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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 FIVE

SURVEY FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The role of the survey was to establish a baseline and context for the qualitative aspects of the longitudinal study. This chapter begins by describing the background to the survey in terms of the number of schools and teachers involved as well as their demographic and professional backgrounds. Next, the survey responses of the teachers regarding the use of instructional resources are discussed. The responses of the teachers to the teaching approach and underlying principles sections in the survey are then addressed. An overview of the findings is presented next and possible lines of inquiry are discussed in preparation for the next phase of the research project. When statistical tests of inference are undertaken, only significant effects are reported. These survey findings establish a database of potential interviewees. From this database, the selection of a purposive sample of interviewees and their professional characteristics as recently assigned RE (RARE) teachers was possible.

5.2 Background to the Teachers in the Survey

Letters were sent to all 38 Principals of Catholic secondary schools from the Archdiocese of Perth and the Dioceses of Bunbury and Geraldton. In response, 34 (89%) Principals agreed to have RE Coordinators and recently assigned RE teachers in their schools involved in the survey. RE Coordinators in these schools were also invited to participate in the study and all agreed to be involved. They were willing to approach recently assigned RE teachers about completing a survey. Table 5.1 (p.157) and Table 5.2 (p.157) summarise the background context of the surveys. Of the 168 surveys sent out to schools to teachers in their second to sixth year of teaching RE, 122 (73%) were sent back which is a high rate of return (as discussed in Chapter 4, p.126). Based on the *Accreditation to Teach RE Data (1997a)* from the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia (CEOWA), this return of 122 surveys represented about half of the RE teachers in the 0-5 years of teaching experience category (Table 4.1, p.141). Table 5.2 (p.157) shows that most returns came from the

metropolitan area of the Archdiocese of Perth (73%) as this region has the most Catholic secondary schools. There was some variation in the response rate across the three dioceses. The Diocese of Bunbury had the lowest return rate (70%) and the Diocese of Geraldton had the highest (91%).

Table 5.1 Surveys sent to Schools in the Archdiocese of Perth and the Dioceses of Bunbury and Geraldton

Archdioceses and Dioceses	Surveys sent
Archdiocese of Perth	
Metropolitan Area	125 (74%)
Outside Metropolitan Area	12 (7%)
Diocese of Bunbury	20 (12%)
Diocese of Geraldton	11 (7%)
Total Sent	168 (100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

Table 5.2 Surveys returned from Schools in the Archdiocese of Perth and the Dioceses of Bunbury and Geraldton

Archdioceses and Dioceses	Surveys returned	Response Rate¹
Archdiocese of Perth		
Metropolitan Area	89 (73%)	71%
Outside Metropolitan Area	9 (7%)	75%
Diocese of Bunbury	14 (11%)	70%
Diocese of Geraldton	10 (8%)	91%
Total Returned	122 (100%)	73%

Note:

1. Response Rate calculated on the percentage of surveys returned divided by surveys sent. Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

5.2.1 Demographics of the RE teachers

Of the 122 survey returns, the majority (69%) came from female lay teachers (Figure 5.1). There was only one person from a religious congregation teaching RE involved in the survey. The singular presence of a religious congregation teacher reflects the decline of religious congregation teaching involvement in Catholic schools and the rise in the employment of lay staff (Figure 2.2, p.44). The ratio of male to female teachers in the survey was 1:3 whereas the ratio nationally for secondary school teachers and, coincidentally, for Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia was 1:1.2 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003 and Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2003, p.33). The prevalence of female lay teachers was noted but not investigated further as it was considered beyond the scope of this study. While gender perceptions may be a factor in curriculum implementation, the narrow variability in responses from the survey on the three dimensions of curriculum implementation (Table 5.11, p.177; Table 5.19, p.186 and Table 5.31, p.197) seemed to indicate that perceptions were homogeneous (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh 2006, p.136). Nonetheless, one of the recommendations for further research (Chapter 9, p.345) was to explore further this situation regarding gender balance and its impact on the teaching of Religious Education.

Figure 5.1 Distribution of Teachers by Gender and Vocation

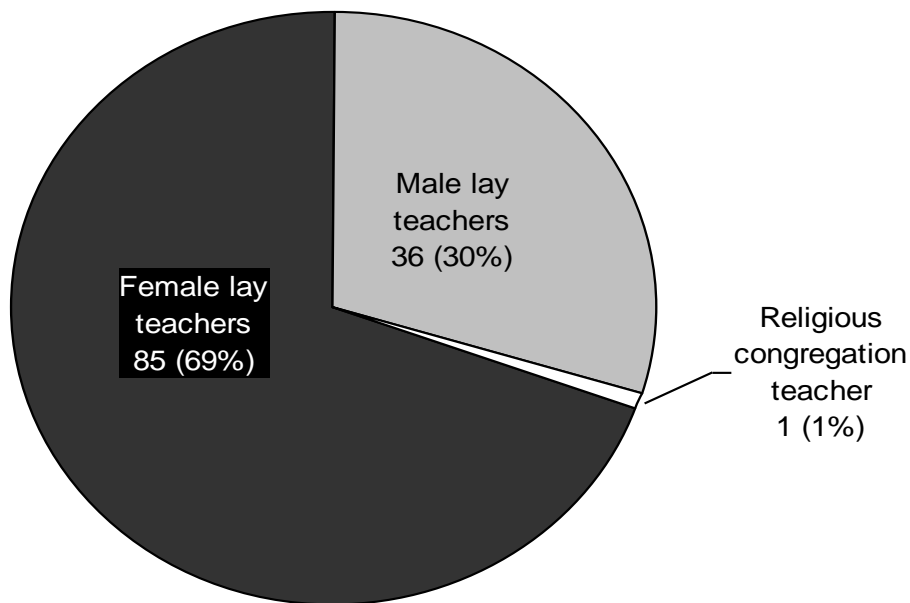


Figure 5.2 indicates that recently assigned RE teachers tended to be drawn from age groups with most respondents (66%), that is, between 21-30 years of age. There was little difference in the male to female teacher ratio across the age groups (Figure 5.3, p.160). Very few (6%) recently assigned RE teachers taught RE as their main subject area (Figure 5.4, p.160). Rather, they were teachers trained within a specific subject area who also taught Religious Education. The largest group of recently assigned RE teachers comprised of teachers who mostly taught English (26%) followed by teachers of Society and Environment (14%), Technology and Enterprise (13%), Science (11%), Health and Physical Education (9%), the Arts (7%), Maths (7%), Religious Education (6%) and Languages Other Than English or LOTE (3%). As a comparison of professional backgrounds, teachers in the learning areas of the Arts, English, LOTE, Religious Education, and, Society and Environment were grouped under a humanities background. Maths, Science, Health and Physical Education, Technology and Enterprise teachers were grouped under a science background. There were more teachers with a humanities background (57%) than teachers with a science background (39%) as indicated in Figure 5.5 (p.161).

