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A longitudinal study of the personal and professional responses of recently assigned secondary Religious Education teachers to curriculum demands

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CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is on recently assigned RE teachers and their responses to the curriculum demands placed upon them as they implement the draft Perth Archdiocesan Religious Education Course (PAREC). The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature concerning recently assigned teachers, with a special focus on how recently assigned Religious Education (RARE) teachers responded personally and professionally to curriculum exigencies. These responses were the subject of much scrutiny, especially with regard to inexperienced and underqualified RE teachers in Western Australian Catholic secondary schools (Chapter 2, p.46). This review explores the literature on the experience of recently assigned teachers as they faced the ‘subjective realities’ of curriculum implementation (Fullan 2001, p.32) and relates this literature to the experience of RARE teachers. Of particular importance in this review is how these teachers responded to the perceived intensity of curriculum demands placed upon them and the means they relied upon to assuage these demands.

3.2 Key themes in the Literature Review

Figure 3.1 (p.55) shows an outline of the key themes in this literature review. Firstly, the review begins by studying the professional experience of recently assigned teachers, especially when the assignment they are given is out of their field of experience and training. RARE teachers face a similar professional situation to other recently assigned teachers as they contend with the challenges of becoming competent and confident RE teachers. Many of these teachers are also not in their field of expertise and face pressures that parallel the circumstances of beginning teachers. Secondly, this chapter explores the models of curriculum change that focus on the responses of teachers to perceived demands of curriculum implementation and the effect these demands have on RARE teachers. Thirdly, the review considers the significance of formative experiences in

alleviating the intensity of these curriculum demands. The quality of professional growth to cope with these demands depends greatly on the teaching experience, collegial support, and professional assistance they receive in the school. Furthermore, the pressure of demonstrating a strong role model for students and a committed faith witness is an additional expectation placed upon them and reliant upon the quality of their personal and religious formation as RARE teachers.

Figure 3.1 Outline of the Key Themes in the Literature Review

- ***Recently Assigned Religious Education Teachers***
 - *Recently Assigned Teachers*
 - *'Out-of-Field' Teachers*
 - *Recently Assigned RE (RARE) Teachers*
 - ***Perceived Demands of Curriculum Implementation***
 - *Models of Curriculum Implementation*
 - *Concerns of Teachers*
 - *Teachers as moral agents of implementation*
 - ***Formative Experience of RARE Teachers***
 - *Professional Formation in Content and Method*
 - *Religious and Spiritual Formation in Character and Witness*
 - *Collegial Support and Professional Assistance*
-

3.3 Recently Assigned Religious Education Teachers

This section explores the literature into the professional circumstances of recently assigned teachers, especially in the RE learning area. There are three aspects to these professional circumstances to be considered in this section. Firstly, it explains the situation of recently assigned teachers in taking up new teaching assignments. Secondly, this section explores the consequences of such teachers complying for various reasons to teach in a learning area with which they are unfamiliar. Thirdly, it describes how the teaching of an unfamiliar learning area accentuates the demands placed on RARE teachers.

3.3.1 Recently Assigned Teachers

In the literature, there are various terms used to refer to teachers who are new to teaching at a school or in a learning area. Some terms connote specific characteristics about teachers that may or may not have acceptance across the literature. For example, definitions of ‘beginning’ and ‘recently assigned’ teachers do vary between authors. The term ‘beginning teacher’ is given usually for the teachers in their first or second year of teaching; alternatively, it could mean teachers with less than ten years experience and subdivided between teachers with 0-4 years teaching experience (‘truly beginning teachers’) and ‘experienced beginners’ with 5-10 years experience (Marlow, Inman and Betancourt-Smith 1997). For the purposes of this study, the term ‘beginning teachers’ will refer to teachers in their first or second year of teaching. The term ‘recently assigned teachers’ will mean teachers within their first five years of teaching at a school or, as in the case of this study, in a specific learning area. This latter definition was applied in the ‘Survey Instrument’ and ‘Initial Criteria for Selection of the Sample Group’ (Appendix 5, p.357 and Appendix 6, p.365) although the term ‘recently appointed RE teacher’ was used later in reporting the study instead of the original ‘beginning RE teacher’.

Much of the research into the responses of recently assigned teachers to perceived curriculum demands is concerned with first year or beginning teachers (Veenman 1984; Dollase 1992; Ganser 1999). Furthermore, the term applies to teachers in general rather than to the teaching of specific learning areas. However, studies of teachers with many years of teaching experience but assigned to a learning area in which they have neither experience nor training are rare (Kallery 2004, p.147). In this study of recently assigned RE teachers both groups were considered – teachers who were beginning their teaching careers and teaching RE as well as teachers who were experienced but teaching RE for the first time.

In many ways, the situation of recently assigned teachers is similar to the experience of beginning teachers. Like their neophyte colleagues, recently assigned teachers feel frustrated by their inability to teach students, as they perceive they should teach them:

[The recently assigned teacher] experiences all the frustration which comes the way of the new teacher who is not allowed by her pupils to teach as she wants to. She tries desperately to adapt to the situation but this brings her into conflict with her ideals and, worse, makes her doubt her value as a person as well as a teacher. The pain of this kind of experience does nothing to help the teacher to acquire the confidence to teach successfully.

(Hannam, Smyth, and Stephenson 1976, p.68)

Like beginning teachers, recently assigned teachers experience the dilemma of either admitting they do not want to teach the assigned learning area or continuing to struggle to achieve competency in an area in which they feel less than adequate. They find teaching the subject a test of their confidence and their initial enthusiasm tends to wane. Again, this does not appear to be unusual for new teachers:

Most young teachers have ideals to begin with: they want to establish friendly relations with children, they want to share their enthusiasm for learning and they hope to encourage their pupils' curiosity and initiative. The experience of rejection which seems to be so common at the outset may lead them to doubt their position. They may be quickly driven to what seems an inevitable dilemma: how to establish themselves effectively in the classroom without betraying those ideals? It is not a matter between choosing between ideals and realism.

(Hannam et al 1976, p.72)

As shown in Table 3.1 (p.58), the personal and professional dilemmas experienced were confirmed more recently regarding the plight of beginning teachers in Malta (Bezzina, Stanyer and Bezzina 2005). A consistent portrait of the experience of beginning teaching is evident in the literature: 'the story of beginning teaching usually revolves around several themes: reality shock, the lonely struggle to survive, and a loss of idealism' (Feiman-Nemser 2003, p.27). These difficult circumstances may continue also beyond the first year (McCormack and Thomas 2003, p.126). Similarly, recently assigned teachers find they are:

planning lessons, often with few resources, as they are trying to learn how to apply what they learned in preparation and fill in the most important gaps in their learning. Often they are left with little time to actually think about what they are doing.

(Stansbury 2001, par.15)

Furthermore, a study of failing teachers, especially among novice teachers, found that most of these teachers did not possess sufficient knowledge background or skills even in their specialist areas (Wragg, Haynes, Wragg and Chamberlin 2000, p.218). The assignment of these teachers to a learning area with which they did not possess the training or the experience may exaggerate these deficiencies. Such a situation becomes symptomatic of ‘out-of-field’ teachers (Kallery 2004, p.160). The next section ‘Out-of-Field Teachers’ (p.60) discusses these circumstances further.

Table 3.1 The Plight of Beginning Teachers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel over-whelmed and exhausted dealing with non-teaching duties • Apprehensive about the lack of breadth and depth in their knowledge of the curriculum • Feel perplexed with and inadequate in addressing the diverse learning needs and backgrounds of students • Experience difficulties in improvising or changing plans to suit students’ needs and behaviour • Experience difficulties in planning for the long term and to select suitable teaching materials and resources • Very apprehensive about classroom management concerns, especially disruptive or unmotivated students • Feel isolated and reluctant to ask for help (in case they are seen as incompetent) although want more assistance regarding school policies, procedures and teaching responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May experience difficulties in developing relationships with parents or lack of supportive relationships from administrators and colleagues • Experience possible ‘transition shock’ where teachers not able to transfer classroom skills previously acquired • Experience tension between their vision of a creative, dynamic and autonomous professional and the prescription of curriculum policies, teaching manuals and textbooks • Experience a collapse of idealism (‘reality shock’) and growing disillusionment • Have overly high expectations about teachers (and themselves) being dedicated, enthusiastic and fair people who are role models to students; they expect teachers to perform well and to invest time and energy into their teaching.
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(Source: Bezzina, Stanyer and Bezzina 2005, pp.19-20)

Studies suggest that the most intense concerns, at the start of implementing a curriculum, do tend to diminish over time with classroom experience and teacher formation (O’Connor and Fish 1998, p.2; Freiberg 2002, p.58; Bezzina, Stanyer and Bezzina 2005, p.21). How successful these teachers are in coping with the demands of teaching a new area is problematical (Jacobs 1996, p.5). Nonetheless, there are positive signs of which to be aware. While recently assigned teachers may have limited training or experience to

deal with these dilemmas, ‘they usually bring energy, enthusiasm, and new ideas’ to their teaching situation (Martinez 1994, p.137).

There is an emotional dimension to recently assigned teachers facing the demands of curriculum implementation. This dimension contributes to the stresses of beginning teaching:

the first 5 to 7 years of teaching are a critical period during which professional activity is accompanied by strong and often negative emotions. [Teaching is]...emotional work that gives rise to feelings of satisfaction, but also to tension, dilemmas and even suffering, all of which have negative effects and result in loss of efficacy.

(Ria, Sève, Saury, Thereau and Durand 2003, p.220)

It becomes clear that a significant outcome to intense curriculum demands is a ‘heavy emotional toll’, especially for recently assigned teachers (Huberman 1993).

Consequently, recently assigned teachers ‘...experience an odyssey of emotions which run the gamut – exhilaration, frustration, uncertainty, confusion, and isolation’ (Zepeda and Mayers 2001). The result may be that many of these teachers leave the teaching profession (Marlow et al 1997) because ‘without proper support and assistance, beginning teachers are likely to experience higher levels of stress and teacher burnout’ (Martin and Baldwin 1996). Recently assigned teachers require the following conditions for teacher satisfaction:

- reasonable teaching assignments;
- carefully designed mentoring programs;
- a comprehensive induction process;
- a network of collegial contacts;
- a supportive evaluation;
- preparation of new teachers to face challenges; and,
- an encouraging environment to connect to the profession.

(McCann, Johannessen and Ricca 2005, pp.31-34)

The level of teacher satisfaction seems to be an important criterion for teachers in continuing to teach. One aspect of the research question was to explore the extent to which RARE teachers experienced these conditions.

3.3.2 'Out-of-Field' Teachers

A significant complicating factor occurs when recently assigned teachers possess neither the training nor the experience in the learning area assigned to them. Ingersoll defines this 'out-of-field' teaching as 'teachers assigned to teach subjects for which they have little background training or education' (1998b, p.64). Such a mismatch may be due to a lack of content knowledge. On the other hand, it may be a deliberate administrative ploy to fill vacant teaching assignments by fitting teachers from one field into another in which they have little expertise or experience (Ingersoll 1998a; Ingersoll 2001, p.44). Recently assigned teachers seem to be the ones who are often given such teaching assignments (Ingersoll 1998b; Evans 1999; Ingersoll 2001, p.43; Stansbury 2001; McCormack and Thomas 2003) and, with little in the way of direct collegial support (McCormack and Thomas 2003, p.126; Weitman and Colbert 2003, p.7). It is also true that highly qualified and experienced teachers may find themselves in the same predicament (Veenman 1984; Ingersoll 2001, p.43).

In a study of two groups of teachers, inexperienced and experienced primary teachers but unfamiliar with teaching science, some common concerns emerged. Both groups were apprehensive about a number of issues: their lack of content knowledge; with managing their classes while acquiring new resources and strategies; about the quality of their teaching performance; and, a loss of confidence and feelings of insecurity in their interactions with students (Kallery 2004). This finding parallels the 'reality shock' of many beginning teachers (p.57): 'the assimilation of a complex reality which forces itself incessantly upon the beginning teacher, day in and day out' (Veenman 1984, p.144). It is almost as if these teachers regressed professionally (Kallery 2004, pp.159-160) where control of the class dominates decisions about lesson planning rather than the learning needs of students (Martin and Baldwin 1996).

Furthermore, other studies of teachers teaching a learning area for the first time found differences in professional needs between beginning teachers and experienced teachers

(Dawson 2002; Kallery 2004). Experienced teachers new to teaching science were concerned:

about capability, about the correctness of their work, about organizing and managing time demands, about the availability of materials and other instructional sources and about classroom management.

(Kallery 2004, p.149)

As a result, teachers new to a learning area experience similar concerns – based upon a lack of training in specific content and teaching methods – that places them in a professionally disadvantaged position even before they walk into the classroom. For example, a study of primary teachers found that many of them lacked a science background and were not confident in teaching science (Appleton and Kindt 1999). Teachers demonstrated a number of avoidance behaviours such as: not teaching science at all; postponing the teaching of science where possible; allowing other events or programs to take first priority; only teaching science incidentally or when an external science event arises; and, using a thematic approach to submerge science into the background (Appleton and Kindt 1999, pp.3-4). The teachers focused upon developing a pedagogical approach called ‘activities that worked’ (Appleton and Kindt 1999, p.4) using strategies they were familiar with or ‘hands on’, student-centred strategies to compensate for a lack of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Often this approach was to keep students busy and allow the teacher to manage the class. However, where Education Departments have attempted to increase the amount of content in the primary science course, evidence suggests that this does not change the approach of the teacher to the subject (Appleton and Kindt 1999, p.3).

