt out clearly by Brett, a senior teacher at CBC Adelaide

> I knew it offered both academic and non-traditional way, I was aware of that and wanted to work with boys (Appendix 1, Section 1.5.1)

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The staff also echoed the Headmaster's views of not pushing students beyond a sustainable level indeed he suggests that inflating scores "beyond natural, self-sustaining levels" would be doing a "disservice to students in our singular focus on academic success" (Appendix 1, Section 1.2.9)

Staff views clearly articulated that if a student succeeds he has achieved it. If he fails he has done it of his own accord. Staff are congratulated publicly but not rewarded for the results of their students. The focus of the Headmaster is the achievement of the students likewise his staff follow suit.

At CBC Brisbane there is also a theme of the students being responsible for their own achievement. A senior teacher at CBC Brisbane reports that "Academics are the focus of the school, the boys know that" (Appendix 2, Section 1.5.5). The tone, however, is for student excellence and pushing students to their greatest extent. Phrases such as "Evening of Excellence" instead of prize giving night have been introduced into the culture of the school. Common language calls for all students to give of their best particularly in Year 12 where "the QCS is the biggest team sport at CBC Brisbane."

Although a high fee paying, Independent school, CBC Brisbane fights hard not to become, or be seen to be, an elitist school. Staff comments echo those of the Headmaster and a number of staff used a phrase; "to whom much is given, much is expected" calling the boys to be mindful of privilege and their responsibilities to the poor and marginalised. The key messages of excellence and service of others are reiterated throughout the various levels of the school because they are repeatedly reinforced at a Leadership Team level.

At CBC Melbourne there was a marked change in the messages given by the Headmaster in the mid 1990s. Phrases of academic excellence were used, accountability and assessment methods were employed and both quickly became part of the language of the school. The current Headmaster says :

> We've shifted school culture in terms of expectations interns of things like classroom climate…what's acceptable in classrooms, academic climate done to a particular level right down to year 7, the boys taking examinations seriously right the way through. The Headmaster's study awards, the academic insignia, the Duane awards, boy recognition, and inclusion in the newsletter, to the expectation that it is good to do well. As a leadership team we have continued to innovate with a range of things in terms of extra support from the Café Academus to the individual mentoring, to the leadership taking on 60 extra students that we thought were in the middle band to be pushed ahead; the study hall concepts; our willingness to go to other schools

The Headmaster of the time saw the need for a concrete goal and created what has become known as the "Wilding line". The goal of all teachers was for 25% of their students to achieve study scores in excess of 40, hence the Wilding line was drawn at 25% and all teachers strive to get above it. Value added measures of teacher effectiveness were used for the first time and the teacher's value added coefficient became commonplace.

The message of the current Headmaster is delivered to staff and students regularly calling for excellence of performance in what ever field they are pursuing, whether it is academic, cultural or sporting. Whilst it is clear that the paradigm shift for staff accountability is complete, it is acknowledged that there is work to be done in terms of the spiritual nature of student development. CBC Melbourne's Headmaster continually calls for the boys to become leaders with conscience and to act for others in the community. He says :

> We are producing young men that will have leadership roles within the community. We were founded to have a major impact in Melbourne. If we produce young men with a social conscience then we are staying true to our origins. (Appendix 3, Section 3.1.11)

He appreciates that the school's clientele has changed and the school's message needs to change with it.

In all three sites the influence of the Headmaster and Leadership Team is extremely important in driving change and maintaining high standards. The language used by each leader is strong, dynamic and repeated often to the school and wider community. The language and terminology of accountability has entered the psyche of each school community.

In one significant difference, whilst all the schools call for academic endeavour or excellence, CBC Melbourne is the only one that gives teachers a specific goal of achievement: the "Wilding line". Initially seen as unreachable, the goal of 25% of students scoring in excess of 40 on their study scores is now regularly achieved. It has become engrained in the vernacular and has become a benchmark for all senior teachers.

5.6   Theme 3: The Influence of the Media

In Victoria the reporting of Year 12 examination data has reached new heights. Tables listing data on each school whether State, Independent and Catholic enable the reader to contrast and compare the scores of each school. Schools can be ranked on different scores, by median study score, percentage over study scores of 40 and the percentage completing VCE.

CBC Melbourne has benefited greatly from the publication of these scores over the last 5 to 10 years. Whilst retaining the cultural, pastoral and sporting aspects of the school it has achieved greater academic success every year. Newspaper coverage has extended to

naming it the highest achieving Catholic school in the State, and interviewing high achieving students. Indeed, the headmaster of CBC Melbourne reflect on the important effect the media has:

> There is no question that the press exerts a significant influence. Our reputation as a school with a strong academic performance has been enhanced dramatically because of the attention we've received because of our top performance. (Appendix 3, Section 3.1.3)

In Victoria, the most often quoted statistic for the success of schools, and the one highlighted in the newspaper is the percentage of students achieving a study score in excess of 40. It is worth noting that the "Wilding line" also focuses specifically on this measure of success. Whilst academic success is called for, success in this measure is seen as a key for the continued marketing and promotion of the College. When these figures are printed in the College prospectus or other material the reading public are cognisant of its significance.

In Queensland, the *Courier Mail* carries a broader measurement than its Victorian counterpart reporting just the percentage of OP 1 to 15 scores. As already described, it is a "blunt tool" to dissect the complex world of examination achievement. However, it is likely to have caused difficulties for some significant independent schools who have unexpectedly suffered poorly by comparison. It would be interesting to hypothesise what would occur were the *Courier Mail* to extend the nature of the data they reported. More than one member of staff stated that if they reported the number of Op1s it would have a negative impact on the public's perception of the school.

In Adelaide the only media coverage is self-promotion where schools choose to advertise their own achievements. Many do so, but CBC Adelaide does not seek to market itself as a purely academic school. However, it may be worthwhile for this College to consider

contacting local newspapers with good news stories to build up a media relationship and hence stay ahead of any changes they may make in the near future.

Both CBC Adelaide and CBC Brisbane would do well to observe trends in media coverage of high stakes testing. If Victorian league tables broaden to National focus then both schools may need "Wilding lines" of their own.

5.7   Theme 4: The Influence of Culture and Changing Culture

All schools in the study have a history of academic achievement. Each is known as the best Christian Brothers' school in their own state, and performs well in comparison to all other schools of all persuasions.

The culture of CBC Brisbane is engrained and speaks of excellence in all facets of school life. It has an extended history of academic achievement, sporting prowess and membership of the GPS. When students are accepted at the College they understand that they are expected to perform to an excellent level. A senior teacher from CBC Brisbane talked about the fact that academic expectation has a long tradition in the College:

> There is a very strong tradition and that is always brought back to the boys. "This school is founded by the forefathers in 1875 to carry this forward, through assemblies, academic awards, College Hall which has proud memorabilia of what the school has achieved. (Appendix 2, Section 1.5.6)

Parental expectation is high as is the expectation of staff. An environment of self-fulfilling prophecy may be assumed in this case. This may however denigrate the efforts of the staff at the College. Not with standing, students are expected to achieve and they expect to achieve. Pathways are very academic and aimed firstly towards the premier University in the State, Queensland University, and on the whole tertiary study in general.

The culture of CBC Brisbane is firmly directed towards excellence. It celebrates excellence through prize giving, in the end of year annual, periodical publications, on the web site and in the prospectus. The broader community acknowledges that CBC Brisbane is a school with high academic standards. The community realises that the school demands a great deal from their students but this also helps the students gain excellent examination results.

The culture of assessment at CBC Brisbane is aimed at the students. The protocols used for student accountability is longitudinal, thorough and proactive. It has made a great difference to the results of students; teachers trust it and rely upon its feedback. Ann, a senior teacher at CBC Brisbane, suggests that not only is there an advantage in terms of test-taking but the higher order thinking skills demanded by the high stakes testing regime has also helped.

> We've tried to lift the profile of the high level thinking skills (within QCS) and do that across the school. If you think of education in terms of learning how to learn, thinking and problem solving and take out elements of knowledge, generally it does that [mirrors good practice] (Appendix 3, Section 1.4.7)

However, there is no culture of teacher accountability. Staff members are quite comfortable with this and comfortable in their approach to teaching. The culture of the school demands a great deal of the students but to a certain degree assumes that the staff members are fulfilling their "side of the bargain". Teachers have reacted poorly to challenges regarding their teaching in the past as the Director of Studies attests (see Appendix 2, Section 1.3.4) and a paradigm shift from student accountability to teacher accountability would, one predicts, meet with a significant degree of negativity. However, an emphasis on teacher accountability would be likely to increase the level of academic achievement of the students.

A change of culture on a whole school basis is an extraordinarily difficult task to undertake and complete. However, over a period of ten years this has been accomplished at CBC Melbourne. Under the guidance of two Headmasters, an academically underperforming school has been transformed into a school that is widely acknowledged, and indeed criticised, for having a very strong academic focus. It must be recognised that change takes place in schools for many reasons. In CBC Melbourne's case pastoral, systemic, and technological changes have all been made along with the use of high stakes testing. Classroom management techniques have been improved and reporting to students and parents has also been a focus. However, one of the most significant drivers of change in VCE performance has been the use of the student's scores to assess staff, as acknowledged by many senior staff at the College (see Appendix 3). As Mr Christian the Director of Studies attests if the accountability measures were taken away, "They (the VCe marks) certainly wouldn't go up."

The culture for staff and their individual focus has changed from a quasi-pastoral approach to one where their achievements in the classroom are their first priority. Staff recognise that the results of their senior students are the key to the ongoing success of the school and it's standing in the wider community. They realise it is no longer enough to be a caring nurturing environment; they must help the students achieve their full potential, which would now include academic potential. Staff has retained, and indeed enhanced, the spiritual aspects of school life, but they have added a steely edge and professionalism to the way in which they prepare boys for their final VCE examinations.

The level of teacher accountability and the measures taken to assess them initially confronted the senior staff (see Appendix 3, Section 3.3.2). Over a relatively short period

of time however, they have come to accept this as part of senior teaching and there are a large number of teachers waiting their chance to take senior classes. The Headmaster of CBC Melbourne comments that:

> In a whole range of subjects there are people saying, given the knowledge of what the expectations are and the discussions that occur and the fact that results are closely analysed we have got people saying when can I get my chance at it. (Appendix 3, Section 3.1.4)

If students pass or fail there is recognition that the teacher have played a significant part in the students' development and appropriate responses are elicited from the school. Success is celebrated and rewarded; underachievement is analysed and questioned. There is in this approach since to berate under achieving staff and to attribute the success of the students solely to that student's effort alone would be both unfair and illogical. Indeed it is the consistency of the approach which has been a key element of its success.

The climate of the College throughout the year levels is also aimed at academic achievement. Middle school courses have been adjusted to reflect skills and content for VCE. All year levels sit examinations and the examinations mirror the style of VCE examinations. Main examinations are sat in the School Hall under VCE conditions. The climate calls for academic focus and the students respond. This was not always the case 10 years ago.

The climate of CBC Adelaide is also developing, but its focus is somewhat different to the other schools. In its call for service of others, CBC Adelaide is focussing on service learning with an emphasis on producing adults with morals and high ideals. It is telling that many staff made mention of CBC Adelaide students being "men for others" (see Section 1.2.9, Appendix 1). The broadening of the curriculum offering to cater for the widest possible population also sets this school apart. In its acceptance and encouragement of the whole community it is expounding the ideals of a community with

a profound conscience. The climate is supportive and inclusive. It has succeeded in keeping many at the College, whereas once the students would have left before completing Year 12. It seeks to imbue in its students the possibility that more than one of them could be the next Edmund Rice.

5.8   Theme 5: The Nature of the Schools

Each of the schools offers excellent educational outcome for its students. Talented visionaries lead these schools, each with a strong message and a profound vision for the young men in their care. The staff are caring and supportive of the students and of each other. The facilities in each are excellent and continue to improve. The young men at each College are talented and with a spiritual awareness that is most welcome in today's climate.

When reflecting on the nature of each school I returned to the concept of a continuum line: each school progressing along that line as it matures and develops. In terms of their academic life CBC Brisbane has a long established and distinguished academic record; its climate of excellence has been in place for a long period of time. Teachers have become used to teaching the best students and getting very good results. CBC Melbourne could be considered as the "new kid on the block". The school has achieved success and become imbued with a climate of excellence only recently. CBC Melbourne has made a paradigm shift and emerged into a "Golden Age" academically as commented by one of the staff members (see Appendix 3, Section 3.4.1). CBC Adelaide produces some excellent academic results but it has not embedded an atmosphere of excellence and has not yet moved to the same academic level as CBC Brisbane and CBC Melbourne. It is important to note however that CBC Adelaide does not at this juncture wish to promote itself as an academic school. It markets itself as an "all-rounder" (see Appendix 1,

Section 1.2.4) catering for a broad academic entry, providing varied and accessible pathways for every intellectual and socio-economic strata.

The spiritual leadership of all these school calls for students to be part of the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their communities. The Headmaster of CBC Adelaide contends:

> As students become more materially rich, they become more spiritually poor. There is a strong place for Catholic schools in wealthy suburbs like because their proportionally greater need for spiritual nourishment and development. (Appendix 1, Section 1.2.10)

However, there is a subtle difference in the approach of CBC Brisbane and CBC Adelaide. CBC Brisbane has had a long history of educating the privileged members of Brisbane's Catholic community (see Appendix 2, Section 1.5.7). It has encouraged and educated its students to advocate for the poor and marginalised in their post school lives where it is seen they will become leaders in the community as lawyers, doctors, politicians and other leaders. CBC Adelaide retains a more traditional view that each student should give service to the marginalised personally, rather than leading those who give service. CBC Adelaide's students are encouraged to develop hands on, personal relationships with the poor and marginalised as their first priority.

Over the last three years CBC Melbourne has moved from a model mirroring that of CBC Adelaide to one that resembles CBC Brisbane. This may be in response to a change in clientele or a maturing of the vision it holds for Catholic leaders in Melbourne's society.

5.9   Summary

The three schools in question operate under the banner of Christian Brothers' guidance and are informed by the Charism of Edmund Rice. Each has a true lived experience of the

Charism in its every day life but their epistemological stances and methods are vastly different.

Academically, the three seem to form different markers along a continuum. CBC Adelaide whilst achieving academic success, does so only sporadically. Staff members seem to have little control of the outcome of the senior students. CBC Melbourne have invested a great deal of time and effort into the staff accountability systems and have relatively recently achieved a high level of academic success so it can now call itself a truly academic school. It sees the achievement of the students as being inextricable bound to the efforts of the staff. CBC Brisbane on the other hand has had a long history of success. It is a mature and confident College and strives for excellence as a matter of course. Students expect to achieve and are expected to achieve. CBC Adelaide may be considered as being at the outset of a journey, if they so choose, that CBC Melbourne has recently taken and CBC Brisbane has followed for a great deal of time.

The heavy reliance at CBC Melbourne on staff accountability is in stark contrast to the student accountability at CBC Brisbane. Again the academic maturity and confidence that CBC Brisbane has is developing at CBC Melbourne. The accountability systems for staff gives CBC Melbourne a lean and hungry atmosphere, whereas staff members at CBC Brisbane are seemingly comfortable given the absence of such measures there. It is a process that CBC Brisbane and CBC Adelaide may have to address: CBC Brisbane to balance the strong history of data driven student accountability it has developed, and CBC Adelaide because staff accountability measures have a proven history of kick starting academic achievement. At CBC Adelaide and CBC Brisbane it is likely that any introduction of teacher accountability measures will have the same degree of tension and dissonance as was seen at CBC Melbourne. At both schools, though, it is likely that once

the difficult first few years are passed, staff accountability measures can become part of the accepted landscape of the College's life.

CBC Adelaide's adherence to a "purer" message of the lived experience of Edmund Rice in service to others seems to be interpreted as a challenge to the message of educating tomorrow's leaders found at CBC Melbourne and CBC Brisbane. Again, there is a perception that with increased academic fortunes and a more privileged clientele CBC Melbourne is constructing a message that is already completely engrained at CBC Brisbane. Teachers contend that CBC Brisbane has a long history of catering to the privileged and sets out to educate leaders with a social conscience. It might be considered that CBC Melbourne was following the CBC Adelaide model until relatively recently, and the paradigm shift to a CBC Brisbane model is yet to be either recognised or accepted by all teachers at CBC Melbourne.

Across a number of measures it can be suggested that CBC Adelaide occupies a more traditional Christian Brothers' niche: CBC Melbourne is moving towards the position occupied by CBC Brisbane, perhaps more Ignation in its feel. But both schools, CBC Melbourne and CBC Brisbane, are still completely aware of their Christian Brothers' tradition and are thoroughly imbued with the Charism of Edmund Rice.

The next chapter, Discussion of Research Questions, includes an overview of the research, recommendations for future research and a summary. The research questions are answered in light of the research findings and lead to recommendations for future practice reported in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

6.1   Introduction

This chapter takes an overview of the results and addresses the research questions
directly. It revisits the purpose and design of the research project before addressing each
question in turn. A general discussion then concludes the chapter, but also leads to
recommendations for practice that are reported in Chapter 7.

6.2   Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to review the experience of senior teachers from the
three targeted schools and highlight ways in which teachers at these Christian Brother's
schools have achieved academic success with their students without compromising their
lived experience of Edmund Rice's Charism. Underpinning this purpose is the belief that
teachers and managers of schools can help their students to achieve academic successes
within the framework of a Christian Brother's School committed to the values of Edmund
Rice.

6.3   Design of the Research

The methodological structure that underpinned this research was collective case study. The case studies were of the academically successful Christian Brother's schools CBC Adelaide, CBC Brisbane and CBC Melbourne.

Data collection methods used in each of the three case study schools includes an interview with each Headmaster, an interview with each Director of Studies, interviews with individual senior teachers and a document search of relevant school documents. Analysis of the data followed the interpretive model of thematic interpretation, extolled by van Manen (1990). Five themes emerged from the analysis: uses of high stakes data, effect of school leadership, influence of the media, influence of culture and changing culture and the nature of the schools.

6.4   Research Questions Answered

This section will discuss each of the four research questions that guided this study in turn.

6.4.1 Interpretation of findings for research question 1: Have, and if so how have, staff changed their teaching to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes testing in their school?

At CBC Adelaide, where there was no history of teacher or student accountability systems, there was no apparent emphasis on students gaining high academic results on a systemic level. As the Headmaster attests,

> I'm not sure I want to market CBC Adelaide as just an academic school. Because I think schooling and the educative process is much broader than just tertiary entrance scores (Appendix 1, section 1.2.4.)

Instead leadership emphasised service learning, more in line with the findings of Woodard (2002) who suggests that where high stakes testing is not prevalent, schools may not push for academic success above more holistic measures but non-examinable

skills. Whilst some staff and departments adapted and acted in isolation, there was no whole school emphasis on the pedagogy of senior teachers in preparing their Year 12 students (see Appendix 1, Section 1.3.2) . A number of members of staff reported a greater use of ICT in the classroom and running out of hours tutorials and examination revision; however, this was not common across all faculties (see Appendix 1.4.6). Supporting the view of Volante (2004) who states that the use of high stakes testing depends on the focus of the school leadership, the Headmaster at CBC Adelaide did not encourage staff members to push the students beyond their natural academic limit and over inflate their final score because he feared this would lead to students dropping out of university courses. He stated that he did not want students to gain scores that:

> Are inflated above their natural self-sustainable level of achievement. So if ever we get to a point where we inflate the students' TER above the point where they can not sustain it without the support of the school I think we've done a disservice to students in our singular focus on academic success. (Headmaster, CBC Adelaide, Appendix 1)

The fear of increased drop out rates due to high stakes testing seen at CBC Adelaide supports the findings of Weaver-Dunne's (2000) research. Weaver-Dunne (2000) contends that students may be placed at increased risk of educational failure and dropping out and in response to high stakes testing. With the introduction of a Director of Curriculum, an embryonic use of data driven teacher accountability and more regular staff meetings, there was mention of greater focus being made on the teaching method of senior teachers (see Appendix 1, Section 1.3.6). But this seems at odds with the overarching goals of the school leadership. Whether this is the beginning of a new trend in the school could not be confirmed from the data.

At CBC Melbourne, the emphasis on academic achievement has embedded itself over a relatively short time and measures of teacher accountability are extremely thorough. This supports the findings of Gradwell (2006), who states that the influence of high stakes testing is far reaching. Echoing the research by Amrein and Berliner (2002a) there have

been enormous changes in the teaching practice of senior teachers at an individual and systemic level. In response to this high stakes testing teachers are far more likely to give class time to explicit teaching of examination technique supporting the research performed by Smith and Fey (2000) and Gulek (2003). The staff at CBC Melbourne are far more likely to refer to past paper questions, in line with the findings of Firestone et al. (2002), focus solely on examinable content and skills as predicted by Drummon (2003), run practice examinations as highlighted by Baker et al. (2001), and produce tests which mirror both examination style and language mirroring the findings of Chudowsky and Pellegrino (2003). As explained by Brian, one of the senior staff at CBC Melbourne,

> The first thing I did was sign up as a VCE marker; that really helped. It gave me an insight into how to answer and manage the paper well. I also did much more marking of students work. They appreciated it and responded well…. I don't have to chase work now it's all done.
> (Senior Teacher, Brian, CBC Melbourne, Appendix 3)

There have been changes made to the curriculum of the lower year level in response to high stakes testing to reflect skills and knowledge bases at the senior year levels supporting the findings of Nichols and Berliner (2007) and Billinger (2004). Congruent with the findings of Yeh (2005) and Kiang (2004), senior teachers at CBC Melbourne are also more likely to mark more often and give more feedback to their students Chris, a senior teacher at CBC Melbourne suggest that:

> There has been an emphasis on the VCE examination right down to Year 7 not only Year 12…they have been exposed to better content and skills. Assessment is much tighter even down to Year 7.
> (Senior Teacher, Chris, CBC Melbourne, Appendix 3)

New members of staff have been employed specifically if they already posses skills focussed on VCE success and existing members of staff have been encouraged most strongly to develop and used these approaches by the College Leadership Team and Faculty Heads (Volante, 2004). As Mr Christian, the Director of Studies attests:

> Getting people in the right position at the right time in the right teams.
> (Mr Christian, Director of Studies, CBC Melbourne, Appendix 3)

Tutorials and extra classes are run out of school hours and during the holidays by all the teaching faculties supporting the findings of Baker et al. (2001) and examination technique is emphasised through assemblies, classroom teaching and written communication. Teachers have been taken off senior classes as a result of a number of years of poor results. These teachers have been provided with support in terms of networking with other school, mentoring by more successful teachers and support in their efforts as VCE markers (see Appendix 3, Section 3.2.4).

Given that the academic climate at CBC Brisbane is long established, the emphasis on student accountability rather than teacher accountability and the fact that only one element of the senior assessment is external, the response of senior teachers is different to that of the other schools, contradicting the findings of Woodard (2002). There has not been a significant shift for senior staff in their subject based (QSA) teaching method (supporting the findings of Clarke et al., 2003; Libresco, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Wolf & Wolf, 2002). However, there has been a significant change in the their whole school approach to the preparation for the external examination the QCS (supporting the findings of Linn, 2003; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). The QSA approach does not call for the use of past papers, but in line with the findings of Chudowsky and Pellegrino (2003) there is widespread use of testing, mirroring the style and content of the final examinations. Examination technique, whilst not explicitly taught for the QSA is mentioned in class; however, it is not a major focus. The teachers are confident of their approach and seek to cover the content thoroughly and in more depth than is necessary for the Queensland Education Authority.

There have however, been significant advances in the preparation for QCS, the external examination against which scores are scaled. The QCS is seen as vital to the success not only of individual students but also of the entire cohort, so a great deal of time an effort

has gone into setting up systems for preparing senior boys to take these examinations. As Mrs. Brown the Director of Studies says, a successful year is when "we've addressed all the issues in the classroom we've dotted every I and crossed every T" (Appendix 2).

Congruent with a large body of educational research (see Smith & Fey, 2000; Gulek, 2003; Firestone et al., 2002; Drummon, 2003), explicit exposition of examination technique and practice examinations is common. Most significantly, the curriculum has expanded by weaving key skills for the QCS into the existing curriculum. This contradicts the vast majority of academic research; however, it is supported by research by Anagnostopolous (2003b), Luna and Turner (2001), Segall (2003), Smith (2006) and Volger (2003). In adding more emphasis on higher order thinking skills required for the QCS, CBC Brisbane again contradicts the majority of research that suggests schools will ignore these skills (Herman, 1992; Tomlinson, 2000), and focus on the facts (Kohn, 1999).

 Statistical analysis of performance and prediction based on these data has been embedded into the process and have led to improvements. A QCS team has been assembled from senior teachers with an explicit function of helping students gain the highest score possible. Senior members of staff emphasise examination technique and preparation through whole year level assemblies and focussed lessons. Class time is used for specific examination technique rather than subject material if required. A group of weaker students have also received special lessons in English and Mathematics to get them to a passing level, supporting the findings of Rockoff (2004).

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6.4.2   Interpretation of findings for research question 2: How do senior teachers

perceive methods employed to achieve academic success in the response to high stakes

testing in their school?

At CBC Adelaide, the push for academic success from the College Leadership Team is

limited on the whole to "conversations" with members of staff following the SACE

results of their senior students. As described by the Director of Studies at CBC Adelaide,

conversations with teachers whose students have underperformed are handled carefully:

> It was giving them an opportunity to say what they think happened and an
> opportunity to say what we can do to improve this, whether its offering
> professional development.
> (Director of Studies, CBC Adelaide, Appendix 1)

Again, in its embryonic stages, the achievement of academic success of staff is based

upon the final examination result of senior students in the teacher's class. The

performance of boys across a number of different subjects is analysed and poor

performances in a particular class would cause concern. The staff member would have a

conversation with a Head of Faculty or the Director of Studies depending on the gravity

of the situation. As was noted in Gradwell's (2006) research, staff members have been

taken off senior classes as a result of poor grades. Mr Brown, Director of Studies gives

some details of the conversation and the support that these teachers can expect.

> It wasn't really these results are poor why? It was giving them an
> opportunity to say what they think happened and an opportunity to
> say what we can do to improve this, whether its offering professional
> development. We have from SABSA a person assigned to the school
> to come out and speak to teachers. Perhaps it's because they've
> marked too high or not enough or whatever, it's about making sure if
> they are unhappy with the results they have the skills to make sure

that doesn't happen again. In most cases they are pretty disappointed with those results too.