Figure 5.2 Distribution of Teachers across Three Age Groups

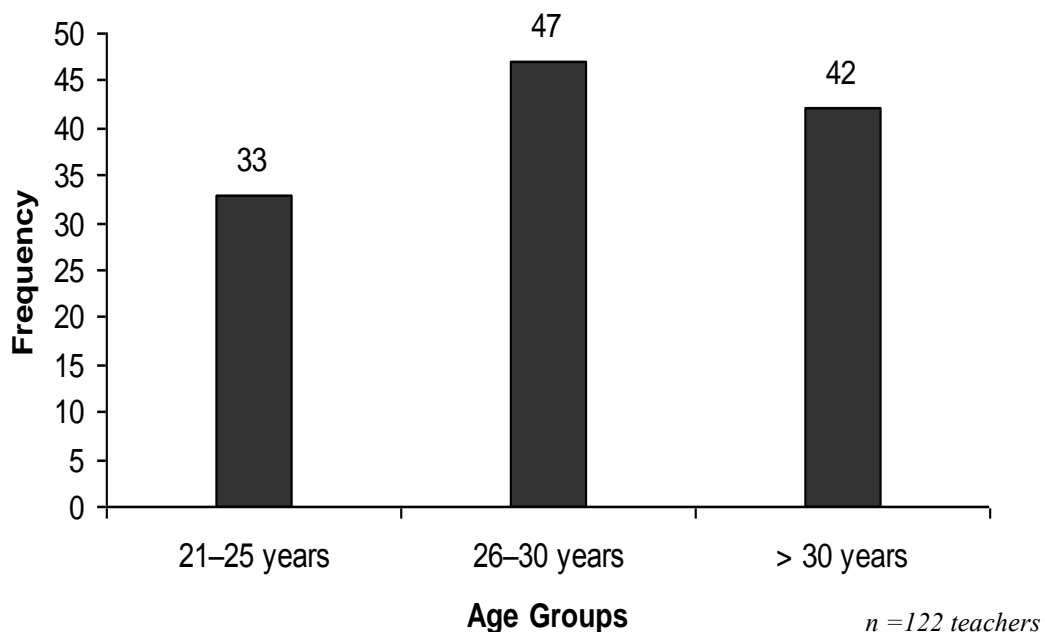


Figure 5.3 Percentage Distribution of Teachers by Age Group and Gender

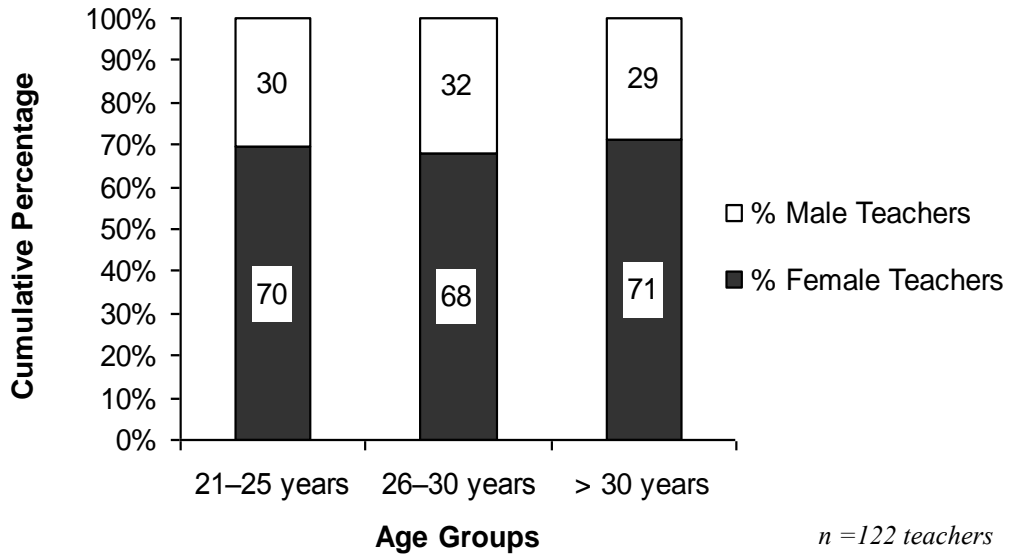


Figure 5.4 Percentage Distribution of Teachers by Major Teaching Area

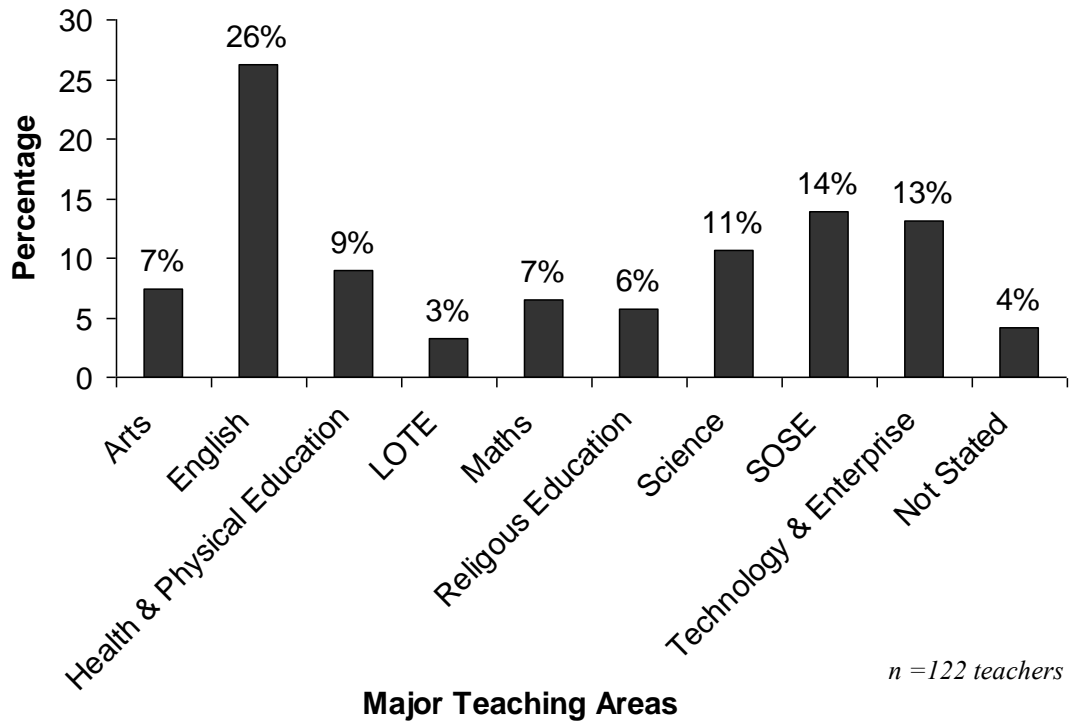
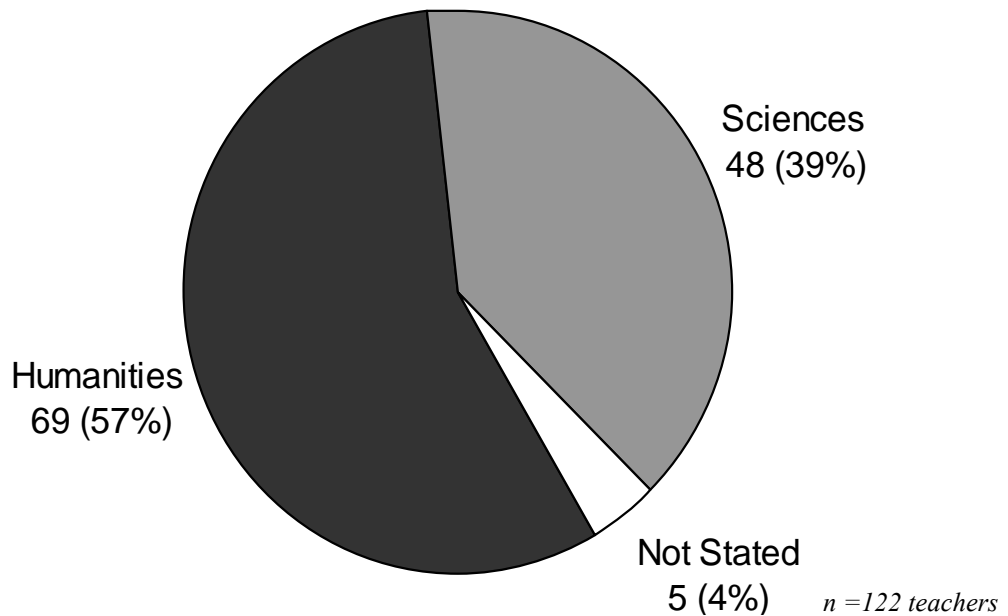


Figure 5.5 Distribution of Teachers by Generic Disciplines



5.2.2 Tertiary Qualifications

The majority of recently assigned RE teachers (64%) in the survey graduated in their first tertiary qualification between 1991 and 1998 and 32% graduated from 1958 to 1990 (Table 5.3, p.162). Furthermore, 55% of teachers graduated in their second qualification between 1991 and 1998. The data indicate that more than likely teachers had recently graduated and had two qualifications. Very few teachers (9%) had more than two qualifications (Table 5.4, p.163). These teachers (89%) graduated mostly from tertiary institutions in Western Australia (Table 5.4, p.163): 35% from Edith Cowan University, 18% from the University of Western Australia, 18% from Curtin University, 11% from the University of Notre Dame Australia and 8% from Murdoch University. It should be noted that the University of Notre Dame Australia only began its undergraduate program in 1994, so the percentage of teachers graduating would be lower than from the other tertiary institutions.

Table 5.3 Year of Graduation for First and Second Tertiary Qualifications among recently assigned RE teachers

Year of Graduation	First Degree Number of teachers (%)		Second Degree Number of teachers (%)	
1958-1960	2	(2%)	0	(0%)
1961-1965	0	(0%)	1	(1%)
1966-1970	3	(2%)	0	(0%)
1971-1975	5	(4%)	4	(3%)
1976-1980	5	(4%)	3	(3%)
1981-1985	9	(7%)	6	(5%)
1986-1990	21	(17%)	8	(7%)
1991-1995	65	(52%)	55	(45%)
1996-1998	10	(8%)	12	(10%)
No year stated	2	(2%)	33	(27%)
Total	122	(100%)	122	(100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

Many recently assigned RE teachers (73%) had a second degree (Table 5.3), usually a Graduate Diploma of Education to enable a teaching position. Most of these teachers (67%) completed their second degree between 1991 and 1998 (Table 5.3). They had attended predominantly WA tertiary institutions: 25% from Edith Cowan University, 18% from the University of Notre Dame Australia, 13% from the University of Western Australia, 6% from Curtin University and 4% from Murdoch University (Table 5.4, p.163). It should be noted that UNDA was established in 1992 with the College of Education catering for post-graduate students; the focus on pre-service teacher training began in 1994 and so the proportions for first degree graduation are low while the proportion for second degrees are greater.

Table 5.4 Tertiary institutions attended by recently assigned RE teachers

Tertiary Institution	First Degree completed	Second Degree Completed	More than 2 degrees completed
Curtin University	29 (24%)	7 (6%)	3 (2%)
Edith Cowan University	44 (36%)	30 (25%)	3 (2%)
Murdoch University	9 (7%)	5 (4%)	3 (2%)
University of Notre Dame Australia	1 (1%)	22 (18%)	2 (2%)
University of Western Australia	24 (20%)	16 (13%)	0 (0%)
Another Australian Tertiary Institution	11 (9%)	7 (6%)	1 (1%)
Overseas Tertiary Institution	3 (2%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
No institution stated	1 (1%)	33 (27%)	110 (90%)
Total (%)	122 (100%)	122 (100%)	122 (100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

Table 5.5 Tertiary qualifications of recently assigned RE teachers

Type of Degree	First Degree completed	Second Degree completed	More than 2 Degrees completed
Arts (Undergraduate)	47 (39%)	2 (2%)	3 (2%)
Arts (Postgraduate)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Education (Undergraduate)	46 (38%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)
Education (Postgraduate)	0 (0%)	87 (71%)	6 (5%)
Science (Undergraduate)	17 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Science (Postgraduate)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
Other (Undergraduate)	11 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other (Postgraduate)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
No degree or no degree stated	1 (1%)	32 (26%)	109 (89%)
Total	122 (100%)	122 (100%)	122 (100%)

Note:

- *Undergraduate refers to Associate Diplomas, Diplomas and Bachelor degrees eg. Bachelor of Education. Postgraduate refers to Graduate Diploma, Masters and Doctorate degrees eg. Masters of Education.*
- *Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.*

For their first degree completed, 39% of these teachers held an undergraduate qualification in Arts, 38% in Education, 14% in Science and 9% in another discipline. For their second degree, the majority of teachers (71%) held a postgraduate qualification in Education such as a Graduate Diploma in Education (Table 5.5). Only 10% of teachers had completed more than two degrees at a postgraduate level (Table 5.5).

Summary: Professional Qualifications of Recently Assigned RE Teachers

The teachers in the survey tended to be a mixture of recent graduates and experienced teachers – 60% of them graduated in their first degree between 1991 and 1998 and 55% in their second degree between 1991 and 1998 (Table 5.3, p.162). While they may have limited experience in teaching RE, in their own major learning areas their teaching experience varies from some to substantial. These recently assigned teachers have undertaken teacher training with 38% completing an undergraduate education degree as their first degree and 71% completing an undergraduate education degree as their second degree (Table 5.5, p.164). The teacher training they received was mainly from tertiary institutions in Western Australia (89%). This data would imply that recently assigned RE teachers, as they are professionally qualified and trained locally, should be familiar with and confident in catering for the educational and cultural backgrounds of students in WA secondary schools.

5.2.3 Religious Education Qualifications

In the survey, a distinction was made between the teaching qualifications of recently assigned RE teachers and their background to teach Religious Education. Two aspects of RE qualifications were identified: tertiary studies in RE and completion of requirements to fulfil *Accreditation to Teach Religious Education*.

Tertiary Studies in Religious Education

Recently assigned teachers were asked in the survey about their tertiary studies in Religious Education (Table 5.6, p.166). It should be noted that the item ‘First Degree’ referred to whether it was the first degree in RE achieved by a respondent not their first degree overall. Similarly, the item ‘Second Degree’ means it was the second RE degree they had completed. The majority of teachers (77%) responded that they did not have a tertiary qualification in RE, 19% stated that it was incorporated within their undergraduate (Education) degree and 2% recorded that it was a part of their postgraduate degree in Education. As many teachers indicated they did not have a tertiary qualification in RE, the ‘Not Stated’ items in Table 5.7 (p.166) and Table 5.8 (p.167) also were scored high.

Table 5.6 Tertiary studies in Religious Education for recently assigned RE teachers

Type of Degree	First Degree completed	Second Degree completed
Arts		
Undergraduate	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
Postgraduate	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Education		
Undergraduate	23 (19%)	1 (1%)
Postgraduate	3 ¹ (2%)	0 (0%)
No degree stated	94 (77%)	121 (99%)
Total	122 (100%)	122 (100%)

Note:

1. Of the 3 teachers who had completed tertiary studies in RE as part of a postgraduate degree in Education, 2 had completed a Masters of Religious Education.

Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

Table 5.7 Tertiary institutions attended by recently assigned RE teachers to complete studies in Religious Education

Tertiary Institution	First Degree completed	Second Degree completed
Edith Cowan University via CIWA¹	5 (4%)	0 (0%)
University of Notre Dame Australia	22 (18%)	2 (2%)
Overseas Tertiary Institution	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Non-attendance or not stated	94 (77%)	120 (98%)
Total	122 (100%)	122 (100%)

Note:

1. CIWA is the Catholic Institute of Western Australia.

Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

Recently assigned teachers (77%) also indicated that they either did not attend a tertiary institution or had not stated that they had attended one to complete studies specifically in Religious Education (Table 5.8, p.167). Those teachers who had graduated with tertiary RE qualifications came from the University of Notre Dame Australia (18%), Edith Cowan University (4%) through the Catholic Institute of Western Australia (CIWA), or from an Overseas Tertiary Institution (1%). Recently assigned teachers were asked also to indicate when they had completed their tertiary studies in Religious Education (Table 5.8, p.167). Teachers with tertiary

qualifications in RE stated they had graduated between 1992 and 1998 with most teachers having graduated between 1994 and 1996.