One worrying trend observed by researchers (Ingersoll 1996; Stover 1999; Jerald 2002) was the significantly high number of ‘out-of-field’ teachers teaching in remote and disadvantaged schools. A report by NSW Department of Education and Training on Teacher Education commented that:

too frequently new teachers are given the most difficult schools and classes. They are often required to teach outside their subject area of specialisation with little guidance and encouragement.

(McCormack and Thomas 2003, p.126)

In a Catholic school system and especially a learning area that proclaims the value of social justice, the replication of such a trend is a matter for urgent attention.

The emerging difficulties of ‘out-of-field’ teachers coping with the intense demands of the RE curriculum were apparent (Chapter 2, p.51) in Australia and elsewhere during the late eighties and nineties. The work of Australian religious educators and the findings from research overseas discuss this context further in the next section: ‘Recently Assigned RE (RARE) Teachers’.

3.3.3 Recently Assigned RE (RARE) Teachers

Religious educators over the past few decades have held disparate views about the nature and purpose of Religious Education (de Souza 2005; Marendy 2005). Some have tried to accommodate the changing catechetical and educational orientations of the learning area in the design of new curriculum (Chapter 2, pp.37-38). As a result, they may have misinterpreted the balance of these orientations in the classroom context (Crawford and Rossiter 1985). Teachers have become confused about how they should translate the curriculum for students in meaningful and purposeful ways (de Souza 2005, p.60). Consequently, some teachers emphasised cognitive practices and avoided affective ones. They perceived a faith element to their teaching was contrary to RE curriculum thinking at the time (de Souza 2005, p.64).

The implementation of RE Guidelines around Australia during the eighties and nineties has been the subject of comment and research concerning their accessibility by RE teachers. For example, while the introduction of RE Guidelines was seen as a valuable support to RE teachers, the lack of prior training created difficulties for teachers in coping with the demands of implementation. The prediction was that teachers would experience a:

lack of personal confidence and professional competence [that] must thereby reduce the ability to make good decisions. I would therefore see this as an urgent need for improving the curriculum development in religious education. Religion teachers seem to need skills to undertake a research stance towards their own teaching.

(Graham 1984, p.22)

To compensate for this loss of efficacy, the use of action research techniques to develop critical and systematic reflection on teaching practice was proposed (Graham 1984). As teachers became familiar with the materials and conducted their classes, they needed to evaluate their lessons on an ongoing basis and seek ways to improve their teaching. Such a proposal for more critical reflection on teaching practice has yet to find merit among religious educators and more immediate concrete solutions were sought to address the difficulties of implementing new RE Guidelines.

A study by Malone (1987) investigated the difficulties RE teachers had in the implementation of RE Guidelines from the Archdiocese of Melbourne and the Archdiocese of Sydney. These documents were not easily accessible to teachers because of the unfamiliar language used in the documents and the lack of a planning process of implementation as part of the school RE program:

[The Melbourne and Sydney Guidelines] ... were published to help schools develop their own school-based religious education programs. Many schools have had difficulties in translating the guidelines into practice and although some of the problems have been related to the language of the documents and the newness of the ideas they contain, some are related to an inadequate appreciation of the process of planning and of the decisions that need to be made.

(Malone 1987, pp.143-144)

For many teachers the ecclesial language used to describe the nature of Religious Education and its content was too abstract and of little practical use. At that time, Malone believed that teachers did not have sufficient professional formation to implement RE Guidelines effectively. Consequently, teachers were more interested in strategies and resources for their next lesson. Malone (1987, p.144) argued that RE curriculum documents should be organised in such a way that they expressed theoretical considerations as well as practical suggestions for classroom use to be effective during

the implementation process. She proposed that teachers needed curriculum documents that explicitly covered six elements: an overview outlining the rationale and assumptions underpinning the program; a context describing how the program fits in with the needs of students and teachers; content to be taught; unit development containing strategies and resources; language suitable to teachers, particularly recently assigned teachers; and evaluation procedures. Malone also later observed that RE teachers had been restricted in their use of Archdiocesan or Diocesan RE Guidelines, even though Catholic Education Offices in NSW have supported their endeavours, since:

Many of the teachers ... [have] ... had very little formal Religious Education during the secondary years ... and many have had little training since. These teachers therefore have no model of Religious Education Many of them have insufficient knowledge to approach the subject in a more formal way.

(Malone 1988, p.15).

The demands of implementing the RE Guidelines by 'out-of-field' teachers seem to have been too great without further professional formation. This situation was particularly the case for teachers with insufficient training or with experience limited to their own Catholic secondary schooling or practicum opportunities that occurred during their teacher training.

In another study, Crotty, Fletcher, and McGrath (1995) also lamented the difficulties experienced by teachers in implementing the Archdiocese of Sydney RE Guidelines. They found that:

many involved in developing school-based programs found this task far more consuming of time and energy than for other areas of teaching. What also contributed to the enormity of the task has been the high proportion of teachers who do not have Religious Education as their first or main subject area.

(Crotty et al 1995, p.15)

Such observations of teacher difficulties seem to reaffirm earlier findings (p.63) that teachers did not have the professional competence to implement the RE curriculum because they did not have specialist training in that learning area. This lack of professional competence meant that teachers found it difficult to cope with the exigencies of implementation. While there were instructional resources available and a

teaching approach outlined in the curriculum, the lack of formation about the nature and purposes of RE was becoming a serious problem.

The professional capacity of RE teachers to understand the curriculum principles underpinning the learning area came under the spotlight again (Malone 1997). In two research projects – one evaluating the Parramatta RE Guidelines, *Sharing Our Story* and the other, a series of case studies on the use of textbooks in Catholic secondary and primary schools – it was found that teachers were usually practitioners rather than theorists and made use of instructional resources in an uncritical fashion (Malone 1997, p.14). The conclusion drawn from observations of teachers using textbooks was that RE teachers did not appreciate the underlying curriculum principles nor did they implement RE curriculum documents in creative and relevant ways to students. This conclusion was despite the fact that these teachers attended CEO professional development programs outlining the curriculum principles used in the diocesan RE Guidelines. Teachers perceived the Guidelines and textbooks ‘... as a source of activities ... [allowing the teacher] ... to fill in the time allotted for the class’ (Malone 1997, p.19). The Guidelines were major instructional resources that required a sparse addition of other resources. Inexperienced and inadequately trained RE teachers look for ‘activities that work’ (Appleton and Kindt 1999) like the primary science teachers described on p.61. However, this response was not the complete picture.

Teachers perceived that the demands of implementing the RE curriculum required them to make a personal and professional response. This response was to be in ways that more than paralleled increasing professionalism in other learning areas (Skilbeck and Connell 2004, p.7). Religious educators increasingly perceived that the teaching of religion was no longer strictly catechetical and necessitated an appropriate tertiary educational background:

As with other curriculum areas, the teaching of the classroom religion program requires teachers to undergo thorough preparation prior to entering the classroom, as well as further professional development to enhance their knowledge and skills throughout their teaching career.

... No longer is membership of a local Catholic parish community sufficient qualification for a religion teacher in a Catholic school. While not denying the necessity for formation in faith for all teachers, the classroom religion teacher will find religion teaching difficult and unsatisfying if they do not have an adequate academic preparation.

(Ryan, Brennan and Wilmettt 1997, p.11)

The intensity and quality of the demands brought about by the implementation of new RE curricula meant that RE teachers faced challenges to their personal, professional, and religious formation. RE was like other learning areas, in some aspects, but it also required more from the RE teachers than did other learning areas (Rymarz 1997). There were broader religious differences among students with which to contend:

Students in contemporary Catholic schools have never been more diverse in terms of Church membership, religious affiliation, family religious involvement, preparedness to question religious claims and level in religious matters.

(Ryan 1997, p.95)

When RE Coordinators were asked about the quality of RE teaching, they believed that RE teachers had to relate a diverse array of content that was accessible across a wide range of students (Rymarz 1997, p.15). Such a task was proving to be daunting for many RE teachers.

There have been positive reports to emerge about teachers coping with the demands of curriculum implementation. In a study of Catholic Special Religious Education (SRE) teachers in NSW, Ivers (2002) noted that these teachers lacked formal teacher qualifications and were required to follow the *Joy for Living* series of Teachers' Manuals. Nonetheless, rather than implementing the classroom materials as printed, many SRE teachers sought to identify and provide for the specific learning needs of their students (Ivers 2002, p.3). Consequently, they adapted the materials to meet the needs of their students. As part of the profile he developed about the characteristics of SRE teachers, Ivers found that this concern for the needs of students was more important than

adhering to the principles of the 'Shared Praxis' approach espoused in the Teacher's Manuals. Not surprisingly, many SRE teachers did not have a good understanding of the teaching approach in the first place (Ivers 2002, p.6). He believed that these teachers wanted the flexibility to choose from a range of strategies and resources, to be able to see the connections between 'content, principles and concepts' and to provide a balanced and integrated program to their students (Ivers 2000, pp.50-51). Ivers (2000) concluded that as the new edition of the Teacher's Manuals catered for these aspects and the teachers became more familiar with the materials, the teachers would be more willing and confident in implementing the RE program.

Moving beyond the exclusive use of curriculum materials appears to be a necessary part of the developing expertise of the recently assigned teacher. In similar fashion to findings reported by Ivers (2000), a qualitative study of religious educators in Newfoundland, Canada found that there was a movement away from the 'set' curriculum materials (English 2000). Such a shift '...is an indication of growth or learning in the educators' role where texts are seen as guidelines, not as a canon.' (English 2000, p.171). Inexpert and inexperienced RE teachers needed access to quality classroom resources to assist them in developing their background knowledge and competence to teach RE confidently (Rymarz and Engebretson 2005). In the responses from questionnaires on the use of textbooks in Years 7 and 9 in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, teachers commented upon the value of such texts as a mainstay to their teaching, reduced their preparation time and provided a catalyst for improving the quality of learning in the RE learning area. Rymarz and Engebretson (2005) also recognised that recently assigned RE teachers needed weaning from such a heavy reliance on one resource. This reliance was a transient measure until the teachers developed greater confidence as competent RE teachers. Discontinuing this reliance was part of a process of empowering recently assigned RE teachers to move beyond being purely technicians, that is, people who used instructional resources as a learning tool in a repetitive fashion. RARE teachers became more professional as they used the textbook as one of many components to their teaching repertoire (Engebretson 2002).

3.3.4 Summary: Professional Profile of RARE teachers

Recently assigned RE teachers consist of both beginning and experienced teachers who are new to the teaching of Religious Education. For both groups, their experiences of teaching RE tend to reflect the difficulties of teaching for the first time. These teachers are teaching outside of their field of expertise and comfort zone. They may experience a serious loss of efficacy as they face the dilemmas and challenges of curriculum implementation for the first time in a learning area in which they are inexperienced or inadequately trained. To alleviate the pressures they face, RARE teachers rely heavily on instructional resources such as textbooks. As they gain teaching experience, it is possible for these teachers to broaden their repertoire of strategies and resources. Furthermore, alongside this developing professionalism, RARE teachers felt they had to draw upon their personal and religious background in response to curriculum demands. For some RARE teachers, the personal cost of coping with the intense demands was too great leading to burn out or dissatisfaction with teaching Religious Education. These personal and professional responses are a part of the research base educators have studied over many years. From this research base, a number of curriculum change models about the perceived demands of implementing a curriculum are proposed and these models are the focus of the next section.

3.4 Perceived Demands of Curriculum Implementation

In this section, the review turns its attention to the curriculum change models that take into account the perceptions of teachers to the demands of curriculum implementation. In particular, those models that focus on how these demands effect the teachers personally and professionally. The first model described is the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) from the initial work of Fuller (1969) and then the subjective realities aspects of the Change Agent Model by Fullan (2001). Out of these models, emerge the moral dimension of curriculum implementation. Teachers want the best for their students and implement a new curriculum accordingly. This perception produces another set of demands on teachers that challenge their levels of efficacy, strength of character and depth of spirituality (Palmer 1998).

3.4.1 Models of Curriculum Implementation

A number of educational change models describe and analyse the processes of curriculum implementation. Firstly, those models that study the factors influencing the implementation; secondly, those that analyse the processes that occur at different levels of the implementation; or, thirdly, those models that explore the curriculum outcomes (Hall 1997, p.31). These models may fall into a number of conceptual categories (Ellsworth 2000, p.37) as shown in Table 3.2 (p.70). An examination of these categories was useful to this study because the focus was on a specific group of teachers. This group of teachers had unique perceptions and experiences of the way they implemented a curriculum. Some categories may not be applicable directly to this study and others may very much be in tune with the research focus. In turn, the selection of a model category assisted the direction of the literature review. This study was focusing on the implementation process at the classroom level or ‘the actual change in practice component of implementation’ (Hall 1997, p.31). The focus was on ‘... the teaching – learning dimension of religious education’, what Lee (1973, p.8) refers to as ‘religious instruction’ or in current educational language as teaching practice. A number of factors may influence the successful implementation of curriculum documents. Part of the purpose for the development of PAREC Units was to assist inexperienced or inexperienced RE teachers cope with the demands of teaching RE. A key design feature of the Units was that they be accessible to recently assigned RE teachers as day-to-day teaching resources. A considered review of the models suggest two models dealing with teachers at a classroom level and their responses to a curriculum: the Intended Adopter or Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) first described by Fuller (1969) and the Change Agent model described by Fullan (2001).