At CBC Adelaide the situation is, however, rare and to the greater extent staff do not feel the pressure to perform as a result of these measures. Some staff members report that they feel protected from the complaints of students and parents. When challenged, some staff have not reacted well, supporting the findings of Smith (2001), whereas some Heads of Faculty would prefer more pressure be applied to underperforming teachers. The overriding response from staff is based upon the feeling that there is no push to make the boys succeed in the final examinations and staff members attest to the "care-free" attitude of their students. Moreover, teachers are encouraged not to make the boys exceed their natural academic limit. The climate at CBC Adelaide would suggest that there is little general or specific accountability for either students or staff. In the words of Alan, a senior teacher at CBC Adelaide:

> there is a **care-free attitude to student performance**… it's up to the subject teachers to motivate and maintain, if they choose not to nothing happens which is a bit sad.
> (Senior Teacher, Alan, CBC Adelaide, Appendix 1)

Allan's feelings of sadness at the lack of accountability in this context are quite significant. A large body of literature exists to suggest that high stakes testing will cause teachers to have a negative emotional effect (for example Smith, 2001). However, Allan's negative emotional response may be drawn from a feeling of powerlessness in the face of a " care free attitude" amongst students. It is worth noting that high stakes testing is shown to have a positive effect where high quality professional development is available (Cozart & Gerstl-Pepin, 2002), as is the case at CBC Adelaide through SSABSA, and that it has been shown to focus the learning of students towards measurable goals (Bushweller, 1997).

At CBC Melbourne the climate is focussed on teacher accountability: if a student is underperforming the **teacher** is asked, "What will **you** do about it?" A wide range of

accountability measures and reporting have been introduced and embedded over a ten year period and now form the fabric of the teaching landscape for senior teachers. Teacher performance is based on the percentage of their students gaining study scores above 40 and the value added score for their classes. Teachers are asked to explain poor results through interviews with the Head of Faculty, the Director of Studies and the Headmaster. Again at CBC Melbourne some teachers have been taken off senior classes in response to continued poor results supporting the findings of Gradwell (2006).

The first three days of term see the school reflect on the performance of the preceding year's senior cohort. There is an in-depth analysis of all classes and what has been termed "the graph of shame" where all subjects have their 40+ scores published at a full staff meeting. Successful staff members are congratulated publicly and a small token of appreciation is given to the senior teachers who gain particularly good marks. Those teachers whose classes do not gain high numbers of 40+ scores, or fail to pass the 25% "Wilding line" report that this is a stressful time echoing the findings of Dworkin (2001).

Members of staff who have been at the College over this period of time report that they found these measures confronting and the emphasis on examination preparation added to the pressure of teaching senior classes, supporting the findings of Hillocks (2002). However, a number of staff who were taken off senior classes "bounced back" as noted by Yeh (2005) and Kiang (2004), after a series of professional development activities, VCE marking and in some cases, networking with other schools. As one who bounced back, a senior teacher at St Kevin's provides and insight to his experience when he says:

> Staff are much more accountable for the results of their students now. I
> don't necessarily think this is a bad thing as well…. staff can go one of
> two ways; I chose to make a point and improve.
>   (Senior Teacher, Andrew, CBC Melbourne).

Overall then, senior teacher's responses to the value added scores varies considerably at CBC Melbourne. Some value it greatly based on the premise that it gives an indication of the work they do with the whole cohort rather than just the top students. Others report that they pay little attention to this statistic, one reason being that they do not see it as a statistically valid measure.

The significance of the professional development in increasing the positive effects of high stakes testing echoes the findings of McNeil (2000) and Schoenfeld (2004). It is interesting to note that now, there is a waiting list of staff who wish to take senior classes even though they know the extent to which their students' performance will be analysed and reported. As reported by the Headmaster:

> In a whole range of subjects there are people saying, given the knowledge of what the expectations are and the discussions that occur and the fact that results are closely analysed we have got people saying when can I get my chance at it (teaching VCE)
> (Headmaster, CBC Melbourne)

At CBC Brisbane the climate is directed towards student accountability; if a student is underperforming the **student** will be asked, "What are **you** going to do about it?" If members of staff are perceived not to be performing Heads of Faculty will have a "quiet talk" with the staff member. There is no formal review policy linked to examination success. However, the Director of Studies will interview staff members whose classes are continually underperforming, although the criteria for this were not clearly evident in the data for the present study. The experience of staff members at CBC Brisbane is in line with those reported by Nichols and Berliner (2005; 2007) and by (Hillocks, 2002) who studied teachers acting in a high stakes environment where examination results informed the feedback process. In some cases at CBC Brisbane where teachers have been asked to explain a series of poor results or have been taken off senior classes those teachers have not reacted well. Indeed there is a perception amongst staff at the College that the accountability measures aimed at the students, not the staff, is effective and appropriate.

If there is a problem with academic performance it comes back to the student. There are very advanced and well-embedded accountability procedures in place to track the students; this is not the case for staff accountability. As Ben, a senior teacher at CBC Brisbane confirms:

> Academics are the focus of the school, the boys know that. If they are slacking then consequences will occur, they will lose privileges (Senior Teacher Ben, CBC Brisbane).

The emphasis on examination preparation for the QCS is well received by senior staff who appreciate that it will aid the students significantly. The push towards examination success is "the biggest team sport" at CBC Brisbane. Teachers appreciate being involved in the process and acknowledge the excellent work done by the College Leadership Team and the Director of Studies particularly.

6.4.3 Interpretation of Findings for Research Question 3: Given the Charismatic nature of a Christian Brothers School is there congruence between the lived experience of the Charism and the goals of the school management?

When addressing the findings of this research question, the underlying epistemological stance of the each College regarding its charismatic nature becomes quickly apparent. Each has a particular reading of the Charter (2004) that calls for schools to promote service to others. This epistemological stance is formed not only by the present senior staff and Headmaster but also its perceived standing in the school and wider community. It becomes clear that each College has a definite reading of the calling of the lived experience of Edmund Rice, from a literal education of the poor and marginalised through to the education of tomorrow's leaders who can advocate for the poor and marginalised.

In terms of mission, CBC Adelaide sees itself as a true Christian Brothers school based on the three pillars of "spirituality, academic endeavour and co-curricular involvement" (Appendix 1, Section 1.2.3) catering for those who are not overtly wealthy (see Appendix 1, Section 1.2.8) and preparing them to take the step into public life supporting the proposition of McGillion (2004). As the Headmaster attests:

> By virtue of who Edmund Rice was and his own socio-economic status he was able to influence others, then so to the next Edmund Rice may come from a school like CBC Adelaide…because they'll have power and influence and a good all-round education. Nothing would be better for those elements to combine in a way where that person has a capacity to change for the better. (Appendix 1, section 1.2.10)

Staff attest that whilst CBC Adelaide has sporting affiliations with other Independent Schools, it sees itself "as a Christian Brothers' school first and foremost" (Appendix 1, Section 1.3.10). CBC Adelaide seeks to take in the poor and marginalised and educate them. It sees its role as catering for a broad spectrum of academic pathways and capabilities. Rather than adjust its clientele to fit a more academic profile it has striven to put in place a wide range of vocational courses to cater for less academically inclined students and support structures for those with special intellectual needs. It was interesting to note that students had transferred from an Ignation School to CBC Adelaide because they wanted a less academic climate (Appendix 1, Section 1.4.4). There was a sense that CBC Adelaide fit the **perceived** traditional role of educating the less academic whilst the local Ignation School catered for those who were more academically orientated.

Enrolment to the College is based firstly on the acceptance of Christian ideals and the Principal is explicit in terms of making CBC Adelaide accessible to all incomes. As Allan says:

> I think if we are true to our ethos being a Christian Brother school, if that's what you're trying to advertise that's what you should be doing. There are a certain amount of subsidies given to parents, a group of Sudanese boys as well. We are a genuine Christian

Brothers' School. It is a challenge to embrace the philosophy and
maintain the academic (Appendix 1, Section 1.4.8).

However, the fact that the students on the whole come from more privileged backgrounds
is not lost on the Headmaster particularly who asserts that when "students get richer they
become spiritually poorer" (Appendix 1, section 1.2.10).CBC Adelaide does not stress
academic achievement at the expense of other aspects of school life and values service of
others very highly.

Senior teachers and management at the school report significant congruence between the
lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice and the focus of the school. Its focus on
the service to others, coupled with the acceptance of students from a wide range of socio
economic, cultural, intellectual and religious backgrounds ensure that CBC Adelaide's
teachers are at ease with its place as a Christian Brothers' school. It does not suffer from
comparison with other Independent schools in an association and it is not compared
academically in the local newspapers or media. There is a sense that students at CBC
Adelaide are encouraged to be engaged in service first hand, in a literal sense, to make a
difference in the lives of others. They may go on to advocate for the poor and
marginalised in life outside school but the emphasis lies in the day to day service of
others. A senior teacher from CBC Adelaide maintains:

> We are a genuine Christian Brothers' School. It is a challenge to embrace
> the philosophy and maintain the academic.
> (Senior Teacher Brett, CBC Adelaide, Appendix 1).

There is a high degree of congruence, therefore, between the lived experience of the
Charism of Edmund Rice at CBC Adelaide and the daily experience of senior staff.
However, the reading of the message of the Charism of Edmund Rice and their
interpretation of the Cultural characteristics at the Heart of a Christian Brothers' school
maybe somewhat simplistic. Senior teachers at CBC Adelaide take the message as a call
for a focus on service learning above other aspects of their education. The academic focus

of the school is not as refined as the other schools that form this study. The congruence between the message of the Charism and the message of the Leadership team is very high, one wonders whether the message of the Leadership reflected a reading of the Charism that was already present or if there has been a re-interpretation of the Charism to suit the message of the Leadership team.

It is worthwhile reiterating that for the greater part of its history, CBC Melbourne was the smallest school in the Association of Private Schools (APS), its academic achievement was modest, its sporting results poor and its facilities lacking. In a relatively short period of time it has set new academic records, has transformed the school's facilities and won numerous premierships. There is a general acceptance across the staff that there is a tension between being in the APS and being a Christian Brothers school. As Chris suggests:

> I think there is a really difficult connection between us and the APS. I think other schools do it better because their focus has always been more academic (Appendix 3, Section 3.5.7).

However, it is generally seen as a healthy tension and the College benefits from being in the APS and a Christian Brothers' School. The mindset of many staff in the recent past is that CBC Melbourne was somewhat of a poor cousin of the APS but that has dissipated over time. Indeed, Andrew suggests that "not only do we belong (to the APS) it is imperative that we belong" (Appendix 3, section 3.3.4). Public perception in terms of academic and sporting result reported in the media has also raised the profile of the school.

CBC Melbourne is in a stage of metamorphosis that is almost complete. It has developed from a traditional Christian Brothers' school catering for the poor and marginalised to a

point where it accepts that its clientele are drawn largely from privileged backgrounds with high socioeconomic and intellectual aspirations. Brian maintains:

> We are much more likely to educate leaders at the College who can advocate for the marginalised than to educate the marginalised themselves. I personally don't see an issue with bringing the message of Edmund Rice to the well off. In fact I'd go as far to say that if we don't do then who would? We give these students a great opportunity to serve others in the community and thankfully they grasp that opportunity (Appendix 3, Section 3.4.6).

The message for the students is that they will be tomorrow's leaders who will need to advocate for the poor in their roles as Catholic figureheads in the broader community. This message is transmitted strongly from the College Leadership and is accepted and recognised by the majority of staff. As a senior teacher attests:

> Through good management however, we have retained our Christian Brothers' ethos and in fact I would say we are far more explicit about our Christian Brothers' approach now we have a lay head.
> (Senior teacher, Brian, CBC Melbourne, Appendix 3, Section 3.4.7)

However, there is still confusion amongst some staff and some reluctance to accept this role. Some staff members retain a view that the students should be more service orientated rather than so focussed on academic achievement and that academic achievement is not inherently part of a true Christian Brothers' school. Chris asserts that:

> The Charism for me is more working for the poor not pushing for academics. I think there is a dissonance between the Charism and doing well academically (Appendix 3, Section 3.5.6).

Although students are involved heavily in community service, fundraising and work with new immigrants, the mindset of the staff and students is the importance of this as a lived experience that should influence them post school. The Headmaster maintains that:

> We are producing young men that will have leadership roles within the community. We were founded to have a major impact in Melbourne. If we produce young men with a social conscience then we are staying true to our origins.
> (Headmaster, CBC Melbourne, Appendix 3, Section 3.1.11).

It does not detract from the benefits inherent in performing these works; however, the higher aim is to train the students to advocate and work for the poor and marginalised as

professionals and leaders. The interpretation of the Charism has changed to meet the message of the Leadership team in this context. However, this is a change of mindset that has taken place in the recent past and has yet to embed with the entire staff body causing some dissonance.

Historically, CBC Brisbane has been an academic and sporting leader within the Great Private Schools (GPS). It has had a very high profile in the Brisbane community and is well regarded throughout the country. It has a reputation of strong academic prowess and has drawn it students from high socioeconomic and intellectual backgrounds. It has catered for the greater part of its existence to the sons of professionals. CBC Brisbane speaks proudly of its long history of educating leader in business, the Church, sport and academia in its own publications. Having been successfully in the GPS system for a lengthy period of time members of staff and the community view it as a school of high standing.

To this end CBC Brisbane seeks to educate the leaders of tomorrow through service programs, fundraising and overseas aid. It seeks to imbue in the students a commitment to the poor and marginalised that goes beyond their tenure at CBC Brisbane. Whilst they insist they are not elitist, they recognise that they cater for students from very privileged backgrounds. They are committed to excellence not just participation or endeavour. A senior teacher says:

> There a big focus a the school on producing boys with a strong sense of
> social justice and the reality is that they are likely to be out in positions of
> power and influence…and your opportunity and even duty is to go out and
> be people of integrity and do what you can in the environment that you are
> working in to be people of justice.
> (Senior Teacher, Ann, CBC Brisbane, Appendix 2)

With these factors in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that there is a strong degree of congruence between CBC Brisbane's lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice

and its role in the GPS. It has a long experience of catering for the privileged and

expecting excellence. As Colin suggests:

> be the best person you can be in all respects, whether that's academically, on
> the sporting field. I can't see any clash there what so over, we do the other
> bits and pieces (Appendix 2, Section 1.6.5).

It has been a pace setter in the GPS and its message has evolved over a long period of

time. The ethos that underpins student's actions at CBC Brisbane has been embedded and

accepted by both members of staff, students and the wider community. Asked whether

CBC Brisbane struggles to be both a genuine Christian Brothers' school and part of the

GPS, Ann's response was quite emphatic:

> No, it doesn't seem to be the way at all. Should it? Belonging to an elitist
> group like the GPS it is an opportunity to stand up and be who you really are
> in any situation (Appendix 2, Section 1.4.8).

There is a sense of continuum rather than change as the College has matured so has the

underlying epistemology. A senior teacher attests:

> There's a strong correlation between the GPS and academic
> achievement. I feel that the GPS system promotes excellence, excellence
> in everything…This school is founded by the forefathers in 1875 to
> carry this forward.
> (Senior Teacher, Ben, CBC Brisbane, Appendix 2)

The reading of the Charism on this case maintains that Christian Brothers' schools can be

both academically successful and give service to others, they are not mutually exclusive.

Indeed as one senior teacher says:

> You make the most of the situation you're in and gain the most from it;
> you're being un-Christian if you are not making the most of the situation or
> interfering with others to hinder them (Appendix 1, Section 1.6.5).

The message has been firmly engrained at CBC Brisbane and a strong degree of

congruence exists between the message of the Leadership team and the lived experience

of the Charism of Edmund Rice.

6.4.4   Interpretation of Findings for Research Question 4: How can methods be

employed to improve academic success whilst remaining congruent with lived experience

of the Charism of Edmund Rice in their school?

The methods use to improve the academic outcomes of students are varied and specific to

the form of assessment to which the students are subjected. The three schools have

different expectations of the students and staff members. The academic culture of the

school to a large extent dictates the degree of congruence that is maintained between the

drive for academic success and its lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice. The

nature of teacher accountability and assessment will also impact significantly on the

impact of a number of these methods.

At present CBC Adelaide's academic expectations of its students is not high amongst

staff members. There is a general acceptance that the students govern their own fate and

poor marks can be attributed to a lack of effort or capacity on the part of the student.

When questioned whether this was the nature of the students or the systems put in place

that garnered good SACE results, a senior teacher at CBC Adelaide replied:

<div align="center">It's probably the bunch of kids</div>

There is no extended history of teacher accountability and the introduction of

accountability methods seem at odds with the message of not pushing the students

beyond their natural limit (see Appendix 1, Section 1.2.9). The system of Heads of

Faculty having informal "conversations" with members of staff whose classes

underperform is taking root, whilst some Heads of Faculty would like a more stringent

approach to accountability (see Appendix 1, Section 1.5.6). The message to the school

and wider community is that they want the students to do as well as they can without

artificially inflating their scores to unsupportable levels. If this were the case, students

would drop out of University without the support or drive that they gained from the school and as the Headmaster of CBC Adelaide, puts it:

> I think we've done a disservice to students in our singular focus on academic success.
> (Headmaster, CBC Adelaide, Appendix 1)

There is a great deal of room, therefore, to prepare the ground for a more rigorous approach to academic achievement if so desired. At present there is no system of students' accountability and staff do not feel that there is pressure on them to perform. As Alan suggests that "Nothing is said, a personal goal what you strive for."(Appendix 1, Section 1.4.5).

There is congruence, therefore, between the reality of their situation and the expectation of the school.

Staff members whose classes are underachieving at CBC Adelaide are supported well through SSABSA, school based professional development and encouragement to mark SACE papers. There is a subtle approach being taken by the College Leadership Team as they embark in this new phase of academic development for the CBC Adelaide. The steps taken by the Director of Studies are in their infancy and it will be interesting to see if they become embedded over a period of time, become more explicit, or abandoned. I feel that CBC Adelaide is at the beginning of a continuum where staff accountability will become more endemic at the College. There is some support for a move towards accountability under the umbrella of greater care for the academic outcomes of the students. Brett as senior teacher suggest that more specific training of senior staff in terms of academic outcomes, helping the students with course selection and study skills would bear fruit (See Appendix 1, Section 1.5.6). Some heads of department have taken it upon themselves to talk to underperforming teachers. These conversations are handled delicately, as Alan attests:

You try to make the conversations as un-confrontational as possible, more of a chat because there's no pressure on Heads of Faculty to perform or get their faculty to ensure that students get certain marks so you don't feel you have to pressure the faculty members…You handle them (the interviews) with kid gloves…staff are very protective of their results some do come up very quickly with excuses. I suppose when students who are strong across the board come up with a poor mark that's when a little bit of attention is given to it, but nothing formal.... In some ways out staff a bit protected, I think there needs to be some discussion.

Whilst CBC Adelaide's accountability measures are in their infancy, CBC Melbourne's measures have almost reached adult hood. The difficult early years of change have passed and the systems of teacher accountability have become enmeshed into the fibre of the College. Existing staff members have become accepting or have moved on and new staff recognise that this is part of senior teaching at the College as Brian attests:

I am aware of how closely we are assessed using the marks of the students, particularly the high achievers, but I am also aware that I need to really push all the boys. The emphasis is on me to get everything possible out of the students. I firmly believe that the boys don't really know their own potential unless you really push them to their academic limit (Appendix 3, Section 3.4.3).
.

When the measures were first introduced it was done systematically based on hard data, with the understanding that the students were not reaching their potential. A whole raft of measures were introduced simultaneously (see appendix 3, Section 3.1.6) and expectations were set (the so called "Wilding Line"). Initial levels of dissonance were high amongst teachers since academic expectation had not been the teachers' first priority. However, over a period of time just as the level of academic achievement has increased the level of congruence between the message of the management and what the Charism means to staff members has increased. As Brian comments:

Of course if you are not getting the marks no matter what you do, you would be pretty upset. People have stopped teaching VCE or been asked to take a break as it were. Some people have really bounced back well on the other hand through professional pride I suppose…. However, there are plenty of people queuing up to teach VCE, the staff are pretty driven I think (Appendix 3, Section 3.4.3).

At the initial stages the priority of the student's achievement was seen to outweigh the sensitivities of the senior teachers. It is important to note that the message of the management about academic achievement has not changed since the focus on academics began; however, there has been a significant change to the message about the lived experience of the Charism and what it means at the school. As a senior member of staff says:

> We have made great strides over the last ten years in terms of academic gains. …I think in the past we perceived that we were a small Christian Brothers' school …..however, we have retained our Christian Brothers' ethos and in fact I would say we are far more explicit about our Christian Brothers' approach now we have a lay head.
> (Senior Teacher, Brian, CBC Melbourne, Appendix 3)

As academic achievement has become an expectation at the College, the climate has changed; so too has public perception. Staff are accepting of the high standards of academic pursuits and are proud of what has been achieved. Senior teachers have not only accepted the measures introduced, they generally feel that if the measures of teacher accountability were taken away, results would deteriorate or as Mr Christian, director of Studies at CBC Melbourne contends that "They certainly wouldn't go up".

Initially, teacher accountability interviews with staff were difficult; however, as the system has matured both the nature of the interviews and how they are accepted has matured. Early on, the interviews were a "culture shock" for existing staff (indeed new members of staff still experience this shock); however, these interviews are now spoken of in more supportive terms. "Knee jerk" reactions are avoided through the use of longitudinal data to inform the interviews and an extensive list of professional development options are recommended before a teacher is taken off senior classes.

Methods to improve academic success have gone far beyond teacher accountability systems but these are still seen as integral. The support systems for students, enacted

though testing, career counselling and subject specific information is extensive. The

greatest indicator for student performance however remains the performance of the

teacher.

The focus for CBC Brisbane could not be further from the CBC Melbourne experience.

Whilst an enormous amount of time, effort and resources goes into teacher accountability

at CBC Melbourne, the same can be said for the student accountability systems at CBC

Brisbane. Students are held directly accountable for their successes and failures. As Mrs

Brown Director of Studies says:

> Teachers would say that there is pressure on them to maintain very high
> standards and to make sure that their results are up to par. In saying that
> we don't target teachers we target students.
> (Director of Studies, CBC Brisbane, Appendix 2)

Teachers are seen as facilitators to that performance rather than the greatest influence

upon it. Moves to increase levels of teacher accountability have met with some

negativity. Ann suggests that some teachers feel "under the microscope" (Appendix 1,

Section 1.4.5). Staff seem threatened by feedback, and any change to current protocols

need to be managed carefully and systematically. Teachers are not used to assessment of

their performance and a dramatic change of mindset is required (see Appendix 1, section

1.3.4).

CBC Brisbane is a mature school with student accountability measures embedded in the

day-to-day life of the College. There is common acceptance of this level of accountability

amongst the student body, as Ben remarks:

> Academics are the focus of the school, the boys know that. If they are
> slacking then consequences will occur, they will lose privileges
> (Appendix 1, Section 1.5.5).

Decisions are based on 'hard' facts gleaned from extensive data capture and manipulation. Teachers and students trust the system because it has served them well. Teachers at CBC Brisbane are long serving and seem very comfortable.

There is a push to create a team of senior teachers who focus on year 12 students, and perhaps there is a need to proliferate the skills of these teachers amongst the other staff (see Appendix 1 Section 1.3.4). Professional development based on pedagogical approaches may be a key; at present it is not performed. It may be in the explicit professional development of core QCS skills amongst the general staff holds the key for increased academic success at CBC Brisbane. It appears that CBC Melbourne could examine and use CBC Brisbane's model of student accountability; whereas, CBC Brisbane could emulate the CBC Melbourne model regarding teacher accountability.

6.5   Discussion

A review of the findings from this project suggests that it is possible to raise, or maintain, the academic achievement of senior students in Christian Brothers' schools using the high stakes testing and remain congruent with the Charism of Edmund Rice. The findings show that whilst the emotional response of senior teachers is predictably unfavourable at first, however, with time and persistence, senior staff come to see it as part of teaching in the higher years and accept that it "comes with the territory". The pedagogy of senior teachers change over time, but contrary to most research, this research suggests that there can be an expansion of content and an inclusion of higher order thinking skills. There will be a proliferation of teaching to the test techniques, but rather than viewing this as a

negative response, this research suggests that teachers are mirroring and teaching good practise.

The experience of all three schools shows the importance of messages from the Leadership Team in reinforcing school identity. The message of the Leadership Team was central in all cases to the degree of congruence between the push for academic success and the congruence with the Charismatic environment. In all three cases, the Leadership Team interpreted what the message of Edmund Rice was for them in their context and sought to produce a message that was congruent with their academic aspirations. There was a realisation that Christian Brothers' schools can drive academic achievement; furthermore it is a central Cultural Characteristic at the Heart of Christian Brothers' Schools.

When using high stakes data the College Leadership team was also central to the successful implementation and management of such measures. The research shows that it can be successfully managed where the Leadership team use in within context, based on hard data and pursue it for the good of the students. There will be difficulty in implementation, but the result will be improved academic outcomes for the students. The use of high stakes data can be used as an accountability measure for staff and students, however, the use of high stakes data as a staff accountability measure is shown to improve result in a shorter period of time. It is suggested that the use of student accountability measures, once engrained, can promote self directed and focussed learners; an ideal for all schools.

The research also shows that it is possible to raise or maintain academic standards by the promotion of and commitment to excellence, built on good teaching practice, with authentic and effective learning environments. College Leadership, senior teachers and

students will have to commit to these ideals, whether this is voluntarily or through the use of accountability measures. Transmitting this message to the wider community was more problematic however. The influence of the media in defining what a successful school is, takes the voice from teachers and places it with reporters who do not have, on the whole, an education background. The school can be proactive and address its focus to the primary focus of the media whilst maintaining the interests of the whole cohort, as has been shown in this research.

Having discussed the research questions it is possible to present a series of recommendations for future practice. The recommendations for future practice are presented as a list of recommendations for a hypothetical school in the Christian Brothers' Tradition that is seeking academic success whilst being faithful to the Charismatic environment that informs its day-to-day activities. The hypothetical scenario calls for a wide raft of changes that are gleaned from the research findings and the experience of each of the schools in this research. This is done in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

HYPOTHETICAL

7.1 Introduction

This research is about teachers. They teach in schools that follow the Tradition of the Christian Brothers and are also the highest achieving academic Christian Brothers' schools in their state. High stakes testing is a feature of the schools, to greater or lesser degree, and the response of senior teachers in each school forms the basis of the thesis. Each school from which the data was collected is an excellent school by most measures.

Their facilities are of the highest order, their teachers are well qualified and committed, and their education is wholistic and extremely well supported. They have achieved remarkable success on the sport field across summer and winter seasons and have innovative and proactive performing arts faculties. Pastorally strong, the schools promote service learning and work in the wider community. Whilst there are significant differences in approach between the schools, they are all outstanding Catholic boys Schools in the Tradition of the Christian Brothers.