Table 5.8 Time of First Degree Graduation with tertiary studies in Religious Education

Year of Graduation	Number of Teachers (%)	
1992	2	(2%)
1993	1	(1%)
1994	10	(8%)
1995	4	(3%)
1996	5	(4%)
1997	2	(2%)
1998	1	(1%)
Not stated	97	(79%)
Total	122	(100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

Mandatory Professional Requirements – Accreditation to Teach Religious Education

The survey asked teachers about their progress towards *Accreditation to Teach RE* (the mandatory professional requirement to teach RE in Catholic schools in Western Australia). It should be noted that the study component of this Accreditation could be undertaken during and after initial teacher training while the inservice component could only be undertaken with CEOWA-trained facilitators once a teacher was employed to teach RE (CEOWA 1997b). The inservice component was offered to recently assigned RE teachers at their local school after school hours or at the Perth or regional offices of the Catholic Education Office with the proviso of teacher replacement.

Table 5.9 (p.168) indicates that 55% of teachers in the returned surveys stated they had completed the study component of *Accreditation to Teach RE*, 38% stated they were in the process of completing it and 7% had stated they had not begun the study component. Concerning the inservice component of *Accreditation to Teach RE*, 76% stated they had completed this component, 9% were in the process of completing it, and 13% stated they had not begun the inservice component. This data would suggest that over half of the recently assigned RE teachers surveyed had fully completed

Accreditation to Teach RE. In comparison, the CEOWA data on *Accreditation to Teach RE* among a similar grouping of teachers (including teachers in their first year of teaching RE) showed that, in 1997, 37% of teachers had completed *Accreditation to Teach RE* (Table 4.1, p.141).

Table 5.9 Progress towards Accreditation to Teach RE

Progress	Study component (%)		Inservice component (%)	
Not begun	9	(7%)	16	(13%)
In progress	46	(38%)	11	(9%)
Completed	67	(55%)	93	(76%)
Not stated	0	(0%)	2	(2%)
Total	122	(100%)	122	(100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

One concern raised in the Literature Review (Chapter 3, pp.61-62) was that recently assigned teachers with minimal expertise were sent to remote or disadvantaged schools. Figure 5.6 (p.169) and Figure 5.7 (p.169) present the proportion of teachers who have progressed towards completing their *Accreditation to Teach RE* as part of the mandatory professional requirements set down by the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA). The graphs indicate that this concern was unfounded and that the Archdiocese of Perth (Metropolitan Area) has a lower proportion of recently assigned RE teachers with Accreditation when compared to outer metropolitan area and other dioceses.

Figure 5.6 Study Component of Accreditation to Teach RE by Region

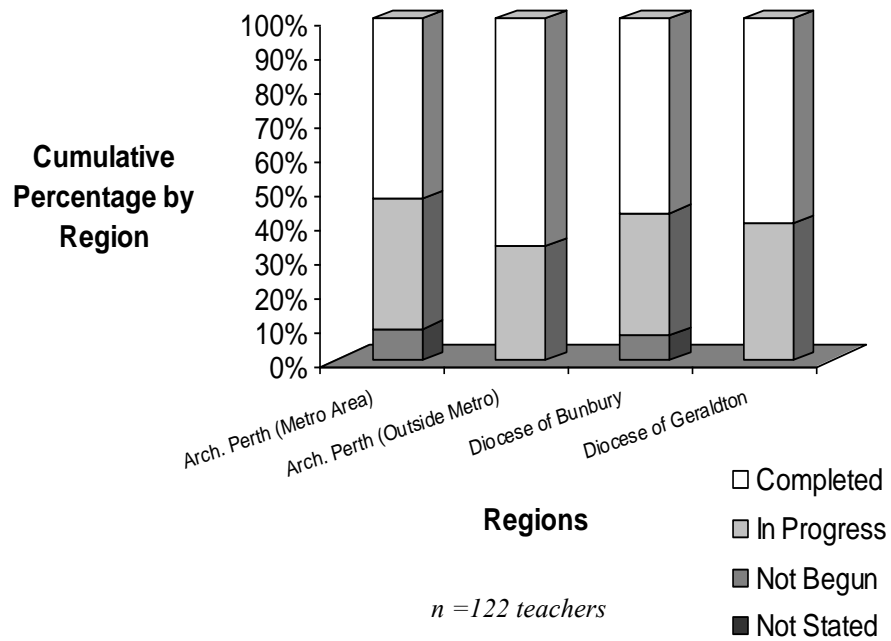
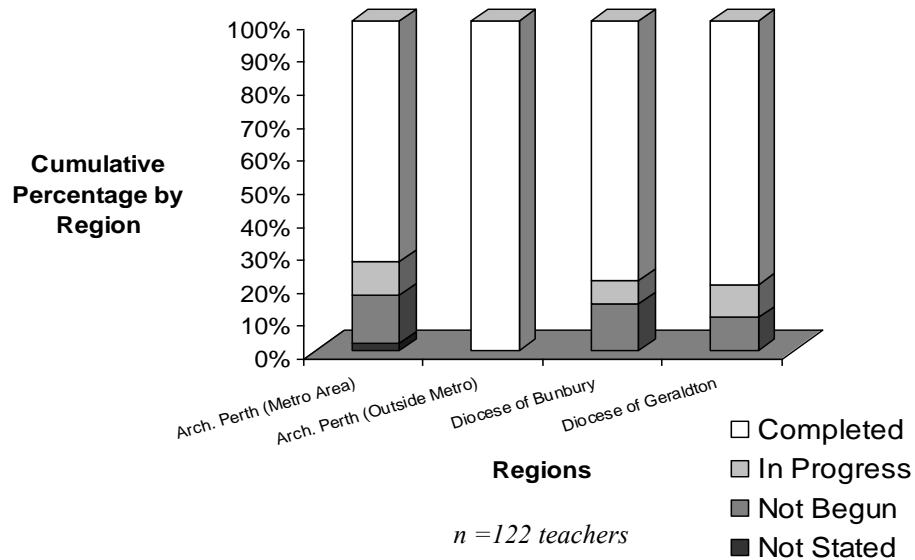


Figure 5.7 Inservice Component of Accreditation to Teach RE by Region



Responses to Open-ended Question on Professional Background

Recently assigned RE teachers were asked what they considered to be of importance in acquiring sufficient professional background to teach RE confidently. The majority (51%) of 178 comments recommended that gaining professional qualifications in RE was important. Of this number, 30% advised that tertiary qualifications, or its equivalent through CEOWA inservice courses, be gained as early as possible. These studies were to be done during either teacher training or the first years of teaching. Furthermore, 14% recommended the need to acquire *Accreditation to Teach RE* as a means of teaching RE confidently. The responses suggested that just over half of the recently assigned RE teachers recognised the professional status of Religious Education as a learning area. However, overall the respondents saw themselves as professionally trained teachers of another major learning area and that teaching RE was an extra responsibility.

In addition to this majority (51%) who recommended gaining professional qualifications in RE, 9% of comments suggested that, as a minimum, recently assigned RE teachers should be familiar with the background materials in the Units and 8% recommended the need to discuss RE teaching issues with other RE teachers or experienced Religious Educators. The ‘on-the-job’ training attitude of the recently assigned RE teachers implied that the demands of implementing the draft RE Units were adequately catered for as the teachers developed their professional experience by studying, attending courses, talking with other RE teachers and through the teaching experience itself. In contrast, some respondents felt that there were other demands that were not addressed sufficiently by ongoing professional formation. Other issues were reported also by teachers such as: 13% of comments advised that a strong faith witness was important to teaching RE confidently; and, 4% felt that prior tertiary study or *Accreditation to Teach RE* were of little use.

Summary: Religious Education Qualifications of Recently Assigned RE Teachers

Most recently assigned RE teachers had limited prior training in Religious Education. However, almost a quarter (23%) had graduated with academic studies in RE from a tertiary institution (Table 5.7, p.166). In most cases (76%), this group of teachers consisted of recent graduates from these institutions between 1994 and 1996 (Table 5.8, p. 167). The implication here is that most recently assigned RE teachers

are not professionally prepared to teach Religious Education prior to employment in a Catholic school. Nonetheless, recently assigned RE teachers appeared to be prepared to complete the mandatory professional requirements of *Accreditation to Teach RE* once they were employed in a Catholic school. Table 5.9 (p.168) indicates that 55% of these surveyed teachers had completed the study component and 38% were in the process of doing so. Furthermore, 76% stated that they had completed the inservice component provided by the CEOWA and 9% were in the process of doing so. This ongoing training would suggest that the majority of recently assigned RE teachers possess the minimal professional competence to teach Religious Education. The teachers themselves highlighted the significance of this ‘on-the-job’ training in the responses to the open-ended question in the survey and are discussed in the next section.

5.2.4 RE Teaching Experience

Teachers were asked about their years of teaching experience specifically in Religious Education. The target population for this survey was teachers in their second to sixth year of RE teaching experience. Of the teachers surveyed, 31% stated they were in the second year of teaching RE, 28% in their third year, 21% in their fourth year, 11% in their fifth year and 10% in their sixth year. These statistics suggested that most (80%) teachers had between one and four years of teaching experience in Religious Education. However, this teaching experience did not come in the form of a full RE teaching load. Of the teachers surveyed, 62% stated that teaching RE represented less than a quarter of their class contact time as a proportion of their teaching load. The remainder indicated their teaching loads as follows: 26% with RE representing between a quarter to a half of their teaching load; 5% with RE representing more than half to three quarters of their teaching load and 6% with RE representing more than three quarters of their teaching load.

Table 5.10 (p.172) shows the distribution of RE classes among recently assigned RE teachers. Respondents were asked to indicate how many classes they taught at each Year level. The distribution of scores indicated that recently assigned RE teachers taught a combination of Year levels. Table 5.10 (p.172) shows that teachers usually taught one class, mostly in lower secondary (34% of teachers in Year 8; 30% in Year 9 and 30% in Year 10) but tended to teach across more than one Year level.

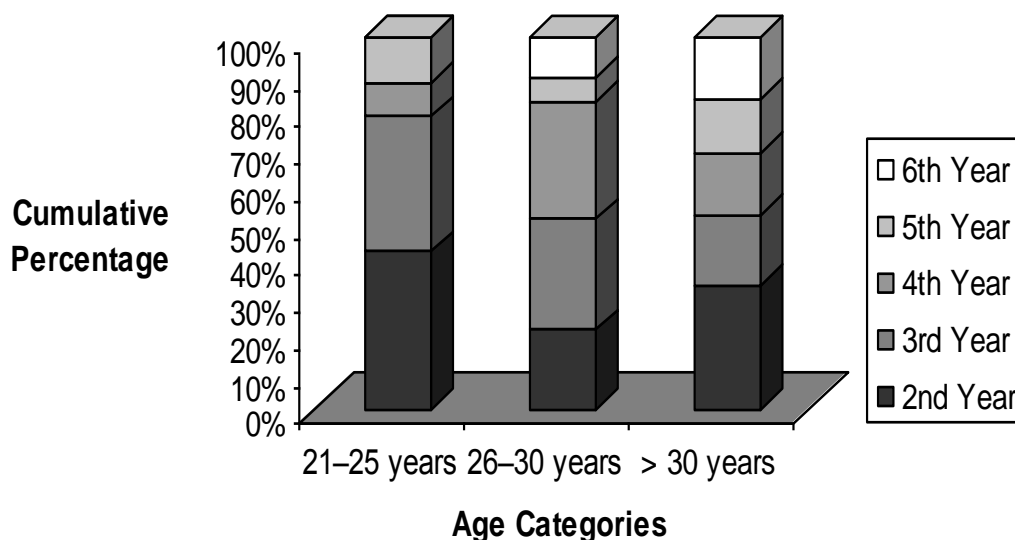
Table 5.10 Distribution of classes among recently assigned RE teachers

No. of Classes	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
1 class	41 (34%)	37 (30%)	36 (30%)	30 (25%)	16 (13%)
2 classes	3 (3%)	4 (3%)	5 (4%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)
3 classes	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
4 classes	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
No classes stated	78 (64%)	79 (65%)	78 (64%)	85 (70%)	105 (86%)
Total	122 (100%)	122 (100%)	122 (100%)	122 (100%)	122 (100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

A comparison between age categories and the RE teaching experience of recently assigned RE teachers (Figure 5.8) indicates that these teachers come from a range of age categories. The implication is that recently assigned RE teachers in the survey consisted of a mixture of young beginning teachers and older experienced teachers.