Table 3.2 Taxonomy of Change Models (Ellsworth 2000)

Question(s)	Component of Change Communication Model	Title of Flagship Publication (or Framework Name, if Different)	Principal Author(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What <i>attributes</i> can I build into the innovation or its implementation strategy to facilitate its acceptance by the intended adopter? • How can the presence or absence of these attributes affect the rate of acceptance by the intended adopter (or prevent acceptance altogether)? 	Innovation	<i>Diffusion of Innovations</i>	Rogers, E. M.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the conditions that should exist or be created in the environment where the innovation is being introduced to facilitate its adoption? 	Environment	<i>Conditions of Change</i>	Ely, D. P.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the implications of educational change for people or organisations promoting or opposing it at particular levels? • What can I, as a(n)...(e.g., teacher, administrator, parent) do to promote change that addresses my needs and priorities? 	Change Agent	<i>(New) Meaning of Educational Change</i>	Fullan, M. G.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the essential stages of the change facilitation process? • What activities should the change agent be engaged in during each stage? 	Change Process	<i>Change Agent's Guide</i>	Havelock, R. G.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stages do teachers go through as an innovation is implemented? • What will be the major focus of their concerns at each stage? • What levels of innovation use are likely to be exhibited at each stage? • How do I identify which stage teachers are at right now? • How do I assess the extent to which teachers are actually using the innovation as its developers intended? 	Intended Adopter	<i>Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM)</i>	Fuller, F. F. Hall, G. E. Hord, S. M.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the cultural, social, organisational, and psychological <i>barriers</i> to change that can promote resistance to the innovation? • What can I do to lower these barriers and encourage adoption? 	Resistance	<i>Strategies for Planned Change</i>	Zaltman, G. Duncan, R. B.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the factors <i>outside</i> the immediate environment in which the innovation is being addressed that can affect its adoption? • How can change efforts combine multiple, mutually reinforcing innovations to increase the likelihood of effective, lasting change? • What stakeholders and constituencies are likely to see their interests impacted by this change, and how can I work with them to ensure they see their concerns addressed? 	System	<i>Systemic Change in Education</i>	Banathy, B. H. Reigeluth, C. M. Garfinkle, R. J. Carr-Chellman, A. A. Jenlink, P. M.

(Source: Ellsworth, J. B. 2000, *Surviving Change: A Survey of Educational Change Models*, p.37)

A significant purpose of the draft Perth Archdiocesan RE Course (PAREC) was to provide RE teachers, in particular, inexperienced and under-qualified RE teachers, with Units of Work and associated resources for use on a daily basis (Chapter 2, p.50). Earlier anecdotal evidence had suggested that there were a number of concerns about the Perth Archdiocesan RE Guidelines (PAGRE), the predecessor of PAREC (Chapter 2, pp.46-47), that resources needed to be accessible and the teaching and learning program needed to be embedded with an appropriate pedagogy that could be understood and translated by these teachers. Such an understanding about the concerns of teachers implementing a curriculum is reflected more broadly in the works of Fuller (1969) and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) described in the next section.

3.4.2 Concerns of Teachers

Research about the concerns of teachers when implementing a curriculum has focused upon understanding the affective and behavioural responses of teachers to the demands they experience as they implement a new curriculum (Anderson 1997). For ‘the single most important factor in any ...[implementation]... process is the people who will be most affected by the ...[implementation]’ (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin and Hall 1998, p.29). The development of detailed Stages of Concern (Table 3.4, p.74) in the model developed by Hall and Loucks (1978) was based upon the conceptualisations proposed by Fuller (1969) about the concerns recently assigned teacher expressed in curriculum implementation about ‘self’, the ‘task’ of teaching and ‘impact’ of this teaching on students:

- *Concerns about Self:* In the early phase of curriculum implementation, teachers are concerned about surviving the stresses of teaching and gaining acceptance as a competent teacher from the Principal, their colleagues and students.
- *Concerns about the Task of Teaching:* After some experience with curriculum implementation, teachers begin to focus on the practicalities of teaching – ensuring access to instructional resources, developing a repertoire of strategies and seeking advice about improving their teaching from their colleagues.

- *Concerns about the Impact of their Teaching:* Later in the curriculum implementation phase, teachers become aware of the specific learning needs of their students and focus upon adapting their teaching strategies to meet these needs.

Fuller (1969) also distinguished between the categories of concerns for beginning and experienced teachers. She felt that concerns for self and tasks were more associated with beginning teachers whereas task and impact concerns were common to experienced teachers. Later, Fuller and Bown (1975) proposed that these differences in concerns reflected stages in the professional development of teachers (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Stages of Teacher Development (after Fuller and Bown)

Stage	Concern	Characteristics
First Stage	Concerns about Self	Focus on survival and control by familiarity with content and management of students. Heightened expectations about their own sense of competency and gaining favour with their more experienced peers.
Second Stage	Concerns about Tasks	Focus turns to the teaching experience, especially the frustration and demands of developing resources and strategies that explain the content to their students. Expectations relate to quality of their teaching as opposed to student learning.
Third Stage	Concerns about Impact	Focus more on the educational needs of students, develop a greater sensitivity to the personal, social interactions between themselves and the students. Expectations relate to the value of what students learn and become.

(Source: Kallery 2004, p.148)

Reviews of the research literature related to these stages of development by Veenman (1984) and later, Dollase (1992) and Whittaker (2001), have supported the model advanced by Fuller. The approach used by Veenman (1984) was to assess the frequency with which certain specific concerns or problems arose for beginning teachers across 83 studies. He found that beginning teachers frequently perceived problems with discipline, engaging the learning of students, and catering for the needs of individual students (Whittaker 2001, p.4). Dollase (1992) took a different approach to the problems of

beginning teachers. The focus of the study was on the severity of the problems cited rather than the frequency of the problems. Individual needs and engaging students ranked second and third, while the demands on the time of the teacher ranked the highest (Whittaker 2001, p.4). The study of recently assigned teachers in Wisconsin by Whittaker (2001) also supported the above findings about the lack of time but found the 'burden of clerical work' and a 'heavy teaching load resulting in insufficient preparation time' (Whittaker 2001, p.9) were high on the list. In this study, the perceived demands of recently assigned RE teachers were investigated and some comparisons were made with these studies about classroom management, catering for the learning needs of students and the challenge of limited preparation time.

The later research background for CBAM was drawn from studies of teacher responses to curriculum innovations that were often externally imposed. The model addresses such things as identifying the possible degrees of concern expressed by teachers, their probable level of use in adopting curriculum materials and teaching practices and the degree to which facilitators may assist teachers through the implementation process. The strength of this model is that it is 'descriptive and predictive, not prescriptive, of teacher attitudes and behaviours in the process of learning to use new classroom ideas, materials, and practices' (Anderson 1997, p.333). The CBAM bases its understanding of the responses of teachers to changes in their teaching because of the implementation of a new curriculum on a number of assumptions:

- (1) change is a process, not an event;
- (2) change is accomplished by individuals;
- (3) change is a highly personal experience;
- (4) change involves developmental growth in feelings and skills; and
- (5) change can be facilitated by interventions directed toward the individuals, innovations, and contexts involved.

(Anderson 1997, p.333)

Anderson understands the implementation of a curriculum as being a dynamic one. The experience of each teacher is unique and significant to the teacher. The process of coping and the concerns expressed are subjective and intertwined with the personal and professional formation of teachers. Such a subjective dynamic seemed to be a crucial part of how recently assigned RE teachers cope with implementing the new RE Units.

Stages of Concern

Table 3.4 describes the seven stages that teachers may proceed through as they implement a new curriculum. Teachers firstly become aware of the new curriculum and begin to develop concerns about how to implement the curriculum. Next, as they begin to put the curriculum into practice there is intensification in their concerns based on their own needs. They may respond by modifying the curriculum in ways to suit themselves and later, to their students. It is possible that teachers will then seek to placate their concerns by working collegially and re-evaluating the value of the new curriculum. Some studies of this model (Table 3.4) have suggested fewer stages, for example, Kember and Mezger (1990), Bailey and Palsha (1992). Other studies by Belgian and Dutch researchers raise questions as to whether the stages are so clear-cut (Anderson 1997, pp.342-343). Nonetheless, three categories of concerns of Fuller (1969) for self, the task, and impact on students remain relevant (pp.71-72).

Table 3.4 Stages of Concern

Stage of Concern	Description of Concern
Stage 0 AWARENESS	Teachers have minimal background about the implementation of the new curriculum.
Stage 1 INFORMATIONAL	Teachers become interested or directed in learning about the implementation of the new curriculum.
Stage 2 PERSONAL	Teachers express anxiety regarding the pragmatics of the curriculum implementation and its impact upon themselves personally.
Stage 3 MANAGEMENT	Teachers' anxiety becomes more intense and they begin to manage the curriculum implementation on their own terms.
Stage 4 CONSEQUENCE	Teachers become concerned about the impact of the curriculum implementation upon the students; they begin to adapt the curriculum to suit perceived student needs.
Stage 5 COLLABORATION	Teachers turn to their professional colleagues for advice and support in modifying the curriculum implementation to suit perceived student needs.
Stage 6 REFOCUSING	Teachers re-consider whether the curriculum implementation has value by pursuing, adapting, or rejecting.

(Source: Anderson 1997, p.334)

Levels of Use and Innovation Configuration

The CBAM also proposes a Levels of Use schema (Table 3.5, p.75) that shows the degree to which teachers may use and become familiar with new curriculum materials. It

suggests that initially teachers decide what materials they will use and how they will use them. Much of the attention of the teachers is upon personal preparation and resourcing to placate their own concerns (Levels 0 to III). Next, the teachers possibly progress to a routine pattern of use before making key decisions about whether to continue using the materials in the same way or make changes in light of their perceptions about the needs of their students (Levels IVA and B). If they so choose, teachers may seek the collaboration of their colleagues to modify the curriculum materials and make some further decisions about how they will use the materials in the future (Levels V and VI).

Table 3.5 Levels of Use

Level of Use	Description of Use
Level 0 NON-USE	Teachers are unaware of or not using the curriculum materials available in the new curriculum.
Level I ORIENTATION	Teachers discover what new curriculum materials are available in the new curriculum.
Level II PREPARATION	Teachers become familiar with and prepare to use the new curriculum materials.
Level III MECHANICAL	Teachers decide about their own course of action in using the new curriculum materials to suit their own personal needs.
Level IVA ROUTINE	Teachers develop a routine pattern of use.
Level IVB REFINEMENT	Teachers may begin to consider how they use the new curriculum materials in respect to their students' needs.
Level V INTEGRATION	Teachers consult with their colleagues about supplementing or enhancing the new curriculum materials to suit the needs of their students.
Level VI RENEWAL	Teachers may seek to radically modify the new curriculum materials or seek alternatives to substitute the materials.

(Source: Anderson 1997, p.335)

The way in which teachers implement the new curriculum was recognized to be variable among the teachers themselves. This led to the notion of innovation configurations (Anderson 1997, p.336) whereby the stage of concern and level of use represents a pattern of behaviour that is unique for each teacher. Some of these behaviour patterns may be judged by curriculum developers as desirable, while teachers themselves may interpret these patterns to be contrary to the way in which they wish to continue to implement the curriculum. Such perceptions were often related to the way in which

change facilitators (Anderson 1997, p.336) such as curriculum developers, school leaders and experienced teachers assisted or hindered teachers during the implementation process.

A number of studies have focussed more on the validity and reliability of the CBAM or its measuring instruments (for example, Bailey and Palsha 1992; Buhendwa 1996; Shotsberger and Crawford 1996; Cheung, Hattie and Ng 2001). The quest seemed to be more about accurate categorisation of the concerns of teachers rather than seeking to understand why teachers feel this way and how this insight may assist in teacher development:

Clearly, the need remains ... for more systematic inquiry into the interactions between teacher concerns, mastery of use, and patterns of use in implementing a change over time. Research on factors affecting the arousal, resolution, and intensity of teacher concerns at different stages is minimal.

(Anderson 1997, pp.356-357)

It was the intention of this study to explore such factors of teacher concerns in greater depth. The categorisation of concerns, while interesting, was not necessarily useful to understanding more deeply how RARE teachers coped with the intense and, at times, traumatic experiences of implementing the draft PAREC into their classroom teaching.