7.2 Overview of my Research Process

The purpose of this research was to review the experience of senior teachers and administrators from the three schools and highlight ways in which teachers at Christian Brother's schools can achieve academic success whilst remaining congruent with their lived experience of Edmund Rice's Charism. Underpinning this purpose was the belief that teachers and managers of schools can help their students achieve academic successes within the framework of a Christian Brother's School committed to the values of Edmund Rice.

The last two chapters discussed the analysis of the data collected at the three schools and discussed the four research questions, which guided the study. I now move to providing recommendations for practice couched in the terms of a hypothetical situation of a Christian Brothers' school seeking to improve its academic achievement. I describe the context of the school in question. I also suggest that these recommendations provide a framework for all Christian Brothers' schools seeking to maintain or improve academic achievement. The hypothetical example may also be of use to schools that are not aligned to the Christian Brother's but have strong faith messages at the core of their practice. In

other words the hypothetical is a device used to draw together insights found in the research project but applied in an integrated comprehensive manner to a "possibility".

7.3 Recommendations for Practice: A Model for Christian Brother's School Pursuing Academic Success

This final chapter is devoted to providing recommendations for future practice. To this end I have produced a model for a hypothetical Christian Brother's school that wishes to improve its academic success whilst remaining faithful to the Charism of Edmund Rice. The hypothetical is drawn from the areas highlighted as contributing to the academic success of the three schools from which the data was collected for the research project.

Although not providing an exhaustive list, the hypothetical does attempt to present a range of methods that can be employed by a school to promote academic success. The hypothetical is a culmination of the research and does not suggest that all these factors were found in any one, or all, of the schools. The hypothetical highlights factors that range from staff and student accountability measures to goal setting, management messages and marketing. Details that are context specific are not included such as the names of programs used or particular awards but the over-arching methods are listed. The factors and their relative association are shown in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: A framework for improving academic achievement in a Christian Brothers' school.
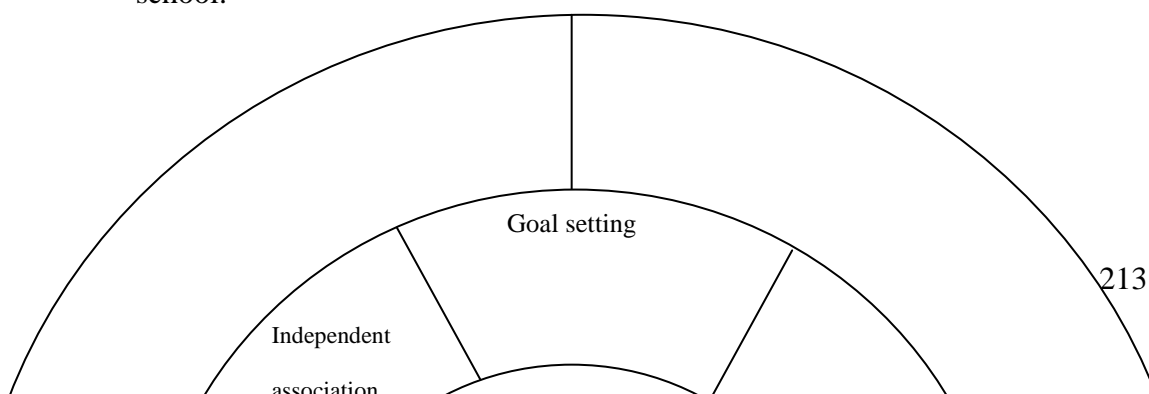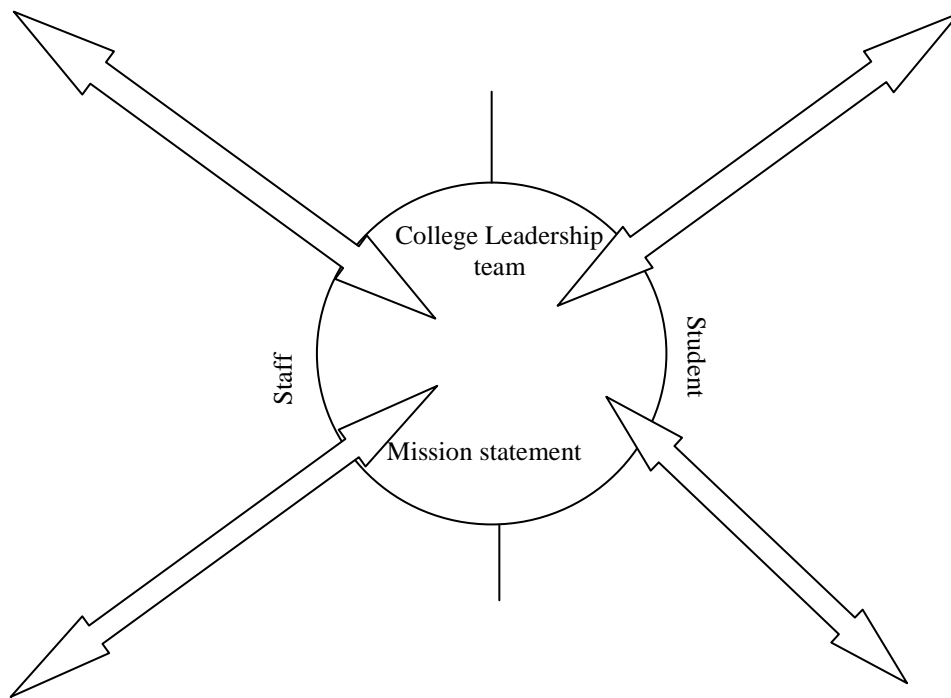
The framework shown in figure 7.1 highlights that Christian Brothers' schools can have two distinct influences in guiding practice, the College Leadership Team and the College Mission Statement. The cyclical nature of the diagram however indicates the connectedness of the two approaches. Discussion in earlier chapter have shown how the message from one aspect can be impacted by the other. The calls for excellence by the mission statement informed by *The Charter (*2004) and the College Leadership Team should be enacted using both staff and student accountability measures. These influences devolve messages to the staff and students about the need and use of high stakes testing, the setting of high goals and the use of these in a supportive professional environment. If performed appropriately, the underpinning messages that inform practice would lead to a school experiencing a climate striving for academic achievement and experiencing a genuine lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice. I now move to describe important factors impacting on the hypothetical school.

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7.3.1 Context of the hypothetical school

Founded in 1930, St. Philip Carters' College is a Catholic Boys school, following the Christian Brothers' tradition and educates approximately 1300 boys from prep to Year 12. The senior students follow a curriculum set by the state government based on external examinations and Standardised Achievement Tests (SAT). The senior students have historically achieved moderately highly in their examination in comparison with like schools, but they are consistently 3rd or 4th when measured against all other Catholic schools in the state. Local newspapers carry a comprehensive review of senior students scores including the average value added scores for the scores, the average enter score for senior students, and the percentage of students who achieved A+ in their final examination. Local media use the percentage of A+'s achieved to identify their "top performing schools".

There is a strong service learning program, with a great deal of support given to taking immigrant students into the school, offering assisted places and going out in to the community to serve others. Teaching staff at the school are collegial and supportive of each other. When asked about the Christian Brothers' nature of the their school, they are happy to note that whilst they do not get the best academic students they produce fine young men in the mould of Edmund Rice. However, an interpretation of a Christian Brother's school as being 'non-academic' exists amongst some of the staff.

7.3.2 Staff Accountability

After a period of internal review and consultation with its wider community, the Leadership Team at St.Philip's has decided that any view of the College as 'non-

academic' will in the long run not be in their best interests. Hence they have decided to implement a change process. The following sections outline some of the major factors that they will address.

The area of staff accountability was seen as key in one of the three schools and was mentioned in the other two in this research project. Hence, I would recommend that the school would immediately implement a number of measures to increase staff accountability at St. Philip's ensuring that the high stakes data collected to assess staff is viewed within a context and linked to high quality professional development. The staff accountability would be based on three areas: a value added measure of student achievement, the percentage of A+'s achieved by the senior students in that teacher's class, and the overall average study score achieved by students in that teacher's class. A range of measures would not only give a broad view of achievement across a number of measures. It also looks at achievement across the board as well as the top end of achievement, it also addresses what is seen by the media (and probably the general public) as what defines successful schools. It would have to be viewed in isolation in the first year but over a period of time a protracted picture of achievement should be formed.

The staff questioned in this research project attested to the fact that the high stakes data collected must be analysed within the context of the staff member's history and their ongoing practice. That is to say that the data for one year should not be used in isolation. The person analysing the high stakes data needs to find long-term trends in the data rather than acting on peaks and troughs. The context should also take into account the teachers' personal context within the calendar year. Issues such as health, and relationships need to be taken into account. Knee-jerk reactions need to be avoided at all cost.

The systems that seem to work the best have a number of key elements. They have a high degree of transparency in their application and the use of data. Hence, it should come as no surprise to teachers that their results are publicised, analysed, praised or criticised. The systems should also be based on 'hard' facts rather than only qualitative data where possible. If personality and preference is taken out of the accountability measure there is more likelihood for the staff member to take the measure seriously and it also gives the person driving the accountability a degree of impartiality. Interviews conducted on the basis of problems identified by data analysis are more likely to succeed than those called on the basis of "gut feeling".

Managing the systems takes a delicate mix of hard-nosed determination to start them, an ability to use data impartially and responsibility and the delicate task of reflecting on data in light of the personal context of the staff member. The data produced by the senior students in their final examination is compelling evidence of the effectiveness of individual teachers and to manage change using this data required sensitive yet firm handling. Following a process of informing the staff of the decision to use the data, it's form and the outcomes, the person driving the systems must put into place a series of feedback protocols and follow up sessions for staff. Having identified teachers as underachieving, they are to be informed, given a chance to see and speak to the data, explore the reasons behind the underachievement, reflect on their performance and that of their students and put in place a series of steps for the staff member to perform to a higher degree in the following year. Clear goals and feedback milestones need to be put in place and a series of professional development opportunities explored.

The most effective professional development reported across all sites was the marking of senior examinations. All teachers who had taken part in external marking attested to a greater ability to prepare their students for the examinations and an improvement in the

outcomes for students. The person driving professional development at St. Philip's may therefore choose to highlight this particular professional development and strongly encourage staff to participate in it. In order to do this the merits must be publicised and protocols may be put in place to encourage staff to do this such as a reduced timetable or leave granted. Links with other schools or networks must be developed at a managerial level and staff invited to speak with other teachers working in the same discipline. If state-wide support from the education authority exists this can be called upon to aid teachers. There must be a series of avenues for a teacher to explore once they have been identified by the high stakes data. The positive effect of these data would be immediately negated without the resources to call upon easily and systematically.

7.3.3   Student accountability

In tandem with the Staff Accountability measures I would also recommend that St. Philip's institute a range of Student Accountability measures. Student accountability measures were deemed to work most effectively when they shared a number of key factors. The factors identified in this study included student feedback based on data, modelling and prediction of student outcomes and accountability systems.

Student accountability measures were seen as most effective where they were based on hard data and had an action reaction approach. Measures were most effective when there was an ability to highlight a student's performance in terms of actual marks and give a prediction of their likely long-term outcomes. Where a model had been developed to see the effect of changes made in individual subjects on a student's overall score, the student should take away specific quantified goals for them to work on. The notion of "could do better if you try harder" was deemed to have little effect. However, feedback that could predict with a high degree of accuracy, for example "if you achieve this mark in this

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subject then you will gain an increase of five in your overall mark" had a very strong effect.

The modelling of scores, whilst time consuming and requiring a high degree of technical and systemic knowledge, was highlighted as integral to the success of student accountability methods. The nature of the feedback should be easily understood by the students and parents; however, it also needs to carry with it sufficient weight that it elicits the desired response. An iterative ongoing process of measurement and feedback should also be put in place.

7.3.4 Goal setting

Whether academic, pastoral, sporting or cultural, each school in the research set explicit goals for its students and staff. In some cases teachers set their own personal goals and reported against them. However, where goal setting was seen as most effective, goals were concrete and in some cases quantified. At a whole school level, I would institute a "Davies Line" at a level above those of the Catholic schools that St. Philip's is compared against. But I would also engage individual departments and staff in a process of their goal setting and evaluation. The use of targeting scores across the school, giving a specific challenge to staff and reporting against it, carries with it a strong message of intent from the College Leadership Team and a focus for senior staff. Asking senior staff at St. Philips' to set specific quantified goals for themselves may also derive success. The staff member should be asked to make predictions of student scores and reflect on the performance of the students once the year is complete. The action of assessing the potential of the individual students rather than the whole class to find an overall trend may bear fruit. It would encourage the teacher to assess the relative strengths and weakness of each student, predict a likely outcome based on their prior performance and

be more aware of the potential of each individual rather than the outcome of the whole. Goal setting should take place at the inception of the year with a personal reflection of the last year, areas of focus, a series of milestones and a prediction for senior classes.

7.3.5 Delivering the message

It was quickly apparent in all sites in the research project that the influence of the leaders in the College was enormous. The language that was common to all flowed down from the Leadership Team and infiltrated the whole community. The message of the Leadership Team was successful because they delivered strong, clear messages that were repeated often so that messages entered the vernacular. With this in mind I would encourage the College Leadership at St. Philip's to take time to formulate their core messages which they clearly believe in, which could be easily remembered and should be repeated often. These messages would be based on themes of excellence and commitment to studies.

In all three schools at the heart of this research project the message was very strong and elucidated very clearly. Where excellence was called for it was woven into the fabric of the whole school day. It was an expectation of all at all times. The message was relayed clearly to staff members, parents and students. Students and parents were well-informed using language that was accessible to the whole community. Those outside the school were able to gain a snap shot of what was expected and to pass this information to others with clarity and accuracy.

The messages were repeated at a wide variety of levels and gatherings. The whole community was bombarded with the key messages from the school leadership. As part of transferring the message specific phrases were focussed upon and imagery was

employed. It needs to be clear and strongly crafted to enable terminology to be repeated by all individuals This enabled the staff, students and parents to absorb the message and repeat it as part of their daily lives. The strength of the message was magnified because it was crystallised and repeated amongst the whole community. Having entered the vernacular, the message coloured the lens though which all actions at the school took place.

7.3.6   *Achieving an academic climate*

Although difficult to achieve, changing the academic climate of a school is possible and this would be a key focus at St. Philip's. In the schools that form the research only one has undertaken and completed an enormous change of academic climate, as opposed to maintaining climates that have been in place for a significant time. However, the factors identified as leading to successful climate change are also found where a strong academic climate needs to be maintained or constantly improved. The factors included rewarding and recognising excellence, making excellence visual, pitching classes at the top of the academic spectrum, improving academic classroom climate, instituting curriculum review, and the appropriate induction of new staff to these standard setting

At St. Philip's, I would institute a regime of highlighting and rewarding academic achievement above all other pursuits in the short term. In rewarding academic excellence the school would be sending a message to the students where its priorities lie. Publicly rewarding the academic students, when once the senior sports teams were lauded, sets a tone that would have a significant impact on students. Publicising success through school assemblies, awards nights, publications, school insignia and prizes all go to encouraging students to emulate the academic achievements of their peers. In appointing students who

have strong academic credentials to positions such as Prefects and House Captains, a strong emphasis on academic acumen has also been shown to bear fruit.

I would encourage staff to set an academically challenging curriculum including higher order thinking skills down the year levels. When teaching a class, staff members would be encouraged to teach to the high ability students rather than the middle. They should be mindful of the success of all, but if the teachers' expectations are low; the students' performance will be low. Setting high goals in individual classrooms should be a corner stone of schools searching for academic success.

The academic climate in the classroom is not achievable without good classroom management. Where an academic change has taken place, the first priority was to gain an academic environment in each class of every day. It was noted at CBC Melbourne and CBC Brisbane that student behaviour was a focus and once good student behaviours were achieved the focus shifted to teacher pedagogy. Teacher effectiveness in the classroom was seen as a key to academic success and teacher effectiveness could only be built upon a base of sound management of the class.

With classroom practice enhanced, a focus on curriculum refinement should be undertaken. Key skills required at the senior level should be woven into the fabric of the lower years. An emphasis on study skills and specific content was also shown to bear fruit. A top down approach to curriculum development, although criticised in some places was spoken of as effective in two cites.

When students enter the school they should have a clear view of what is expected of them in terms of academic excellence. The messages should be clear, strong and often repeated

started with induction day. Setting the standard from the first day is more easily done that trying to do this later when bad habits have been engrained.

7.3.7 Marketing and Media

Although perhaps not central to providing a change of academic climate, a school searching for academic success can make use of the media or conversely, the school can become a victim of poor press. If the media focuses on a particular outcome and the school does not do well in this measure, it will suffer when compared to like schools. This belies the fact that the school in question may excel in measures not reported in the newspaper. Different aspects of this issue were discussed for the different contexts of the Colleges taking part in this research. For St. Philip's I would look at the A+'s and the mean enter score as a focus for staff. The school would then plan to use the media to its advantage and encourage a particular focus, not at the detriment of other very worthy achievements, but as a marketing tool. If parents are focussed on a specific measure of success, it is in the schools best interest to consider that measure as a goal for academic staff. If the media does not cover academic achievement in schools, the school may chose to use its own results as a marketing tool. If the perception of a school is good regarding academic achievement it is more likely to get academic students. Students arriving at the school with a perception of a high academic requirement will be more open to an atmosphere of academic achievement and endeavour.

7.3.8   The lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice at the college

In all three schools the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice was strong. The message drawn out in *The Charter* (2004) has been infused into each of the school in some way so that it informs their daily practice. The three schools however interpret key

aspects of *The Charter* (2004) and the lived experience of Edmund Rice in slightly different way. The interpretation of a Christian Brother's school as being non-academic has been held in the past amongst the wider community. However, *The Charter* (2004) calls for excellence in all things, including academics. Each school calls students to reach their full potential but not all Christian Brother's schools strive for academic success with the same degree of tenacity.

One of the major challenges at St. Philips' is to challenge the notion that Christian Brothers' schools are not academic by nature, and that the Jesuits perform the role of educating the academic elite. I would ensure that one of the core messages from the Leadership team addressed this issue and repeated often that it was part of the Cultural Characteristics at the Heart of a Christian Brothers' school to pursue academic excellence. In searching for academic success a school may have to be extremely explicit in informing the staff that Christian Brother's schools are not betraying the Charism of Edmund Rice by being academics. Moreover, it is in the nature of Christian Brother's schools following the tradition of Edmund Rice to expect excellence of their students and not to expect excellence is to betray the Charism of Edmund Rice.

7.3.9   Summary

I reiterate that the hypothetical model explained here and informed by the earlier data analysis is not meant as a panacea for Christian Brother's schools searching for success. It is written more as a resource that can be drawn upon as a starting point. It crystallises the experience of three very different schools all following the Edmund Rice Charism in

the tradition of the Christian Brothers, each in their own way. The model encompasses significant factors but it does not give the context in which the factors exist. The factors may not work in all schools; indeed they may work in few.

The model is a culmination of the research and reading that is based on the experience of schools around the globe, non-denominational and Charismatic schools, co-educational and single sex. It may not only be of interest to Christian Brother's schools searching for success, but also school who search for academic success that follows a different faith tradition. The pursuit of academic success in a Charismatic environment is shown through this research to be possible and in this case inherently part of that environment.

7.4   Recommendations for Future Study

The data from this research suggests the following for investigation in the future and offer some possible avenues for further investigation of related issues.

1. That research be conducted into the relationship between the media and education, particularly the relationship between the media and the making of education policy at a Federal, State or school level.

2. That this study be replicated in other Christian Brothers' schools to further understand the effect of high stakes testing in charismatic environments that follow the Christian Brothers' tradition

3. That this study be replicated in schools that follow a particular religious tradition other than that of the Christian Brothers to further understand the effect of high stakes testing in charismatic environments.

4. That research be conducted regarding the perception staff in Christian Brothers' school hold of the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice and its impact on their teaching in the Australian context.

5. That research be conducted regarding the perception staff in Christian Brothers' school hold of the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice and its impact on their teaching across all provinces to evaluate the effect of context on their perception.

7.5   Final Reflection

Each school is led by magnificently informed, passionate and effective leaders. The influence of these men on the staff and the students is clearly seen through the testimony of the staff and in the physical spaces that have created at each College. As the Christian Brothers withdraw their influence from their schools around Australia, they can do so safe in the knowledge that the lay men who have inherited the role of Headmaster at each of the colleges that form the study, cherish the characteristics that underpin each Christian Brothers' school.

As the educational chapter of the Christian Brothers history concludes in Australia I am aware of the generations of young men that have been moulded by these remarkable educators. I am also aware of the weighty responsibility on the shoulders of the lay staff who now perform the role of educator and guiding hand in Christian Brothers' schools. We are part of a rich history that is informed by documents such as *The Charter* (2004) and need only read the history of the these men and their aspirations to reinvigorate us in our role.

For me, the close of this chapter completes a journey of self reflection and realisation that I am part of a larger family of educators duty bound not only to educate the boys in their academic pursuits, but also extol virtues of service to others and to prepare my students to be Catholic men to lead with compassion, awareness, empathy and conviction.

APPENDIX 1

RESULTS FROM CBC ADELAIDE

1.1   Introduction

Appendices 1, 2 and 3 present an interpretation of the data collected in August and September of 2006 at the three Christian Brothers' Schools in Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne.

These appendices draw out themes from the interviews and data collection that have been previously identified and used in the research questions. The data is interrogated in detail to draw out themes that have a bearing on teacher responses to high stakes testing. Unexpected themes or disconfirming themes are also identified and reported. The themes were derived mainly from interviews and data collection practices informed by the research framework and underpinned by the literature review. This section is reported using the interviews of the Principal/Headmaster, Director of Curriculum/Studies and two or three other members of staff.

Each school is treated separately in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. A summary for each school and how the themes answer the research questions is addressed. Unexpected results and disconfirming results are reiterated and collated for further examination. Appendix 1 presents the data from CBC Adelaide.

1.2 The Headmaster: Mr. Arnold

Mr. Arnold has been at the school for four years. In that time there has been a huge building and renovating program; the new Science and technology buildings are particularly impressive.

1.2.1 Defining and Quantifying Academic success

In quantifying academic success Mr Arnold points to the high percentage of students passing Year 12 as a clear indicator. He states that whilst staff will focus on those boys

capable of achieving perfect scores of 20 out of 20, it will not be at the expense of others: the College values academic endeavour, rather than everyone performing at the very top level. This is reflected in information provided to parents, such that,"We don't say to parents your son will get in the top 10%, we say 90% of CBC Adelaide Boys will pass their Year 12 subjects". Whilst there is not at present a system of identifying possible very high achievers, targeting them and motivating them, Mr Arnold was quite in favour of this occurring at a later date.

1.2.3 Academic Nature of the School

Mr Arnold spoke very proudly of the academic achievements of students at CBC Adelaide. He highlighted his first year of arrival as a standout year. The school, in that initial year was already "travelling well academically". That year's cohort included the top academically performing boy in the state. This provided enormous opportunities "a platform to promote and publicise".

In South Australia there is a Five 20's Merit List of students who achieve perfect 20 scores in their final year. Statewide, in a given year, only ten or so students achieve this feat. Again, in that initial year of his Headmastership, two CBC Adelaide boys gained five 20's. It seems clear that the background of the boys has an obvious impact on their scores and Mr Arnold notes:

Part of the boys wanting academic excellence must come from their socio-economic background of the families as well. CBC Adelaide sits in the leafy Eastern suburbs, so from that perspective its fair to assume… that CBC Adelaide's results would be strong in that regard.

Since Mr Arnold has come to the College, he has broadened the range of the curriculum, offering Vocational Educational Training (VET) courses, trade and certificate courses in an effort to allow all boys to "be the best they can be". He sees the impact this has had on academic results as interesting, in that, "If we compare the academic results of 2006 to 2004 we are not comparing apples with apples, but more students will stay on to complete Year 12". Mr Arnold maintains that the CBC Adelaide should offer a wide range of courses catering to students of all abilities: the focus is not purely aimed at those achieving five 20's. In Mr Arnold's words

> We have an obligation to the 1000 boys here to provide a curriculum diversity that provides for the needs of all the boys. Now another person might come in here and do a narrow academic curriculum and if the boys don't fit that they must go somewhere else.

1.2.4 Enrolment

Prospective parents don't describe the school in terms of a strong academic school at enrolment. However, they come to use those terms over time.

> Maybe we put that language into their mouths, we talk about an all-round education. The three pillars at CBC Adelaide are spirituality, academic endeavour and co curricular involvement.

However, if parents ask about academic results at the interview stage they "are impressed with the answers they get". Overall, the perception of CBC Adelaide's academic profile as an academic school in Adelaide is less that it's close neighbour St. Ignatius College.

> St. Ignatius holds the mantle of the academic Catholic School, by default, and might I say, our academic highfliers have done as well if not better than theirs. However, as a new-comer to Adelaide and start asking around school is the academic school, they would name St. Ignatius first

Although having comparable exam results at the top end, Mr Arnold deliberately avoids marketing the school as an academic school as he says:

> I'm not so sure I want to market CBC Adelaide as just an academic
> school. Because I think schooling and the educative process is much
> broader than just tertiary entrance scores. I don't think that's hurting us
> in terms of enrolment. Our numbers are every good.

The School Board are supportive of Mr Arnold's changes as long as the broadening of

the curriculum does not come at the expense of diminishing the top end.

1.2.5 Achieving Academic Success

Mr Arnold asserts that there is a culture that allows students at CBC Adelaide to achieve
academic success both in terms of teaching and learning.

> Part of me is of the belief that good students will be good students any
> where…however in order to get boys over the line in terms of excellence, it
> suggests that there must have been culture here of excellence, of the boys being as
> good as they can be.

He alludes to the quality and commitment of the teachers. It is interesting to note whilst

one of the school's pillars calls for academic endeavour, the teacher's see their mission as

academic excellence.

> There's a staff's desire to work with students in their own time, whether in
> free periods or during holidays. I've been really pleased with what the
> CBC Adelaide Staff see as their mission, it is to promote excellence,
> particularly if boys want that.

The use of statistical data to inform the feedback process to staff has been embedded into

the school. The use of high stakes data to identify underperforming teachers or faculties,

is now in place at a management level.

> Every year we get data from SABSA (Senior Secondary Assessment
> Board of South Australia) for teachers and classes against the state
> average. Our Director of Curriculum and I go through those and analyse
> them then to go to Faculty Heads of specific teachers about where their
> results seem to be at odds with like schools for a start and secondly where
> the results of students in their class vary significantly from the same
> students results in other subjects within the same school.