Figure 5.8 RE Teaching Experience by Age Categories



n = 122 teachers

When RE teaching experience is considered according to region (Figure 5.9 and Figure 5.10, p.174), the data indicate mixed results. The metropolitan area of the Archdiocese of Perth had proportionally more teachers in their third or fourth year of teaching RE than the other regions (Figure 5.9). On the other hand, the other regions had proportionally more teachers in their second and fifth year of teaching the learning area. However, this was not a consistent trend when the data was subdivided into the separate dioceses (Figure 5.10, p.174). The assertion by some researchers (Ingersoll 1996; Stover 1999; Jerald 2002) that less experienced teachers are located in more remote areas (described in Chapter 3, pp.61-62) did not appear to be the case with recently assigned RE teachers.

Figure 5.9 RE Teaching Experience by Two Significant Regions

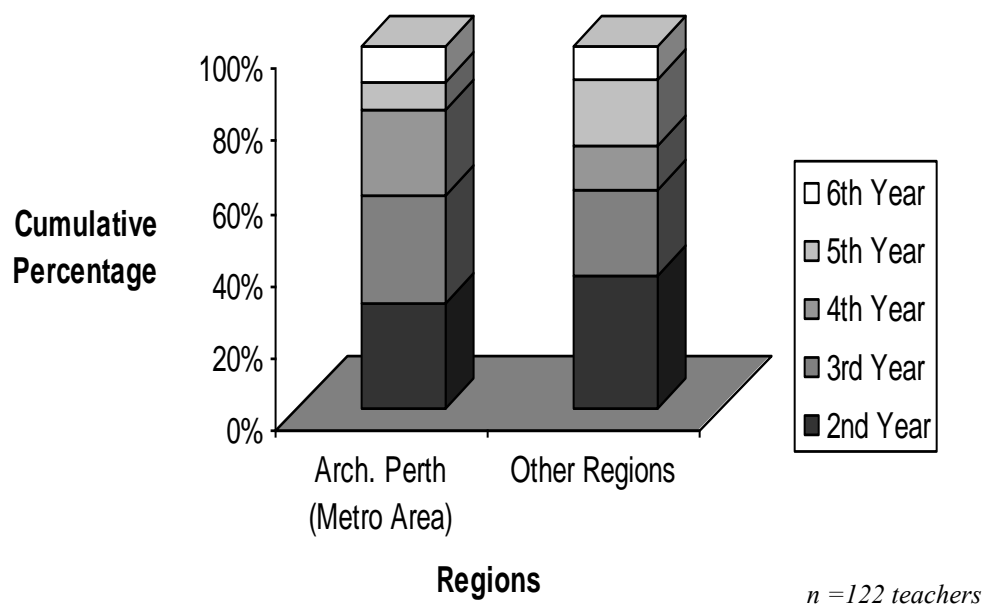
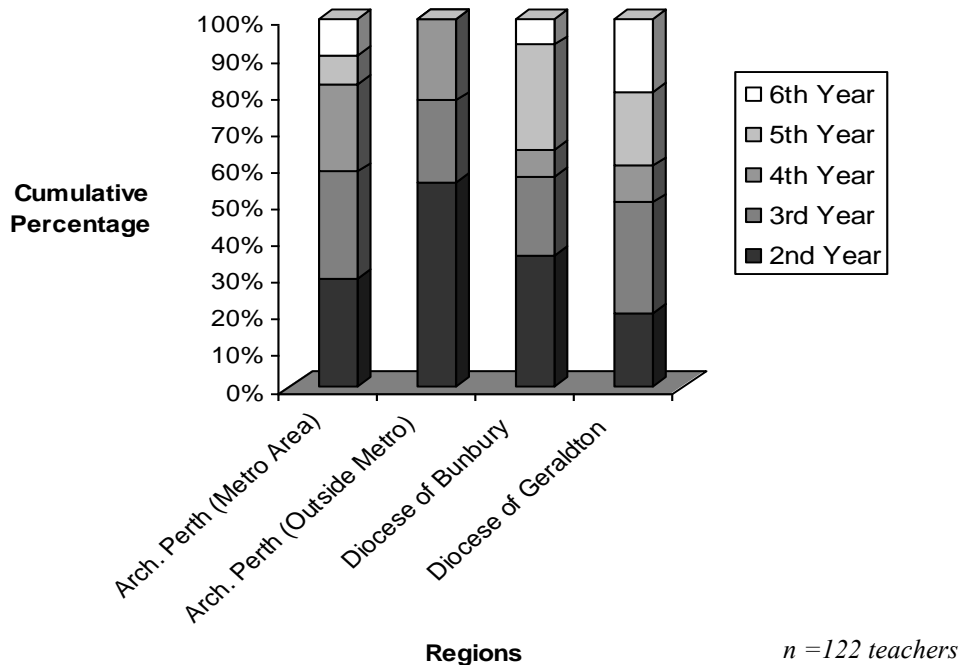


Figure 5.10 RE Teaching Experience by Region



Summary: RE Teaching Experience

Most (80%) recently assigned RE teachers had between one to four years RE teaching experience. This RE teaching experience was not necessarily related to a specific age group or region. The degree of expertise or experience appeared to be common across age categories and regions. Remoter regions seemed to be as well served by a range of recently assigned RE teachers as the Perth metropolitan area. The data indicated a contrary view about teachers teaching outside of their field of expertise. Recently assigned teachers in Religious Education were not assigned deliberately for administrative purposes to teach RE and these teachers were no more prevalent in remote regions. Whether teachers are younger or older, accredited or not, they seemed to share a similar situation to one another; they were teaching a learning area with which they were unfamiliar. The data indicated that the actual length of RE teaching experience for recently assigned RE teachers was considerably less than what they would experience in their own major learning area. Furthermore, these teachers seemed to teach predominantly lower secondary classes and had a class in more than one Year level. The implication here is that these teachers may be

stretching their preparation time over more than one draft RE Unit at a time. With almost two-thirds of the teachers having a reduced contact time with their RE classes, it was possible that the classroom experience of teaching RE took longer to develop. Furthermore, it was possible that changes to the perceptions of teachers about their experiences occurred over time. In-depth interviews made it possible to explore further the experiences and perceptions of recently assigned RE teachers.

5.2.5 Overview: Demographic and Professional Background of Recently Assigned RE Teachers

The responses, from the survey on the demographic and professional backgrounds of recently assigned RE teachers, suggested that most teachers are lay (99%), female (70%) and aged between 21 and 30 years (66%). They were teachers who specialised in learning areas other than RE; mostly from the disciplines of the Humanities (56%) particularly, from the learning areas of English (26%) and Society and Environment (14%). They were also professionally qualified and trained in WA to become, presumably, competently skilled teachers. However, over three quarters of these teachers did not have tertiary qualifications in RE (78%) although a little over half had progressed towards completing *Accreditation to Teach RE*, the mandatory professional requirement to teach RE in a Catholic school. Many teachers (76%) had completed only the inservice component of this Accreditation which suggested they were conversant with the underlying pedagogical principles of RE (as indicated in Figure 2.1, p.39). However, only 55% had completed the equivalent of three tertiary units to satisfy the study component of Accreditation. While a little more than half of the recently assigned teachers had completed Accreditation, the evidence suggests this cohort of teachers did not have sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge for teaching this learning area. Interestingly, in contrast to their own progress, many teachers remarked favourably about the value of completing the Accreditation requirements as an important part of their professional formation. Most recently assigned RE teachers had from one to four years of experience in teaching RE (80%) and tended to teach one RE class over more than one Year group. In many respects, these were the teachers that the Catholic Secondary Principals' Association of Western Australia (CSPA) anecdotally referred to as 'inexperienced teachers or those without a solid training in religious education' (CSPA 1992, par.3). In the next section, the survey responses of this group of teachers regarding their use of RE instructional resources are described.

5.3 Use of Instructional Resources

In the survey, recently assigned RE teachers were asked about the use of instructional resources provided by the PAREC. The tables in this section present a summary of the findings from the 122 responses. The survey explored three issues within this category: the accessibility of the resources, the frequency of use of these resources and the attitudes of recently assigned RE teachers towards the use of these resources. Tests of significance were conducted with regard to items in each category where these were supported by prima facie evidence. Results of such tests are discussed in what follows.

5.3.1 Accessibility of Instructional Resources

Teachers were invited to consider their attitude towards the accessibility of the instructional resources in the draft RE Units. A Likert scale with five levels of agreement was used: Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. When the categories ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ were combined (Table 5.11, p.177), the responses indicated widespread agreement among teachers that the instructional resources were ‘easy to follow’ (86%), ‘useful in my classroom teaching’ (83%), ‘reduce lesson preparation time’ (82%), and provided ‘sufficient background material’ (63%). The skewed distribution towards the modal (most frequent) ‘Agree’ response in the Likert items and the small dispersion of scores from the mean (small standard deviation) indicated that recently assigned RE teachers generally held similar perceptions to one another about the accessibility of the instructional resources.

Table 5.11 Accessibility of instructional resources as perceived by recently assigned RE teachers (Survey Questions 1-4)

<i>As a [recently assigned] RE teacher, I tend to find...</i>	SA	A	U	D	SD	Omit	Total	Mean Value ¹	Stand. Dev. ²
1. RE Units are easy to follow.	27 (22)	78 (64)	7 (6)	8 (7)	2 (2)	0 (0)	122 (100)	2.02	0.83
2. RE Units are useful in my classroom teaching.	24 (20)	77 (63)	11 (9)	9 (7)	1 (1)	0 (0)	122 (100)	2.07	0.81
3. RE Units reduce lesson preparation time.	37 (30)	64 (52)	8 (7)	12 (10)	1 (1)	0 (0)	122 (100)	1.98	0.92
4. RE Units provide sufficient background material.	19 (16)	57 (47)	20 (16)	24 (20)	2 (2)	0 (0)	122 (100)	2.45	1.03

Note:

1. The Mean Value represents the average of numerical values scored after each category was given a numerical value. SA = Strongly Agree (1); A = Agree (2); U = uncertain (3); D = Disagree (4) and SD = Strongly Disagree (5). Omit indicates that no response was given.
2. Stand. Dev. = Standard Deviation.
3. Italicised numbers in parentheses indicate percentages and rounded to the nearest whole numbers.
4. Shaded scores represent the Mode (most frequent response) for that item.