Some researchers have applied CBAM to understanding teacher responses to curriculum implementation. Whereas Hall and Rutherford believed that 'meaningful change is a process that takes time' (1976, p.227), Christou, Eliophotou-Menon and Philippou (2004) found that it was not so much the time it took to implement a new curriculum but rather the way the teachers managed its implementation based on their years of teaching experience (concerns more related to the 'task' category). The anxieties of recently assigned teachers about the immediacy or exigency of implementation did decline over the years (Pigge and Marso 1998) but, more importantly it was the manner of coping with that exigency that teachers focused upon. In particular, Pigge and Marso (1998) found that while self concerns declined and task concerns increased, impact concerns remained steady and the most intense throughout curriculum implementation which was in contrast to the model proposed by Fuller (1969). As was to emerge in this study, these three areas of concern were not independent but interact with each other according to the

circumstances. The impact concerns of teachers are always present but the intensity of each concern may take longer to arise. As discussed in the next section: 'Teachers as Moral Agents of Implementation' (p.78), such concerns are a response to the subjective dimensions of curriculum implementation.

While Fuller (1969) based her research on data collected from survey and interviews, CBAM studies have tended to concentrate on using an inventory measurement instrument. As Anderson points out, this approach has tended to obscure the value of the viewpoint of the individual:

In practice, individual data are rarely reproduced in published CBAM studies. Stages of Concern data are typically reported by computing mean responses for all prospective users of an innovation in a school. These are displayed as concerns profiles for the school at different points in an implementation process. For Levels of Use and Innovation Configurations, the distribution of individual assessments is often described by the number and percentage of respondents for each level or configuration component variation.

(Anderson 1997, p.362)

In this study, the intention was to consider not only the perceptions of the cohort but also to include the possible insight of individuals as is consistent with qualitative research.

The focus was on looking:

less for central tendencies, and more for the distribution and patterns and linkages between individual responses across the organization. This approach would lead us to a better understanding of the nature and extent of organizational change without losing sight of the individuals.

(Anderson 1997, p.363)

This view expressed by Anderson (1997) is especially relevant to the assertion by Manuel (2003) about how educators understand the professional lives of recently assigned teachers. Educators tend to rely on anecdotal evidence (as in the case of recently assigned RE teachers, Chapter 2, p.46) rather than allow these teachers to contribute their experiences directly:

How frequently do beginning [and other recently assigned] teachers have the opportunity to chronicle their emerging professional identities in ways that enable the wider profession not only to support them more fully, but also to learn from them in their ‘newness’?

(Manuel 2003, p.140).

In this study, by giving individuals such as recently assigned RE teachers a prominent ‘voice’ to relate their perceptions personally, a possibility existed for a clearer understanding of their situation to emerge.

Recently assigned teachers are initially enthusiastic but apprehensive about teaching their new assignments. Their focus is on trying to provide the best teaching experience from which their students may learn. As a result, implementation depends much upon the disposition or commitment of the teacher (Huberman 1988). Teachers are moral agents and this is an important element in curriculum implementation to be discussed in the next section.

3.4.3 Teachers as Moral Agents of Implementation

It is within the nature of any curriculum development to have a tension between ‘espoused theory’ and ‘actual practice’. Such a tension is the result of implementation at one level (eg. education system) to the next (local school) because:

Curriculum ... can be seen to be interconnected at different levels or scales. Indeed, it is the *translation* [their italics] from one level to another which often produces gaps between intentions and what actually occurs in the classrooms.

(Smith and Lovat 1991, pp.12–13)

An effective translation occurs when teachers, as a group, have a common understanding or shared knowledge about the curriculum (Keeves 1988, p.168). This translation of the curriculum is dependent upon the perceptions teachers have about the curriculum and, in turn, how they deal with its implementation. Even a packaged curriculum can have a profound personal impact on teachers (Montgomery and Way 1995). Teachers may become uncertain as to their role in the translation process, whether they are technicians delivering the curriculum as recommended or whether they were experts in implementing the curriculum as they saw fit.

The translation of new curriculum documents during an implementation process at the classroom level does involve 'learning how to do something new' (Fullan and Hargreaves 1992, p.1). This learning process on the part of teachers is also a part of their professional development (Little 1992, p.170). As a result, there are three dimensions considered to be important when studying curriculum implementation at the classroom level (emphasis in italics by Fullan):

(1) the possible use of new or revised *materials* (instructional resources such as curriculum materials or technologies), (2) the possible use of new *teaching approaches* (i.e. new teaching strategies or activities), and (3) the possible alteration of *beliefs* (e.g., pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new ... programs).

(Fullan 2001, p.39)

The process of implementation depends on how these dimensions effect the understandings and teaching practice of teachers. Fullan believes that changes in teaching practice along the three dimensions described above are 'critical for the simple reason that it is the *means* [his italics] of accomplishing desired objectives' (2001, p.70).

The model suggested by Fullan (2001) highlights the importance of translation processes involved in curriculum implementation at the local school level. Such translation processes base themselves upon the notion that teachers are moral change agents. Furthermore, teachers may perceive they are caught in a professional conundrum (Fullan 2001, pp.39-40). Should teachers implement the curriculum as advised by the curriculum developers (fidelity perspective) or should they implement and modify the curriculum as they see fit (mutual-adaptation perspective)? Teachers may perceive such a dilemma as a challenge to their efficacy and reduce their enthusiasm for teaching the subject.

Teachers make decisions about how they implement a curriculum based on what is best educationally and professionally for their students. However, they do not necessarily make these decisions collectively nor do they perceive the same reality about curriculum implementation:

it is *individuals* [author's emphasis] who have to develop new meaning, and these individuals are insignificant parts of a gigantic, loosely organised, complex, messy social system that contains myriad different subjective worlds.

(Fullan 2001, 1992)

Therefore, an in-depth understanding of these individual perceptions about curriculum implementation is crucial. By studying the subjective realities of teachers implementing a curriculum, it may be possible to ascertain certain patterns of behaviour that shed light on how to address the personal and professional stresses on teachers. Such a study was the intent of this research project in how recently assigned RE teachers coped with the demands of implementing the PAREC.

Hargreaves (1997) takes the subjective reality of implementing a curriculum a step further and suggests this perception reflects the emotional dimension of teaching or the 'passion'. Durka defines passion for teaching as the 'power of possibility' (2005, p.5). Those teachers who continued to teach seemed to respond to a 'calling' or vocation to teach even when the benefits of continuing to do so may not be apparent:

teachers remember the passions that led them to become [teachers], and they do not want to lose the primal energy of their vocation. They affirm their deep caring for the lives of students, and they do not want to disconnect from the young. They understand the identity and integrity that they have invested in teaching, and they want to re-invest, even if it pays no institutional interest or dividends.

(Palmer 1998, pp.170-171)

Palmer (1998, p.4) suggests that in addition to the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of teaching, as suggested by Fullan (2001), there is a fourth more significant dimension to take into account, that is the personal sense of self or spirituality of the teacher. Spirituality is defined in this context as '... the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own egos' (Palmer 2004). This spirituality of the teacher finds expression through the efficacy or self-confidence of the teacher (p.87). It refers to how teachers relate to how they see themselves as a teacher and their relationship with others in their immediate learning community as well as to the subject matter. As Palmer (1998, p.10) states '... good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.' This love for teaching students is a

highly prized professional attribute that sustains teachers through the demands of classroom teaching (Vallance 2003, p.255). This ‘primal energy’ (Palmer 1998, p.170) is expressed intellectually, emotionally and spiritually for the benefit of students. Without a positive outlook to these three inner aspects, teachers questioned themselves about their identity and integrity. Consequently, teachers may experience ‘burnout’ that is, ‘...the culmination of a progressive disillusionment and lack of efficacy in which early enthusiasm and dedication ultimately yield to depletion and a loss of caring’ (Evans 1996, p.95). Energy levels of teachers will continue to wane unless there are personal and professional supports available from the school and the wider education system (Treston 1997, p.69). Furthermore, if teachers continued to teach without a positive outlook then they are in danger of harming themselves and their students (Palmer 1998). On the other hand, those teachers who have the authenticity and integrity to teach the truth derive great benefits:

when we are unfaithful to the inward teacher and to the community of truth, we do lamentable damage to ourselves, to our students, and to the great things of the world that our knowledge holds in trust.

... If you are faithfully with us, you are bringing abundant blessing. It is a blessing known to generations of students whose lives have been transformed by people who have the courage to teach – the courage to teach from the most truthful places in the landscape of self and world, the courage to invite students to discover, explore, and inhabit those places in the living of their own lives.

(Palmer, 1998, p.183)

A number of studies have focused on the first dimension of implementation suggested by Fullan (2001) – the provision of instructional resources to assist teachers in implementing a new curriculum and reducing the workload stress of teachers. The publication of curriculum materials as day-to-day resources for teachers to use in their teaching practice is a traditional method of curriculum implementation. Rather than leave the hunt for curriculum materials to teachers, professional curriculum writers provided teachers with content background, generic teaching and learning programs, and a textbook for direct classroom use. One issue to emerge from this approach is how well teachers are able to contextualise the use of resources such as texts in their teaching.

Teachers may misunderstand or overly simplify the manner in which they use these resources (Fullan 2001, p.77). The other issue is the quality and usefulness of the resources themselves, especially if they are the cornerstone to the curriculum implementation. Teachers may feel reluctant to use them or become cynical about their practicality if these resources do not satisfy the perceived needs of the teachers (Fullan 2001, p.79). The process of curriculum implementation becomes less onerous when quality resources are available and their use is explained carefully to teachers, as Fullan concludes:

you get farther, faster by producing quality materials and establishing a highly interactive infrastructure of pressure and support. Finally, the materials do not have to be treated as prescriptive. Many judgements can and should be made [sic] during implementation as long as they are based on evidence linking teacher practices with student performance.

(2000, pp.23-24)

This conclusion about the implementation process may be optimistic in comparison to research studies into the introduction of new curricula. For example, this relationship between feeling more comfortable in teaching and exploiting new curriculum materials was observed by Harper and Maheady (1991, p.356) in their study of 407 teachers implementing a new Reading and Arts language program. Correspondingly, Givens (2000) conducted a small in-depth case study into how two teachers accessed new, commercially available curriculum materials in the Design and Learning Technology Area of the National Curriculum in England and Wales. The teachers selected a narrow range of strategies and, initially, overly relied on the text that was available to them. In another small in-depth case study, Grossman and Thompson (2004) investigated how three new secondary English teachers made use of curriculum materials in their teaching. They also found similar results to Givens (2000) – these teachers drew upon a range of materials and strategies that they followed initially very closely. However, as they gained more experience they became more critical of the materials and developed a greater confidence in adapting these materials and strategies.

In Religious Education, similar findings have emerged. The changes intended by the implementation of a new RE curriculum may not take place, even with the offering of resources and support, because teachers would adapt these to their own understanding of

teaching practice (Malone 1987, p.144). As a result, teachers could teach the curriculum in ways not originally intended by the curriculum writers. Hendry (1996, p.23) agrees with Malone that teachers may generate different meanings that were not intended by the curriculum writers. However, he believes that teachers understand a curriculum based on their existing knowledge and beliefs that include ideas about the world, and the processes of how they themselves teach and learn. The understandings teachers have about the implementation of curriculum documents depend upon the level of professional development these teachers possess in making decisions about the resources and strategies to use in the classroom.

Another study investigated how teachers used different strategies to achieve particular aims of RE in the Model Syllabuses of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) in Britain (Astley, Francis, Burton and Wilcox 1997). In contrast to Malone, Astley et al (1997) expressed a more positive view in tune with the suggestions of Hendry. They believed there was an interplay between the theoretical aims of a subject and 'particular educational methods and strategies for achieving those aims' (Astley et al 1997, p.171). These researchers pointed out that 'RE teachers employ their professional judgement' in how they implement the specific aims of a curriculum by choosing a wide and appropriate range of teaching practices (Astley et al 1997, p.173).

The views expressed by these researchers (Malone 1987; Fullan and Hargreaves 1992; Little 1992; Hendry 1996; Astley et al 1997; Hall 1997; Fullan 2001) suggest that the accessibility of curriculum documents and the empowering of teachers to make appropriate decisions are crucial to the implementation process of the curriculum. The implementation process is dependent upon the actions and decisions teachers make (Fullan 2001, p.115) in response to their concerns about the new curriculum. These actions and decisions depend upon the perceptions teachers have about the curriculum materials, teaching approach and beliefs about the curriculum. Furthermore, teachers prefer to learn through their experiences of curriculum implementation rather than through authoritative instruction. Therefore, implementation and appreciation for this implementation takes time (Fullan 2001, pp.79-80). Teachers need time to adjust cognitively and emotionally to the new tasks set upon them. Their pre-conceived ideas about how to teach need a period of adjustment to be married with the new curriculum

principles presented to them (Evans 1996, p.60). This adjustment period as a part of curriculum implementation is crucial because:

When we seek genuine commitment and changes in belief, the people doing the changing...are in control of the transformation. This is particularly true when the ultimate goal...is to affect not just teacher's behaviour but the very ways they think....

(Evans, 1996, p.61)

To examine how the actions, decisions, and perceptions of RARE teachers changed with the experience of implementation, a longitudinal study of the impact of a curriculum implementation on these teachers seemed appropriate.