Although not done at a systemic level, individual teachers are likely to call in students

who are close to achieving very high marks to motivate them to get them over the line. A

list of students with perfect scores is published in the newsletter *The Red and Black* and

teachers are keen to get their students on that list. Employment of high quality staff was seen as a vital progression point because "by their own excellence they gain credibility amongst other staff members".

A change of emphasis at middle school to a more integrated approach has caused some dissatisfaction with staff but seems to be bearing fruit. The thinking behind this change of emphasis is more holistic. At the least, members of staff are more aware of the outcomes of education. However, specific thinking skills are not taught explicitly.

What it's doing is encouraging staff to view education of middle school boys more holistically that simplistically within subject areas. Now that's hard for staff and I don't think they have all liked it. But if it's done nothing else it's forced them to look very closely at what their outcomes are for each of their unit of work. So even if they haven't liked it there has been considerable growth in their knowledge of outcomes and the educational worth of activity A versus activity B.

The result for his students is for lateral thinking to be an emphasis for teaching CBC Adelaide and, as a result, better academic scores.

> What I would want are boys to leave CBC Adelaide with a strong sense of the interconnectedness of knowledge and skills, with a greater desire to work in teams rather than individuals and with an increased reliance on interdependency. This is what I believe future young men will need to survive in society. It's not just about the score

1.2.6 Using High Stakes Data

Mr Arnold commented that whilst there were no monetary rewards for teachers whose students perform well in Year 12; there was school recognition of their achievement.

> At the beginning of the year I address the staff…promoting not only the successful students but the teacher who achieved those scores, and part is also not only congratulating the year 12 teachers but acknowledging the result of good teachers back to reception.

High stakes data is also use to inform practice at CBC Adelaide. He points to an occasion where the results in the boarding students were improved as a result of identifying a weakness through this data and making significant changes to private study practices in the Boarding House.

Underperforming teachers, as Mr Arnold put it, are "caught up in that loop of conversations" that comes around from the SABSA data. He notes that the tone of the conversation is dependent on the degree of dissatisfaction with their results and that " the intensity of this conversation varies." Although rarely getting involved, he has intervened to make sure that a specific teacher does not take a Year 12 class, following a series of very poor results. The School Leadership Team actively promote teachers to Year 12 teaching and conversely remove teachers who are not performing at that level. The removal of staff from Year 12 teaching, as Mr Arnold clearly identifies, is not done solely using these data. It is made taking into account students and parental complaints or dissatisfaction. Mr Arnold explains that the removal of staff:

> would normally be as a result of one of those intense conversations the year before. They might have had another run at it again and the second time no better, so it doesn't come as any great surprise. It's just a conversation that says "Look lets try and eliminate the factors". We might use someone else in the faculty next year and see what happens to the results

The response in one case has not been as he would have hoped. The staff member has "not bounced back" and has responded poorly to what is a perceived demotion.

1.2.7 Effect of the Media

There is no talk of media coverage or statistical reporting of schools data in Adelaide; however, Mr Arnold contends that is may have an effect on marketing should this happen.

> If it comes in here it may very well change the face of marketing here but
> we are resisting for as long as we can. It's really a media beat up around an
> issue [on which] the media has no idea. The sad part is it can be a self-
> fulfilling prophecy and it can tempt schools to believe it is the most
> important factor.

1.2.8 Being a Christian Brothers' School in an Independent System

CBC Adelaide finds itself under the auspices of the Christian Brothers' as an Independent Catholic school, not directly governed by the Catholic Education Office. At a sporting level there is ISSA, the Independent Schools Sporting Association to which CBC Adelaide belongs. This is the only link CBC Adelaide has with other independent schools.

The message of the College Principal regarding service is very clear: "Boys who come through this school become well rounded with a strong focus on service learning. Our mantra is CBC Adelaide boys become men for others." In terms of education of the poor and marginalised CBC Adelaide espouses ideals that are in line with the traditional view of Christian Brothers education in the Charism of Edmund Rice.

> I am very clear in that I will not make CBC Adelaide inaccessible to
> certain socio-economic groups, which can easily happen if you are a
> successful Independent Catholic Secondary School. If you take you eye
> off your ideals, the pressure from the media can drive you to just want
> the student who gets the good grades and all that good stuff. So what I
> would want is for boys to come to CBC Adelaide who want to know
> more about their own spirituality. I ask all the boys "do you want to
> come to CBC Adelaide to learn about how you can become a better
> Christian person, that language in specifically chosen. Every single boy
> has to say yes to that question.

It seems clear that Mr Arnold does not just select boys who get A's and B's at primary schools, he selects boys who want to improve themselves.

1.2.9 Exceeding Academic Expectations

Mr Arnold is firm in his philosophy regarding academic achievement of students at his school. Whilst he wants every boy to reach their potential, he does not want to spoon-feed them. This may lead to a student entering Tertiary studies being unable to handle it and drop out after the first year. He reiterated that he did not want the students to gain scores that:

> Are inflated above their natural self-sustainable level of achievement. So if ever we get to a point where we inflate the students' TER above the point where they can not sustain it without the support of the school I think we've done a disservice to students in our singular focus on academic success.

1.2.10 Edmund Rice Philosophy and CBC Adelaide College

In the past Mr Arnold has been questioned about the seeming contradiction of being a Christian Brothers' school and having the highest fees of any Christian Brothers' school in the state. He acknowledges that the socioeconomic profile of his school is above that of other Christian Brothers' schools. However, he points out that Edmund Rice came from a more privileged background, not a poor upbringing and was able to influence many of all economic backgrounds

> By virtue of who Edmund Rice was and his own socio-economic status he was able to influence others, then so to the next Edmund Rice may come from a school like CBC Adelaide…because they'll have power and influence and a good all-round education. Nothing would be better for those elements to combine in a way where that person has a capacity to change for the better.

Mr Arnold expresses his strong beliefs which underpin his philosophy to educating these more affluent boys at CBC Adelaide College. He believes that,

> As students become more materially rich, they become more spiritually poor. There is a strong place for Catholic schools in wealthy suburbs because their proportionally greater need for spiritual nourishment and development.

The drive for academic success is not seen as being "at odds with the Edmund Rice spirituality or Charism as long as it forms part of the holistic nature of the education that takes place at the College, "If it becomes the only thing mentioned at speech night, if it's the only thing that staff focus on then, yes it will be at odds."

1.2.11 Summary

Mr Arnold speaks proudly of the academic achievement of the whole cohort of the school, not just the high achievers, although he does note that students gaining high academic results at CBC Adelaide were amongst the highest achievers in the State. He points to an environment in which all students were encouraged and able to achieve academically. There has been a broadening of the curriculum to include VET programs to give pathways for those who are not drawn towards more academic tertiary focused pursuits. He deliberately does not market the school as being an academic school, rather one that offers an all-round educational experience. The quality of staff and their motivation towards academic success were noted as important variables. He and the Director of Studies will critically review the SACE results and look where improvements can be made in terms of staffing. Although not used in isolation the high stakes data is used to underpin conversations with staff who the College Leadership Team sees as underperforming. Some members of staff have had these conversations. The "intensity" of the conversations varies, but members of staff have been taken off Year 12 teaching as a result of poor performance. Those students who are close to achieving very good grades are interviewed in an effort to motivate them to get "over the line". Staff members have been employed specifically to bring to the school their skills in achieving academic success at year 12. Academic high achievers are celebrated in the school magazine and at assemblies. Where a student can take more demanding academic courses they are strongly encouraged to do so but not forced. As Principal, Mr Arnold maintains that the

final outcome for the College is not producing men with high final examination scores but preparing them for life after school. He will not put in place a system that force students to gain academic outcomes beyond "their natural limit" and cites the drop out rate from University as a poor indictment of a number of private schools.

Mr Arnold views the CBC Adelaide as exhibiting characteristics that embody the lived experience of Edmund Rice. He does not feel that the nature of the school is changed because they are the highest fee paying Christian Brothers' school. Rather, he suggests that having Christian Brothers' school catering for more affluent clientele and in more affluent areas is of vital importance, because as he sees it, often the more materially wealthy people become the poorer spiritually they are.

1.3 Director of Studies: Mr. Anderson

Mr Anderson, who occupies the new role of Director of Studies, has been at CBC Adelaide for 6 years. Formally the Head of the Science Faculty and in charge of timetabling, he assumed this role in 2006.

1.3.1 Defining the Role of Director of Studies

Being new to the role, Mr Anderson's role is not specifically to improve the academic profile of the senior results, his focus is more the support of Heads of Faculties as he states; "It was to support the Heads of Faculty who would have that as a part of their

work, in improving the status of their disciplines." Recent changes to the length of lesson; where classes are longer. This encourages staff to focus on what they do in their class. Mr Anderson sees teaching at the senior level as driven by content rather than pedagogy, although currently, pedagogical issues are raised in middle school predominantly. The main thrust of departmental meetings seems to be management of students rather than an in-depth exposition of pedagogical approaches. At senior level, the emphasis of departmental meetings is towards systemic organisation and marking or moderating procedures.

1.3.2 Academic Perception

The perceptions that the parent body and wider community holds of CBC Adelaide, is that whilst it has academic pathways it may not be as academic as it perhaps once was. Mr Anderson reports that a recent survey confirmed this perception. CBC Adelaide sees itself in competition with the other local Independent Catholic School, St. Ignatius College. However, some students who have not succeeded St. Ignatius, a more academic school, transfer to CBC Adelaide. Anecdotally, they find the teachers at CBC Adelaide more approachable and pathways more appealing. Mr Anderson points to the success of the more vocational pathways as a real benefit of attending CBC Adelaide. He insists however, that the academic results of the school are gradually going increasing.

1.3.3 Effect of the Media

Currently high stakes data is not reported in the local media, but Mr Anderson contends that it is likely to happen since it has happened in other states and the political will is behind it in South Australia. Instead, individual schools market their own achievement in

the local paper, where a school congratulates its graduating class. While these schools include TER scores above 90, CBC Adelaide has not published this data in the past.

1.3.4 Academic expectation

Whilst some parents have questioned the academic nature of the school, Mr Anderson contends that academic expectation of the senior students by the parents and the students themselves remains high, both of students and of themselves and their parents, even where students are not top academic students. Although no explicit pressure is placed on teachers regarding academic results from the College Leadership, Mr Anderson acknowledges that some Year 12 teachers would feel pressure to perform; "not that anyone at the school puts a huge amount of pressure on them, [but] you do feel that pressure to perform."

1.3.5 Qualifying Academic Success

The key indicator used in most South Australian schools relies heavily on the numbers passing their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). Mr Anderson mentions that at CBC Adelaide 98-99% of students pass their SACE. Another key indicator is their Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER). The percentage or number of students who gain a TER above 90 is an important indicator of the academic success of senior students at the College. At a subject level, the number of students achieving a perfect score of 20 is also seen as an important indicator.

> At a Faculty council level we look at the percentage of A's, B's and C's for each subject. Sometimes we do this for the teachers to look at their assessment processes. It's not all about getting the data out to the public…it's also about giving staff some feedback.

Mr Anderson suggests that teachers would define and measure success by the number of 20's scored in their class or the number of students achieving an a grade (17 or better).

1.3.6 Using High stakes Data to assess staff

Once the Year 12 results have been sent through to the school the data is examined and unpacked at a number of different levels and implications on a staffing, teaching and learning and systemic level are drawn out of that data.

> We are always looking at improving our results in Year 12. Obviously we make them available to our year 12 teachers…. myself, Mr Arnold and the Heads of Senior School get together and view those results and produce a summary which is reported in our quarterly magazine. The results are compared to like schools. That data is presented to the Heads of Faculties and we give them the opportunity to look at that data first and then speaking to their year 12 teachers. They can get an indication of why the results are the way they are how they have been shaped and any implications for the systems we have in place.

There is public recognition of members of staff whose students achieve perfect scores of 20 during whole staff meetings at the beginning of the year and during whole school assemblies. Conversely, the results are also used to identify area of concern and follow up with Faculty leaders or individual teachers.

> Normally that comes through me…we look through the results very carefully, then we pick out any areas that seem to be a concern, or that we need a bit more information on.

Mr Anderson cites this year as an example when he had conversations with five teachers regarding their end of year results.

> It wasn't really these results are poor why? It was giving them an opportunity to say what they think happened and an opportunity to say what we can do to improve this, whether its offering professional development. We have from SABSA a person assigned to the school to come out and speak to teachers. Perhaps it's because they've marked too high or not enough or whatever, its about making sure if they are unhappy with the results they have the skills to make sure

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that doesn't happen again. In most cases they are pretty disappointed with those results too.

Teachers have been moved off senior teaching as a result of continued poor marks. A range of issues is taken into account before moving them including complaints from other teachers, Heads of Faculty or pupils and parents. Heads of Faculty are given an opportunity to assemble their senior teachers and Mr Anderson backs this up. Staff responses to this sort of action depend on the way in which this change is managed

> We've found that in most case that occur over a number of years…there's no surprises. We wouldn't do it if one year were poor. We'd talk to the teacher and ask how we can help, if we can send them to another school to look at how they do their marking and moderation. I guess in cases where this has occurred it has been over a long period of time and the teacher hasn't found it too surprising. This would be the last thing we would do.

Teachers do feel some pressure to perform in SACE but they would not think of producing a Teacher Performance indicator and use it explicitly.

> I prefer the system we currently use, we do get the teacher in and talk to them, we do have the data from SABSA to compare class to class and that's the sheet I use to identify the people I need to talk to. I prefer to think if there are think there are things we can do to support the teacher we will do that. Its important they get feedback, if it's about their assessment marking etc then we get some help for SABSA. But we need to give them the opportunity to put things in place to improve those. Every teacher wants the best for their kids.

1.3.7 Achieving Academic Success

Although frowned upon, members of staff have been known to try and persuade top students into their subject. The brightest students are encouraged strongly by leadership to take subjects that will improve their TER (gaining bonus points).

> We do encourage, at least talk to kids to say, look you've got these marks you could do well in this year 12 course, but I don't think this happens too often.

The reason behind this is two fold, not only to improve the academic profile of the school but:

> More importantly for the student…about career options too.

Where Year 12 teachers meet in forums the staff have an opportunity to discuss their pedagogy and methods; however, it is not done at present. New teachers to the school or new teachers to Senior teaching are encouraged to make contact with more experienced teachers to assist in the assessment.

> As individual subject teachers we give out past papers prior to trial exams at the end of Term Two. It gave our students that time to use a "swat vac". Normally, we do that in preparation for the final exams.

Mr Anderson contends that teachers would make reference to the style of questions used in their final exams and be explicit about the techniques required. Teachers are encouraged to become markers of final examinations.

> I was on the marking panel for SABSA for six years, that was a remarkable professional development for me. You have the examiners meeting it really makes you more aware of what the examiners are looking for. So one of the things we try to do is encourage our teachers, when there are expressions of interest called for, I would email people individually to say look here is the opportunity to get some great PD. The majority take up the opportunity

As a school the senior teachers are supported by not using them as relieving teachers when their own students leave. They are kept free so they can get involved in marking, but also to enable them to be free for students. Whilst there have been dramatic changes to what happens in the middle school, they are not driven to reflect Year 12 work. Moreover, some staff have seen these changes as having a negative impact on what happens at year 12.

> Some staff would see the opposite, because we've made some changes that have been seen as some as not assisting what happens at the senior school. Some people view that as watering down what we do with the kids, perhaps not working towards the requirements at year 11 and 12. I don't personally agree with anyway. I believe that

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at middle school, if you teach things that are beyond the kids that they learn the wrong thing.

Mr Anderson does point to the increased focus on study en-skilling at the middle years in an attempt to prepare their skill base for success in the senior year levels. Systems have been put in place primarily through the pastoral care program but not at an individual subject level.

The style of trial exams at Years 10 and 11 depends on the subject. Some make a conscious effort to mirror the style and look of the SACE whereas many do not. The decision to do this is driven by the Head of Faculty. However, the physical placement of the exams has changed. The year 10's have normally completed their exams in their classrooms, but now they sit their core exams in a large hall, mirroring the style of the Year 12.

> The students seemed to take it more seriously…. more like and exam than a test. Next year we will put them all in the Hall…there are no exams for Years 7 to 9.

Whilst the school does not set a specific target for A's or perfect scores etc, the leadership say, "it would be good to improve on this". There is no specific targeting of an indicator such as TER or the number of 20's.

Mr Anderson says that while the gradual trend of academic results is up there are still improvements that can be made.

> Every year we say what can we do, what can we put in place to improve the performance of our students. At the end of the day most of the teachers, particularly the ones with the poorer results, would say, 'It was the cohort, we knew in year 11 they were weak'. One of the things we've been looking at is a mentoring system. We've set up an online mentoring system. We invited last years graduate back and talked to them about becoming part of the online mentoring system. The help they could give was not only subject specific it could be about dealing with pressures of exams, dealing with social lives, work etc.

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1.3.9 Effects of Pastoral Care on Academic Results

CBC Adelaide's tutor groups are run at the senior level in a vertical system. Tutor groups are made up of Years 10, 11 and 12. Mr Anderson sees this as having a very positive effect on the younger boys.

> It's really useful particularly at subject selection time, when you are addressing the year 12 boys, the younger kids get to learn the language and terminology.

1.3.10 Christian Brothers' School in an Independent System

Mr Anderson sees CBC Adelaide as a Christian Brothers' school first and foremost. In many ways, he contends, they fit the traditional mould of taking the sons of dockers and making them into lawyers, rather than taking the sons of lawyers and producing more of the same.

> Part of that is offering alternative pathways, from less academic backgrounds, from broken families, indigenous students, giving students the opportunity to have the CBC Adelaide education. Yes first and foremost a Christian Brothers' school.

1.3.11 Summary

In summary, CBC Adelaide is quite rightly seen as offering different pathways to students, both academic and vocational. Some parents read the offering of vocational courses as a decrease in the academic nature of the College. The broader community considers CBC Adelaide's close neighbour St. Ignatius to be more academic. Although statistical reporting of Year 12 examination results is not carried out in terms of league tables in the local press, many school publish their results to highlight their achievements; CBC Adelaide does not. Academic expectations amongst the parental and student body are high, but in some instances misplaced. At a whole school level, the number of

students passing the SACE quantifies academic success. At a class and teacher level, important indicators are the number of perfect 20's scored or the number of A's. High stakes data is used by the Director of Studies to identify struggling staff and to inform the process of review. However, he uses it as a basis for conversation and a guide for professional development. He does however, withdraw teachers from teaching senior classes if their students do not achieve the expected results after a series of steps have been followed in terms of professional development, interviews and mentoring. Senior teachers are likely to make reference to exam technique and specific exam preparation in the classes. However, there is little professional talk to share pedagogy in specific Year 12 forums. Changes in the middle school to produce better results at Year 12 include the coverage of specific exam skills and coping strategies. The Year 10 examinations now mirror setting of the senior exams with significant improvement in the seriousness with which boys take the process. A more thematic, interdisciplinary approach at middle schooling has however, been viewed by some staff as "watering down" the curriculum. No statistical goal is used for the school or as a target for staff. Mr Anderson views CBC Adelaide as a Christian Brothers school first and foremost, being accessible to the marginalised, poor and disadvantaged.

1.4 Teacher 1: Alan

Alan is an experienced member of the College. He has gained academic success and has had a family association with CBC Adelaide that gives him an insight into its history. He has a position of responsibility that allows him some management decision-making.

1.4.1 Academic Profile of CBC Adelaide College

Alan suggests that CBC Adelaide was always seen as a good all-round school providing a wide variety of opportunities for the boys. However, he suggests that the inclusion of VET subjects has allowed a broadening of the curriculum. As he says CBC Adelaide was always:

> Noted as academic… more of an all-rounder always had the sport…there was the other aspect of the school the academics.

Now however, he sees a different dynamic to the academic profile of the school.

> Results are almost cyclic, well not even that; sporadic. This is something you can predict, from year ten onwards

Alan spoke at length regarding the intake of students and how the academic profile of those students has changed. He was thankful that the old boys still sent their high achieving sons to CBC Adelaide.

> Public perception has changed slightly, our competitors are picking up high performing students that we once picked up because of our academic record. We still have students that perform well that are children of old scholars, but I know that there are certain parents who move children here because of VET or programs for assisted learning. Once upon a time there were one or two students with learning difficulties, now there are 6, 7 or 8 students in a class. This has been a trend over the last 7-8 years possibly. We are fortunate to get a number of students achieving a high score, but that could change. But not dramatically, as long as we have fathers who are professionals.

Quantifying this shift, he contends that the percentage of high achievers at the College was decreasing, as an anecdotal measure and using the data from the senior study scores at Year 12.

1.4.2 Defining Success

In defining or quantifying academic success, Alan prefers to look at the achievement of the cohort as a whole rather than the high achievers, by focussing on the minimum standard achieved by all his students.

> I certainly want no kids achieving D grades. But I expect a normal distribution…As long as the kids achieve their potential and achieve some sort of success.

1.4.3 Achieving success

In recent years CBC Adelaide's senior students have achieved a high level of academic success in some particular years. When questioned whether is was the nature of the students or the systems put in place that garnered those results Alan replied:

> It's probably the bunch of kids.

1.4.4 Parental Expectation

One line of inquiry focussed on a hypothetical question to parents: "If they were asked whether they would want CBC Adelaide to 'hot-house' or push their children to achieve academic success, or focus on the whole person to the detriment of their TER would they be happy?" Alan was quite clear in his view:

> I think so yes, but their expectations are probably higher of their children…a good proportion of parents are professionals.

He did point out that the demographic of the students was changing and that students now chose to come to the school for more non-academic, vocational needs.

> The attitude is changing. Students coming from others schools come here for less demand on academia, one parent actually stated that they brought the student to CBC Adelaide because he would have a better chance of doing a trade.

1.4.5 Teacher Accountability

Alan points out that whilst there is verbal recognition of what has been achieved by students, there is no pressure placed on the teachers to ensure academic success. He believes it comes back to the professionalism of the individual.

> Nothing is said, a personal goal what you strive for. There is verbal recognition of those whose students achieve a perfect 20, however it's never looked at in what proportion have achieved that score.

On the subject of data driven assessment, Alan feels that not only is it difficult to achieve it is unfair to use high stakes data as an assessment tool to judge the performance of teachers.

> It's unfair. In out profession we realise that when students achieve their potential you should be recognised for it. But how you recognise that and later acknowledge it is difficult for the leadership

He has knowledge that the Director of Curriculum analyses the data from the senior classes but he feels that the data is more a reflection of the students rather than the teacher. He has had to have conversations with some teachers regarding their scores when comparing students achievement across a number of classes. He describes the conversations:

> You try to make the conversations as un-confrontational as possible, more of a chat because there's no pressure on Heads of Faculty to perform or get their faculty to ensure that students get certain marks so you don't feel you have to pressure the faculty members…You handle them (the interviews) with kid gloves…staff are very protective of their results some do come up very quickly with excuses. I suppose when students who are strong across the board come up with a poor mark that's when a little bit of attention is given to it, but nothing formal.... In some ways out staff a bit protected, I think there needs to be some discussion.

1.4.6 Achieving Academic success

Because of a long course, featuring a large amount of content, Alan has changed his

approach from chalk and talk to a more lecture style approach to help students get

through the course. He feels this has had a positive effect for some, but negligible for

others.

> Having to do chalk and talk took time, so I have gone to power point and
> produce a booklet for students, more of a lecture, so that students can
> focus more on the thinking and doing. We can put up animations so that it
> brings things to life. Last year's students I feel benefited greatly from it.
> They were prepared to preliminary readings.

In preparing for exams, Alan focuses both on the content and exam specific preparation:

> I think you blend them both when you teach content you say " in previous
> years… make sure you have a close look at this. I certainly format test
> like exams, with multiple-choice short answer. I often go back and pluck
> out questions from past exams.

Surprisingly, given the way in which Alan has quantified academic success and his drive

towards the holistic nature of the school, he notes that:

> You tend sometimes to suggest that Year 12 is all about getting the score.

1.4.7 Student Accountability

The notion of forcing a student to go beyond their "natural limit" was again prevalent in

Alan's interview.

> I try to get the best out of the student and that's it. I find flogging the
> students doesn't work; particularly with the mentality of some of the
> students.

Historically this was not the case however, as Alan contends:
> The mindset varied from teacher to teacher…. certainly the pressure was
> more so that the teachers face now. It does require to get that bit more,
> particularly when you have the wide variety of capabilities…. some
> students just have no direction in where to go in a task.

Alan contends that, as a school there is not a huge push for academic success, particularly amongst the student body. It falls to individual teachers to drive their classes rather than on a systemic level.

> Certainly House leaders take on pastoral care role nothing goes back to Faculty head, there is a care free attitude to student performance… its up to the subject teachers to motivate and maintain, if they choose not to nothing happens which is a bit sad.

1.4.8 Edmund Rice Ethos

In taking a wide range of academic students and those from a diverse socio-economics background, Alan suggests that CBC Adelaide is a true Christian Brothers' school in the tradition of Edmund Rice.

> I think if we are true to our ethos being a Christian Brother school, if that's what you're trying to advertise that's what you should be doing. There are a certain amount of subsidies given to parents, a group of Sudanese boys as well. We are a genuine Christian Brothers' School. It is a challenge to embrace the philosophy and maintain the academic.

1.4.9 Summary

Alan is aware that historically, CBC Adelaide had a pronounced academic profile amongst the wider public; however, this had reduced in recent years. There seemed to be less high achieving academic students attracted to the School, however, these were drawn from old boys of the College rather than new families. The school is attracting those who are fewer academically inclined and more focussed on non-academic, vocational pathways. There also seems to be far more students at the College with special educational needs. In defining academic success, Alan seeks to get all his students to achieve a D grade or above; he does not set a focus on the high achieving students.

Whilst parental expectation of the boys is high, Alan contends that they do not wish CBC Adelaide to push the boys academically at the expense of other attributes that the College offers. According to Alan, there seems to be little pressure to perform academically on students or staff. Students are not pushed beyond their "natural limit"; however, methods such as referring to past papers and modifying assessment task to mirror year 12 papers take place. He feels that the school is a genuine Christian Brothers' school in the truest sense of the phrase. He qualifies this by saying that they still reach out to the poor to educate them by means of bursaries.

1.5 Teacher 2: Brett

Brett is a senior teacher with a position of responsibility. He has been at the school for a relatively short time but has known of CBC Adelaide and it's reputation over a number of years.

1.5.1 Academic Nature of CBC Adelaide

Whilst acknowledging the dual pathway approach of the College, Brett questioned whether all staff members were setting the academic climate.