Despite general similarity of response, it was noted however, that responses to Item 2, ‘RE Units are useful in my classroom teaching’ differed by age groups (Table 5.12, p.178). The mean values indicated that such a difference might be significant. To test this difference, a One Way ANOVA was performed with a probability value set at $p = 0.05$. The ANOVA indicated that the difference was indeed significant, $F(2, 119) = 4.78, p = 0.01$. A Post Hoc (Scheffé) test was conducted, again with a probability value set at $p = 0.05$, which indicated differences between RE teachers in the 26-30 year group and >30 year group ($p = 0.021$). This difference may be due to their professional experience and familiarity with these types of resources compared with their younger colleagues. On the other hand, older teachers may see teaching RE as a ‘filler’ and are complacent about using the resources available in the Units (Rymarz, 1999b, p.51).

Table 5.12 Item 2: ‘RE Units are useful in my classroom teaching’ considered by Age Groups

Age Groups	Respondents	Mean Value
21-25 Years	33	2.21
26-30 Years	47	2.23
>30 Years	42	1.67
Total	122	2.07

Note:

The Mean Values represent the average responses to the Likert item that ranged from ‘Strongly Agree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Disagree’ (5).

5.3.2 Frequency of Use

Teachers were asked to rank five stipulated instructional resources on a scale from (1) to (6), with (6) being least frequently used, in response to the statement: ‘As a [recently assigned] RE teacher, I develop my lessons mostly around....’ The respondents had the flexibility to consider the merits of the five stipulated items and had the option to include another item (Volunteered Item) that they felt was important. A rank score was calculated from the rankings given by each teacher. As some teachers gave two or three items the same rank, the rankings were averaged. For example, if two items were given a rank of (2) by a teacher, they were averaged to score an equal rank value of (2.5) and the next ranked item was given a rank value of (4). The item with the lowest total score was considered to be the most frequently used and so forth for the other items. Volunteered items were counted then given a rank from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items. The highest ranked items are shown in Table 5.13 (p.179).

Table 5.13 Ranking of Frequency of Use of Instructional Resources (Survey Question 5)

A. Stipulated Items

Rank	Item
1.	Mastersheets
2.	Student Books
3.	Resources created by the teachers
4.	Resources from the Coordinator of RE
5.	Texts cited in the RE Units

B. Volunteered Items

Rank	Item
6.	Videos
7.	Print materials from magazines and newspapers
8.	Own resources collected
9.	Applying ideas from the Teacher's Manual
10.	Using resources from the school's RE department

Note: Ranking is from most frequent (1) to least frequent (10).

Recently assigned RE teachers indicated that they used resources such as the Mastersheets from the Teacher's Manual and the Student Book the most frequently. Yet, these curriculum materials were supplemented by resources created by the teachers themselves or from the RE Coordinator. Teachers augmented these resources with their own or the resources of their school as well as using resources such as videos and print media materials.

A One Way ANOVA was undertaken to test whether there were statistically significant differences between sub-groups of teachers in the survey cohort about the frequency of use of curriculum materials in the RE Units. One difference which surfaced was the use of resources beyond those described in the RE Units between the regions (Table 5.14, p.180). Respondents in the Diocese of Geraldton rated the use of resources provided by the RE Coordinator more highly than respondents in other regions. A One Way ANOVA indicated a statistical difference, $F(3, 118) = 3.26, p = .024$. A Post Hoc (Scheffé) test was conducted which indicated differences

between teachers in the Diocese of Geraldton and teachers in the country areas of the Archdiocese of Perth ($p = .028$). Such a finding does not suggest much overall. Regions away from the Metropolitan Area of the Archdiocese of Perth had diverse responses. One possibility may be the way RE Coordinators played an important resource support role in the schools of the Geraldton region.

Table 5.14 Stipulated Item: Resources from the Coordinator of RE by Region

Regions	Respondents	Mean Rating¹	Overall Rank²
Perth Metro	89	4.00	4.00
Perth Country	9	4.83	5.00
Bunbury	14	3.96	4.00
Geraldton	10	2.83	1.00
Total	122	3.96	4.00

Note:

1. The term 'Mean Rating' refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term 'Overall Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 5.

A second finding identified was the use of the Bible according to gender. Male teachers cited use of the Bible as their highest volunteered item whereas female teachers identified it as one of their lowest items (Table 5.15, p.181). However, the frequent use of the Bible was not a high priority overall among recently assigned RE teachers because of the disproportionately large number of female teachers (Figure 5.1, p.158). The contrast in use between male and female teachers indicates that further exploration of this item should include comments from both genders (Chapter 6, pp.228-230).

Table 5.15 Volunteered Item: Use of the Bible by Gender

Gender	Respondents	Rank¹
Female teacher	85	16.00
Male teacher	37	6.00
Total	122	12.00

Note:

1. The term 'Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 6 to 16) for volunteered items in Question 5. Volunteered items were counted then given a rank from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items in Question 5.

A third finding concerns RARE teachers with more than a 50% teaching load in Religious Education. These teachers ranked using resources they had collected themselves more highly compared to teachers with less than a 50% teaching load (Table 5.16). The implication here is that teachers with more RE classes are more experienced and familiar with the resources available to them because they spend more time in teaching RE. Their professional formation may be hastened and consequently they preferred to use their own resources (Rymarz and Engebretson 2005, p.67), see Chapter 3, p.67.

Table 5.16 Volunteered Item: Own resources collected by RE Teaching Load

RE teaching load	Respondents	Rank¹
<25%	76	11.00
25%-50%	32	9.00
51%-75%	6	6.00
>75%	7	6.00
Not stated	1	6.00
Total	122	8.00

Note:

1. The term 'Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 6 to 16) for volunteered items in Question 5. Volunteered items were counted then given a rank from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items in Question 5.

Juxtaposed with the findings in Table 5.12 (p.178), 26-30 year olds seemed to prefer using 'Resources created by the teachers' more than their older counterparts (Table 5.17, p.182). Mean ratings in Table 5.17 (p.182) suggested that the differences might

be significant. A One Way ANOVA was executed and a significant result was found, $F(2, 119) = 3.46, p = 0.034$. A Post Hoc (Scheffé) test indicated a significant difference between the 26-30 year old RARE teachers and >30 year old RARE teachers ($p = 0.036$). The finding suggests that the oldest age group (>31 years), were more content to use the resources provided (as reported in Table 5.12, p.178) and less likely than their younger counterparts to be as energetic in their teaching commitment. Such a conclusion finds support in the research of Rymarz (1999b) relating to some experienced RE teachers (Chapter 3, p.88). Again, the earlier question of whether such a finding is due to professional experience or complacency may be raised (p.177).

Table 5.17 Stipulated Item: Resources created by the teachers by Age Groups

Age Groups	Respondents	Mean Rating ¹	Overall Rank ²
21-25 Years	33	3.05	3.00
26-30 Years	47	2.60	2.00
>30 Years	42	3.69	3.00
Total	122	2.99	3.00

Note:

1. The term 'Mean Rating' refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term 'Overall Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 5.

5.3.3 Advice about using the Instructional Resources

Teachers were asked to give a comment about what best reflected their experience as a recently assigned RE teacher in using the Teacher's Manuals and Student Books. Using a content analysis technique (Cohen and Manion 1994), each comment from a teacher was recorded on a spreadsheet. The comments were grouped on a common theme or phrase that had emerged from the responses. Table 5.18 (p.183) shows what the most important advice RARE teachers would give to other teachers as a result of their experiences of teaching the draft RE Units about using the instructional resources.

Table 5.18 Advice from recently assigned RE teachers about using the Instructional Resources (Survey Question 6)

Comment theme or phrases	Frequency (%)
• Plan for and review the curriculum materials as it provides good, useful background	58 (23%)
• Be creative, explore alternatives, provide variety, don't just use the Mastersheets or Student Books	45 (18%)
• Use curriculum materials as a guide; be selective	39 (16%)
• Match or modify curriculum materials to student needs, encourage student involvement	31 (13%)
• Supervise the use of the Mastersheets and the Student Book because the language is not readily accessible to students	20 (8%)
• Follow teaching and learning program – well resourced and researched	17 (7%)
• Consult with RE Coordinator or other RE teachers about the curriculum materials	11 (4%)
• Access to resources is important	6 (2%)
• Move through the teaching and learning program quickly as there is too much	4 (2%)
• Do more background reading	4 (2%)
• Use the Mastersheets and the Student Book – good	3 (1%)
• Begin lesson with prayer or journal writing	2 (1%)
• Resources do not counter negative influences	1 (<1%)
• Don't teach Year 11 – too much theological background is necessary	1 (<1%)
• No comment given	4 (2%)
Total	246 (100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

The advice from recently assigned RE teachers about using the instructional resources provided by the draft Units was consistent across the cohort and seemed to focus on using the resources as a mainstay for teaching. This advice about using the resources was indicated by comments relating to ‘planning for and reviewing the resources’ (23%) and ‘using the resources as a guide’ (16%) and ‘follow the teaching and learning program’ (7%). These comments were juxtaposed with statements by recently assigned teachers about drawing on other resources that were suited to the needs of their students. The teachers made comments such as: ‘be creative, explore alternatives, provide variety’ (18%), ‘match or modify curriculum materials to student needs’ (13%) and ‘supervise the use of Mastersheets and the Student Book because language is not readily accessible to the students’ (8%).

5.3.4 Overview: Use of Instructional Resources by Teachers

The responses from recently assigned RE teachers were very positive and consistent towards the use of instructional resources in the draft RE Units. This positive response suggested that the Units satisfied one of the major concerns raised by Religious Educators about the implementation of RE curricula, the ease of access to resources for recently assigned RE teachers. The ease of accessibility of the instructional resources in the Units was indicated further by the high frequency of use of the Mastersheets and the Students Books by the teachers. The notion of ‘activities that work’ (Chapter 3, p.61) seemed to be very much the focus here. However, the lower response for ‘sufficient background material’ may warrant further investigation into links between these content materials and the extent of professional formation these teachers possessed. The differences between groups of teachers seemed to depend upon the familiarity and confidence of teachers in using materials other than the Mastersheets and Student Book. The responses in Table 5.12 (p.178) indicated that recently assigned RE teachers used the draft PAREC materials as a foundation or as a ‘springboard’ for other activities to be used in their classroom teaching. These responses were noted as also being worthy of further exploration.

5.4 Teaching Approach

In the survey, recently assigned RE teachers were asked about their experiences in using the teaching approach as recommended by the draft RE Units. Tables in this section present a summary of the findings. Three issues within this category were explored: teaching process, preferred learning strategies and the attitudes of recently assigned RE teachers towards the prescribed teaching approach. Tests of significance were conducted with regard to items in each category where these were supported by prima facie evidence. As was the case with the accessibility of resources (p.174), the data reflected a positively skewed distribution and narrow standard deviations suggesting widespread agreement on items about teaching approach. The exception to this trend was the Likert item dealing with organising liturgies in the classroom.

5.4.1 Teaching Process

In Table 5.19 (p.186) with the categories ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ combined, a majority of recently assigned RE teachers (87%) agreed that it was useful to begin with student experiences about a topic. In addition to this notion, 80% of teachers surveyed indicated it was useful to use a process of sincere and patient dialogue with their students. The majority of teachers (71%) also indicated that journal work was easy to include as a part of their teaching.