Accessibility to resources is not the only factor that influences the implementation process. Prior training, teacher attitudes, and professional support may also be important factors at this level. Bezzina, Chesterton, Johnston, and Sanber (1993) conducted a study to investigate how RE teachers implemented evaluation processes which is also an important aspect of school-based curriculum development. Their study found discrepancies between what the curriculum writers advocated in the Sydney Archdiocesan RE Guidelines for secondary schools: *Faithful to God: Faithful to People* and the actual practice of RE teachers:

We see a group of teachers, for whom religious education has not been a major part of their training, making efforts to evaluate a subject which is not a major part of their teaching load. The evaluation practices in which they engage are largely subjective, are influenced by personalities rather than policy, and by methodologies of the other subjects taught.

(Bezzina et al 1993, p.112).

The discrepancies in evaluation practices also seemed to be the result of a lack of teacher formation. Compounding this lack of teacher formation is the extended preparation of school programs and the reduced classroom contact time teachers have with students. This study also sought to explore whether or not teacher formation influenced how recently assigned RE teachers coped with teaching RE as they implemented the Perth Archdiocesan RE Course.

3.3.4 Summary: Curriculum Implementation

Understanding the perceptions teachers have about the implementation of curriculum is important to the success of that implementation, especially their concerns and their responses to the demands placed upon them. Fuller (1969) suggests that the concerns teachers express often focus on their own immediate concerns (self-concerns), concerns about the way they teach (task concerns) and the effect the implementation has on the students (impact concerns). These categories of concerns emerge over time as teachers gain more experience in teaching the curriculum.

Teachers generally want to improve their teaching and to improve the learning outcomes of their students. During the process of implementation there needs to be an extended interlude for teachers to adjust to their new circumstances. As a result, their concerns may become more altruistic and their attention focuses on changing or improving their use of instructional resources, their repertoire of teaching strategies and their beliefs about the underlying curriculum principles (Fullan 2001). One significant phase is the level of use in instructional resources such as textbooks among teachers. Initially, the use of recommended resources is overly stringent but as teachers gain further experience and confidence, the level of use of these resources diminishes. Teachers begin to embark upon developing their own resources based upon a growing appreciation of new teaching approaches and understandings of the underlying curriculum principles.

However, the translation of the curriculum by teachers may not match the intention of the curriculum developers. Additionally, curriculum developers cannot rely on anecdotal evidence to provide a sound basis as to how teachers implement a curriculum. Rather, the gathering of evidence needed to be not only about the concerns of teachers but also about how each teacher responded to the intense demands of implementing a new curriculum. Evidence was needed also about how the demands of implementation affected teachers professionally and personally. The character or mettle of teachers is tested by curriculum implementation and they may become emotionally and spiritually exhausted. As a result, the formative experiences of teachers are crucial to developing the efficacy and character of teachers as they implement a curriculum with which they are unfamiliar and lack expertise. Such experiences are the focus of the next section.

3.5 Formative Experience of RARE Teachers

The demands of curriculum implementation on teachers are a part of the teaching experience (Huberman 1983). It is what teachers are trained to do; however, the degree of intensity is what most concerns the teachers. These concerns arise out of demands that exert what Huberman calls the 'classroom press' (Fullan 2001, p.33). The intensity of the press they feel may be due to pressures such as the immediacy and spontaneity of delivering lessons; catering for a multitude of educational needs; adapting to the unpredictable nature of teaching; and, developing a friendly and meaningful rapport with students (Huberman 1983, pp.482-483). The responses to these pressures are possible feelings of isolation, exhaustion, limited opportunities for reflection and a myopic view of classroom teaching (Fullan 2001, p.33). Furthermore, there is a danger in assuming the achievement of competence with professional formation (Wragg et al 2000, p.4). The definitions of the term competence is largely confined to a narrow range of teaching skills but what were demanded of teachers were a broader range of interpersonal skills and a deeper knowledge of the concepts and values of their subject. Inexperienced teachers may develop the skills of teaching Religious Education but may not develop a coherent knowledge or understanding of the theological and pedagogical principles underlying the learning area (Engebretson 1997).

A negative view of work stress need not override the value of having demands placed on teachers due to curriculum implementation. Curriculum implementation is worthwhile when teachers feel they have the support of their colleagues and their school communities. Manageable pressure and professional support go together (Fullan 2001, p.92). However, teacher workloads over the past 25 years have increased (Fullan 2001, pp.118-123) and the stress of daily classroom teaching has intensified, reducing the time to relax, reflect and re-energise creating a poorer teaching and learning environment (Hargreaves 1994, pp.118-119). Therefore, if teachers were experiencing these pressures on a daily basis, then the introduction of an unfamiliar curriculum would heighten their concerns about the additional pressures placed upon them. Furthermore, if teachers do not possess the professional expertise or support to implement a new curriculum adequately, then the demands would be felt more intensely.

Another important factor to their formative experience was the attitude of recently appointed teachers towards their posting to a new learning area. Teachers who had a positive disposition towards their teaching (called teacher efficacy, p.80) were more inclined to face challenges in their teaching and to take greater responsibility for student learning (Ross 1995). A begrudging teacher did not feel that any further learning would be of assistance to their ability to cope in the classroom (Kallery 2004, p.170). This negative disposition meant that the depth of knowledge and quality of instruction would be poorer, giving rise to further difficulties with disengaged or disruptive students (Kallery 2004, p.162).

Rather than discuss the achievement of outcomes as emphasised in other learning areas, RE teachers tend to talk about their teaching in terms such as ‘formation’ and ‘spiritual development’ of the students (English 2000). However, to have both the responsibility for imparting the content of Religious Education and for the personal formation of their students is a significant burden, particularly when there is a lack of collegial support:

Unwittingly, religious educators in denominational schools have assumed the major responsibility to provide the essential formational and informational basis in religious education for youth. They are expected to subscribe to the teachings of their denomination and communicate these teachings to others, despite the perceived lack of support.

(English 2000 p.169)

The demands on the commitment and professionalism of the teacher had increased over the nineties (p.65). Yet, at the same time, there were an increasing number of lay teachers becoming involved in teaching RE (Figure 2.2, p.44), especially recently assigned RE teachers who made up a significant proportion of the RE teaching profession (Table 4.1, p.141).

Groome, writing the Foreword to *A New Vision of Religious Education* by Treston (1993), remarked that most RE teachers actively seek to develop their pedagogical content knowledge in Religious Education. They also recognise it is their own personal faith and professional commitment to the subject that makes them highly effective (and by inference, a teacher who wishes to continue to teach RE as part of their teaching career):

Effective religion teachers do not depend primarily on their professional expertise or their knowledge of content and methods, important as these may be. They depend most on their own appropriation of Christian faith as their personal vocation and call to holiness of life. This “owned” faith commitment must permeate their content and methods if their teaching is to be integral and effective. ... It is the personal faith of educators when woven throughout their curriculum (content, method, and environment), their spirituality as teachers if you will, that most shapes what happens at the core of intentional faith education. Such integration and integrity, in turn, point to the need for holistic and ongoing formation of our ... teachers.

(Groome in Treston 1993, Foreword, p.vi)

Through a holistic and ongoing formation, teachers have the opportunity to become authentic religious educators, to become leaders or role models to their students. These teachers are able to ‘build their practice outward from their core commitments rather than inward from a management text’ (Evans 1996, p.193). Regrettably, there is the possibility that enthusiastic, recently assigned RE teachers could lose their love for the discipline because of a lack of deeper commitment. Some teachers saw their RE teaching assignment as something to make up their workload:

it is unfortunate that in the eyes of many of the RECs [Religious Education Coordinators] interviewed in my research, some RE teachers find their rationale for teaching the subject not from love of the discipline but in finding a convenient ‘filler’ to make up a teaching allotment. This attitude makes professional development of RE teachers very difficult.

(Rymarz 1999b, p.51)

What was to emerge in this study was the apparent need for recently assigned RE teachers to develop greater self-confidence both personally and professionally. This confidence was crucial in facing the exigencies of implementing the PAREC. This teacher efficacy constitutes ‘the realization of one’s self-judgments and capabilities to create and organize instruction that motivate student learning’ (Onafowora 2004, p.36). Feelings of efficacy were important to how teachers coped with the demands of curriculum implementation. The experiences of teaching and professional development contribute significantly to such feelings:

Whether the early years of teaching are a time of constructive learning or a period of coping, adjustment and survival depends largely on the working conditions and culture of teaching that new teachers encounter.

(Feiman-Nemser 2003, p.27)

Unfortunately, for many recently appointed teachers, formative experiences come under duress. They may be ‘constantly exposed to feedback about their functioning and personality, from the school establishment, their colleagues, the learners and their parents...’ (Shoham, Penso, and Shiloah 2003, p.195). In this section, the review concentrates on studies that have called for firstly, a professional formation in content and method that is relevant to the needs of teachers and collegial in nature. Secondly, for further consideration of the importance of religious and spiritual formation for RARE teachers and thirdly, the role of mentoring and other support programs in assisting teachers with coping with the demands of curriculum implementation.

3.5.1 Professional Formation in Content and Method

Shulman (1986) proposed that teachers are required to possess three key understandings about their teaching: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. Teachers need to know their subject matter (content knowledge) and how to teach (general pedagogical knowledge) and, importantly, to integrate these two domains (pedagogical content knowledge). There are four components to pedagogical content knowledge: an understanding and appreciation for the purpose of the learning area, an understanding and appreciation for the perceptions students have about the learning area, an understanding of curriculum principles and knowledge of a wide range of teaching strategies (Grossman 1990). It is concerning these components that teachers find themselves seeking further professional development.

When pressures to change how and what to teach confront teachers, then the key for this change to occur is a consequence of professional development opportunities. However, the types of opportunities available to teachers have come under severe criticism:

traditional approaches to professional development, such as short workshops or conference attendance, do foster teachers' awareness or interest in deepening their knowledge and skills. However, these approaches to professional development appear insufficient to foster learning which fundamentally alters what teachers teach or how they teach.

... For the majority of teachers, professional development appears to be still characterized by fragmented 'one-shot' workshops at which they listen passively to 'experts' and learn about topics not essential to teaching.

(Boyle, While and Boyle 2004, p.47)

Nor do pre-packaged materials suffice to compensate for the lack of professional competence. For example, Appleton and Kindt make this warning in relation to primary teachers with inadequate science backgrounds:

An approach which relies on activities that work, where the teacher hopes that activities will inherently "teach" those engaged in them, appears to be a distortion of discovery learning. There seems to be the assumption that if the activity is any good then students will learn whatever it is the activity is about, simply by doing it. Texts and curriculum materials which respond to this teacher-need without providing appropriate background knowledge of how the activities fit into a broader science conceptual map are a modern version of the "teacher-proof" curriculum programs which emerged during the 1960s.

(1999, p.8)

Furthermore, this positivist approach whereby students learn that by 'doing', where answers always emerge through experimentation, may be antagonistic towards a constructivist philosophy of education. This may undermine more open-ended, problem-centred, inquiry approaches (Appleton and Kindt 1999, p.8) that allow for an appreciation of the mystery, wonder, and beauty of the world around them.

If there are to be changes in the ways teachers teach, then other professional development opportunities need investigation. These opportunities need to be characterised by a longer duration of time (Boyle et al 2004, p.47) at a more localised level as teachers adjust to the curriculum demands (Evans 1996). Grodsky and Gameron (2003, p.1) concluded that the best form of professional development was that held within the school because it had the added benefit of teachers being able to consult with their colleagues (called onsite mentoring, p.109). Furthermore, it can be more relevant to

teacher learning because it can relate to their specific school situation (King and Newmann (2000, p.576). As Grossman, Wineberg, and Woolworth recommend:

We argue, therefore, for a vision of professional community that is located in the workplace, offering the possibility of individual transformation as well as the transformation of the social settings in which individuals work.

(2001, p.948)

However, rather than teachers collaborating with each other within the school, there was also the need to 'network' or establish cooperation with teachers in other schools (King and Newmann 2000, p.576). It is within these professional networks that experts and curriculum developers needed to work to support teachers. New teachers want firstly, to see good teaching in action and secondly, to discuss with experienced teachers (mentors) how they taught (Gilbert 2005, p.36). High stress factors were 'time pressures, paper work and non-instructional meetings' (Gilbert 2005, p.38).

Recently appointed teachers do not have a clear understanding of the principles of teaching and 'tend to be less sure of how their ideology compares with that of others' (Marlow et al 1997). They may fear that their ideas may be rejected by others and so develop a greater sense of isolation and insecurity. Reynolds goes further to warn that:

teachers who do not have a deep and broad understanding of teaching in all its facets may be causing serious educational harm to students. ... Guiding the redesign of professional development programs must be a map of the progression from novice to accomplished teacher that is grounded in a well-defined conceptual framework of teaching. Also aiding the redesign should be a plan for monitoring the competence of prospective teachers along the route to licensure.

(1995, pp.218-219)

Yet, the struggles of recently assigned teachers in facing the demands placed on them may be a contributing part to the making of excellent teachers:

One does not start out teaching in possession of all the fully developed qualities of a fine teacher. With experience and self-knowledge, however, these qualities grow and ripen; and after having felt intimidated by the demands of teaching and often discouraged by the dimensions and responsibilities of the work, one can come close to mastering its challenges and become a teacher in the fullest sense of the word.