> I knew it offered both academic and non-traditional way, I was aware of that and wanted to work with boys…but I don't think the push towards academic rigour is there from all staff.

He felt that the brighter boys may not be facing academic challenges and may need to be pushed more, but there were a large number of students who wanted to do better and sought out teachers in their own time.

1.5.2 Public Perception

Brett attests to the fact that CBC Adelaide had a strong academic perception in the past but it has slipped since the 1990s. However, there were positives with the new courses that have been offered.

> For a lot of people they would offer a wide variety of these programs (VET) but parents like the idea that their sons could have that opportunity if they were not that capable or able.There is a strong perception that because of the single sex environment that CBC Adelaide boys were allowed to be boys, rather having to be teenage stereotypes. A very positive and strong thing.

1.5.3 Academic Profile of CBC Adelaide

Brett alluded to a difference in the public profile of the academic nature of the College and the reality. He suggested that the more academic students are drawn more from past association rather than attracting new academic families to the College. He saw this as a future problem.

> It wants to attract the clientele it used to, they still get a percentage through father, grandfather, but a lot have gone to co-ed and not Catholic either.

1.5.4 Teacher Accountability

As a senior teacher, Brett took a number of Year 11 and Year 12 classes however he found there was a lack of pressure from the school to make his students perform in their examinations.

> There is no pressure here…in regard to Year 12.

1.5.5 Student Accountability

Whilst there was no systemic benchmarking or goal setting, teachers set their own standards and the students were quite willing to work to those parameters. Brett suggests

that there was no systematic reporting or tracking of students in an effort to improve their final Year 12 results.

> It depends upon the teacher and parental expectation…students are happy to work to benchmarks that are set

1.5.6 Achieving Academic Success

Brett pointed to a number of positive systems that had been put in place to increase the academic achievement at Year 12. He pointed to some use of streaming in subjects at the lower year levels, some use of common assessment tasks and the allocation of grades. He did however, suggest that there could be more done in terms of common assessment and pedagogical approaches across faculties and departments. Brett also pinpointed the subject selection process as a cause for some concern, since the pastoral care teachers with not specific training were the major source of information for the boys. He felt that the school "could get more out of the boys" with the use of study skills sessions and focussing further down the school.

1.5.7 Summary

Brett suggested that whilst the offering of the VET courses allowed alternative pathways, there was a feeling in the community the CBC Adelaide was less academic in nature than it had been, and more over that the school was less academic than the public realise. He stated that there was no pressure on staff members to perform and that there was not systemic academic tracking or benchmarking for Year 12 students. Teacher by teacher, goal setting was more common however. Generally, he felt that they could get more out of the CBC Adelaide boys academically.

1.6 Identifying the themes from CBC Adelaide

During the course of the data collection at CBC Adelaide, I interviewed 10 members of staff including the Headmaster, the Director of Studies and eight staff members drawn from different Faculties and roles. They included House Heads to Heads of Faculty and teachers without positions of leadership. In the preceding sections I have drawn out the themes from four key interviews. In this section I will include an overview of the site and I will place the themes in the context of the research by addressing the research questions using the themes.

1.7 CBC Adelaide College: Research Questions Answered

Q1. Have members of the teaching staff changed their teaching to achieve academic success?

- No, on an individual basis teachers use past papers and refer to exam style questions but there is no whole school policy to push this aspect of exam preparation
- There is no explicit emphasis on sharing exam technique with others from the successful SACE teachers, maybe a good source of PD.
- Departmentally there is no coordinated approach to exam preparation.
- Underperforming members of staff have a meeting with Head of Faculty to talk through any issues arising from the exam results. Normally this is enough for staff and marks improve.
- If things do not improve Director of Curriculum has a meeting with them.
- Greater emphasis on guidance of student choices and pathways.
- Director of Curriculum has a system where members of staff give their preference for teaching loads. Once passed onto him from HOD's he can either say yes or no to requests for Year 12 subjects.
- Pastoral care is still the main avenue of career guidance rather than those who are well versed in the field.
- Members of Staff attest to some boys in the wrong subjects because they have not thought out their subject selection properly.
- Some staff work long hours outside normal time to tutor boys, providing additional lectures.
- The use of SSABSA data has been more commonplace. Changes made to the study habits of the boarding house were brought in after an analysis of Year 12 statistical data.
- In some cases there is greater reliance on ICT in teaching.
- Guidance is given to students to make good choices when selecting topics for course work and extended essays.
- It is up to the individual staff member to enthuse the student and motivate them towards study.

Q2. How do members of staff perceive the methods employed to achieve academic success?

- Staff do not perceive any pressure to achieve academically

- Staff perceive that the Director of Curriculum, Principal or HOD influence staff quietly and inconspicuously.
- Some HOD's would prefer more pressure applied to under achieving teachers or an ability to select their SACE teachers with a view to exam success.
- Key indicators for the school are the number of perfect 20 scores however; there seems little real focus on how to achieve more of these.
- Teachers are praised and recognised for perfect scores this has a motivating impact on staff.
- The Director of Curriculum also reviews the numbers of A, B and C scores.
- No pressure on the students to perform academically
- Goal setting is not done the senior management or staff. There is no bottom line with which to assess performance or goals to shoot for.
- Some members of staff attest to "carefree attitude" of students to studies.
- Student achievement rewarded in a full assembly for those gaining perfect scores. Teachers are also invited onto the stage.
- Director of Curriculum responds to parental concerns and student complaints.
- The members of staff feel protected from this sort of response from parents and children.
- There has been a change of the middle school curriculum to an integrated approach; some members of staff feel this will damage the academic prospects of year 12.
- Staff encourage students to try harder subjects if they are capable, not because it will raise the profile of the school but because it is good for the student
- One on one interviews with struggling students is performed on a pastoral level.
- The students on the 19 out of 20 borderline are not interviewed as yet.
- Whilst changed have been made to the content and learning style of the middle school, no explicit teaching of thinking skills has been employed.
- Also there is a perceived lack of in depth study skills preparation. This is done in pastoral care groups.
- None of the changes to middle schooling reflect Year 12 content or skill development.
- Director of Curriculum encourages Year 12 teachers to become SACE markers. This is seen by a number of staff as excellent PD.
- Time constraints stop some staff doing it, but they would consider it if they were given a small time allowance during marking times.
- Members of Staff are actively involved in Holiday tuition programs.
- Year 12 cohort of 2005 has been approached to mentor the Year 12 of 2006 online and in person.
- Year 11 and 10 exams are now to take place in the Hall or the Pavilion. There seemed to be a more focussed and serious approach to the exams.
- There are no exams below year 10.
- The younger students have tests.
- Members of Staff are happy that not only the high achievers are applauded but those who more from B to A or C to B are recognised.
- There is "no animosity" directed towards underachievement.
- Under the new Principal there is not the narrow academic focus that there has been in the past. Approved by the School Board because it is seen as broadening not diminishing the top end.

Question 3: Given the charismatic nature of the school are there any points of dissonance?
- CBC Adelaide sees itself as a true Christian Brothers school catering for those who are not overtly wealthy and preparing them to take the step into public life

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- A Christian Brothers' School first and foremost.
- The only link with the other private schools is through sporting affiliation rather than a philosophical level.
- Teachers are perceived to be more relational than at other private schools
- Some teachers see this as a draw back however, and would prefer a more stringent approach.
- The Charismatic nature of the school seeks to include those with special needs and leaning difficulties within the normal classroom. Some staff find it difficult to teach to the benefit of the whole class without ignoring both ends of the academic spectrum.
- Unlike a number of other CB schools those students with behavioural problems are encouraged to stay on at school.
- High number of VET places, those coming through the junior school need to be catered for. There is a general feel that the CBC Adelaide juniors are not of the standard of those from other CBC Adelaide feeders.
- There is a feeling that the macho, not cool to succeed in academia, is still prevalent amongst the student body but to a reduced level.
- Members of Staff heavily encourage music, drama and the arts.
- It is not a culture of commercialism and enrolments
- Whilst some members of staff feel that the balance is right, a number of senior teachers feel that there is not enough emphasis on academic rigour.
- The Principal makes the point that Edmund Rice came from an educated, affluent background. In taking boys form high socio-economic backgrounds we could be preparing the next Edmund Rice at CBC Adelaide.
- He maintains that as "students get richer they become spiritually poorer" and that there is an extremely important part for CBC Adelaide to play in affluent Woodford.
- The push for academia will not be at odds with the Charism of Edmund Rice if it is done within a holistic, integrated education.

  Question 4: How can these methods be employed to reduce dissonance and improve academic success?

- Professional development for staff members who are getting low results is good. There is advice given and mentoring within the school and an Area Field Officer from the SSABSA
- Not seeking overtly to improve academic success across the school, students are encouraged to do as well as they can.
- Student dropout rate at University for private school students is high and CBC Adelaide does not want to add to this problem
- The school would rather a student perform to their own "natural" level than to inflate it due to the efforts of the College.

APPENDIX 2
RESULTS FROM CBC BRISBANE, QLD.

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Appendices 1, 2 and 3 present an interpretation of the data collected in August and September of 2006 at the three Christian Brothers' Schools in Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne.

These appendices draw out themes from the interviews and data collection that have been previously identified and used in the research questions. The data is interrogated in detail to draw out themes that have a bearing on teacher responses to high stakes testing. Unexpected themes or disconfirming themes are also identified and reported. The themes were derived mainly from interviews and data collection practices informed by the research framework and underpinned by the literature review. This section is reported using the interviews of the Principal/Headmaster, Director of Curriculum/Studies and two or three other members of staff.

Each school is treated separately in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. A summary for each school and how the themes answer the research questions is addressed. Unexpected results and disconfirming results are reiterated and collated for further examination. Appendix 2 presents the data from CBC Brisbane, Queensland.

1.2 The Acting Principal: Mr Baird

Mr Baird is the College Dean (Deputy Head) and is acting Principal whilst the Principal is on study leave. He is a long serving member of staff and has a very clear understanding of the systemic and actualised ethos of CBC Brisbane. He is heavily involved in the pastoral aspects of the school, but also has a large role to play in QCS preparation and feedback to boys on their academic performance.

1.2.1 Staff accountability

One of the central themes of the research focuses on staff's response to accountability measures and the Acting Principal made a number of comments regarding the level of accountability, the processes of staff accountability and the outcomes. Whilst there is no formal structure of measurement and assessment of staff performance, each teacher must submit their results and examples of work to the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) where their work is assessed and the marks awarded. The marks awarded by the teacher are validated by the QSA and any changes made. These marks are then reported back to the school. The level of achievement of the boys and variation between the teacher's prescribed grades and those of the QSA are of great interest to the school leadership:

> Where results aren't in accordance with what we want there certainly is accountability.

As a consequence of low marks, or radical changes in results, the Director of Studies and the Headmaster will interview the teacher in question or the Faculty Head. A process of appraisal has been instituted but:

> It has stalled…. more of a reflective document rather than an appraisal of pedagogy…need to revisit.

1.2.2 Qualifying Academic Success

Part of the research process was to identify motivation behind the use of high stakes data in the schools. One line of inquiry focuses on how staff in the school quantify success, particularly those who set the agenda and foci at senior levels. Whilst accepting that the number of Op1s was important, the Acting Headmaster drew upon the median OP score as a source of a deeper measure of success.

> For me I look at what our median score is. Is it a 7, 8 or 9? If the majority of boys are getting 7 or 8 then that, I think, is a stronger benchmark than the number of Op1s. You need those certainly, but the deeper result is the median score.

Another benchmark is drawn from the QCS exam that is sat by all the boys. The Acting

Principal highlighted this as another clear indication of the success of the year but

questioned whether the wider staff, pupils or parents would draw the same conclusions

from what is quite confusing data.

> The QCS generates a mean from 4 papers used to calculate the OP scores.
> We can look at that and see that as a benchmark for the success of the year.
> Does this standard deviation mean a lot to the staff or the wider community?
> Maybe not however, we know it is a very important discriminator. That's
> why we do practice tests

Anecdotally, the Acting Principal suggested that prospective and current parents tend to

focus on the number of Op1s, where as the public are now informed by the local paper,

The Courier Mail, of the number of students scoring OP's between 1 and 15. He

suggested that it was not a sufficiently fine tool to dissect the success of the school.

However, it was enough for some government schools to take great delight at the expense

of large Independent Schools.

> State Education of Queensland could crow that some schools got 100%
> because they have four kids scoring OP 10's, yet big private schools like
> Nudgee got only 68% 1-15

He acknowledged that the community now use the terms of OP's to look at schools using

the OP 1-15 scores and number of Op1s they scored.

1.2.3 Enrolment Policy

Since this research encompasses teacher's responses to high stakes testing, it is

worthwhile looking at how whole school policy is informed and driven by high stakes

testing. To this end the enrolment policy of the school was touched upon. As explained by the Acting Headmaster:

> Part of the enrolment policy is an interview and a written document filled in by the parents. It includes aspects of their Catholic values, academic history, their interests, where the family is. We also get the boy's end of semester report from his last school, a copy of his results in the statewide test, a statement from his school principal and a statement from his parish priest, or some religious affiliation. We do look at their results and are not likely to take boys below state average.

1.2.4 Edmund Rice and Equity

One of the major avenues for investigation in this research is examining how a school strives for academic success and remains faithful to the lived experience of the Charism of Edmund Rice. Issues of equity arise in schools such as CBC Brisbane because of their students tend to be drawn from families that are economically privileged. Traditionally, Christian Brothers' schools catered for the working class migrant Catholics, whilst the Jesuits catered for the "well heeled" Catholics. The Acting Headmaster alluded to questions raised by the governing province such as what are schools doing for the marginalised? How is the school actively bringing the marginalised and disadvantaged into the school?

> We do a lot in terms of out reach; our boys going out into the community, the boys doing things for others, in terms of bringing them into our community. We have a scholarship system… looking for boys with academic ability who financially would not normally be able to come to CBC Brisbane. This year we sent letters out to parishes asking if they had any boys of academic ability we asked specifically for those who come from needy situations and for refugees. We would like to open that up but we don't want to compromise our academic endeavour.

1.2.5 Dissonance and Tension

All three schools find themselves in an interesting position regarding association to private school organisations but acting under the auspices of the Christian Brothers'. On

one hand they are in direct competition with elite private school for the best students and the best results, whilst following a tradition of serving the marginalised and educating the poor. On questioning whether there was tension or dissonance in approach, the Acting Headmaster's response was enlightening in two ways. Firstly the acknowledgement that there was some degree of tension but also a clear view of how the socio-economically privileged students may achieve the goals of Edmund Rice in this context.

> There is tension, absolutely. Whether that's in us or out there in the community about us as a Christian Brothers' school and a GPS leader. I don't personally have a problem with the fact, I think it's great, that the Christian Brothers' have two fine schools like CBC Brisbane and Nudgee in that competition who can match it with the best in what ever field we choose.

He went on to describe the way in which parents were educated in the role of CBC Brisbane. He explained that they were a Catholic school first and foremost; " Yes we are an academic school but that's as a holistic part of what we do." He was also aware of the history of Christian Brothers' schools in Australia and the advances made by the vast majority of Catholics in Australia.

> Education has served the Catholic community very well, because they've climbed up the socio-economic ladder… to whom much is given, much is expected. For us to turn that tension into a healthy thing we must say OK boys you are talented, you have access to great resources, whether at school or at home, with that comes responsibility, we emphasis that a lot with our boys. That's the mission part of the school, it is a touch stone to come back to, our core values; academics yes but in the context of the whole and healthy community.

1.2.6 Excellence

There is a drive at CBC Brisbane for the boys to achieve excellence academically and in extra-curricular activity. The new mission statement, modelled on the Christian Brothers

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Charter, specifically makes mention of excellence. In conversation the Acting

Headmaster made mention of this and added that:

> Students are told on a regular basis to be the best you can be. We affirm that
> but also you talk about CBC Brisbane gentlemen having a humble humility.

1.2.7 Under achieving Teachers: identifying and supporting

A major implication of assessment tools is their use, their management and the impact on

staff. The Acting Head gave a clear indication of how underperforming teachers are

identified and given help at CBC Brisbane.

> Often anecdotal evidence coming out of a complaint of students will come
> to us, or from observation, from walking past a classroom…I know that we
> have worked with a number of teachers to assist their teaching and that can
> be identifying the weakness in classes, that can be difficult process. Initially
> identifying then working together, the challenge of time and on going
> support. Where things aren't remediated to our satisfaction we have a couple
> of avenues. Now that the hard edge…we support and challenge them out of
> a pastoral model, the Edmund Rice, Catholic Model. That role falls to the
> College Dean, the Headmaster and the Director of Studies.

1.2.8 Using Data for Goal Setting

One of the main requirements of measuring the success of teachers is setting a benchmark

or calculating a "bottom line" to which achievement can be compared. CBC Brisbane has

a remarkable technological tracking system that allows an accurate indication of the final

achievement of students. The leadership team have great faith in their statistical model;

however, they do not use this as a benchmark against which to assess the performance of

staff. Indeed, asked if he would go public and state the number of OP 1s they were

expecting he replied:

> No we wouldn't be that bold, we wouldn't publicly state that…based on
> student's results and historical QCS data we would be able to say at the start

of the year with this group there would be this number of Op1s with an average of Y. So we know where our starting point is. That might be a little bit below what we wanted so it's a case of "So fellas you're not quite where you should be". There's some testing that is done in year 10 that's independent ….so we know comparatively if were dealing with a strong or weak year level. Because there are so many other factors, particularly out of the QCS testing, you never really know how they are going to go.

1.2.9 Summary

The Acting Head drew out a number of clear themes in his interview. It was apparent that whilst there was an advanced use of high stakes testing in giving predictions to the leadership team and informing practice for the QCS, there was no benchmarking for staff or assessment against QCS or QSA scores. Where staff had been made accountable it was as a result of student of parental complaints or observations made by the leadership team; no statistical data had been used to inform the process. The academic nature of school is historic in nature and the school is identified as an academic school. There was a feeling and perception that the school had become elite however the tone set be the leadership team seeks to dispel this amongst both the student body and the parents. Rather than educating the poor and marginalised it was reported that the school seeks to empower the advantaged to make a difference through advocacy and reaching out. However, scholarship programs made the school accessible to academically bright students who would not be able to afford the fees, particularly immigrants. Whilst there was recognition of tension, it is balanced by an enthusiasm to become proactive in points of difference from other GPS schools such as catering for the poor and needy.

1.3 Director of Studies CBC Brisbane: Mrs. Brown

1.3.1 Qualifying Academic success

In conversation regarding the defining academic success and indeed qualifying it, Mrs Brown recalled the year level where she felt the school had achieved its best results. The factors that determined the success were two-fold in her opinion, the students had the academic potential and they were a strong group working well as a team. One "out of the blue" result came in a year when a sportingly successful year level was galvanised by a stirring call to academic arms by the 1st XV Rugby Captain. They performed well beyond expectations. The school collects baseline data in Year 10 of basic numeracy, literacy and general IQ to gauge how strong a year level is academically. But in defining the year level's success Mrs Brown was clear that the number of Op1s achieved by the students was a key indicator for the parents and prospective parents:

> Don't be fooled otherwise, the word on people's lips when they come in for interviews they will ask that, or they will refer to that. We put it out there.

As a school policy however, Mrs Brown was more holistic in her approach. She would never push the number of Op1s as the only parameter of success rather she encourages all staff to:

> Get the best out of every student. If that meant getting 22 Op1s or 18 OP's that's fine. My level of satisfaction is have we done everything to support the boys in the classroom…. and what we do on those vital two day [QCS testing days].

The other measure that is used by the school and most often quoted in public is the median OP score. Whilst the state's median in 13 out of 25, CBC Brisbane's best is seven.

> But to me a successful year is were we've addressed all the issues in the classroom we've dotted every I and crossed every T, I go through every Year 11 report, I rank them; who are the boys failing; so and so isn't passing. In year 11 I'm very proactive when they do their first set of exams every boy who is not passing is challenged over his subject selection.

On the subject of subject selection Mrs Brown maintained that ultimately the students "have the power", they choose their subjects and can ignore the advice of the teachers if they have chosen their subjects poorly.

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1.3.2 Pastoral Effects

An interesting sideline to come out of the conversation was the school's identification of pastoral effects on the academic outcome of the student. Alarm bells would ring within the academic staff if there were issues amongst the boys or if they had been "splintered" in any way.

> I'm at my wits end thinking that if we can't perform as a team the scaling parameters will definitely be affected. If they can inspire each other… that definitely has an effect

1.3.3 Teaching to the Test

The preparation for QCS at CBC Brisbane has taken on a very professional aspect. Since the QCS is an exam that is prescribed for all students across all subjects, it forms a vital part in achieving a high OP score. To this end, Mrs Brown explained that a great deal of time and effort goes into preparing boys specifically for the 4 exams that make up the QCS. Classes are timetabled that focus on QCS exam technique. Trial exams are organised and a full two-day mock exam process is put in place so that; "Students experience the exhaustion factor of 4 exams in two days". As a result of the mock exams, lessons are specifically tailored to address any issues that affect the general cohort. Students are interviewed and told how they can improve their OP scores by making small but significant changes in either their QCS scores or their QSA scores. This is teaching to the test in its truest form.

> We look at what happened in the exam, now what? Then we implement strategies to address it [a problem]

The elements that make up the QCS exam have as yet not been completely woven into the existing curriculum, but a small number of faculties, Science particularly, has explicit use of QCS terminology and techniques as part of its teaching, learning and assessment. A study had however, been completed to look at strengths and weaknesses within the whole school curriculum and Common Curriculum Elements (CCEs) such as Analysis, Synthesis etc. The CCEs will be woven into the curriculum from Year 7 to 10 so that they are explicitly taught rather than an assumed knowledge by implicit means.

In an attempt to affect the profile of results at the school, as Mrs Brown says to "stretch the neck and tuck in the tail," special classes have been arranged in Maths and English for those students who are failing. Smaller class sizes and a teacher who teaches "no frills" have had a dramatic effect.

> Out of the 20 who were failing this year 19 are now passing. As it has turned out instead of just getting 50% some are in the 70%.

The QSA (subject specific studies) provide a set of results called the SAI (Subject Achievement Indicator). The assessment used is an important part of helping students gain the appropriate score that will not only help them but also the cohort. Students who are on the cusp of Op1s are interviewed and given an indication of their standing and some areas in which they can improve their scores to get an OP 1. Mrs Brown will not give false hope to those not able, but for those who can she says: "You only have to sneeze in one subject to get over the line. I'm very aware however, of not making their life miserable".

Trial examinations and their use is a huge point of debate amongst the parents. One of the major outcomes of high stakes testing is a reliance on past papers and examination techniques. Yet despite the strong academic achievement of CBC Brisbane, and its

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method of preparation for QCS, it was intriguing to find there was little reliance on past or trial papers in QSA subjects. As discussed earlier in terms of stretching the neck and tucking in the tail, the perfect shape for a distribution would be the top students pushed out and the bottom students pushed in. If the past papers were handed out there may be a case where all the boys were too well prepared and there may not be any delineation between the top students. As Mrs Brown puts it: "It defeats the purpose of pushing the top boys out because every body has seen the paper… if the whole bulk is grouped we've killed ourselves off." There is however a great reliance on revision sheets produced by the teachers

> We put revision sheets out, that's something we're very good at, the boys
> download them from the intranet. The revision sheets are not the exam as
> such, but they cover the knowledge required. They look very similar in style
> and language to the exam. I often say to the boys "How did you do so well?"
> "I did the revision sheet three times". He knew what he had to do.

Other wide-ranging services provided by Mrs Brown included study skills classes, assessment calendars and study planners. Time is made in whole year level assemblies to talk specifically about the exams and exam preparation. Students are encouraged strongly to prepare early for exams particularly in Year 11. The message is strongly put from a range of sources. As Mrs Brown puts it: "The Principal is good. He says the main game is the academics, we have a myriad of others things but the big game is your academics"

1.3.4 Staff Assessment and responses to assessment

The idea of congratulating staff who do well or berating underachieving staff is a delicate matter and is handled very differently at different schools. Mrs Brown can look at individual teacher's results or individual classes throughout the year in every assessment task. Members of staff have not responded well to this form of assessment in the past, indeed in one instance the teacher in question was extremely disgruntled. Whilst Mrs

Brown acknowledges that there are wide variations in the quality of classes year to year, she maintained that she would challenge teachers on the achievement of the students. This would take the form of a one to one conversation. Conversely she takes time to congratulate staff on the achievement of their students on an informal basis. She gave the view that financial reward of more formal reward has its negative side:

> I believe that the teaching profession is never financially rewarded for excellence, that's the nature of the profession. So when you try to do it in a micro-environment like a school its often not received in the spirit in which it should be…some people see it as perhaps a vote of no confidence for them rather than an acknowledgment of somebody else.

Mrs Brown sees modelling of good practice as a key for school improvement and success at the senior level. CBC Brisbane has a vibrant and well-equipped audiovisual program and a very experienced Audio Visual department who make a wide variety of films.

> I want to film specific teachers in their classrooms, teachers delivering lessons. And I want to run it at staff meetings. As well as that I have asked for Heads of Faculty to ask people to share what works for them in the classroom and what is a challenge.

Mrs Brown aims to get a "Senior Team" of teachers who are focussed squarely on success at Year 12. The teachers are hand picked from those who regularly achieve academic success in the final examinations. One of the problems with moving teachers out of Year 12 is finding a space to put them somewhere else.

> You can't let them sit out and you must be able to replace them with someone from your staffing budget. I try to be strategic… I tell the Heads of Faculty to pick strong teams, teams that you know that will work. Then with the wisdom of the Heads of Faculty and what the staff want, you come up with a compromise.

1.3.5 Conflict with the Charism of Edmund Rice

When dealing with staffing, the Director of Studies has to make some difficult decisions regarding the loading for teachers. Mrs Brown has "moved people" in the past. Her

decisions are guided by academic results and work in the classroom however; she takes into account a wide raft of holistic influences as Mrs Brown explains:

> There is a conflict with the Edmund Rice tradition, because you try to value the dignity of someone who has been teaching a long time…. you "carry them" because you don't want to be someone who terminates a profession someone loves but basically what's happening in the classroom is below par.