In the survey, 71% indicated it was useful to follow the sequence of objectives in the RE Units (Item 8). Some differences between sub-groups of teachers became apparent after further analysis. Table 5.20 (p.187) indicates that the oldest teachers (>30 years) were possibly more positive about using the sequence of objectives than their younger colleagues (26-30 years). The mean values indicated there may be a significant difference. To test for difference between categories, a One Way ANOVA was performed which confirmed this difference, $F(2, 117) = 3.75, p = 0.027$. The Post Hoc (Scheffé) test indicated that the differences in the mean values between >30 year old teachers and 26-30 year old teachers was significant ($p = 0.027$). Such findings may reflect earlier suggestions about this age group regarding their proclivity for compliance (p.177 and p.182).

In addition, the results for a further One Way ANOVA test indicate that RARE teachers who taught 50-75% of their teaching load in RE were less in favour of following the sequence of objectives than teachers who taught 25-50% of their teaching load, $F(3, 115) = 4.10, p = 0.008$ (Table 5.21, p.187). The Post Hoc (Scheffé) test result reported significant differences in the means between these two categories, ($p = 0.009$). Such a finding suggests that these teachers were more discerning about what and how they teach their RE classes because of their experience and familiarity with the Units.

Table 5.19 Experience of the RE Teaching Approach as perceived by recently assigned RE teachers

<i>As a [recently assigned] RE teacher, I tend to find...</i>	SA	A	U	D	SD	Omit	Total	Mean Value ¹	Stand. Dev. ²
7. Presenting content as outcomes of learning useful.	4 (3)	54 (44)	52 (43)	9 (7)	1 (1)	2 (2)	122 (100)	2.53	0.78
8. Following the sequence of objectives in the RE Units useful.	15 (12)	72 (59)	17 (14)	15 (12)	1 (1)	2 (2)	122 (100)	2.25	0.91
9. Beginning with students' experiences about a topic useful.	59 (48)	47 (39)	9 (7)	4 (3)	0 (0)	3 (3)	122 (100)	1.61	0.80
10. A process of sincere and patient dialogue with students useful.	49 (40)	49 (40)	18 (15)	4 (3)	0 (0)	2 (2)	122 (100)	1.78	0.84
11. Linking students' experiences with the Gospels difficult.	13 (11)	50 (41)	15 (12)	28 (23)	13 (11)	3 (3)	122 (100)	2.75	1.29
12. Including learning strategies suited to the faith stances of all students difficult.	20 (16)	52 (43)	21 (17)	22 (18)	5 (4)	2 (2)	122 (100)	2.46	1.14
13. Organising class liturgies difficult.	10 (8)	37 (30)	19 (16)	43 (35)	9 (7)	4 (3)	122 (100)	2.93	1.26
14. Journal work is easy to include as part of my teaching.	42 (34)	45 (37)	14 (11)	16 (13)	3 (2)	2 (2)	122 (100)	2.07	1.13
15. Formal assessments are easy to include as part of my teaching.	33 (27)	63 (52)	9 (7)	12 (10)	2 (2)	3 (3)	122 (100)	2.00	1.00

Note:

1. The Mean Value represents the average of numerical values scored after each category was given a numerical value. SA = Strongly Agree (1); A = Agree (2); U = uncertain (3); D = Disagree (4) and SD = Strongly Disagree (5). Omit indicates that no response was given.
2. Stand. Dev. = Standard Deviation.
3. Italicised numbers in parentheses indicate percentages and rounded to the nearest whole numbers.
4. Shaded scores represent the Mode (most frequent response) for that item.

Table 5.20 Item 8: ‘Following the sequence of objectives in the RE Units useful’ by Age Groups

RE Teaching Load	Respondents	Mean
21-25 Years	33	2.24
26-30 Years	47	2.47
>30 Years	42	1.78
Total	122	2.25

Note:

The Mean Scores represent the average responses to the Likert item that ranged from ‘Strongly Agree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Disagree’ (5).

Table 5.21 Item 8: ‘Following the sequence of objectives in the RE Units useful’ by RE Teaching Load

RE Teaching Load	Respondents	Mean
<25%	76	2.33
25%-50%	32	1.91
51%-75%	6	3.33
>75%	7	2.29
Not stated	1	1.00
Total	122	2.25

Note:

The Mean Scores represent the average responses to the Likert item that ranged from ‘Strongly Agree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Disagree’ (5).

Interestingly, 79% of respondents felt that it was easy to include assessments as part of their teaching (Item 15). Although there was general agreement, a series of One Way ANOVAs was conducted to test whether there were any differences between sub-groups of teachers. One difference was related to the completion of the study component of Accreditation. Teachers who had completed the study component of their Accreditation seemed more positive about item 15: ‘*Formal assessments are easy to include as part of my teaching*’ than teachers who were still ‘In Progress’ (Table 5.22, p.188). To test the significance of the difference between categories, a One Way ANOVA was performed. The results returned showed an F ratio of $F(2, 116) = 4.12, p = 0.019$. A Post Hoc (Scheffé) test was conducted and the result ($p = 0.041$) indicated there was a significant difference in the means between teachers who had completed the study component of Accreditation and those teachers who

were progressing towards completion. Perhaps ‘In Progress’ teachers see the inclusion of such assessments as increasing their professional workloads during a time when they are studying after hours to complete the study component to their Accreditation.

Table 5.22 Item 15: ‘Formal assessments are easy to include as part of my teaching’ by Accreditation to Teach RE: Study component

Accreditation to Teach RE: Study component	Respondents	Mean
Not Begun	9	1.67
In Progress	46	2.30
Completed	67	1.84
Total	122	2.00

Note:

The Mean Scores represent the average responses to the Likert item that ranged from ‘Strongly Agree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Disagree’ (5).

Respondents agreed less strongly with each other on the difficulties they experienced with the teaching approach employed in the draft Units. Most teachers (59%) felt they had difficulty in including learning strategies suited to the faith stances of their students and 52% had difficulty with linking student experiences with the Gospels. Respondents also seemed divided about organising class liturgies with 38% agreeing they had difficulty doing so, 42% disagreeing they had difficulty and 16% indicating they were uncertain.

One item in particular returned responses that suggested a range of perceptions about the educational focus of Religious Education. While 47% of teachers agreed that presenting content as outcomes of learning was useful (Item 7), 43% were uncertain about this. Two sub-groups of teachers appeared to have differences in their perceptions about this item, one group according to RE qualifications and another group according to age. Teachers with tertiary qualifications in RE seemed to be less positive towards this item in comparison to teachers without qualifications (Table 5.23, p.189). The One Way ANOVA confirmed there was a significant difference between the mean values, $F(1, 118) = 5.37, p = 0.022$. In the case of another sub-group, the oldest teachers (>31 years) seemed to be more inclined to present content as outcomes of learning than the youngest group (21-25 years) of teachers (Table

5.24). The One Way ANOVA confirmed there was a significant difference between the mean values, $F(2, 117) = 3.95, p = 0.022$. The Post Hoc (Scheffé) test result ($p = 0.044$) reported there was a significant difference in the means between these sub-groups. These findings may imply that these two sub-group of teachers lean towards a stronger catechetical rather than an educational orientation to their RE teaching than their colleagues (Chapter 2, pp.37-40). These differences between sub-groups of teachers were noted for further investigation.

Table 5.23 Item 7: ‘Presenting content as outcomes of learning useful’ by RE Tertiary Qualification

RE Tertiary Qualification	Respondents	Mean
Yes	27	2.85
No	95	2.44
Total	122	2.53

Note:

The Mean Scores represent the average responses to the Likert item that ranged from ‘Strongly Agree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Disagree’ (5).

Table 5.24 Item 7: ‘Presenting content as outcomes of learning useful’ by Age Groups

Age Groups	Respondents	Mean
21-25 Years	33	2.67
26-30 Years	47	2.62
>30 Years	42	2.22
Total	122	2.53

Note:

The Mean Scores represent the average responses to the Likert item that ranged from ‘Strongly Agree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Disagree’ (5).

5.4.2 Preferred learning strategies

Teachers were asked to rank stipulated learning strategies from (1) to (6) with (6) being least preferred in response to the statement: ‘As a [recently assigned] RE teacher, I prefer learning strategies that help’ Teachers also were given the opportunity to include a sixth item to rank. As with the frequency of use item (p.178), the respondents then had the flexibility to consider the merits of the five

stipulated items and had the option to include another item, volunteered by them that they felt was important to consider. A score was calculated from the rankings given by each teacher. As some teachers gave two or three items the same rank, the rankings were equally weighted. For example, where two items were given a rank of (2) by a teacher, each item was given an equal rank value of (2.5) and the next ranked item was given a rank value of (4). The item with the lowest total score was considered to be the most preferred strategy and so forth with the other items. Volunteered items were counted then ranked from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items. The top ranked items are shown in Table 5.25.

Table 5.25 Ranking of Preferred Learning Strategies (Survey Question 16)

A. Stipulated Items

Rank	Item
1.	Stimulate active participation and creativity within students.
2.	Interpret significant human experiences in the light of the Gospels.
3.	Describe and explain information about Catholic beliefs and practices.
4.	Reinforce student understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices.
5.	Reveal the deeper religious meanings behind Catholic beliefs and practices.

B. Volunteered Items

Rank	Item
6.	Provide students with experiences of God.
7.	Promote personal development.
8.	Identify moral arguments.
9.	Promote prayer.
10.	Promote interconnectedness and group discussion.

Note: Ranking is from most frequent (1) to least frequent (10).

The most preferred learning strategies were those that teachers felt ‘stimulate active participation and creativity within students’. This preference suggested that recently assigned RE teachers were focused on student-centred learning. Female teachers seemed to rate learning strategies that stimulated active participation and creativity higher than did male teachers (Table 5.26), although there was no overall difference in rank between the groups. A One Way Analysis of Variance of the mean ratings indicated there was a significant difference between the genders, $F(1, 118) = 8.68, p = 0.004$. However, female teachers seemed to prefer learning strategies that ‘reinforced student understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices’ more than did male teachers (Table 5.27, p.192). Another One Way ANOVA of the mean ratings indicated there was a significant difference between the genders, $F(1, 118) = 7.75, p = 0.006$. Such contrasts between the genders indicate that further exploration of these items via comments from both male and female teachers would be of value (Chapter 6, pp.232-234). Teachers also seemed to prefer strategies that assisted in interpreting significant human experiences in the light of the Gospels. Interestingly, in Table 5.19 (p.186) ‘making links between experiences of the students and the Gospels’ was a strategy teachers had difficulty in using. This finding was noted as a point for further investigation.

Table 5.26 Stipulated Item: Reinforce student understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices by Gender

Gender	Respondents	Mean Rating¹	Overall Rank²
Female teacher	85	3.21	2.00
Male teacher	37	3.75	5.00
Total	122	3.39	4.00

Note:

1. The term ‘Mean Rating’ refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term ‘Overall Rank’ refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 16.

Table 5.27 Stipulated Item: Stimulate active participation and creativity within students by Gender

Gender	Respondents	Mean Rating¹	Overall Rank²
Female teacher	85	1.72	1.00
Male teacher	37	2.38	1.00
Total	122	1.92	1.00

Note:

1. The term 'Mean Rating' refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term 'Overall Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 16.