(Banner and Cannon 1997, p.6)

The recognition that the recently assigned teacher still needs time to develop is not new. Banner and Cannon make the point above that it is precisely the years of teaching experience (with all its successes and failures) and an authentic integrated identity that make a better teacher. As Angelico notes:

This also points to the need for teachers who are confident in their own knowledge and understanding of the subject and whose personal commitment could enhance their teaching, thus enabling them to comfortably handle difficult issues.

(Angelico 1997, p.83)

Recently assigned teachers shared with all teachers the challenge of ensuring effective instruction and classroom management. How well they managed this fundamental demand formed their confidence to teach. It is a cornerstone trait in becoming 'highly effective teachers' (McEwan 2002, p.51). This effectiveness depends upon the capacity of teachers to learn. Arends (1983, p.235) found 'that the most competent teachers were those who were avid learners' and that they 'use a substantial amount of time in learning/attending PD' (Arends 1983, p.241). Recently appointed teachers begin with a 'limited repertoire of instructional strategies' (Freiberg 2002, p.56), but this situation changes when formation is encouraged in four ways through (emphasis in italics by the authors):

(a) *personal experience*, where an individual is consistently challenged by a range of task demands differing in the number and degree of difficulty; (b) *direct experience*, defined as on-the-job training under the supervision of an expert tutor or mentor;

(c) *manufactured experience*, in which an individual sharpens his or her perceptual abilities through simulations or role playing; and (d) *vicarious experience*, defined as the opportunity to read or visualize a complex task and asked to highlight the difficulties and problems encountered within the scenario and propose working solutions.

(Klein and Hoffman 1993, p.215)

Personal experience plays a significant part in the professional formation of the teacher (Littleton and Littleton 2005). The day-to-day experience of teaching is a challenging one and, if taken in the right perspective, can lead to professional growth. On the other hand, experiences may lead to frustration and resentment causing stress and disenchantment in the teacher. Prolonged disenchantment may cause the teacher to leave the profession or become bitter or cynical about teaching. Flores (2003) found in her study of 14 beginning teachers that almost two-thirds of them experienced a loss of idealism within two years of teaching. However, she also found that while these teachers had become compliant and negative, the remaining teachers were dedicated and keen. These differences seemed to be focused upon personal dispositions towards teaching, the support the teachers received both personally and professionally and the nature of the teaching experience (Flores 2003 pp.23-24).

The value of the teaching experience itself can aid the formation of the teacher both professionally and personally (English 2000; Onafowora 2004, p.34). Such experiences occur over a lengthy period in different teaching situations:

Pedagogical experiences that contribute to the development of meaningful patterns about teaching, valuing and organizing information, retrieving information, and knowing when to use the information take place over time in diverse classroom settings.

(Onafowora 2004 p.36)

This duration of actual classroom teaching allows recently assigned teachers to develop their pedagogical content knowledge and their skills in teaching. Such informal learning was an important contributor to the professional development of new teachers (Williams 2003). Yet, to rely on this incidental formation has its limitations and costs (English 2000). While professional competence in some cognitive aspects is acquired quickly, other affective aspects need a longer time to develop, perhaps several years such as the

efficacy or self-confidence of teachers (Onafowora 2004, pp.34-36). Throughout this chapter a number of studies have been cited regarding the significance of teacher efficacy (for example, pp.60, 63 and 87). Kieffer and Henson (2000) have developed a measurement tool to gauge the self-efficacy of teachers based on social learning theory. When there are intense curriculum demands placed upon teachers new to teaching a learning area, there are repercussions for the self-confidence of teachers. Penso (2002) suggests that the capacity of recently assigned teachers to reflect and act upon these demands is reduced and most of their time and energy is devoted towards surviving. In the area of Religious Education, the study by Engebretson (1997) of RE teachers and their need to have an understanding of an RE theoretical framework parallels this research (p.86).

The quality of professional formation, according to Boys (1989), influenced how the teachers implemented the RE curriculum. In her view, the catalytic role of the RE teacher was to make the Traditions of the Church accessible in such a way as to allow the students to be transformed towards a deeper level of faith (Boys 1989, p.203). The onus, then, was on the teacher to contend with the demands of teaching RE through:

painstaking preparation, reflective practice, judicious analysis, and systematic evaluation. Talent and discipline, inspiration and deliberations combine. Both know-how [to teach RE] and knowledge [of the Church's tradition] are required.

(Boys 1989, p.208)

Teachers were also responsible for developing critical thinking about beliefs within their students rather than stress only the transmission of beliefs (Boys 1989, p.210). However, such a responsibility seemed to be beyond many RE teachers. In his review of teaching styles in English schools, Hyde (1990) found that critical thinking would be the least likely skill promoted in Religious Education. The predominant teaching style in RE was passive and focused on the transmission of knowledge rather than the need of students for self-understanding, meaning, or values. 'Knowledge was indeed acquired, but few [students] saw any use for it in the future' (Hyde 1990, p.142). The consequent difficulties teachers faced in teaching disinterested students were not because of a lack of resources but rather limitations in their professional formation.

English (1999) took the discussion of the limitations of teacher formation a step further. In her study of RE teachers in Newfoundland, Canada, she concluded that teachers needed to have a proper religious formation. She believed that in order for teachers to have credibility with students they ‘... will have to be people who experience in their own lives that the religious journey makes a profound difference to them’ (English 1999, p.10). Teaching RE demanded a deep personal faith commitment that needed nurturing and reflection. RE teaching also required teachers to develop a strong conviction for teaching based on contemplation:

conviction about the holiness and power of teaching is the fruit of having spent time contemplating teaching from the inside, and thus beholding its inner nature. It is important that teachers, also take time to sit with this call to teaching, and allow its holiness and power to unfold in their lives. It is only a vision of teaching that sees itself from the inside that can inspire teachers in the face of daily pressures.

(Manning 1992, p.8)

Longitudinal studies by Flynn (1975, 1979, 1985, 1993 and with Mok 2002) have highlighted the importance of committed teachers to students in their charge. However, there was an apparent decline in the religious influence of teachers on students over the last two decades (Flynn and Mok 2002). Coincidentally, lay Catholic teachers had been increasingly responsible for teaching RE over this time. While accepting that the decline in religious influence was a part of a Church-wide problem, Flynn and Mok believe that these teachers needed to have further professional and faith formation for the sake of the proper religious development of their students.

In relation to novice RE teachers, Engebretson (1997) conducted research between 1991 and 1995 about professional formation issues related to teacher education in Religious Education. She found that these teachers needed to be able to translate a ‘coherent and appropriate theory of Religious Education’ into the classroom situation; to be well acquainted with the content; to have the competence to plan lessons suited to the backgrounds of the students, and, to access professional support (Engebretson 1997, p.17). The data that emerged from her interviews suggested that the first of these four issues was crucial to how RE teachers taught because:

poor Religious Education results when the teacher is working in a theoretical vacuum, or working from an inappropriate theory of Religious Education. Indeed, not only poor Religious Education, but disillusionment, disappointment and frustration are evident when teachers tell stories about their practice.

(Engebretson 1997, p.18)

These stories illustrated the loss of personal confidence because of a lack of appropriate teacher formation. Engebretson (1997) tracked her interviewees to see how they responded to their initial teaching experiences. Those teachers who did not have the flexibility to reconsider their understanding about the nature and purposes of RE were least likely to continue to teach in the learning area.

Recently assigned RE (RARE) teachers begin with preconceived ideas about the purposes of RE but quickly find that these preconceptions are inadequate or unrealistic (Engebretson 1997). This situation leads to difficulties in coping with the demands of teaching Religious Education. The teachers become perplexed with the seemingly competing demands of the theory and practice of RE teaching (Engebretson 1997, p.19). The lack of understanding among recently assigned teachers about the curriculum principles underlying the RE curriculum echoes the findings described by Marlow et al (1997) on p.91.

The successes or failures of RARE teachers in coping with the pressures of teaching RE appear to be the result of a poor understanding of the theory of RE – an understanding of the pedagogical and theological principles that underlie the Course (Engebretson 1997). The combination of professional naivety and rigidity, coupled with inexperience, leads to teacher frustration and dissatisfaction. As a result, recently assigned RE teachers would quit teaching RE (Engebretson 1997, p.19). It is possible that the experience of teachers adjusting to the demands of RE curriculum implementation parallels the issue raised by Evans (1996) and needs further recognition and scrutiny (pp.83-84).

Other countries also have highlighted the problem of teaching a subject like Religious Education without adequate professional formation for teachers. A survey of RE teachers in 68 Catholic secondary schools in England and Wales found that 37% of teachers who were 'assisting with Religious Education' taught RE as part of their minor teaching load. Many of these assisting teachers lacked the Certificate of Religious

Education (CRE) required to teach RE in a Catholic school. The Certificate was a mandatory professional award undertaken through Diocesan inservices similar to the *Accreditation to Teach RE* inservice component in Western Australia. In addition, among teachers who taught RE as their main specialist area, 33.3% of these teachers had no RE tertiary qualifications and 15.7% had only the CRE. This meant that 49% of these specialist RE teachers did not have a specific RE qualification. A major recommendation was that such a situation needed urgent attention if RE were to remain an essential element of what made a secondary school 'Catholic' (Hanlon 1989, p.154).

Rather than highlight the deficiencies in professional formation, some studies have focused upon identifying the qualities teachers need to become good RE teachers Rymarz (1998). These RE teachers have the ability to dialogue in a 'purposeful conversation' with students, a justified means to a good end Rymarz (1998, p.11). By relating with students in sincere ways, it would be possible for teachers to hear the deeper questions and concerns students bring forward. Good RE teachers were able to answer student questions as they arose and viewed curriculum materials as one among other means (such as, collegial exchange and further professional development) of learning a wide range of topics quickly (Rymarz 1999b). They were RE teachers who were conversant in:

areas such as personal development, history, dogmatic theology and spiritual development. A good RE teacher should be familiar with many of these areas and be able to relate them to the developmental level of students in an engaging and interesting manner.

(Rymarz 1999b, p.48)

This array of knowledge, that recently assigned RE teachers required, was the 'content knowledge' of Religious Education (Rymarz 1999b, p.49). The term referred to how much teachers developed their background knowledge of or close familiarity with concepts and topics they taught in their learning area. Adjunct to familiarity with the content was the importance of teaching experience. Teaching experience was the means by which teachers developed the pedagogical skills of teaching RE in the classroom (Rymarz 1999b). These were skills that teachers trained for initially in their major learning areas as well as the teaching skills that are specific to Religious Education.

These advanced teaching skills assisted the RE teacher to transform the content in ways that met the learning needs of students (Rymarz 1999b, p.49). Rymarz (1999b) applied the term 'pedagogical content knowledge' to refer to this ability of the teacher to make the content relevant to the learning needs of the students. However, there are specialist skills that need to be learned either beforehand or through professional development. In the case of use of Scripture, Hartley (1999) suggests that RE teachers should have tertiary training in the critical study of the Bible. Teachers need to have opportunities to learn the various methodologies used in Biblical interpretation and be able to apply them in the classroom. When teachers do not use Scripture because they have a lack of knowledge and understanding of Scripture, they also have a lack of confidence in using critical method skills (Stead in de Souza 2005, p.66). Therefore, the confidence to use Scripture was dependent upon the personal appreciation of the Word of God of the teacher rather than the provision of Scripture-based materials (Stead 1994). Likewise the importance of using creative arts in RE has come under review, for the arts are a '...critically engaging teaching tool ... [and] ... greatly enhance text-book based curriculum approaches' (Goldberg in de Souza 2005, p.67). Teachers require specialist skills in cognitive and affective aspects of the RE curriculum which are linked inexorably with their personal and professional commitment.

There seems to be a consistency between the findings of these religious educators in eastern Australia and elsewhere and the emerging difficulties reported by Catholic Secondary Principals in WA about the capacity of recently assigned RE teachers to access curriculum materials. As noted by Bezzina et al (1993, p.102), the assumption that a school-based curriculum development model was beneficial to the professional formation of teachers was flawed. Even if given adequate resources and professional support, RE Coordinators and other experienced RE teachers were not able to develop quality school RE programs from Diocesan RE Guidelines (Malone 1987 and 1988). In turn, these school-based programs became inaccessible to less experienced and less qualified RE personnel as part of their classroom teaching. This situation also emerged in Western Australia where PAGRE documents have not been accessible to recently assigned teachers because these teachers did not possess sufficient professional formation. Malone (1988), the CSPAWA (1992), Bezzina et al (1993), Crotty et al

(1995) and the Director of RE in Western Australia (1996b) have recognised that the extent of professional formation among RE teachers is critical for teaching RE at the classroom level. Since 1993, the CEOWA has actively pursued a policy that RE teachers possess a mandatory professional certification to teach RE in a Catholic school. This certification was later called ‘*Accreditation to Teach Religious Education*’ (CEOWA 1997c, pp.10–11). This accreditation also encouraged RE teachers to seek opportunities for further personal religious and spiritual development. Such formative experiences are the focus of the next section: ‘Religious and Spiritual Formation in Character and Witness’.