1.3.6 Summary

The Director of Studies was very clear in her definition of academic success: the number of Op1s. In her opinion this was a tangible measure with which prospective parents and the whole school community could engage. A second measure of the median OP score was also cited as being an important measure for the school. Her role of securing academic success brings her influence across a wide aspect of school life. Her interest in the pastoral influences on academic scores was most enlightening. The degree to which students are made accountable and the way in which feedback is given is outstanding in its thoroughness. Students are left in no doubt as to what they could achieve; what their potential to achieve is, and, how to achieve that potential. One of the major responses to high stakes testing is teaching to the test and CBC Brisbane's preparation of the boys for the QCS exams provide perfect exemplars of a number of characteristics of teaching to the test. Firstly, specific exam technique training takes place through formal lessons, the use of drilling use past papers and mock examinations that are performed under exam conditions. The characteristic of curriculum change or shrinkage is not yet apparent, but there are moves to include Common Curriculum Elements (CCE's) into the Years Seven to Ten curricula. Rather than being seen as decreasing the breadth of the curriculum, it is viewed as an improvement because it weaves highly desirable thinking skills into the curricula. In this way it is mirroring high levels of curriculum development, teaching and

learning methods. Assessment of achievement of staff is not undertaken on a formal statistical measure against a mean or the QCS; however, Mrs Brown endeavours to congratulate high achieving teachers personally. Some staff members are reported to see staff acknowledgment as an indication of acknowledging their shortcomings instead of celebrating the achievement of another individual. Mrs Brown would like more autonomy to choose a team of the best teachers to teach Year 12; however, timetabling and cost constraints are hindering the process. Staff members have not reacted well to being challenged over their performance in the classroom. The Director of Studies has been shocked with the response of a staff member to inferences of underachievement. Her perception of conflict between the academic aspirations of the school and its Charismatic nature focuses on staff assessment. When dealing with underachieving teachers, especially long serving members of staff, she is very aware of "valuing their dignity" even though they may be "carried" by others.

1.4 Teacher 1: Ann

Ann has been as the school for a number of years and has served under two Headmasters. She has had her own children pass through the school and holds a relatively senior position within the teaching fraternity. Over the course of her career at CBC Brisbane she has taught from Year 12 down to Year 7.

1.4.1 Academic Nature of the school

The academic nature of the school is anecdotally well known in the wider community and through regular publications from the school. It is acknowledged as being one of the top academic schools in Brisbane and by far the most academic Christian Brothers' school in

Queensland. Ann suggests that parents send their students to the school, for the large part, to achieve academic success.

> Parental expectation is high. The expected pathway for these boys is from here on to tertiary study in the University of Queensland. Our post school profile is heavily skewed towards tertiary. The marketing is pitched at "Every boy will achieve" and I agree with that. The perception amongst the school and wider community is that the boys are more likely to achieve at CBC Brisbane.

The boys traditionally take Mathematics and Science courses because that's what their parents want them to do. The staff members support each other, and the community is very supportive. The atmosphere amongst the boys is also very supportive and as Ann says: "For the boys it's cool to learn".

1.4.2 Defining Academic Success

In defining success, Ann reflects on her own measures of success and takes a more holistic, rather than statistical approach.

> For me at the end of year 12 that the majority of the boys achieved their first [University] preference…I want the boys to walk away from here with options and the ability to make choices.

Again, academic success as defined by parents of CBC Brisbane would be the transition of their sons to the best University available, The University of Queensland. I asked the question "Only the best is good enough"? Ann's response: "Absolutely".

She acknowledged that different staff members have different measures of success, across different faculties. But she felt that staff members would rate success in that: "Everybody got over the line, everybody passed, that the classroom had a good feeling, it

was productive and enjoyable place." Furthermore, Ann outlined the school's plan "The school has an overall strategic plan. At Heads of Faculty level we do goals for our faculty, action plans, referring back to the school strategic plan, then the plans go back to the CLT."

1.4.3 Reporting Academic Success in the Media

As mentioned earlier, the local paper, *The Courier Mail* carries statistical information regarding the performance of every school in Queensland across a range of indicators. Ann suggests that this will have an influence on the school:

> I think it will. The two top boys schools academically in Queensland are Brisbane Grammar and CBC Brisbane…looking at year 12, people will use the number of Op1s the students are getting. It will be interesting because that will put more pressure on CBC Brisbane, because Grammar usually doubles the number of Op1s of CBC Brisbane. Even though people think CBC Brisbane is a great school, there will be parents out there putting pressure on us to lift our numbers in terms of Op1s. Something about putting it in black and white changes the perception.

There hasn't been a push this year more than normal for OP1s but Ann mentioned the continued push by the College Leadership Team to keep the mean OP score between 7 and 8. The use of common language between this staff member and the Director of Studies is apparent when Ann says, "There has been a very positive push for those at the bottom to make sure we have done everything to support them."

1.4.4 Teaching to the Test

Teaching staff and the College Leadership team have focused on QCS preparation quite closely in the last few years. As Ann states: "We are doing things a lot smarter". Ann reiterates the use of whole school assemblies; the professional development of staff, staff

running workshops, and involving a wider group of staff members who are properly

prepared has had dramatic, positive academic and collegial effects. Ann applauds the

efforts of the college Leadership team for: "Getting everybody on board and giving them

ownership.

1.4.5 Pressure on Teachers

Whilst acknowledging that there is no use of statistical data to assess senior teachers, Ann

contends that teachers feel pressure for their students to achieve academic success.

> Teachers would say that there is pressure on them to maintain very high
> standards and to make sure that their results are up to par. In saying that we
> don't target teachers we target students. We have never targeted teachers
> and brought that teacher in…as far as I know it's never happened.

However, if teachers were perceived not to perform at Year 12 they would be taken off

senior classes. Ann acknowledged that had happened at CBC Brisbane. The selection

process for senior teaching was also touched upon. Head of Faculty put in preferences but

eventually, the final decision on staffing came for the College Leadership Team. The

pressure on staff due to increased accountability is one issue raised by Ann. She felt that

the atmosphere was more informed by accountability of staff members.

> I think the staff would say there was a higher level of accountability now
> that before. They feel that their class results are more closely looked at, the
> College Leadership team do wanderings through the school, and the HOF is
> encouraged to visit teacher's classes. There would be some teachers who
> would say they're under the microscope…in some ways I would say that's
> improved the school.

Staff members are not powerless however. If they think something is unfair they will

make their feelings known. As Ann states teachers:" …have a voice as well." Moreover,

the College Leadership Team (CLT) responds well to staff issues as Ann puts it: "We're

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expected to be excellent at what we do, but you are also supported in terms of being treated like a professional."

1.4.6 Feedback to Teacher

As noted in the literature, senior teachers responses are governed in some ways by the form of assessment and feedback protocols under which they operate. At CBC Brisbane the feedback for senior staff is multifaceted, but is not based on statistical data. Ann states that at the beginning of the year the Director of Studies goes through all the scores at a full staff meeting and each teacher gets feedback from Heads of Faculty. Also, the Director of Studies makes a point of going round and giving feedback to individual teachers on how they're going. Underperforming staff are identified from results and the approach is problem solving rather than accusatory. Ann highlights the process:

> I think you might be invited to have a discussion with either Director of Studies or, the Director of Studies would encourage the Head of Faculty. She would ask the Head of Faculty what's happening with this person, is there anything wrong, can we do anything to help? And I'm sure it's happened but I haven't been part of it.

Members of staff whose students are not achieving the expected result are offered a number of areas of support. Ann is aware of a number of strategies that are in place. Ann described how teachers are "encouraged" rather than forced to attend professional development and those who needed help in classroom management techniques and strategies are encouraged to get help from people on staff.

> There are different levels of support, from talking through some different strategies with either the Head of Faculty or the Head of Exceptional Learners. A lot of them go down to seek help voluntarily. Some professional development in the area is another avenue. They might be encouraged to go to a particular conference or a particular session.

1.4.7 Response to High Stakes Testing

Ann sees merit in the explicit teaching of the high level thinking skills espoused in the QCS. The teaching of these skills within the normal curriculum across the school is seen as a benefit rather than a hindrance. Again, there is a perception of the QCS as mirroring best practice rather than being an imposition and detracting from the classroom. Moreover their method of teaching writing skills at CBC Brisbane, which has been embedded for many years, mirrors the exact style espoused in the QCS.

> We've tried to lift the profile of the high level thinking skills (within QCS) and do that across the school. If you think of education in terms of learning how to learn, thinking and problem solving and take out elements of knowledge, generally it does that [mirrors good practice].

Ann recounted teaching to the test activities such as:

> the explicit preparation of QCS starts through Year 11 assemblies, QCS lessons if you like talking them through how you go through the multiple choice, the short response, different people go through different things. Then there's a lot of practices. We are explicitly giving the boys skills in how to use the material to their advantage.

1.4.8 Christian Brothers' School within the GPS

The wider community and the staff share the perception of CBC Brisbane as both a Christian Brothers' School and an integral part of the GPS. Asked whether CBC Brisbane struggles to be both a genuine Christian Brothers' school and part of the GPS, Ann's response was emphatic:

> No, it doesn't seem to be the way at all. Should it? Belonging to an elitist group like the GPS it is an opportunity to stand up and be who you really are in any situation.

Ann contends that the boys are imbued with a strong sense of social justice and are called to be future leaders who will respond to the needs of others in their future lives.

> There a big focus a the school on producing boys with a strong sense of social justice and the reality is that they are likely to be out in positions of power and influence…and your opportunity and even duty is to go out and be people of integrity and do what you can in the environment that you are working in to be people of justice.

1.4.9 Summary

Ann contends that CBC Brisbane has a very strong academic reputation and the academic expectations of the boys and teachers by the parental body are high. Whilst Ann's measurement of success is every boy reaching their potential, she concedes that the number of Op1s and the mean OP score is of great interest, particularly in light of the coverage in The Courier Mail. Furthermore, she suggests that there will be increased pressure to achieve Op1s when a direct comparison is made in the media between CBC Brisbane and Brisbane Grammar.

As a consequence of the high stakes nature of the QCS, Ann reports an increase in strategies drawn from teaching to the test literature, such as direct explicit exam preparation, exam technique lessons and mock examinations. Ann does, however, maintain that the skills in the QCS are valuable for the boys and that staff see the induction of these skills into the normal classroom environment as worthwhile. Management of staffing the QCS preparation has also given the staff ownership of the process. Ann feels no dissonance between the academic nature of the school or its association within the GPS rather she feels that it is important for the Catholic leaders of tomorrow to be men of conscience and integrity.

1.5.Teacher 2: Ben

Ben is a younger teacher who has been at the College for only a few years. It is his second appointment. He teaches mainly senior classes but also teaches a Year 10 class.

1.5.1 Qualifying success

Although the emphasis is clearly the OP's as an indicator of success, there has been no push to improve the number of Op1s at the expense of the less able students; however, strategies have been put in place to achieve more Op1s.

> Op1s is the strongest indicator of the cohort. So when the Director of Studies discusses how they're going, the best indicator is the number of Op1s they have at that time compared with past groups. We're always looking at how we can tinker with our model.

1.5.2 Achieving success

Ben highlights the use of statistics to inform the boys on their performance as a key method for achieving success. Again the focus is the accountability of the students rather than the accountability of staff. Comparison is made between year levels and a personal perspective where boys are compared with people within their own cohort.

> They get their cohort information from the Director of Studies and their personal information, they then get feed back on a tentative OP within a 2-grade band.

This leads to discussion, and importantly as he sees it competition within the group. The teachers try to harness this energy in study groups and: "Following that is the competition

within the group, the boys motivate each other when they see it, when they hear it. They work a lot better as a group".

The use of first hand data in informing the boys is seen as a key motivating factor in the boys achieving success, especially when they are shown the comparative data with others in the year group. The use of competition, goal setting and action planning with the students is done to great effect. "That sort of information is very powerful, much more powerful than learning a specific grade, it gives them perspective of where they sit in the cohort."

Ben also alluded to the overall academic nature of the school and its perceived strength in this area: "This school provides an academic pathway". Rather than enrolling brighter boys into the College to achieve further academic success, Ben encourages getting more out of the boys that they currently enrol:

> Improving the boys we've got, it's not just the top end, it's the middle supporting the top end. If the averages and distributions are there, then we'll help boys go from fives to fours. The magic number for us is seven, if we get 50% of boys scoring 7 or better then we've had a very good year.

Staffing was also a key area for Ben, at Year 12 and at Year 10. He felt that Year 10 teachers should have had experience at Year 12 so they could inform the boys of expectation and the content of Year 12.

1.5.3 Effect of Media

Ben made mention of the statistic data in the *Courier Mail*. His interpretation of the reasons behind publishing the data spoke more of the renewed push for accountability measures in a public forum

> That was meant to send a message to the school of accountability it was
> meant to raise discussion on state school versus non-government schools,
> girls single sex education went pretty strongly on that

1.5.4 Teacher Accountability

Again, Ben confirmed that there is no aspect of staff evaluation using high stakes data.

Moreover, the data is used as a lens to view the achievement of the boys and bring them

to account. The emphasis is across a year level rather than teacher's individual classes.

The approach of one-on –one conversations with staff whose classes have underachieved

was seen as "Let's talk about what's happened in your classroom. Have there been boys

who are disrupting the learning process? How can we help?" This was interpreted as a

collegial supportive process, rather that a meeting where teachers would have to defend

themselves.

1.5.5 Academic Climate

Although the school strives to produce well-rounded young men who live with Catholic

sensibilities, Ben contends that the primary focus of the school is academic success and

he cites boys who have been suspended for a lack of academic rigour and disruption of

lessons.

> Academics are the focus of the school, the boys know that. If they are
> slacking then consequences will occur, they will lose privileges

1.5.6 Christian Brothers' School within the GPS

Ben speaks of the place of CBC Brisbane as a Christian Brothers' school within the GPS. He is happy with the duality of the schools identity, promoting excellence at a Christian Brothers School in an association of other great schools.

> There's a strong correlation between the GPS and academic achievement. I feel that the GPS system promotes excellence, excellence in everything. Excellence in sport, in academics, music, culture, debating. I feel that the boys really feel that sense of excellence and they must work and achieve to maintain that. There is a very strong tradition and that is always brought back to the boys. " This school is founded by the forefathers in 1875 to carry this forward, through assemblies, academic awards, College Hall which has proud memorabilia of what the school has achieved.

1.5.7 Summary

Ben reiterates the commonly held notion that the greatest indicator of the success of a year level is the number of OP 1s they produce, closely followed by the median score "magic number seven". Ben saw student accountability, the extensive use of comparative statistical data and competition amongst boys as key factors in achieving academic success. He agreed with the school's perceived approach to teacher accountability of a conversational collegial approach rather than a confrontational, statistically based assessment of the performance of members of staff. The school has a long history of academic excellence. Maintaining those standards is part of the role of each boy who attends CBC Brisbane in Ben's view, a message that is strongly endorsed by the College leadership team and broader community.

1.6 Teacher 3: Colin

Colin is an experienced teacher, with a successful record of academic achievement at the school. He has a leadership position that allows him to make changes in what is taught and how it is taught.

1.6.1 Defining Success

Colin did not make mention of the current focus on Op1s as a prime indicator of success, rather his basis for academic success was on the scores achieved in the QSA rather than the student's overall or QCS performance.

> I was asked one year by the boss how many VHA's (Very High Achievement) we had got. I can't remember the exact numbers but about 26/80 that year was very good

1.6.2 Achieving success

In explaining CBC Brisbane's academic success, Colin drew upon a number of sources.

> The biggest change that's been made in the last number of years; … the kids no longer poo-poo academic success. If you achieved good academic success you were seen as a nerd, you weren't part of the crowd. But over time, and it's been quite some time, maybe ten years or more, now the kids see academic success as important and the academic high achievers are held in high regard.

In Colin's view promoting academic achievement and raising the academic profile of students within CBC Brisbane was central to school improvement. Colin holds the view that celebrating Rhodes Scholarships with special assemblies, identifying and praising the students who achieve OP 1s, and giving academic awards for those achieving A grades from Year 12 through to the primary students all raised the profile of academic study at CBC Brisbane all aided in the process of raising the academic profile.

Colin is able to have control of the subject matter taught in his course. He intentionally teaches the boys much more that is taught in other schools. He sets the "bar high" to

challenge motivate and keep the students interested. Interestingly, Colin suggests that students will, quite pragmatically; take a particular course because it seems to achieve academic success on a regular basis. However, students are not told to undertake particular courses for them to achieve Op1s. The greater use of career guidance and increase levels of informed choices were also mentioned as another area of academic improvement. Teachers are also giving their time to tutor students before and after school, as Colin mentions; "Tutorials are offered across a range of subjects, they're advertised on the website so the kids know what's happening when. There's some peer tutoring as well." Something as small as changing the name of Awards night to Evening of Excellence is also seen as significant.

Importantly, CBC Brisbane doesn't take chances with staffing. Teachers with four or five years experience elsewhere were employed rather than new graduates. Colin suggests that, "All the teachers we've put on have had to prove themselves somewhere else first." In this fashion the teachers taking senior classes already have a number of years experience.

1.6.3 High Stakes Testing

Colin explained that he specifically changed his assessment pieces in Year 12 to have 50% multiple-choice components. When other staff have challenged him about this in the past he replies:

> I just put it back to the QCS. QCS has four papers, two multiple choice. Tell me what percentage that is? What we've done in the junior science, there's CCE's and we try to incorporate as many of these into the junior of science and dimensions of learning into the curriculum. We have tried to keep the terminology the same from Year Five to Year Ten.

1.6.4 Accountability of Staff Members

Colin makes mention of the reliance on Heads of Faculty to address issues of teacher accountability. Again, the feedback given is not based on statistical data of their student performance, more so a focus on classroom management.

> The head would use the HOF " Go and keep an eye on so and so", generally because of poor classroom management. "Go give the guy a hand".

1.6.5 Dissonance between Christian Brothers and GPS

When asked if there was any dissonance between being a Christian Brothers' school and being part of the GPS, Colin was very clear.

> I don't think so, be the best person you can be in all respects, whether that's academically, on the sporting field. I can't see any clash there what so over, we do the other bits and pieces

Moreover, Colin goes on to say

> You make the most of the situation you're in and gain the most from it; you're being un-Christian if you are not making the most of the situation or interfering with others to hinder them.

Colin echoes the sentiments of a number of staff at the College; he contends that a social responsibility is incumbent upon the boys at CBC Brisbane. The words of the Acting Principal " to whom much is given, much is expected" seem to resonate in this passage.

1.6.6 Summary

Colin listed a number of changes that have been made over the years to ensure CBC Brisbane's continued academic success, these included whole school assembles and awards celebrating academic success and raising the profile of the studious boys rather than focusing on the sport. He seeks to set the bar high and push boys beyond what would be expected at other schools. He has been instrumental in putting key skills into junior syllabi and creating assessment items that help boys with their QCS scores. Colin can see no points of dissonance between bring a Christian Brothers' school and being part of the GPS system. He maintains that the GPS encourage excellence and the Christian Brothers' encourages students to make the most of their opportunities in that culture.

1.7 Identifying the themes from CBC Brisbane

During the course of the data collection at CBC Brisbane, I interviewed 9 members of staff including the Headmaster, the Director of Studies and seven staff members drawn from different Faculties and roles. They included House Heads to Heads of Faculty and teachers without positions of leadership. In the preceding sections I have drawn out the themes from five key interviews. In this section I will include an overview of the site and I will place the themes in the context of the research by addressing the research questions using the themes.

1.7.1 Overview

It appears that members of the teaching staff at CBC Brisbane are happy, collegial and supportive. It is apparent that they enjoy a very good level of support from each other and from the CLT (College Leadership Team). Many of the members of staff are long serving especially those teaching or managing at the senior level. Their perception is that their students are motivated and eager to succeed at the senior level. Whilst successful at Year 12, CBC Brisbane does not at present meet the academic standards of Brisbane Grammar

School (selective entry) their main competitor at the highest level of academic achievement. Whilst public perception of CBC Brisbane is excellent, The Courier Mail cannot differentiate between it and a regional College on a score of O/P's 1-15. Most feedback protocols at CBC Brisbane supply feedback to students rather than to staff. A great deal of time and effort goes into supplying boys with feedback about their exam and test results; the emphasis is student performance rather than what teachers can add to their students. If students succeed, members of staff perceive that the students have achieved it by their own merit, likewise if they fail to meet expectation it is by the shortcomings of the student rather than the attributes or input of the teacher.

1.7.2 CBC Brisbane: Research Questions Answered

Question 1: Have members of staff changed their teaching to achieve academic success?

- Teaching staff seem to be organised in their approach
- Increased use of ICT, data projectors are now used in most classrooms
- Teaching is aimed at the higher end of the curriculum, more rather than the lower end.
- Curriculum has been changed in some cases to challenge and reduce boredom; this was initially a response to poor classroom behaviour.
- Students are challenged above state expectation
- The "CBC Brisbane way" is understood to be more demanding than the norm e.g. Year 12 Chemistry teaches Fuels that is beyond the scope of normal courses.
- Accountability of students is high, senior students in particular are given a lot of feedback and are expected to act upon it.
- There is a program to highlight weaknesses in the student's content or skill base at Year 12 and address them before the exam.
- Each subject has their own study design that has to be vetted by the QBOS a very stringent approach is taken to content. However this does not extend to prescribed pedagogy.
- The senior school subjects are based on booklets given to students rather than a reliance on textbooks. Members of staff produce the booklets.
- They aim for excellence in their courses and their outcomes.
- There is an aim to work smarter rather than work harder with a greater reliance on ICT, IT support and tight protocols for feedback to students.
- Weaker students are withdrawn from normal English or Maths classes and hot housed with an aim to just get them to pass. This has been highly effective in small classes turning around the fortunes of a number of failing students. It is unlikely that students will fail at CBC Brisbane.
- There has been a focus on the teaching of higher order thinking skills with staff PD. However, this has been a response to the requirements of terminology at QCS level. There seems to be little flow on effects in other areas, however, these systems have only been in place for a short time.

- There is evidence in a number of subjects that the QCS language has proliferated down to year 8. Science is a good example of this where the explicit teaching of Bloom's Taxonomy terminology has been a focus.
- There has been a general focus on classroom management rather than pedagogy.
- A noisy or unruly classroom is frowned upon and has been a focus for senior management
- The next step seems to be a focus on the way in which they can teach the class now that a settled learning environment has been established.
- There has until this time been no focus on excellence of pedagogy rather a link between classroom management and the learning climate of the school.

1a. Sub question: Does teaching to the test occur?

To answer this question we need to delineate between the two aspects of testing at the senior level, the QCS and the QSA.

QCS

- Time given over to specific exam preparation
- 4 mock examinations through year 12
- Whole year level assemblies explaining the structure and format of the exams
- Specific team focuses on exam preparation
- Comprises of core thinking skills that cannot be taught in the normal curriculum
- Should be accessible to all students regardless of their subjects chosen
- However it is more difficult for those who have a strong arts/drama/expressive arts background
- The curriculum has been changed in parts to prepare for the QCS.
- Seen as very important amongst the normal teaching staff as a result they are supportive of the time taken to prepare for the QCS.
- Time taken to prepare the students for QCS is not begrudged because it boosts the student's marks across the board.
- Attempting the QCS is a skill in itself. 4 papers in two days. A writing task, two multiple choice.
- QCS team gets together after the mocks and looks at lacking skills and addresses them as whole year level.
- Curriculum broadened advantage of the students. Narrow set of subjects will work against them in QCS
- Explicit use of terminology included in the normal curriculum. This process has started and is to be developed over the coming years.
- However, students capable of the harder subjects are encouraged to pursue them in order to achieve a high OP's.
- Past paper questions used in mocks.
- By definition this is teaching to the test in its purest form. A necessary evil to help the other subjects and the students primarily.

QSA

- Since members of staff have to prepare the papers there is no great use of past papers. E.g. maths where 4 problems are used to delineate the students. A straightforward one that graduates in difficulty. Difficult to keep coming up with new examples
- Director of Studies has written a book of these problems.
- There is a widespread use of revision sheets that use the same language as the exams and prepare the students for the end of year exam.
- No mocks for the QSA.
- Not a huge emphasis on preparing for the style of exam encountered at the end of the year.
- Exam style and content is not explicitly directed to the students, however, there are somewhat subliminal messages that are derived form the teaching cues of the teacher.
- There is no shrinking of the subject curriculum because they set their own agendas, in fact there seems to be a broadening within subjects.
- Students are encouraged to keep a broad set of subjects throughout their schooling.
- However, because of the large amount of content teachers tend not to stray outside the set curriculum.
- There should be no surprises for the students when they sit the exams. Teachers know what the outcomes are and teach stringently to them
- There seems to be an emphasis on classroom management rather than quality teaching or pedagogy.

Question 2: How does the teaching staff perceive methods employed?

- The methods employed to improve QCS are well supported.
- The QCS scores can either help everyone or hurt everyone.
- The QCS is "the biggest team sport at the school".
- The members of the teaching staff see how the QCS improves core skills as a spin off; however, it is primarily seen as a hurdle for the students to achieve good OP's.
- Teachers appreciate and commend the work done by Mrs Brown Quinn and the College Leadership Team (C.L.T.) in preparing the boys.
- Their academic results and standing in the broader community is a source of pride and a point of difference between them and their competitors in the Catholic system and the GPS.
- Teachers are supportive of the system because it gets their students a good OP and therefore gives them options in terms of University.
- There is no specific pressure applied to individual subject teachers in QSA subjects.
- If there is a problem with marks it's the students responsibility, and likewise if things are going well it is down to the students not the staff.
- There is no statistical feedback to inform teacher effectiveness based on QSA or QCS scores.
- If staff are perceived not to be performing HOD's/HOF's will have a "quiet talk". There is no formal review policy linked to exam success.
- Director of Studies trying to put together a "Year 12 Team" of senior teachers.
- There does not seem to be external pressure on staff to perform well in the QSA, success linked more to professional pride than outside influence.
- There is however a large pressure on the students to perform in the QCS.
- The bulk of the responsibility for performance in the QCS is born by the Director of Studies. However, as the role has expanded, she has been able to exert more influence on the process and the results have improved.

- What happens if Director of Studies moves on? Have these processes been embedded on a systemic level?
- There is pressure to perform from prospective parents. The question is always asked, "How many OP1s did you get last year?" This is a concrete measure used by prospective parents.
- The pressure that is exerted on the students is not exerted on staff.
- In comparison with other schools in the GPS (Great Private Schools) CBC Brisbane is academically very good. The only one that is better on a wide range of measures in Brisbane Grammar School. They get a huge number of OP1s whilst CBC Brisbane get between 10-15. The highest was 21 OP1s but this was seen as exceptional. BGS scores seen as unattainable.
- There is a sense that they cannot rest on their laurels "you cannot keep running the old reels"

Question 3: Given the charismatic nature of the school are there any points of dissonance?