Overall, the responses from the survey indicated that teachers were very much in tune with the catechetical teaching approach advocated by the draft PAREC (Figure 2.1, p.39). The volunteered items in Table 5.25 (p.190) appear to highlight this emphasis on catechetical formation. The highest ranked volunteered item was 'providing students with experiences of God'. Teachers who taught 51-75% of their teaching load in RE were the most inclined towards this item (Table 5.28). Furthermore, teachers with a >75% teaching load in RE ranked promoting prayer experiences more highly than did teachers with a lower teaching load (Table 5.29, p.193). The suggestion here reinforces the notion that teachers with more RE classes are more experienced and familiar with teaching approaches in tune with a catechetical rather than an educational orientation towards Religious Education (p.189).

Table 5.28 Volunteered Item: Provide students with experiences of God by RE Teaching Load

RE teaching load	Respondents	Rank¹
<25%	76	13.00
25%-50%	32	7.00
51%-75%	6	6.00
>75%	7	7.00
Not stated	1	6.00
Total	122	6.00

Note:

1. The term 'Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 6 to 16) for volunteered items in Question 16. Volunteered items were counted then given a rank from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items in Question 16.

Table 5.29 Volunteered Item: Promote prayer

RE teaching load	Respondents	Rank¹
<25%	76	13.00
25%-50%	32	7.00
51%-75%	6	8.00
>75%	7	6.00
Not stated	1	6.00
Total	122	9.00

Note:

1. The term 'Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 6 to 16) for volunteered items in Question 16. Volunteered items were counted then given a rank from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items in Question 16.

5.4.3 Advice about Applying the Teaching Approach of PAREC

Table 5.30 (p.194) indicates the most important advice recently assigned RE teachers would give others about applying the teaching approach of PAREC as a result of their experience of teaching Religious Education. The responses were not limited to any one particular sub-group of recently assigned RE teachers.

Table 5.30 Advice from recently assigned RE teachers about applying the Teaching Approach of the PAREC (Survey Question 17)

Comment themes or phrases	Frequency (%)
• Be student-centred; to suit students; work from student experiences and background, provide experiences and substance for students	59 (27%)
• Use Unit as a guide; be selective of objectives, simplify or vary	29 (13%)
• Dynamic and flexible; encourage creativity and active participation	27 (12%)
• Discuss views and content with students; have open dialogue with them, create atmosphere of mutual trust and respect	20 (9%)
• Know and understand the Units, the background information and sequence of objectives	14 (7%)
• Link student experiences with teachings of Christ in the Gospels and/or Catholic beliefs and practices	12 (5%)
• Become comfortable with the teaching approach, balance strategies between ‘head’ (cognitive) and ‘heart’ (affective)	11 (5%)
• Talk to the RE Coordinator or experienced RE teachers about the teaching approach	5 (2%)
• Apply the teaching of the Catholic Church, its beliefs and practices first	5 (2%)
• Bring teacher’s experience in (witness to the Faith)	4 (2%)
• Journal work needs to be established	4 (2%)
• Develop students’ appreciation that God loves them unconditionally through prayer, reflection, meditation and journal work	4 (2%)
• Do not assume prior knowledge or experience of Catholic beliefs and practices	3 (1%)
• Did not understand the question	2 (1%)
• Beware of the Mastersheets!	2 (1%)
• Mastersheets – use them!	2 (1%)
• Pray yourself	1 (<1%)
• No comment given	17 (8%)
Total	221 (100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

The responses from Table 5.30 (p.194) reinforced that teachers wanted to use a student-centred approach to their RE teaching. The highest response (27%) highlighted the need for teachers to be ‘student-centred, to suit the students, to work from student experiences and background’ or to ‘provide experiences or substance for students’. In addition, teachers believed they needed to ‘be dynamic and flexible, to encourage creativity and active participation’ (12%) and to ‘discuss views and content with students, have open dialogue with them, create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect’ (9%). Perhaps recently assigned RE teachers were keen to engage their students in learning by providing meaningful and relevant lessons. Further investigation of this aspect of RE teaching was needed to discover whether this keenness was translated into action, especially when teachers also suggested that they frequently used instructional resources such as the Mastersheets and Student Books.

The role of facilitating learning was suggested further by comments about the need to ‘link students’ experiences with the teachings of Christ in the Gospels or to Catholic beliefs and practices’ (5%). The facilitating learning approach was supported by a perceived confidence in using the Units as a foundation or springboard as evidenced by comments such as: ‘use the Unit as a guide; be selective of objectives, simplify or vary’ (13%) and, ‘become comfortable with the teaching approach, balance strategies between the “head” (cognitive) and the “heart” (affective)’ (5%). An important aspect to using the Units as a foundation seemed to be for teachers to ‘know and understand the Units, the background information and sequence of objectives’ (7%). The responses from the teachers suggested there was a tension between addressing the personal developmental needs of students and addressing their own professional needs. Recently assigned teachers wanted their students to be engaged in learning about RE but the teachers needed the reassurance of knowing how to manage the content presented in the draft RE Units. This need for reassurance is supported by research regarding teacher efficacy (Chapter 3, p.87) and was explored further in the interview phase of the research.

5.4.4 Overview: Application of Teaching Approach by Teachers

Recently assigned RE teachers seemed to interpret the teaching approach advocated in the draft RE Units (Figure 2.1, p.39) from the perspective of their expertise as specialist subject teachers and their pre-conceived notions of Religious Education.

Objectives and content in the Units were to be covered in ways they thought were interesting and relevant to their students. Their confidence in applying the teaching approach seemed to be linked to their perceived competence in using student-centred approaches in their classroom teaching. However, while their confidence appeared to be tied closely to following the Unit Objectives, when they had to make links between the life experiences of students and the Gospels or other related themes, then there was some uncertainty and apprehension. The impression was that these teachers were responding to how they think they should use the teaching approach according to training in their own learning areas rather than readily indicate a deeper critical understanding of the pedagogy used in Religious Education. As a result, the religious dimensions of RE teaching seemed to be widely advocated but inadequately understood by these teachers. Such a perception is in line with the findings of Engebretson (1997) who concluded that RARE teachers had a poor understanding of the curriculum principles underlying the RE curriculum (Chapter 3, pp.95-96). Furthermore, there seemed to be a tension between focusing on the personal developmental needs of students and their own needs to become familiar with the content and strategies presented in the draft RE Units.

The confidence of recently assigned RE teachers also appeared to be related to what they are doing in the classroom rather than why they are teaching in a particular way. As was found in the research by Malone (1997) recently assigned RE teachers pride themselves upon being practitioners rather than manipulators or innovators in implementing the RE curriculum (Chapter 3, p.65). Whether recently assigned RE teachers developed towards a more critical understanding of an RE pedagogy was worthwhile to pursue in the interview phase of this study.

5.5 Underlying Curriculum Principles

Recently assigned RE teachers were asked about their understanding of the underlying principles in teaching RE, that is, their knowledge and understanding of the role of the RE teacher and the aims of Religious Education.

5.5.1 Religious Dimension

One of the roles of the Religious Educator is to promote the religious dimension of the school. RE teachers are role models and witnesses to an active Catholic faith life (CCE 1988, par.96). For each statement in Table 5.31 (p.197), teachers were asked to

indicate their perceptions, as recently assigned RE teachers, about being involved in the religious dimension of a Catholic school. Four key areas were available for comment: awareness raising activities of the Church’s missionary work, formal liturgies, formal prayers and school retreats or RE seminar days. The mean values, modes, and low standard deviations across the Likert items suggested a high degree of agreement among the teachers.

Table 5.31 Participation in the Religious Dimension of a Catholic school as perceived by recently assigned RE teachers (Survey Questions 18-23)

<i>As a [recently assigned] RE teacher, I want to assist in organising...</i>	SA	A	U	D	SD	Omit	Total	Mean Value ¹	Stand. Dev. ²
18.School or class Masses.	23 (19)	69 (57)	15 (12)	12 (10)	3 (3)	0 (0)	122 (100)	2.21	0.94
19.The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at school.	14 (11)	60 (49)	24 (20)	19 (16)	5 (4)	0 (0)	122 (100)	2.52	1.02
20.School retreats or RE seminar days.	31 (25)	68 (56)	14 (12)	8 (7)	1 (1)	0 (0)	122 (100)	2.02	0.84
21.Celebrations for key feast days or liturgical seasons at school.	23 (19)	53 (43)	26 (21)	18 (15)	1 (1)	1 (1)	122 (100)	2.33	1.00
22.The inclusion of prayers at school assemblies or events.	24 (20)	73 (60)	18 (15)	5 (4)	1 (1)	1 (1)	122 (100)	2.04	0.79
23.Activities that raise awareness of the Church’s missionary work.	34 (28)	67 (55)	18 (15)	1 (1)	2 (2)	0 (0)	122 (100)	1.93	0.78

Note:

1. The Mean Value represents the average of numerical values scored after each category was given a numerical value. SA = Strongly Agree (1); A = Agree (2); U = uncertain (3); D = Disagree (4) and SD = Strongly Disagree (5). Omit indicates that no response was given.
2. Stand. Dev. = Standard Deviation.
3. Italicised numbers in parentheses indicate percentages and rounded to the nearest whole numbers.
4. Shaded scores represent the Mode (most frequent response) for that item.

A large number of teachers (83%) responded that they would agree with assisting in the organisation of activities that ‘raise awareness of the Church’s missionary work’. Recently assigned RE teachers also seemed eager to assist in organising the inclusion

of prayers at school assemblies or events (80%) and to take part in assisting in the organisation of school retreats or seminar days (78%). It was in the area of assisting in organising formal liturgies that some reservations were expressed.

Teachers agreed with: wanting to assist in organising school or class Masses (76%); celebrations for key feast days or liturgical seasons (62%); and, the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at school (60%). However, some teachers expressed uncertainty or disagreement with involvement in the organisation of formal liturgies. For school or class Masses, 12% were uncertain about being involved and 12% disagreed with being involved. For celebrations for key feast days or liturgical seasons, 21% were uncertain about being involved and 16% disagreed with being involved. With the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at school, 20% were uncertain about being involved and 20% disagreed with being involved. One wonders whether such responses might reflect the general Catholic lack of ease with Reconciliation and loss of connection with the liturgical year, especially feast days of saints.

Such nervousness among RARE teachers to be involved in organising liturgies may be related to a lack of professional confidence due to limited training and experience rather than a lack of faith formation. Responses on an earlier item in Table 5.19 (p.186) regarding the difficulty of organising class liturgies indicated that 38% agreed it was difficult and 16% were uncertain about this. In contrast, Table 5.25 (p.190) highlighted that teachers ranked the stipulated item, 'provide students with experiences of God' as their highest preferred learning strategy. This aspect of the survey was noted for further investigation.

5.5.2 Attitude towards teaching RE

For each statement in Table 5.32 (p.199), teachers were asked to indicate the category that best reflected their attitudes, as a recently assigned RE teacher, towards teaching RE. Again, there was a high degree of agreement ('Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' combined) among the respondents and notably, the dispersion of responses was narrow as indicated by the low standard deviations.

Table 5.32 Attitude towards teaching RE as perceived by recently assigned RE teachers (Survey Questions 24-28)

<i>As a [recently assigned] RE teacher, I tend to feel confident in...</i>	SA	A	U	D	SD	Omit	Total	Mean Value ¹	Stand. Dev. ²
24. Managing the demands made on my own faith stance.	32 (26)	58 (48)	23 (19)	6 (5)	0 (0)	3 (3)	122 (100)	1.98	0.87
25. Presenting Catholic beliefs and practices.	31 (25)	63 (52)	23 (19)	5 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	122 (100)	2.02	0.78
26. Relating students' experiences to Catholic beliefs and practices.	27 (22)	62 (51)	24 (20)	8 (7)	0 (0)	1 (1)	122 (100)	2.09	0.84
27. Fostering an atmosphere of Christian love and respect.	51 (42)	59 (48)	10 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)	122 (100)	1.63	0.66
28. Fostering positive relationships with my students.	68 (56)	47 (39)	6 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	122 (100)	1.48	0.61

Note:

1. The Mean Value represents the average of numerical values scored after each category was given a numerical value. SA = Strongly Agree (1); A = Agree (2); U = uncertain (3); D = Disagree (4) and SD = Strongly Disagree (5). Omit indicates that no response was given.
2. Stand. Dev. = Standard Deviation.
3. Italicised numbers in parentheses indicate percentages and rounded to the nearest whole numbers.
4. Shaded scores represent the Mode (most frequent response) for that item.