3.5.2 Religious and Spiritual Formation in Character and Witness

New teachers come to realise that teaching entails character formation, not just for the students but also for themselves (Banner and Cannon 1997). Teaching requires not only imparting knowledge but also strength of character and wisdom. It requires great effort because it places demands for ‘moral and human responsibilities’ on teachers that surpass other vocations (Banner and Cannon 1997, p.6). In 1996, just prior to the implementation of the draft PAREC, the WA Director of Religious Education announced to Principals, RE Coordinators and RE teachers that:

all the strategies in the world will fail unless we keep trying to deepen our personal conversion to Christ. Otherwise we cannot be effective ... [educators] ... to those we are trying to teach. We will be less successful if we do not pray explicitly for our students, especially resistant ones. We need too to place troubles we face before God during every Eucharist. Most of all, we need to be striving as best we can as Christ taught. Personal witness is essential.... Without witness, we are selling our students short.

(Holohan, 1996b, p.9)

Such an announcement is compatible with the thoughts of Pope Paul VI on the value of an active faith witness in Evangelisation for:

Modern man [sic] listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he [sic] does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.

(Paul VI 1975, par.41)

As a result, the qualities of character and witness Catholic educators are to develop in conjunction with their professional formation reflect established precedents from the Congregation of Catholic Education (CCE):

The norms of the local bishop should be faithfully followed in everything that has to do with their own theological and pedagogical formation, and also in the course syllabi; and they should remember that, in this area above all, life witness and an intensely lived spirituality have an especially great importance.

(CCE 1982, par.59)

For religious educators, developing professionally and personally with a deep sense of their Christian spirituality was paramount:

The concrete living out of a vocation as rich and profound as that of the lay Catholic in a school requires an appropriate formation, both on the professional plane and on the religious plane. Most especially, it requires the educator to have a mature spiritual personality, expressed in a profound Christian life....

(CCE 1982, par.60)

The Congregation exhorted lay Catholic educators to possess a vocation with an ‘apostolic intention inspired by faith’ (CCE 1982, par. 24). There is an expectation that the religious formation of the Catholic educator (which especially applies to the recently assigned RE teacher) would resonate with the faith position espoused by the RE program and would be complementary to their professional formation. The Congregation for Catholic Education recognised there was to be a personal integration of authentically human and spiritual qualities:

This means that religious formation must be oriented toward both personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation. “Formation for apostolic mission means a certain human and well-rounded formation, adapted to the natural abilities and circumstances of each person” and requires “in addition to spiritual formation,

... solid doctrinal instruction ... in theology, ethics and philosophy.” Nor can we forget, in the case of an educator, adequate formation in the social teachings of the Church, which are “an integral part of the Christian concept of life”, and help to keep intensely alive the kind of social sensitivity that is needed.
(CCE 1982, par.65)

Among the qualities promoted by the Congregation were:

such things as affection, tact, understanding, serenity of spirit, a balanced judgement, patience in listening to others and prudence in the way they respond and, finally, availability for personal meetings and conversations with students.
(CCE 1988, par.96)

The Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) has not only outlined the traits that characterise the identity of a Catholic educator but also advised that the ‘identity of the lay Catholic educator is, of necessity, an ideal; innumerable obstacles stand in the way of its accomplishment.’ (1982, par.26). The Congregation suggested that the teacher should feel inspired by and aspire to these traits by developing ‘a personal identification with Christ’ (1982, par.26). Such statements may imply that Catholic educators should continue to enrich their Catholic spiritual identity, though it may never be accomplished. The CCE has noted also the disparity in formation in its discussion about the role of lay Catholic educators and would especially apply to the recently assigned lay RE teacher:

The need for an adequate formation is often felt most acutely in religious and spiritual areas; all too frequently, lay Catholics have not had a religious formation that is equal to their general, cultural, and, most especially, professional formation.
(CCE 1982, par.60)

The issues raised by RE teachers about the nature of commitment in teaching Religious Education also compounds this disparity in formation (Crawford and Rossiter 1985). Some of the issues raised have direct bearing about the personal commitment of teachers such as teachers referring to their own beliefs and values about a religious issue. Another issue is whether teachers should avoid teaching aspects of a topic with which they do not agree personally. Should teachers teach RE if their lifestyle or personal circumstances are not reflective of the witness espoused? Lastly, whether the teachers in the RE classroom should exhort students to follow their example of a Christian lifestyle (Crawford and Rossiter 1985, p.53).

A study of the beliefs and values of Catholic high school teachers in the USA identified the asymmetrical nature of personal and professional formation of RE teachers (Benson and Guerra 1985). Benson and Guerra (1985) suggested that because teaching priests, brothers and sisters possessed a strong religious grounding, they were able to pass on the faith tradition. On the other hand, lay teachers did not have this grounding and placed more emphasis on ‘... developing compassion and tolerance for others and experiencing and giving affirmation’ (Benson and Guerra 1985, p.54). There is a danger that lay Catholic teachers (who would include almost all the recently assigned RE teachers), with a limited religious and spiritual formation, may tend to focus on the development of a narrow range of religious formation in their students:

Lay teachers tend to define their role in religious formation somewhat narrowly, with emphasis placed on nurturing compassion and tolerance. ... It would appear that lay teachers are generally working to form good and compassionate students with a commitment to service, but there is some question about the extent to which they communicate an explicitly religious motivation for service.

(Benson and Guerra 1985, p.59)

Furthermore, while it may be attractive for personal and professional reasons that recently assigned RE teachers venture down this path, there is the danger that teachers will remain locked into this approach. Benson and Guerra (1985) make the criticism that such a teaching approach reinforces a secular, humanist philosophy:

there is reason to be cautious. The evidence suggests that, without encouragement, clarification, and support, some teachers’ efforts at religious formation [of students] could move in the direction of a kind of generalized humanism, in which emphasis is placed on social and personal values that are unconnected to the gospel message and to the Church and its teachings.

(Benson and Guerra 1985, pp.55-56)

It would not be surprising if students developed an ‘idiosyncratic faith’ (Fahy 1992) because that is how lay RE teachers seem to choose to present the curriculum materials. Nonetheless, it was quite possible that, with the advent of *Accreditation to Teach RE* in WA (Chapter 2, pp.47-48), such criticism was unfounded. In this study it was possible to

explore whether the professional and religious formation of RARE teachers had some bearing on their teaching approach.

This call for religious and spiritual formation was a focus in the United Kingdom as well, with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) commenting in its Consultation on Religious Education that inservices:

should not just be about classroom practice but should include theological formation and spiritual and ministerial formation of teachers as adult Catholics so that they can engage and motivate pupils and establish the link between lived experience of young people and the content of the RE Curriculum.

(CBCEW 1999, pp.2-3)

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales also gave a word of caution about the differences between acquiring sufficient content knowledge and developing a personal commitment or witness to the Catholic faith: 'Having a proper understanding of Catholic teaching was not ... to be equated with a personal faith commitment' (CBCEW 1999, p.4). Having religious knowledge and demonstrating faith commitment are two aspects of teaching Religious Education. However, they are not the same thing with the latter having more importance.

The Congregation for the Clergy (CC) called the personal religious and spiritual formation that occurs within like-minded adult groups as 'catechesis'. It is a formation that:

includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, it is a 'complete Christian initiation'....
... As it is formation for the Christian life, it comprises but surpasses mere instruction ... it incorporates into the community which lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith. It fulfils, at once, initiatory, educational and instructional functions.

(CC 1997, pars.67-68)

Treston (1991) acknowledged that teaching RE demands a sincere witness to faith that requires a 'metanoia', a conversion to teach like Jesus:

Conversion is not a one event thing, it is ongoing. Our commitment to follow the path of Jesus is a series of starts, jolts, stops and restartings. It is rarely a smooth passage. Sometimes feelings of religious joy fill our beings but most of the time it's dull plodding, holding fast to our trust in God in spite of lots of evidence to the contrary.

(Treston 1991, p.107)

The advice of Treston is to encourage teachers to see their formation as an ongoing pilgrimage over their teaching career. Teachers also believed that their strong personal commitment to educating the students in RE was a key factor in the religious development of their students (English 2000). This belief was despite the difficulties in teaching Religious Education when 'it was not their first area of professional concern' (English 2000, pp.171-172). The demands of personal commitment have led educators to focus on the dimension of spirituality as an important aspect to the personal and professional lives of religious educators (Healy 2005). This dimension is reflected as:

a sense of spiritual growth and transformation through experiences that are generative of new learning and which have the capacity to nurture creativity, enthusiasm and a desire for further learning and growth in the religious educator.

(Healy 2005, p.29)

During 2002 and 2003, the Archdiocese of Melbourne conducted 'school-centred' professional development in Religious Education. Notable changes in the disposition of teachers towards this learning area seemed to occur that resulted in greater creativity, enthusiasm and engagement (Healy 2005, p.33). Healy (2005, pp.31-32) has identified a number of positive and negative contributing factors to these changes in the disposition of teachers and some of these factors are identified in this study (Chapter 8, pp.274-275).

Research seems to reinforce the importance of teachers having an affirmative disposition as indicated by how secondary students view Religious Education (Angelico 1997).

Students appreciated the focus on personal development and human formation and the 'space' teachers gave them to unwind and reflect:

The religious education curriculum is, therefore, considered by young people to be empowering when it facilitates holistic personal development, emphasizes the relevance of religion to their immediate world, builds a sense of community spirit and enhances inter-personal relationships. Most importantly, young people are positive about the religious education curriculum when it enables them to co-produce meaning, and when teachers treat students as equal partners in the exercise of co-production of religious meanings.

(Angelico 1997, p.54)

While the content knowledge and personal faith commitment are important, what also seems to be significant, especially for students, is the way RE teachers engage them in their learning. This engagement or pedagogical content knowledge seems to be a cornerstone to effective teaching in Religious Education. However, some religious educators would confine student engagement to the transmission of knowledge rather than assist students in their search for meaning (Finlay 2005). In this study, it was possible to explore whether RARE teachers perceived student engagement as important to addressing the demands of implementing the PAREC. This perception may not be immediately apparent to these teachers until they have taught the draft RE Units for some time and given the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences.

There is a need for Christian lay professionals to become more ‘theologically reflective practitioners’ (Barns 2002, p.8). However, there are factors that make this disposition difficult to develop. Some examples are the hectic aspects of their working lives; the narrow focus on technical prowess in professional training; the over-application of ethical rules rather than aspirations towards an ethos; and, limited access to theological formation opportunities or overly directed towards private rather than social matters. As a result, professional people do not have a strong connection to how the Gospels may relate to their personal and working lives (Barns 2002, pp.8-9).

There are several pedagogical steps to developing theological reflection (Barns 2002). Some initial steps are reflecting on ‘practice stories’; reflecting on the structural challenges of the profession; and, reflecting on the ethical framework of professional practice. These are followed by articulating the Gospel as a framework for public truth; living a Eucharistic way of life; recovering the vocation of the Kingdom of God; developing Christian casuistry in professional practice; and, fostering Christian

solidarities. Each of these steps has the potential to make a profound impact upon the professional person:

1. *Reflecting on 'practice stories'*: Christian lay professional people need to reflect on the challenges (practice stories) in their working lives and to discern the deeper personal, religious and spiritual meanings underlying these challenges.

2. *Reflecting on the structural challenges of the profession*: They also need to analyse these challenges into the 'bigger' picture. To understand how these challenges fit into the broader challenges faced by the profession and envisage the common good.

3. *Reflecting on the ethical framework of professional practice*: Christian professional people need to go beyond a code of conduct that is simply about following rules. They need to develop a 'mores' or ways of behaving (virtues) that uphold the dignity of all, contest the secular separation of personal religious and spiritual life from working life and place God as a central part of the ethical framework.

4. *Articulating the Gospel as a framework for public truth*: The Gospel is not to be restricted to the private domain but to act as a forum for the salvation of the entire community. There needs to be greater awareness of social responsibilities and concern for those who are poor, marginalised, or powerless.

5. *Living a Eucharistic way of life*: Eucharistic celebration should be a central part of the life of the Christian professional person. It is a way of recalling the sacrifices Jesus has made; to give thanks for the gifts God has given each person. It is an opportunity to respond to God in prayer and community, to draw upon the strength of grace from God to face challenges of the lay vocation and in the workplace.

6. *Recovering the vocation of the Kingdom of God*: Christian professional people need to develop a deeper sense of their Christian vocation that reflects both cardinal human and theological virtues. Such a sense of their Christian vocation not only helps to improve society but also to bring that society into a realisation that God is present among them and that all can achieve the salvation offered through Jesus in the Kingdom of God.

7. *Christian casuistry in professional practice*: To develop integrity in professional practice such that the virtues mentioned above are integral to the way Christian

professionals face challenges and make use of their professional skills for the common good.

8. *Fostering Christian solidarities*: To seek the support and to stand in solidarity with other Christian lay professional people and form Christian professional communities. This may mean giving time and service to Christian associations and agencies that represent the profession or provide services to the poor and needy.