- There are no points of dissonance between being a GPS School and a CB's school.
- They see themselves as preparing the generation of leaders to represent the underprivileged rather than educating the under privileged themselves.
- However, there are movements to offer scholarships to talented students who may not be able to afford the CBC Brisbane Education.
- It is quite Jesuit in it's feel
- Unapologetically dealing with privileged students but educating them in the spirit of Edmund Rice.
- They are not elitist but they are committed to excellence. Look at their mission statement drawn from the Christian Brothers' Charter (2004).
- The students are encouraged to do work in the community and overseas in response to hardship.
- The treatment of staff is through diplomacy and tact. There is an emphasis on consultation.

Question 4: How can these methods be employed to reduce dissonance and improve academic success?

- Staff are comfortable perhaps too comfortable.
- The staff are long serving, low turn over of staff.
- Probably need to introduce some feedback protocol to staff.
- The aim is on student accountability.
- Professional development could be aimed at pedagogy at the middle and lower years.
- PD for exam success and preparation at Year 11 and 12 could also be an option. Great teaching going on in the school but in isolation.
- Who is doing well? How are they doing it? Enlighten others and get them to mirror successful strategies.
- Staff PD could also focus on QCS skills and how these can be infused into junior teaching practice. If QCs thrives on good thinking skills this can only help the students in the long term.
- Staff are currently threatened by feedback, any change to protocol needs to be managed carefully and systematically.

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- Perhaps need to look at who is teaching at QSA level and make some changes.

APPENDIX 3
RESULTS FROM CBC MELBOURNE, VIC.

3.1   Introduction

Appendices 1, 2 and 3 present an interpretation of the data collected in August and September of 2006 at the three Christian Brothers' Schools in Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne.

These appendices draw out themes from the interviews and data collection that have been previously identified and used in the research questions. The data is interrogated in detail to draw out themes that have a bearing on teacher responses to high stakes testing. Unexpected themes or disconfirming themes are also identified and reported. The themes were derived mainly from interviews and data collection practices informed by the research framework and underpinned by the literature review. This section is reported using the interviews of the Principal/Headmaster, Director of Curriculum/Studies and two or three other members of staff.

Each school is treated separately in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. A summary for each school and how the themes answer the research questions is addressed. Unexpected results and

disconfirming results are reiterated and collated for further examination. Appendix 3 presents the data from CBC Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria.

3.1 Headmaster: Mr. Collins

Mr Collins had been at CBC Melbourne for ten years, firstly acting as Deputy Headmaster and for the last three years as Headmaster. He has an in-depth knowledge of the changes that have occurred over this time. He continues to have a very hands-on approach to the academic nature of the College.

3.1.1 Academic Nature of the College

In assessing the academic climate of the College, Mr Collins was keen to point out the expectation of the boys and parents in regard to expected career paths and goals post secondary schooling.

> The bulk of students will go onto tertiary study, the bulk of those university.
> Very few go straight into the workforce.

The academic focus of the College has been strong and influences many aspects of the fuller life of CBC Melbourne. Academic expectations are deliver to the boys by many means and in a variety of forums.

> It has been the focus of the College. It has certainly been a focus of the
> leadership team and then that has fed through to the pastoral and curriculum
> committee and improved academic performance has not been a covert
> message, it has been overtly stated that this is what we were trying to do.

As Mr Collins pointed out, it has been strongly worded and repeated often, "We've been unapologetic in saying we want to do well."

3.1.2 Defining and Quantifying Success

In quantifying success, Mr Collins used a broad measure of success that encompassed the hopes for the whole cohort, but also recognised that the achievement of the leading academic students was important in taking the cohort up to higher levels of success. He was also in no doubt of the significance of the above 40 scores to the media.

> We can rely on a number of measures…the figure I'm happiest with is the percentage of enters over 80. That's clearly broad and a boy will have options…70% of the boys getting over 80 is good news. To drag the cohort however, we do need the performance at the very top. There is legitimacy for all those others measures that we use; the number in the top 1% of the state, the percentage of boys with studies scores over 40. That last one is probably the one of least statistical importance, but it is the one used by the press and the one that has been used for the longest time.

3.1.3 Effect of the Media

As alluded to, the effect of the media, particularly the press in Melbourne has had a great effect on school and informing prospective parents of the relative academic success of all schools in Melbourne. Mr Collins was both aware of the influence of the media and the positive effect it has had on the academic reputation of the school.

> There is no question that the press exerts a significant influence. Our reputation as a school with a strong academic performance has been enhanced dramatically because of the attention we've received because of our top performance.

3.1.4 Teacher Accountability

Measures of accountability at the school have taken a variety of forms, but the most enduring are the use of the percentage of study scores above 40 (widely used in the press) and the teacher value added scores. The goal for the school set by the last Headmaster,

was that across the school 25% of students should achieve a study score of 40 or above.

This is often referred to as the Wilding line. Mr Collins contends that whilst the Wilding

line was initially seen as unworkable, it has become a real expectation and goal for

students and staff members.

> When the previous Headmaster set the Wilding line it was scoffed at as
> unrealistic. It has been accepted as a benchmark with in staff has been
> realistic and the boys

The use of statistical data has been used since the late 1990's and it was flagged by Mr

Collins as a key method for informing practice and feeding back to staff. Mr Collins spelt

out the method by which members of staff are informed. He pointed to involvement in

VCE marking as powerful professional development for those whose students have

underperformed.

> There is more accountability to our boys than to this office. The willingness
> to reflect on how I've taught something to make sure these boys achieved a
> result commensurate with their ability. Getting someone to reflect first,
> looking at the group of boys who didn't perform and asking what could have
> been done. Is it that they need to go and mark the paper? Were we've had to
> we've moved staff as well.

The use of statistical data to evaluate the performance of staff is a strong theme at CBC

Melbourne. It is used to identify high achieving staff and to give a quantifiable measure

of underachievement where necessary. Mr Collins reports that senior teachers do

experience a lot of pressure, but he felt that was within the nature of teaching the senior

boys. He explained that from both personal experience and anecdotally, self-imposed

pressure should be in the nature of the senior teacher and that if you didn't enjoy the

pressure you shouldn't teach VCE.

> It is appropriate that we give acknowledgment to staff…but I think we
> genuinely need to analyse. There is more pressure in teaching VCE, I don't
> think you ought to be teaching VCE if you're not prepared to put yourself

under pressure. You should deselect yourself if you don't want that pressure. In a whole range of subjects there are people saying, given the knowledge of what the expectations are and the discussions that occur and the fact that results are closely analysed we have got people saying when can I get my chance at it.

It is very important to note that even given the extensive use of statistical feedback, the public scrutiny and high-pressure environment in place for senior teachers, there are a large number of teachers waiting for an opportunity to teach VCE.

3.1.5 Student Accountability

Whilst staff members are reported to feel pressure from the Leadership team or self imposed pressure to get results, the students themselves are under pressure to perform from teachers, the leadership team, parents and from the comparison made between their year level and years gone by. Each year level since 1996 has improved their study scores, 2005 being a record-breaking year. As a result the 2006 cohort experienced an added weight of expectation.

If there is a down side, the year 12s said this year they felt under pressure because of what happened in the last few years of results…. however, some pressure is good.

3.1.6 Achieving Academic Success

The process of achieving academic success has been a decade long process. It has been achieved using a wide raft of strategies based on systemic, pastoral and classroom-based practice. Mr Collins took time to list quite a few but he stressed that these were ongoing and that the College was not yet the finished article. He stressed that the culture of the school had changed significantly in the decade; a huge change achieved by incremental steps.

> We've shifted school culture in terms of expectations interns of things like classroom climate…what's acceptable in classrooms, academic climate done to a particular level right down to year 7, the boys taking examinations seriously right the way through. The Headmaster's Study Awards, the academic insignia, the Duane awards, boy recognition, and inclusion in the newsletter, to the expectation that it is good to do well. As a leadership team we have continued to innovate with a range of things in terms of extra support from the Café Academus to the individual mentoring, to the leadership taking on 60 extra students that we thought were in the middle band to be pushed ahead; the study hall concepts; our willingness to go to other schools…
> …. The Teaching and Learning Committee, trying to look at big picture and the improved links between each leg of the school. We've tweaked and changed year after year.

Mr Collins was quite clear that the boys are not expected to work in isolation. He was clear that the boys must be encouraged and focussed by the staff.

> It must add something…. you might say it's up to them to do it but I don't' accept that.

Over the last decade, a high priority has been the quality of staffing at the senior level. Mr Collins and the previous Headmaster have endeavoured to bring in high quality teachers and create teams of teachers in each subject so that no one was teaching in isolation.

> We've tried to create teams so that there is not a single teacher teaching Year 12. We have virtually managed that across all subjects.

In terms of school culture, Mr Collins explained that the students have always felt an intense loyalty to CBC Melbourne. Coupled with sporting and cultural success the extension into academic success only added to the fondness with which the boys view the College.

> I think our bits of success sporting wise and culturally, all these things develop a sense of the boys enjoying being at the school…. the loyalty of

the boys to the school is extraordinary. That sense of connectedness and the way boys relate to the staff.

Exterior influences may also have an effect on the climate within the school. The broader community has high expectations of the students at the College and Mr Collins feels that this also has a motivating factor on the boys.

There is a sense of momentum, the reputation of the school in the wider community is strong, I'm sure that has an impact on the boys and the fact that becomes self fulfilling

3.1.7 Using High Stakes Data

Since the late 1990's the study scores of students in each class are used to generate statistical data to assess staff. Staff are either rewarded, acknowledged or asked to account on the their results depending on the achievement of their students.

I am certain that staff owning their own classes and the results that their boys get has been crucial. Whilst it's more common now the work we've done relating performance in a year 12 subject to his GAT (General Achievement Test) scores and relate them across subjects and so you can sit down with staff and see if boys have performed in their subject commensurate with the abilities of the boys in the subject and ask people to reflect on what could have done differently must have had an impact. It produced some real angst, the hardest interviews would have been the ones from 1998-2000, because by the time we got to 2003 people's acceptance of the fact this was a reasonable assessment of the year was there. There has been less angst but there still is some.

3.1.8 Reaction of Members of Staff to use of High Stakes Data

Mr Collins is very aware of the impact of the use of high stakes data. He has not taken the decision lightly but teachers have been moved off senior classes and the data has been used to inform these decisions. But he does point to success stories where teacher have succeeded at a later date having made some changes to their teaching practice.

> Some people have been disappointed when they have been moved off. It is unquestioned some have bounced back. They have gone away and there are instance where staff have been taken off year 12 and been given another go a few years later.

3.19 Responses of Senior Teacher in the Classroom

Whilst the College was at the forefront of using statistical data in terms of value added analysis, Mr Collins points to a conservative approach to classroom practice and school structure with an emphasis to quality teaching and learning.

> Wide range of how people teach, we are relatively conservative. There is a Middle School Studies coordinator, Middle School Studies convener; exam technique has become part of the normal experience of the boys. The exams have a high degree of integrity as a measure of the boy's performance.

3.1.10 Effect on Middle School Teaching

One of the reported effects of the use of high stakes data has been a shrinking of the curriculum and an emphasis on examinable skills. Mr Collins contends that this has occurred to a degree.

> I know it has been a criticism of us externally that we are too driven by Year 12 results, and that therefore the teaching styles a 7 and 8 are dominated by what we want to achieve at Year 12. That is what we're doing but we need to be careful that we don't become a little too narrow.

3.1.11 Christian Brothers' school in the APS

On the question of dissonance between the Christian Brothers' approach and the association with other school in the APS, Mr Collins is very clear. He acknowledges that

there is tension but this is of mutual benefit to CBC Melbourne and to the other schools in the APS.

> Healthy tension and it is a tension. I am at ease with it. If you look at Edmund, he was financially astute was able to read the signs of his times, and look at how best to achieve the result that brought the advantage of many. It seems to be lost the fact that Edmund had fee paying as well as non-fee paying students in his school. Both were advantage by the mix.

The role of CBC Melbourne as seen by Mr Collins has developed over time but it has become a place where leaders of tomorrow are educated. It is a goal of the school to produce leaders in the community who will champion the poor and marginalised.

> We are producing young men that will have leadership roles within the community. We were founded to have a major impact in Melbourne. If we produce young men with a social conscience then we are staying true to our origins.

3.1.12 Summary

Mr Collins was clear about the high academic aspirations of the students, the College and the parental body. He maintains that there is a strong academic focus, which is regularly reinforced through a raft of communication systems to students and staff. He measures academic success firstly by the percentage of boys gaining an Enter score of 80 or above. He is also aware of the importance of the top academic students achieving high marks in order to "drag the cohort up". He quantifies this by a focus on study scores above 40. The "Wilding line" sets a target for all teachers to get 25% of their students above 40. Interestingly, the media reports very heavily on the outcomes of the final VCE scores and the percentage of 40+ scores is a key measure of success. Mr Collins contends that the attention of the media has been a key contributor to the increased public awareness of CBC Melbourne and it's renewed perception of the College as a strong academic institution. Teacher accountability is a strong theme drawn out in the interview. The high

stakes nature of the VCE is spelt out by the interrogation of student's VCE results to assess the performance of teachers. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their performance in interviews based on hard data gleaned from the VCE results. Mr Collins is keenly aware of the high degree of pressure felt by senior teachers; however, he points out that not only is this a healthy and sometimes self induced pressure, there are many teachers at the College eagerly waiting for a chance to teach VCE. Whilst the senior staff members are subject to intense statistical scrutiny, there are fewer accountability measures of this form directed towards the students. Their measure of accountability is derived from comparison with years past. Since 1998 every year level has "beaten" the year before. In 2005 the VCE students posted record scores and the senior students of 2006 felt under intense pressure to perform. The impact of this use of high stakes data have included the removal of staff from VCE teaching and an adjustment of junior curricular and pedagogy to led to success at Year 12. He acknowledges that there is a tension between being a Christian Brothers' school in the APS. Mr Collins also spells out the strong message of leaders with a conscience and the preparation of more affluent boys to serve the community through their actions later in life was again reinforced.

3.2.Director Of Studies: Mr. Matthew Christian

Mr Christian has been at the College for seven years, serving as Head of the English Faculty before being appointed in his present role. He has been heavily involved in the pursuit of academic success at the College and has instituted a wide range of measures to both increase the effectiveness of staff and to aid students in their academic endeavour.

3.2.1 Academic Nature of the College

Mr Christian notes that the students that are attracted to the school are drawn from quite affluent and in some cases privileged backgrounds. The expectation is that on the whole they will attend University and that:

> They (the students) expect to achieve.

3.2.2 High Stakes Testing

Mr Christian cautions that whilst the data used to measure success at the College, the Value Added Scores and the scores above 40, is reductionist in nature it can still add to the full picture of the performance of a teacher:

> I use these data as a piece of the puzzle…and it is certainly a reflection of the teacher's ability, capacity and performance.

He contends that although the full picture cannot be derived from the data, it can form the basis for an interview or structured discussion.

> One has to be very careful how you use these data with staff. You need to set up a context which is challenging but not too threatening

Mr Christian is clear in the fact that the data is not used in isolation. It informs the process and gives a basis for discussion but staffing decisions particularly are not based solely on the outcome of the value added scores or the above 40 scores.

> What I'm interested in is the story behind those high or low marks.

The reason why these measures were introduced and the mindset of the last Headmaster still resonate through the use of these data according to Mr Christian. He contends that

the previous Headmaster saw that the potential the students and their actual results did not match up. He introduced the wide range of academic assessment tools in:

> A genuine desire to lift the academic standing of the school …because it was not performing at it's best.

3.2.3 Effect of High Stakes Testing

Mr Christian again reiterates that although these data are not the only indicator of a teacher's ability and application they have been used as a basis for discussion with staff and to flag teachers who may need help with their VCE teaching. He has had interviews with staff that have lead to staff taking on VCE marking, visiting other schools, attending subject conferences, and as a last resort, members of staff being taken off VCE teaching. He reiterated that taking staff members off VCE was a last option; however:

> At some point nothing is going to make a difference.

The actual teaching method employed by staff has also changed over a period of time. He highlights the increased use of past paper examinations, explicit teaching of exam technique and the use of assessment tools that mirror the examination.

> Teachers are much more prepared to network, much more prepared to be involved in subject field; there is an urgency.

The effect of high stakes testing Mr Christian concurs has had an effect further down the school. He contends that the effect is seen most markedly in the approach to examination.

> Whilst I don't agree with treating every year level like year 12 there has been a proliferation of the language of assessment down so that they understand that language.

Mr Christian asserts that the value added measure is empowering for staff rather than demotivating. The idea that we can quantify their influence and show the massive positive effect a teacher can have on the outcomes for their students should be a boon for those teachers, particularly those who teach the less able boys.

3.2.4 Teacher Accountability

Although mindful of the effect that some of the teacher assessment measures have on staff and the fact that moral could be adversely affected, Mr Christian is clear in his view that:

> Everything we do as a school must be refracted through the prism of that everything must be done for the benefit of the boys.

In saying that he points out that the value added score is now based against the scaled score rather than the raw score which mitigated against subjects like the languages and Specialist Mathematics that are by their very nature harder for students to achieve high (above 40) scores.

He contends that the mindset of senior teachers has changed. Their approach to the year as a whole is mindful of the high stakes nature of the assessment, both assessment of the students and of the teachers themselves.

> I think the way they (the teachers) approach the year itself and the lead up to the exams has changed, there is that sense of accountability.

The message that senior teachers should expect their results to be reviewed is again explicit. When taking a senior VCE class at CBC Melbourne, Mr Christian acknowledges that the teacher will face extra pressure, but people keep asking to take the classes.

> They do see that their results will be scrutinised…. students expectations have also grown as a result.

The process of using the high stakes data involves and interview with the Headmaster and the Director of Studies and as he puts it:

> It can be very confronting.

He explained how the conversation leads through and exposition of the results and the statistical unpacking of the data, an offer of help from the College in terms of developing a plan for professional development and a series of milestones to revisit.

> Is there anyway we can support you? Do you want to visit other schools? Do you want to mark VCE exams? We highlight a range of options. I try to make it as constructive as possible. It's about seeing what they need and how we can help.

3.2.5 Achieving academic success

Mr Christian asserts that the effect of the teacher on the scores of the students is enormous. With this in mind, he contends that the academic improvements seen at the school have been strongly influenced by better classroom practice. In turn, classroom practice has been influenced by no small means by these assessment procedures.

Mr Christian reports that the use of former students is also seen as a key component in the school's success. A student is invited back to speak to the boys on last year's paper, preparing for the examinations, coping with exam stress and the technique of sitting an exam. Before and after school classes are run. Café Acedemus (breakfast study club) and Intellectual Strength and Conditioning are two of the new initiatives. Teachers are strongly encouraged to run exam preparation classes in the pre-exam study leave period

and during holidays. As a leadership team the focus has also been strongly aimed at putting the right person in front of the class and creating teams at VCE.

> Getting people in the right position at the right time in the right teams.

In light of the academic gains made over the last decade Mr Christian believes that the future use of high stakes data at the College is assured. If they were abolished tomorrow he couldn't say whether the scores would drop but:

> They certainly wouldn't go up.

3.2.6 Summary

Mr Christian states clearly that the academic nature of the school is high both amongst the students and teachers. The use of high stakes data based on the VCE results was part of the picture and is fully understood to come as part of teaching senior classes. The use of high stakes data has to be set within a context of the past performance of the staff, and their personal circumstances during the year. A protracted series of professional development opportunities are made available to "underperforming" senior teachers before a decision is made to take them off VCE classes. Mr Christian suggests that there has been a change in approach in the classroom. Much more time is spent focussing on explicit examination preparation, the use of past paper questions and on exam technique. There has been a trickle down effect with these practices being used in the middle school. He maintains that there is a strong sense of accountability amongst the staff, aimed at the success of the students. However, teachers remain keen to teach senior classes and there are many waiting for the opportunity to do so. He reports the strong positive effect of the use of past students to instruct the senior boys about exam technique and elements of theory. Mr Christian suggests that the use of high stakes data is here to stay, as it has not

only been accepted, it is seen as a strong motivational tool to ensure ongoing academic gains at the College.

3.3 Teacher 1: Andrew

Andrew has been at the College for over 20 years. He has served in a wide variety of leadership positions both pastoral and academic.

3.3.1 Defining and Quantifying Academic Success

Andrew was clear that the effect of introducing the measure of assessment to the school had brought a new way of seeing academic success at VCE. The language used by the leadership team has become engrained throughout the staff and according to Andrew, everyone is aware of the school benchmarks. He is very aware the "Wilding line" is set at 25% of students achieving scores of 40 or above and he strives to achieve this.

> It's not a concept I had really come across the 40 and above and value added scores…whilst its not the motivating thing day to day, the reward to help some one is great, but there is that awareness across the school.

3.3.2 Accountability of Staff

Andrew speaks from first hand experience of the uses of these measures of teacher assessment generated from VCE data. He had been asked for an interview with the previous Headmaster and been asked to explain why the VCE result of his students had not been higher. He explained that he found the process "confronting" but he had been motivated to go away and try different methods suggested in the meeting. He had

knowledge of staff members who had not reacted well to the process and had been taken

off VCE teaching.

> Staff are much more accountable for the results of their students now. I
> don't necessarily think this is a bad thing as well…. staff can go one of two
> ways, I chose to make a point and improve.

3.3.3 Effect of High Stakes Testing on Teaching Method

Due to a heavy co-curricular load, a strong pastoral focus and other positions of

leadership, Andrew felt that before the value added scores and the focus on the 40 plus

scores, that his energy was not always channelled towards the academic achievement of

his senior classes. He also point out that the leadership team emphasised his leadership

and pastoral role firstly and his academic contribution was of minor importance. That

emphasis was quickly changed under the new Headmaster.

> Prior to these measures my teaching was important but I never really gave it
> the focus that I do now. With the change of emphasis I have made a
> conscious effort to improve

Andrew highlighted a number of steps that he took to improve both his classroom

teaching and his understand of the subject. He reports that he embarked on a process of

familiarisation with the intricacies of the examination process by marking VCE papers

and getting involved in schools network for his subject. The VCE marking he states:

> Was the best professional development I did to improve the marks.

As a direct result of marking, Andrew contends that he is more able to talk with

confidence about exam technique, use the language of examination and teach specific

exam procedure in every day classes. He also made a greater effort to mark more

consistently and give regular feedback to the students. He did suggest that this had made

a major improvement in the standard of work offered by the students and had a direct positive influence on the final VCE marks.

3.3.4 Christian Brothers' Ethos and Christian Brothers' School within the APS

Andrew suggests that whilst the focus of the school is far more academic, it has not come at the expense of the spirituality of the College or the boys. Moreover, he attests to an improvement in the pastoral care of the boys over the period. He says that where once CBC Melbourne saw itself as a caring pastoral school, it could now touch all bases, pastoral, spiritual, academic, artistic and co curricular.

There is great emphasis on serving the poor through outreach programs, tutoring new immigrants to Australia, community service programs and fund raising. He acknowledges the fact that we may not be specifically catering to the marginalised and needy in our school, we are educating responsible, spiritual leaders for tomorrow.

He states that therein lays the reason why we need to be in the APS system. If we are educating boys in the lived experience of Edmund Rice, we can be an example to other schools and the students.

Not only do we belong, it is imperative that we belong.

3.3.5 Achieving Academic success

When reflecting on how the school achieves academic success at the senior level, Andrew was quick to note that teacher's coming to the school now would have no appreciation of how far we have come in a relatively short period of time. The whole character and atmosphere of the College had changed "from the bottom up". He points to a tightening of classroom practice, examination focus, the use specific exam techniques in class and the very high profile given to the academics in school. The culture of academic success has become in his terms.

> Somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy, the students are not only expected to succeed, but they expect to succeed themselves

3.3.6 Summary

Andrew reflected that the language used in the College is very clear regarding its focus. The academic nature of the school is foremost for staff members. His role as senior teacher must not be impinged upon by positions of leadership, a mindset that needed to change when Brother Wilding became Headmaster. In an effort to improve the results of his students he undertook VCE marking, which he contends was the best professional development he could have pursued. It enabled him to speak with authority about exam technique in the classroom and give students specific instruction regarding the emphasis of examiners. He also marked more regularly and gave more frequent feedback to his students.

Andrew contends that it is imperative that CBC Melbourne is part of the APS, rather than seeing any dissonance between belonging to that Association and being a Christian Brothers' school. The changes that he sees that have taken place at the College are varied and wide reaching with the bottom line being that all students are expected to achieve and expect themselves to achieve.

3.4 Teacher 2: Brian

Brian has been at the CBC Melbourne for ten years. He has held a number of positions of responsibility including Head of Faculty and a pastoral role. He was appointed by the previous Headmaster and has experienced the full gamut of changes that have taken place at CBC Melbourne

3.4.1 Academic Nature of the College

Brian speaks proudly of the academic strides the College has made. He suggests that the students are more academically inclined and there has been a snow balling effect.

> Our students are motivated towards success. It's good to learn and be academically successful. Parents expect it and boys expect it. It has become a bit of a competition at year 12 to try and beat the performance of the year before where once it was the number of sports premierships now it's the percentage of students over 40. We have really reached a golden age at CBC Melbourne.

The culture of the CBC Melbourne has been changed, according to Brian, past the senior years.

> Even amongst the junior students, they are more willing to get really engaged and take their exams seriously. The teachers and curriculum at Year 7 and 8 really reflect a more academic focus at the lower years. We didn't use to be this way, but we have all worked hard to make these changes.

3.4.2 Quantifying Academic success

Brian was again quite clear in how he classifies a good year or quantifies success. The whole school message from the leadership team led to a focal point for Brian.

> The best year I had was really when a lot of my boys got 40 and above. I was really pleased. The year I got over the Wilding line I was very happy. There was a lot of pressure I probably put on myself to get over that mark. I don't really pay much attention to the value added score, unless that is if it's brought to my attention by the Leadership Team.

3.4.3 Teacher Accountability

Attesting to the fact that senior teachers are accountable for the marks of their students, Brian notes that it is not only the scrutiny of the top marks that is his concern.

> I am aware of how closely we are assessed using the marks of the students, particularly the high achievers, but I am also aware that I need to really push all the boys. The emphasis is on me to get everything possible out of the students. I firmly believe that the boys don't really know their own potential unless you really push them to their academic limit.

He cites a number of sources of pressure for senior teachers and suggests that these have a motivating factor.

> You put yourself under pressure when you take a VCE class because it's you against the exam. You really want your students to get the best marks possible. It makes teaching interesting. There is pressure from the 40 plus scores and value added, but that just keeps you going really. The students expectation is high, you want to do well for them because they want to learn and achieve.

The pressure on staff according to Brian can also have demotivating effects. But he also points put that people want to teach VCE at CBC Melbourne

> Of course if you are not getting the marks no matter what you do, you would be pretty upset. People have stopped teaching VCE or been asked to take a break as it were. Some people have really bounced back well on the other

hand through professional pride I suppose…. However, there are plenty of people queuing up to teach VCE, the staff are pretty driven I think.

When asked to account for the changes in the scores at Year 12, Brian stated that there were a range of improvements made but the overriding factor was the use of the 40 plus score and the emphasis on academic achievement by the leadership team.

> The message was very strong, we were an academic school first, and we were classroom teacher above all else. We had to get the classroom right in terms of climate, work ethic and results. When the measures were introduced it gave us a concrete goal to shoot for even though we thought at the time it was probably unattainable.

3.4.4 The effect on Teaching

Brian notes a wide range of techniques that he now uses to improve the outcomes for his students at VCE. They are both classroom based and more systemic approaches.

> The first thing I did was sign up as a VCE marker, that really helped. It gave me an insight into how to answer and manage the paper well. I also did much more marking of students work. They appreciated it and responded well…. I don't have to chase work now it's all done.

During class Brian is much more likely to teach specific exam technique, draw from past papers and pass on useful tips for exam preparation.

> I have really tailored my teaching to get the boys through the exam. I think I was always pretty clear with content but I have really nailed the technique.

He does however, decry the fact that he can't dwell on a subject or stray off the course as students follow a specific line of inquiry because:

> If it's not on the exam we haven't got time to look at it in class

He points to other innovations such as the use of old boys and focussed lectures as a great

improvement

> We really do that well (bringing old boys in). The students get a lot from
> another voice distilling the course down and giving them the cold hard facts

3.4.5 Effect of the Media

With the close scrutiny of all schools in Victoria in the *Herald Sun* newspaper, Brian sees

what the school has done as a positive move.

> Look lets be realistic, we have a good product and the papers portray our
> strengths academically. We come out of the reporting time looking good and
> I think we have done the right thing focussing on what the papers focus on
> (percentage of scores over 40). I know the waiting lists are huge with people
> who want to send their sons to this school. The general public perceive that
> we are a strong academic school.

3.4.6 Dissonance

When asked if there was dissonance between the approach of the school and it's Christian

Brothers' origins Brian was clear about the future of students produced by CBC

Melbourne and their role in society.

> We are much more likely to educate leaders at the College who can
> advocate for the marginalised than to educate the marginalised themselves. I
> personally don't see an issue with bringing the message of Edmund Rice to
> the well off. In fact I'd go as far to say that if we don't do then who would?
> We give these students a great opportunity to serve others in the community
> and thankfully they grasp that opportunity.

He acknowledges that some staff did not see this as their primary function and that they

should do more for the marginalised within the school however, Brian contends that:

> Our mission is to bring students to God through education, we are teachers
> first and foremost…we want to educate these boys to serve others. Some

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teachers overlook the number of Edmund Rice scholarships for needy students, our Community service and the message of leaders for others.

3.4.7 Christian Brothers' School within the APS

Brian maintains that the school's view of itself has changed over a period of time, not only as a Christian Brothers' school but also in its membership of the APS. The academic improvements, the sporting gains, the physical size of the school and its facilities have all made a significant impact.

> We have made great strides over the last ten years in terms of academic gains. We compare very, very favourably with the other APS schools where we didn't in the very recent past. I think in the past we perceived that we were a small Christian Brothers' school that was invited into the APS as a bit of an afterthought. But you look at all the premierships, the money spent on the school; we are a true APS school. Through good management however, we have retained our Christian Brothers' ethos and in fact I would say we are far more explicit about our Christian Brothers' approach now we have a lay head.

3.4.8 Summary

Brian maintains that CBC Melbourne has entered a "Golden Age" in terms of academic achievement. He contends that both staff and students are motivated towards academic success and that it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy to a certain degree. He asserts that all the year levels now take their exams seriously; that was not the case in the past. The "Wilding line" gave him a concrete target to work towards and although he is under pressure to perform he feels that this comes with the job of teaching senior classes. Whilst acknowledging that some teachers have stopped teaching senior classes as a result of these measures, Brian knows of staff who have "bounced back" to teach senior classes effectively.

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Brian made a number of changes to his teaching method in senior classes to achieve academic success. He has marked more work and given more feedback to students but most importantly in his mind, he marked VCE papers. This gave him invaluable insights in to the structure and technique required in the paper and allowed him to instruct his senior students with confidence.

3.5 Teacher 3: Chris

Chris has taught at the school for 4 years. She was employed as a Head of Faculty and has been heavily involved in the process of academic improvement during her tenure at CBC Melbourne.

3.5.1 Academic Profile

Chris attests to the academic nature of the school and its pursuit of success. She maintains that the boys are driven, but suggests that they are quite pragmatic in their approach.

> I'm not sure sometimes if out best students have a love of learning or a love of getting A's.

She contends that CBC Melbourne has gets the best out of students in terms of Year 12 results. Chris attributes this to the degree of support they get at the school.

> Students who might get a C or a B at other schools will probably get an A here because of the level of support they get. I talk to friends who have academically bright kids and I really push this school.

3.5.2 Defining Academic Success

Although cognisant of the school's focus as far as quantifying academic success, Chris prefers to use the measure that she feels shows her effect across the whole cohort. Her reasoning lies with the fact that her impact may be more considerable on those who do not achieve the highest grades.

> I know the school focus is the 40 and above score, but I do look at the value added because I think I do some of my best work with the less able students. I think I make a real difference there.

3.5.3 Teaching Style

On questioning whether her teaching style had changed because of the use of statistical data, Chris maintains that her style had not changed hugely. Her style of teaching was already focused on exam preparation, technique and teaching to the test.

> My mandate on employment was to increase academic success and VCE results. So I haven't change anything, but there is an emphasis on teaching to the exam. There are a lot of really useful skills we don't teach because they are not on the exam; there is just no time in the course.

3.5.4 Teacher Accountability

Surprisingly, Chris contended that the effect of accountability systems has had an effect further down the school. She maintains that teachers of Year 7 and 8 are also more likely to focus on exam preparation to ensure their grades are acceptable. She points to the first days of term where last years VCE results are discussed and a broad range of whole school and subject based results are drawn out and analysed in staff meetings.

> Teachers are a bit more under siege, where results are put up at the beginning of the year. I think that happens at Year 7 and 8 as well. Teachers

really focus on exam results at the lower levels, they want to make sure their classes go well.

Chris also spells out the pressure on senior teachers. Again relating the experience of the first three days as setting the tone.

There is tremendous pressure to perform starting with the first three days of the new school year.

3.5.5 Effects of High stakes testing

One of the effects of high stakes testing worldwide has been a narrowing of the curriculum further down the school. This is a reported effect at CBC Melbourne. Chris asserts that there is a top down approach with skills and content for the lower years dictated by a search for success at Year 12. A focus on assessment and a narrowing of the curriculum seem to be prevalent. There are benefits however, in terms of the standard of the content covered and the skill set that the younger students are exposed to.

> There has been an emphasis on the VCE exam right down to Year 7 not only Year 12. The course has become less enjoyable…. but they have been exposed to better content and skills. Assessment is much tighter even down to Year 7. Some people have felt constrained but we all teach the same content and skills and assess for them. There is a narrow skill base that we are testing.

Chris feels that senior teachers in her department do not need the extra motivation of the value added and 40 plus assessment. She contends that the teachers have a high level of motivation to give the students every chance of success.

> Taking away the 40 plus scores would not make scores in my subject drop. I think the staff are very highly motivated. I think in Year 12 there is always that push…you always want to do the best for that kid.

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3.5.6 Charism of Edmund Rice

Chris recounts a story that sums up her view of the lived experience of the Charism of

Edmund Rice in the school.

> I taught a boy in year 12 who had got E's and F's right the way through
> school. Educationally, all the literature says he should have given up but he
> hadn't. I asked him why he hadn't. He said it's because everyone here
> wanted him to succeed, so you just keep trying

Interestingly, Chris asserts that it is not in the nature of a true Christian Brothers' school

to push academics as strongly as is done at CBC Melbourne. She maintains that there

should be greater emphasis on community service and working for the poor.

> The Charism for me is more working for the poor not pushing for
> academics. I think there is a dissonance between the Charism and doing well
> academically.

3.5.7 Christian Brothers' school and the APS

The position of CBC Melbourne as a Christian Brothers' school within the APS

(Association of Private Schools) is not without difficulties according to Chris. She feels

that because the association of CBC Melbourne and the APS is relatively recent, the

school has not yet found its niche based on its academic acumen.

> I think there a really difficult connection between us and the APS. I think
> other schools do it better because their focus has always been more
> academic.

3.5.8 Summary

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Chris reports that the students who attend CBC Melbourne are academically driven towards success rather perhaps that towards a love of learning. She maintains that the level of support is such that students achieve much better results attending CBC Melbourne than at many other schools. Whilst acknowledging that the school's focus is on the 40+ scores, she prefers to look at her value added performance as an indicator of her success with the senior classes. She feels that the value added approach gives shows her work with the full range of students rather than just focussing on the high achievers.

Although she has not changed her approach to the teaching of VCE classes, she reports that she focuses on exam technique and exam preparation as part of her teaching. She asserts that one of the reasons she was employed was to improve the academic results of the department and bring these specific teaching skill to the College. As a result of the use of high stakes data, Chris reports a narrowing of the curriculum further down the school and an emphasis on exam technique at lower year levels. There has been a push to prepare students from the middle school for success at year 12.

Chris would like to see CBC Melbourne focus more on the poor and marginalised rather than an academic first approach. She feels that this is more in the nature of a true Christian Brothers' School. She also feels that the position of the College within the APS is not a comfortable one, because we have not always focussed on academic achievement.

3.6 Identifying the themes from CBC Melbourne

During the course of the data collection at CBC Melbourne, I interviewed 9 members of staff including the Headmaster, the Director of Studies and seven staff members drawn from different Faculties and roles. They included House Heads to Heads of Faculty and teachers without positions of leadership. In the preceding sections I have drawn out the

themes from five key interviews. In this section I will include an overview of the site and I will place the themes in the context of the research by addressing the research questions using the themes.

3.6.1 Overview

The academic focus of the College is strong and has permeated all aspect of school life. The teaching staff from the senior level down to the middle school is focussed and work towards exam success for their students. Students expect to achieve and are expected to achieve high grades. This has not always been the case. A wide raft of changes has been made over a ten-year period with classroom climate addressed, teacher accountability measures introduced and a strong message of academic achievement first as central themes. Senior staff members are exposed to a number of high stakes testing data. There is an emphasis on teacher accountability and teachers have been taken off VCE classes as a result of continued poor performance. Not withstanding this, there is a waiting list of teachers eager to teach senior classes. The influence of the media has been strong and positive for CBC Melbourne as the Herald sun has documented its improvement to the wider community. Whilst most staff member appreciate that the are preparing the leaders of tomorrow a small number still hold the view that they should focus less on academics and serve the poor and marginalised first hand.

3.6.2 CBC Melbourne: Research Questions Answered

Q1. Have members of the teaching staff changed their teaching to achieve academic success?

- Members of staff who have been at the College since the 1990's have changed their teaching styles markedly.
- Members of staff rely more heavily on past exam papers

- Teachers have been more likely to become VCE examiners to gain more of an insight into exam technique.
- Teachers have visited staff members at other schools who have experienced academic success in order to improve their own results
- Members of staff have joined cluster groups.
- Staff members are far more likely to refer specifically to exam questions in the classroom
- Some newer members of staff have been specifically employed because of their approach and exam success
- Teachers are very aware of the "Wilding line" and strive to achieve 25% of their class achieving scores of 40 or above.
- There is a general expectation of excellence in the classroom and the results.
- Weaker students are offered specific support in English and Mathematics.
- There is an increased use and awareness of ICT in the classrooms through the use of computers, the Internet, data projectors and interactive white boards.
- Whilst the early managerial push was improved classroom management and student behaviour, the new drive is towards pedagogical improvement.
- Students are strongly encouraged to be reflective learners and metacognitive skills are taught explicitly.
- Teachers at the more junior year levels are also very aware of the exam results of their own students in the end of semester examinations.
- Staff members are very keen to get good results for their students and use the "Wilding line" as an indication of success.
- Some staff members feel that the value added score is a better indication because it shows their value to all students not jus the high achievers.
- Students are given a great deal of advice and testing to aid them in both subject choices for Year 11 and 12 and for their career pathway.
- Students are given advice to take specific courses because it will help with their final score.
- Students choose courses and teachers who have experienced academic success.

1a. Sub question: Does teaching to the test occur?

- Yes, teachers are more likely to teach specific exam technique
- A great deal of emphasis is placed on the exam itself and getting the most out of student's content knowledge
- Some teachers enjoy "playing the game" against the VCE exam, seeing it as an advisory
- Teachers and past pupils give exam classes aimed at condensed course content but featuring exam technique and preparation tips.
- Student lead study sessions in the morning and after school are very popular and well attended.
- There has been a proliferation of teaching to the test technique further down the school to junior year levels.
- Teachers tend not to stray off the course because time is "tight".
- Class time is devoted to specific exam technique, difficult past questions, trends and predictions in the exams, and useful tips for success on exam day.
- Some practical skills are not taught because they are not examined. However, the skills that may be examined are covered thoroughly.
- Teachers will sacrifice "love of the subject" for academic success, seeing the end result as most important. However, they hope they can achieve both.

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- Exam technique and skills that would benefit year 12 students are taught at junior levels.
- Students who are on the cusp of achieving scores of 40 or above are interviewed by the College Leadership Team prior to exam preparation.

Question 2: How does the teaching staff perceive methods employed?

- Members of staff who teach VCE experience a great deal of pressure, both from themselves and as a result of the methods employed by the College.
- The teacher is seen as the most important factor for academic success of the class.
- Teachers are rewarded for good results; likewise they are castigated for poor results.
- If a class is doing well the teacher must been teaching well, if the class is going poorly, the emphasis is on the teacher to turn things around.
- The first day of term is a stressful time for a large number of staff members who have not achieved the 25 % of scores above 40, particularly those who feel that the "Wilding line" is unachievable in their subject.
- The graph showing the percentage of scores over 40 for each subject has been referred to as "the graph of shame".
- Teachers on the whole value a target to aim for in the form of the Wilding line.
- Staff members like the use of the value added scores because it gives them a measure for their effect on all students not just the top end.
- Although a number of staff feel a great deal of pressure, there is a waiting list of teachers hoping to teach VCE with the knowledge of what that brings in terms of statistical analysis of their results and public scrutiny.
- Staff members who have experienced poor results, been interviewed and given the opportunity have on the whole reacted positively and performed much better.
- Some members of staff have experienced disillusionment as a result of poor marks and have not continued teaching VCE classes.
- There is a general appreciation that the academic results of the senior students are the first priority of the staff.
Question 3: Given the charismatic nature of the school are there any points of dissonance?

- The senior management and most staff appreciate the fact that the College is training tomorrow's leaders, rather that taking in the marginalised.
- A wide variety of scholarships and bursaries are however, offered to students who may not otherwise be able to afford to attend CBC Melbourne.
- Some members of staff think that we should be more focussed on teaching the marginalised in a more traditional Christian Brothers' role.
- A very small number feel that the academic focus is at odds with the Charism of Edmund Rice as a lived experience in the school.
- The majority of teachers feel that the academic focus of the school sits within the Charism of Edmund Rice and it's lived experience within CBC Melbourne.
- Most staff appreciate that there is "a tension" as a result of being a Christian Brothers' school and part of the APS, but on the whole they feel that the school has developed to a point where it takes the best of the APS and retains the original nature of the school.
- CBC Melbourne does not view itself as elitist, but members of staff are aware that they are dealing with quite privileged students.
- A great deal of time and effort goes into preparing students to serve others in their lives after school. Students are heavily involved in community service, fund raising and

serving the wider community through aiding new immigrants to Australia and those who have mental or physical disabilities.

Question 4: How can these methods be employed to reduce dissonance and improve academic success?

- There seems to be a culture shock for new teachers even those who have taught a senior level elsewhere.
- Staff are very aware of the pressures inherent in teaching senior classes and still wish to take up the challenge.
- Difficult interviews have been handled sensitively yet firmly using statistical data inform decisions.
- Knee jerk reactions are avoided using longitudinal data to inform decisions and long-term trends are assessed.
- Tracking student performance across teacher also adds weight to the interviews.
- Management are very clear in their expectation that teachers bear the responsibility for success and failure.
- Teachers are congratulated in a clear and public manner if appropriate.
- New teachers appreciate that the close scrutiny of academic results is part of teaching senior classes.
- Teachers who have been at the school for a longer period of time have on the whole adapted to the system and accept it as part of the drive toward academic success.
- Teachers are proud of the academic achievement of the school and see the accountability measures taken as a key factor in that success.
- The large majority of teachers believe that taking the measures away would reduce the academic success of students.

APPENDIX 4

Included in this appendix is a table showing the construction of themes from sub themes as they were drawn from concepts that evolved in the interpretation of the data from CBC Adelaide.

Development of sub themes and themes from concepts at CBC Adelaide

Concepts	Sub theme	Theme
Acceptance	Teaching to the test	Uses of high stakes data
Using High Stakes Data		
Teaching style		
Reaction to high stakes data		
Teacher accountability	Messages and emphasis	Effect of school leadership
Achieving academic success		
Defining and Quantifying Academic success		
Publishing scores	League tables	Influence of the media
Effects of media	Public perception	
Christian Brother's School within another association	Congruence/ Dissonance	Influence of culture and changing culture
Charism of Edmund Rice	To whom much is given much is expected	
Academic Profile	Academic nature of the college	The nature of the schools
Exceeding Academic Expectations		
Enrolment		
Student's natural limit		
Student accountability		

APPENDIX 5

Included in this appendix is a table showing the construction of themes from sub themes

as they were drawn from concepts that evolved in the interpretation of the data from CBC

Brisbane.

Development of sub themes and themes from concepts at CBC Brisbane

Concepts ──────────▶	Sub theme ──────▶	Theme
Acceptance	Teaching to the test	Uses of high stakes data
Teaching style		
Reaction to high stakes data		
Teacher accountability	Messages and emphasis	Effect of school leadership
Achieving academic success		
Qualifying academic success		
Publishing scores	League tables	Influence of the media
Effects of media	Public perception	
Christian Brother's School within another association	Dissonance	Influence of culture and changing culture
Charism of Edmund Rice	Men for others	
Academic Profile	Academic nature of the college	The nature of the schools
Student accountability		

APPENDIX 6

Included in this appendix is a table showing the construction of themes from sub themes

as they were drawn from concepts that evolved in the interpretation of the data from CBC

Melbourne.

Development of sub themes and themes from concepts at CBC Melbourne

Concepts ➝	Sub theme ➝	Theme
Acceptance	Teaching to the test	Uses of high stakes data
Teaching style		
Reaction to high stakes data		
Teacher accountability	Messages and emphasis	Effect of school leadership
Achieving academic success		
Qualifying academic success		
Publishing scores	League tables	Influence of the media
Effects of media	Public perception	
Christian Brother's School within another association	Dissonance	Influence of culture and changing culture
Charism of Edmund Rice	Men for others	
Academic Profile	Academic nature of the college	The nature of the schools
Student accountability		

APPENDIX 7

RESULTS FROM ANALYSIS OF MR ARNOLD, CBC ADELAIDE

Representing the early analysis, with Mr Arnold from CBC Adelaide.	Linking Key word	Concept
We **don't say to parents your son will get in the top 10%,** we say 90% of CBC Adelaide Boys **will pass their Year 12 subjects**	Stresses passing not excelling	Defining and Quantifying Academic success
Part of the boys wanting **academic excellence** must	Academic excellence from	Academic Nature of

come from their **socio-economic background of the families** as well. CBC Adelaide sits in the leafy Eastern suburbs, so from that perspective its fair to **assume… that CBC Adelaide's results would** be strong in that regard.	backgrounds, affluent parents	the School
We have an obligation to the 1000 boys here to provide a **curriculum diversity** that provides for the needs of **all the boys**. Now another person might come in here and do a **narrow academic curriculum** and if the boys don't fit that they must go somewhere else.	Curriculum diversity, provide for all boys, not narrow academic,	Academic nature of the college
St. Ignatius holds the mantle of the academic Catholic School, by default, and might I say, **our academic highfliers** have done as well if not better than theirs. However, as a new comer to Adelaide and start asking around which school is the **academic school, they would name St. Ignatius first**	CBC Adelaide has Academic highfliers, St. Ignatius seen as more academic	Enrolment
I'm not so sure I want to market CBC Adelaide as just **an academic school.** Because I think schooling and the educative process is **much broader than just tertiary entrance scores**. I don't think that's hurting us in terms of enrolment. Our numbers are every good.	Won't market as just academic	Marketing and media
Part of me is of the belief that **good students will be good students any where**…however in order to get boys over the line in terms of excellence, it suggests that there must have been **culture here of excellence,** of the boys being as good as they can be.	Must be a culture of excellence, boys to be as good as they can be	Achieving Academic Success
There's a staff's desire to work with students in their own time, whether in **free periods or during holidays.** I've been really pleased with what the CBC Adelaide Staff see as their **mission, it is to promote excellence, particularly if boys want that.**	Work in free periods, promote excellence.	Staff responses
Every year we get **data from SABSA (Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia) for teachers and classes against the state average.** Our Director of Curriculum and I go through those and analyse them then to go **to Faculty Heads of specific teachers about where their results** seem to be at odds with like schools for a start and secondly where the results of students in their class vary significantly from the same students results in other subjects within the same school.	Data from Board of assessment, analyse data and go to HOD where teachers results are at odds with the school	Use of high stakes data
would normally be as a **result of one of those intense conversations the year before**. They might have **had another run at it agai**n and the second time no better, so it doesn't come as any great surprise. It's just a conversation that says "Look lets try and eliminate the factors". We might **use someone else in the faculty** next year and see what happens to the results	Result of a conversation, have another go if it is no better try someone else	Teacher accountability

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If it comes in here it may very well change the **face of marketing** here but we are **resisting for as long** as we can. It's really a media beat up around an issue [on which] the media has no idea. The sad part is it can be a **self-fulfilling prophecy** and it can tempt schools to believe it is the most important factor	Reporting school data change the face of marketing, resisting publishing data, schools may focus on the data	Publishing scores
I am very clear in that I will not make **CBC Adelaide inaccessible to certain socio-economic groups,** which can easily happen if you are a successful Independent Catholic Secondary School. If you take you eye of your ideals, the pressure from the media can drive you **to just want the student who gets the good grades** and all that good stuff. So what I would want is for boys to come to CBC Adelaide who want to know **more about their own spirituality**.	CBC Adelaide accessible to all socio-economic groups, not just the best, focus on spirituality	Being a Christian Brothers' School in an Independent System
Are inflated above their **natural self-sustainable level of achievement.** So if ever we get to a point where we inflate the students' TER above the point where they can not sustain it without the support of the school I think **we've done a disservice** to students in our singular focus on academic success.	Their natural self-sustainable level of achievement. We inflate we've done a disservice	Exceeding Academic Expectations
As students become **more materially rich, they become more spiritually poor.** There is a strong place for Catholic schools in wealthy suburbs because their proportionally **greater need for spiritual nourishment** and development.	More materially rich, they become more spiritually poor. Greater need for spiritual nourishment	Influence of culture and changing culture

APPENDIX 8

ETHICS CLEARANCE

APPENDIX 9

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Copy for Participants to Keep

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TITLE OF PROJECT: INVESTIGATING SENIOR TEACHERS RESPONSES TO HIGH

STAKES TESTING IN ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN BROTHERS'

⊕ACU National

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

COPY FOR PARTICIPANT TO SUBMIT

TITLE OF PROJECT: INVESTIGATING SENIOR TEACHERS RESPONSES TO HIGH STAKES TESTING IN ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' SCHOOLS.

STAFF SUPERVISOR: DR LYN CARTER

STUDENT RESEARCHER: MR. MICHAEL DAVIES

COURSE: DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

Participant section

I .... (*the participant*) have read and understood the information in the letter inviting participation in the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time.

I agree that research data collected by audio tape for the study may be published or provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way. I agree to be contacted by telephone if needed to arrange a mutually convenient time to complete the research task. I am over 18 years of age.

Name of participant: .... Phone: ....
(block letters)

Signature: .... Date: ....

Research Student: Mr. Michael Davies
Signature: .... Date: ....

Staff Supervisor: Dr Lyn Carter
Signature: .... Date: ....

✚ ACU National

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE SEARCH FOR SUCCESS IN A CHARISMATIC
ENVIRONMENT: SENIOR TEAHCER'S RESPONSES TO HIGH STAKES
TESTING IN ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN BROTHER'S
SCHOOLS
NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. LYN CARTER
NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: MICHAEL DAVIES
NAME OF PROGRAMME: DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION, TEACHING AND
LEARNING

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am writing to request your participation in a study that your school has agreed to
take part in. The proposed study seeks to highlight ways in which teachers at
academically successful Christian Brother's School have changed their teaching
method to help students perform well in their final exams. It will also seek to
investigate if this search for success is consistent with the Christian Brother's ethos of
your school. As part of the study you will be interviewed about your work as a senior
teacher. The interview will be audio taped and will take between sixty and ninety
minutes.

The research will highlight ways in which schools can achieve academic success
whilst being true to the values and beliefs of the Christian Brother's who founded the
schools. Your school will benefit by receiving a document outlining ways in which
academic performance can be improved within the Christian Brother's ethos. Staff
will receive information from two other high achieving Christian Brother's schools
regarding their approaches and their successes. Schools who are experiencing a
dissonance between their particular school culture and their academic aspirations may
also draw some solutions from this research.

You are free to refuse consent altogether without having to justify that decision, or to
withdraw consent and discontinue your participation at any time without giving
reason.

Your identity and confidentiality is ensured throughout the research process since at
no time will your name be used or a code assigned to you. Any reports emanating
from this research will likewise make no reference to individuals.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Supervisor and the
Student Researcher at the following contacts.

Dr. Lyn Carter
In the School of Education
Australian Catholic University
St. Patrick's Campus
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy
Victoria
3065
Telephone: 03 9953 3282

Each school will receive a full copy of the final thesis, and a report that will be specific to the school itself.

The Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Research Services Unit has approved this study. In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, you may write to the Chair of Human Research Ethics Committee care of the address below.

Chair, HREC
C/o research Services
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
Fitzroy VIC 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3158
Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern arising from this research will be treated in confidence and fully investigated and you will be fully informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Student Researcher.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Lyn Carter   Mr. Michael Davies
Supervisor   Student Researcher

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