(after Barns 2002, pp.11-17)

In summary, it becomes clear that the experience of teaching may assist the personal and professional capacity of teachers to cope with the demands of curriculum implementation. In addition, attending professional development opportunities are useful as are opportunities for personal religious and spiritual development, especially if these opportunities occur over a sustained period. However, it was the collegial exchange for which recently assigned RE teachers clamoured that helped them to cope and this is the focus of the next section.

3.5.3 Collegial Support and Professional Assistance

One of the best approaches for sustaining and retaining recently assigned teachers, especially novice teachers is mentoring and induction programs (Skilbeck and Connell 2004, p.8). Recently assigned teachers need a comprehensive, local mentoring and induction program (Dinham 1993). A program that is ongoing, personally relevant and requires elements of ‘socialization and professional development’ (Dinham 1993, p.2) rather than one that deals with a one-off ‘this is how it is done’ approach and then leaves the teachers to ‘sink or swim’. For ‘without proper support and assistance, ...[recently assigned]... teachers are likely to experience higher levels of stress and teacher burnout’ (Martin and Baldwin 1996). This ‘proper support’ tends to occur through quality mentoring and induction programs:

A number of studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs raise retention rates for new teachers by improving their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills.

... These young teachers not only stay in the profession at higher rates, but also become competent more quickly than those who must learn by trial and error. Mentoring and induction programs will only produce these benefits if they are well designed and well supported.

(Darling-Hammond 2003, p.11)

The provision of such support may also occur through information and communication technology systems such as video conferencing (Dawson 2002, p.9), especially for recently assigned teachers in remote areas.

Many recently assigned RE teachers are young teachers who need personal and professional support because they are professionally disadvantaged (p.60 on 'out-of-field' teachers) and face personal character challenges (p.99). The sorts of experiences they may engage in are such things as:

study groups in which teachers are engaged on regular, structured and collaborative interactions around topics identified by the group; coaching or mentoring arrangements, where teachers work one-on-one with an equally or more experienced teacher; networks, which link teachers or groups, either in person or electronically, to explore and discuss topics of interest, pursue common goals, share information and address common concerns; and immersion in enquiry, in which teachers engage in the kinds of learning that they are expected to practise with their students.

Boyle et al (2004, pp.47-48)

These experiences were to provide support that was concrete and non-threatening, especially those experiences that allowed for modeling and discussion with colleagues (Appleton and Kindt 1999; Wragg et al 2000; Boyle et al 2004, p.64).

The quality of collegiality recently assigned teachers experience in their working environment assists them in developing greater self-confidence or efficacy (Huberman 1988). Recently assigned teachers not only yearn to share ideas and seek advice from their peers but also to have someone to act as a mentor for them. Mentoring allows recently appointed teachers to clarify their principles of teaching and develop greater confidence in sharing their ideas. Clarke (2004) discerns three types of mentoring: formal mentoring, informal mentoring and co-mentoring. According to Clarke (2004, p.126), formal mentoring refers to a structured master and apprentice relationship,

informal mentoring to a relaxed sage and disciple relationship, and co-mentoring to a relationship of equality and reciprocity. Teachers seem to prefer a co-mentoring situation that takes place onsite at school.

This onsite mentoring provides teachers with a colleague who knows them and their classroom situation (Baptiste and Sheerer 1997, p.265). The provision of induction programs and onsite mentoring for 'new, probationary teachers' are now common practices in many overseas educational systems (Dawson 2002, p.3). Unfortunately, an onsite-mentoring program in any learning area is not a strong feature of Australian schools (Appleton and Kindt 1999, p.9). English (2000) has examined the contradiction between the importance of RE as a learning area in Canadian Catholic schools and the lack of a structured RE department in those schools. It became apparent in this study that while RARE teachers called for such support, there were very limited opportunities for this support to occur (Chapter 6, pp.230-231).

To support recently appointed teachers, a team approach may be conducive where a supportive environment can develop and these teachers can be socialised into a professional culture:

The experienced teacher would take the lead in instructional planning, lesson design and implementation, and other areas of substantive decision-making. Volunteer or paid classroom aides or periodic substitute coverage could allow the teachers involved the opportunity to observe one another in action. The [recently appointed] teacher would follow the lead of the experienced, successful teacher.

(Evans 1999, p.35)

The notion of mentoring is very much in keeping with the philosophy of Catholic education. Teachers are encouraged to have close collegial relationships and to 'work together as a team' (CCE 1982, par.34). Regardless of whether a team approach is used, recently appointed teachers need the wisdom of veteran teachers and to observe these teachers in action so that they may learn new skills in teaching and analysing their own circumstances (Stansbury 2001, pars.16-17). Furthermore, new teachers were able to cope better with the demands of teaching when they could work collaboratively with others and reduce their feelings of 'professional isolation' (Williams 2003, p.217).

When teachers are made to gather and provide each other with assistance, there is the danger that collegiality becomes contrived (Hargreaves 1994). Instead a more positive approach to creating collaborative structures needs to be put into place to minimise the situation of professional isolation and encourage affirming relationships between staff members (Ávila De Lima 2003, p.197). As Manuel exhorts (her emphasis):

Importantly, we need to *hear the voices of new teachers* far more consistently than we presently do. This can be addressed through the infrastructures of individual schools and the actions of senior teachers within these schools. Providing meaningful contexts, on a regular basis, for beginning teachers to connect with other staff, to express concerns, and to contribute ideas and perspectives would go some way towards offsetting the isolation and professional disconnectedness that can lead to attrition. Professional teaching associations are also critical in effective 'induction' of new teachers.

(2003, p.36)

Virgilio and Virgilio (1984) and Wallace and Braunger (1998) have commended the role of experienced colleagues, especially the Principal, in supporting and taking an active interest in the responses of teachers during the implementation of a new curriculum. The degree to which recently appointed teachers perceive the support they get from Principals and peers relates to their feelings of security and surety in teaching (Marlow et al 1997). A number of studies have made proposals about supporting recently assigned teachers:

Principals can try to avoid assigning beginners the most challenging students, combination classes in elementary schools, or the schedule requiring many separate preparations in secondary schools. They can also make sure that beginners aren't overloaded with extracurricular activities and committee assignments. . . .

Time is one of the most precious resources in a school today. There are many competing demands on teachers' time. Principals have control over some of these demands. They also can provide access to resources (substitutes, scheduling) that can judiciously carve out time for teachers during the school day.

(Stansbury 2001)

Such a mentoring program was a useful way to nurture the professional formation of recently assigned RE teachers (English 1999). Through such a program, recently

assigned teachers consulted and worked collaboratively with their more experienced colleagues. As a result, recently assigned RE teachers had available to them a source of 'ongoing guidance and direction' (English 1999, p.40). They had a mentor, a master of the craft who dialogued, guided and supported them through their first years of teaching RE. Recently assigned teachers needed a mentor who provided good counsel and helped them to reflect upon the challenges to their personal character and integrity. Such counsel needed to be a friendly dialogue rather than a formalised appraisal on the performance of recently assigned RE teachers. While a peer-to-peer or 'buddy system' helped at a professional level, recently assigned RE teachers wanted to feel they belonged to a community of RE colleagues who eventually referred to them as friends (Szacsvey 1992). The creation of such schemes focused on training mentors in the practice of using adult education principles known as andragogy (Szacsvey 1992). Mentoring became a part of the responsibilities of experienced RE teachers. It is what Leavey, Hetheron, Britt and O'Neill (1992) referred to as 'sponsoring'. Yet, it is more than educational and instructional; it is a formative process in nurturing and deepening Christian spirituality within a faith community. It is to know, praise and love God as Jesus taught through prayer, liturgy, lifestyle and witness.

3.5.4 Summary: The Value of Formative Experiences

The formative experience of recently assigned teachers plays a significant part in how they cope with the demands of implementing an unfamiliar curriculum. This group of teachers finds these demands to be more intensive than the daily pressures they experience in other classes. In order to manage their concerns and to alleviate the stresses, recently assigned teachers rely on the incidental formation or wisdom they receive through teaching the subject; attending professional development opportunities in content and method; and, perhaps most importantly of all, seeking collegial support at a personal and at a professional level. As they gain further teaching experience, their concerns move towards the effect their teaching has on the students. The formation of these teachers begins to focus more upon their own capacity to act as role models to students as well as being competent teachers. These changes in professional and personal spiritual formation contribute greatly towards enhancing or diminishing the

efficacy and disposition of teachers to continue teaching the learning area. In the case of RARE teachers, the experience of teaching RE includes meeting the expectation of providing a committed faith witness that resonates with the underlying theological principles of the curriculum. While the ability to reflect upon their teaching practice is helpful, the ability to become contemplative, theologically speaking, is important also. In similar fashion, the capacity of RARE teachers to manage these expectations and skills is dependent upon the quality of their spiritual and religious formation. RARE teachers not only require professional assistance but also the example and guidance of experienced, well balanced, and religiously committed mentors. Such support should ideally be available at the school over the duration of becoming familiar and confident with implementing the RE curriculum (Buchanan 2006, pp.22-24).

3.6 Literature Review and the Research Question

What emerges from the literature review is that recently assigned teachers facing the prospect of teaching a learning area in which they are unfamiliar, inexperienced, and inadequately trained is a significant problem. How these teachers cope with the perceived exigencies of implementing the curriculum plays an important role in developing their competence in the learning area and sustaining their levels of efficacy. Therefore, if inexperienced, inexpert RE teachers are facing difficulties in implementing the new RE curriculum, then this situation parallels the plight of recently assigned teachers. Just as there is a need to study the responses of individual teachers who find they are assigned to an unfamiliar learning area (p.77), there is a need to explore the responses of RARE teachers to the implementation of the Perth Archdiocesan RE Course (PAREC) in Catholic secondary schools. The literature suggests that the research question is very much in keeping with contributing new knowledge to an area of curriculum change and implementation, especially within Religious Education:

What are the perceptions of recently assigned secondary RE teachers about the demands of implementing the draft Perth Archdiocesan Religious Education Course?

As a result, this review highlights a number of issues. Firstly, who are recently assigned RE (RARE) teachers and what characterises their professional backgrounds? Secondly,

how can the concerns and responses of RARE teachers to the three dimensions of curriculum implementation proposed by Fullan (2001) provide further clarity about the success of the draft RE curriculum? Thirdly, to what extent do the personal, professional, and religious formative experiences of these teachers contribute to their competence and confidence in teaching Religious Education?

Therefore, in this study an exploration of such a scenario for RARE teachers teaching the PAREC was undertaken. A professional profile of these teachers required the identification of this group of teachers through the development of a database. Using dimensions of the implementation process proposed by Fullan (2001), namely, curriculum materials, teaching approaches, and beliefs, this study explored how recently assigned RE teachers perceived their implementation of the PAREC documents as part of their classroom teaching. As a part of the process of implementation, the curriculum writers intended that the PAREC documents would be accessible to recently assigned RE teachers and would contribute towards their professional development (Chapter 2, p.50). The design of these Units was to alleviate, in part, the pressures these teachers faced at the classroom level of curriculum implementation. The implication is that implementing the PAREC influenced the subjective reality of teachers, including the perception of the capacity of PAREC to meet their needs and help to improve the quality of their teaching practice in Religious Education. Alternatively, if the implementation of the Course did not influence the subjective realities or perceptions of recently assigned RE teachers, then the curriculum innovation would be a waste of educational, human, and professional resources within the Catholic education system in Western Australia. It is the task of this study to find out the extent to which recently assigned RE teachers possess a shared knowledge or understandings about their teaching of the draft PAREC.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature concerning the personal and professional responses of recently assigned teachers to curriculum implementation, particularly recently assigned RE teachers. The review developed around three significant themes. The first theme defined the professional characteristics of recently assigned teachers and described the circumstances with which they feel they have to contend. The second

theme described the contribution of curriculum implementation models with regard to the concerns teachers express, especially recently assigned teachers. This theme focused, in particular, on how teachers manage dealing with self, task and impact concerns at a school level using instructional resources and teaching approaches coupled with an understanding of the underlying curriculum principles. As teachers adjust to the curriculum demands, they increasingly turn their attention towards developing an altruistic professional capacity. The third theme explored the role of formative experience in developing the capacity of recently assigned teachers to face the challenges of curriculum implementation and sustaining their commitment towards teaching a learning area in which they may feel uncomfortable in teaching. An integral part of this formation is the professional assistance and mentoring recently assigned teachers receive over an extended period as they adjust to the curriculum exigencies. For RARE teachers, the formative experience also includes personal spiritual and religious formation. Lastly, the review lends itself to the value of researching how RARE teachers implement the draft PAREC as articulated in the research question:

What are the perceptions of recently assigned secondary RE teachers about the demands of implementing the draft Perth Archdiocesan Religious Education Course?

This study explored how recently assigned RE teachers respond personally and professionally to the demands of implementing the draft RE Units. Are the resources readily accessible to these teachers? How do recently assigned RE teachers translate the teaching approach advocated in the Units into their classroom teaching? What understanding of the pedagogical and theological principles underlying the Units do these teachers possess? What are the personal and professional challenges recently assigned RE teachers face in teaching the draft RE Units to their students? These were some of the possible data collection questions for this study to investigate as part of the key research question. In the next chapter, the design of the research describes the manner of exploring the research question and its subsidiary questions.