The overwhelming positive response by teachers (Table 5.32) was to Item 27, 'foster an atmosphere of Christian love and respect' (90%). and Item 28, 'foster positive relationships with my students' (95%). This response seemed to re-emphasise earlier responses regarding the importance of being student-centred and the creation of a learning culture that exhibits and promotes the values of the draft PAREC. Other items in Table 5.32 indicate how in-tune recently assigned teachers were with the teaching process of the Units (Figure 2.1, p.39). In 'presenting Catholic beliefs and practices', 77% felt confident in doing so and 73% believed they were confident in being able to relate 'students' experiences to Catholic beliefs and practices'. As to issues relating to adequate faith formation, 74% of teachers in the survey agreed they felt confident enough in 'managing the demands made on their own faith stance'. This response seemed to reinforce again the trend that recently assigned RE teachers mostly lacked sufficient professional training in organising liturgies and other religious opportunities for students.

5.5.3 Teacher beliefs about the aims of RE

Teachers were asked to rank stipulated aims of RE from (1) to (6), with (6) being least important in response to the statement: ‘As a [recently assigned] RE teacher, I believe the aims of RE should encourage students to ...’ Teachers were also given the opportunity to include a sixth item to rank. As with the frequency of use item (p.178), the respondents then had the flexibility to consider the merits of the five stipulated items and had the option of including another volunteered item that they felt was important to consider. A score was calculated from the rankings given by each teacher. As some teachers gave two or three items the same rank, the previously described practice (p.178) was used. The item with the lowest total score was considered the most preferred aim of RE and so forth on the other items. Volunteered items were counted then given a rank from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items. The top ranked items are shown in Table 5.33 (p.201).

Table 5.33 Ranking of Aims of Religious Education by recently assigned RE teachers (Survey Question 29)

A. Stipulated Items

Rank	Item
1.	Develop social justice and tolerance for others.
2.	Develop a closer relationship with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3.	Relate the Gospel example of Jesus to their lives.
4.	Participate fully in formal prayers and liturgy.
5.	Understand God’s intervention in human history.

B. Volunteered Items

Rank	Item
6.	Integrate faith and life
7.	To be able to share their (students’) faith
8.	Learn about the history of the Church, its policies and Sacraments
8.	See self-worth in themselves (students)
9.	Understand and listen to their (students’) consciences

Note: Ranking is from most frequent (1) to least frequent (9).

The highest priority for recently assigned RE teachers in Table 5.33 was to develop social justice and tolerance for others in the students. However, ‘Understand God’s intervention in human history’ was ranked last on the stipulated items list. However, the highest volunteered item response was to ‘integrate faith and life’. The rankings seemed to complement what the *General Directory for Catechesis* called an approach with a ‘missionary or humanitarian nature’ (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, par.185). How well this approach was understood warranted further investigation.

Some caution was needed about the method chosen to report these rankings from the survey. There was an expectation that the item with the highest ranking was the item that scored the highest rank most frequently. In this case, ‘Develop social justice and tolerance for others’ did rank higher than other items but upon closer inspection this response was not necessarily the item that scored the highest most frequently. Rather, other items were ranked higher but their frequency of highest ranking was more

diverse among the respondents. For example, if there were three items to be ranked: A, B and C then possible arrangements of rankings could be ABC, BAC, and CAB. It appeared that A had the most frequent highest ranking but B and C also were ranked highest at least once. Such a ranking outcome does not reflect the divided views of the respondents. One Way ANOVAs were conducted to test whether there were significant differences between sub-groups of teachers as follows.

Teachers with a high RE teaching load appeared to prefer encouraging students to relate the Gospel example of Jesus to their lives as the aim of Religious Education compared to teachers with a low RE teaching load (Table 5.34, p.203). The One Way ANOVA indicated there was a significant difference between the mean ratings of these sub-groups, $F(3, 117) = 4.80, p = 0.003$. The Post Hoc (Scheffé) test, $p = 0.045$, reported there was a significant mean difference between teachers with <25% teaching load in RE and teachers with >75% RE teaching load.

RARE teachers with a high RE teaching load also seemed to least prefer the item, 'Develop social justice and tolerance for others' in comparison to teachers with a low RE teaching load (Table 5.35, p.203). Again, the One Way ANOVA indicated significant difference, $F(3, 117) = 10.3, p < 0.001$. The Post Hoc (Scheffé) test confirmed there was a mean difference between: teachers with <25% RE teaching load and teachers with a 51-75% RE teaching load, $p < 0.001$; teachers with <25% RE teaching load and teachers with >75% RE teaching load, $p = 0.005$; and, teachers with 25-50% RE teaching load and teachers with 51-75% RE teaching load, $p = 0.010$.

The item 'Understand God's intervention in human history' appeared to be rated higher by teachers with a teaching load between 25% and 75% in comparison to other teachers (Table 5.36, p.204). The mean ratings indicated there was a difference between these sub-groups and a One Way ANOVA was performed to confirm the difference to be significant, $F(3, 117) = 3.49, p = 0.018$. The Post Hoc (Scheffé) test indicated that there were differences between teachers with 21-50% RE teaching load and teachers with >75% RE teaching load, $p = 0.021$.

Overall, the findings from Table 5.34 (p.203), Table 5.35 (p.203) and Table 5.36 (p.204) suggest that teachers who are more experienced and familiar with the content of the RE Units tended to focus less on secular humanist aspects (such as, 'Develop

social justice and tolerance for others’) and more on the catechetical aspects of the Units. However, the evidence from Table 5.34 and Table 5.36 (p.204) also indicates that this catechetical focus may be more formational rather than instructional. These discrepancies warranted further investigation in the interviews to see how well recently assigned RE teachers understood the aims of Religious Education.

Table 5.34 Stipulated Item: Relate the Gospel example of Jesus to their lives by RE Teaching Load

RE teaching load	Respondents	Mean Rating ¹	Overall Rank ²
<25%	76	2.91	3.00
25%-50%	32	2.61	3.00
51%-75%	6	1.75	1.00
>75%	7	1.71	1.00
Not stated	1 ³	3.00	3.00
Total	122	2.71	3.00

Note:

1. The term ‘Mean Rating’ refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term ‘Overall Rank’ refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 29.
3. Not stated (n=1) was not included in ANOVA and Scheffé test.

Table 5.35 Stipulated Item: Develop social justice and tolerance for others by RE Teaching Load

RE teaching load	Respondents	Mean Rating ¹	Overall Rank ²
<25%	76	1.76	1.00
25%-50%	32	2.13	1.00
51%-75%	6	3.75	3.00
>75%	7	3.29	3.00
Not stated	1 ³	2.00	2.00
Total	122	2.05	1.00

Note:

1. The term ‘Mean Rating’ refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term ‘Overall Rank’ refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 29.
3. Not stated (n=1) was not included in ANOVA and Scheffé test.

Table 5.36 Stipulated Item: Understand God’s intervention in human history by RE Teaching Load

RE teaching load	Respondents	Mean Rating ¹	Overall Rank ²
<25%	76	4.11	5.00
25%-50%	32	3.88	4.00
51%-75%	6	3.83	4.00
>75%	7	5.29	5.00
Not stated	1 ³	5.00	5.00
Total	122	4.11	5.00

Note:

1. The term ‘Mean Rating’ refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term ‘Overall Rank’ refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 29.
3. Not stated (n=1) was not included in ANOVA and Scheffé test.

5.5.4 Teacher emphasis placed on the content of RE

Teachers were asked to rank stipulated emphases on the content of RE from (1) to (6), with (6) being least emphasis in response to the statement: ‘As a [recently assigned] RE teacher, I believe the content of RE should emphasise....’ Teachers also were given the opportunity to include a sixth item to rank. As with the frequency of use item (p.178), the respondents then had the flexibility to consider the merits of the five stipulated items and had the option to include another volunteered item that they felt was important to consider. A rank score was calculated from the rankings given by each teacher. Once again, as some teachers gave two or three items the same rank, the previous practice described (p.178) was used. The item with the lowest total score was considered to be the most preferred emphasis and so forth on the other items (Table 5.37, p.205). Volunteered items were counted then given a rank from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items.

Table 5.37 Ranking of emphasis on the Content of Religious Education by recently assigned RE teachers (Survey Question 30)

A. Stipulated Items

Rank	Item
1.	What helps a person to reach full human potential.
2.	Actions for transforming society for the common good.
3.	Consequences of social issues and trends on human nature .
4.	How the Gospels relate to significant life experiences.
5.	Knowledge about Catholic beliefs and practices.

B. Volunteered Items

Rank	Item
6.	Relationship with Jesus
7.	Focus on Church teachings, solid apologetics
8.	Relationship with God
9.	Practical ways to live like Christ
9.	Student relationships

Note: Ranking is from most frequent (1) to least frequent (10).

Interestingly, the rankings on emphasis reflected closely the teaching process of the draft PAREC (Figure 2.1, p.39) and reinforced the ‘humanitarian nature’ of faith development (Congregation of the Clergy 1997, par.185). Content that emphasised reaching ‘full human potential’, ‘actions for transforming society’ and ‘consequences on human nature’ seemed to be more desirable than emphasising how ‘Gospels relate to significant life experiences’ and ‘knowledge about Catholic beliefs and practices’. Female teachers seemed to prefer emphasising full human potential more than did male teachers (Table 5.38, p.206). A One Way ANOVA confirmed that the difference in mean ratings was significant, $F(1, 119) = 4.10, p = 0.045$. Personal human formation seemed to be a higher priority for female teachers than for male teachers. Such a contrast indicates that further exploration of this item should include comments from both male and female teachers (Chapter 6, pp.233, 234 and 236).

Table 5.38 Stipulated Item: What helps a person to reach full human potential by Gender

Gender	Respondents	Mean Rating¹	Overall Rank²
Female teacher	85	2.38	1.00
Male teacher	37	3.01	2.00
Total	122	2.55	1.00

Note:

1. The term 'Mean Rating' refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term 'Overall Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 30.

Teachers with a tertiary qualification in RE appeared to rank emphasising the 'consequences of social issues and trends on human nature' lower than did teachers without tertiary qualifications (Table 5.39, p.207). A One Way ANOVA was performed and confirmed that the differences between the mean ratings was significant, $F(1, 119) = 4.30, p = 0.040$. Teachers with qualifications in RE, also seemed to prefer emphasising relating the Gospels to significant life experiences more than did teachers without qualifications (Table 5.40, p.207). The result from the One Way ANOVA, $F(1, 119) = 4.56, p = 0.035$, confirmed the significance in the differences between the mean ratings. Teachers who had not begun the study component of Accreditation seemed to rank 'consequences' more highly than other teachers did (Table 5.41, p.207). Again, to test for significance, a One Way ANOVA was performed and confirmed the differences between mean ratings was significant, $F(2, 118) = 4.88, p = 0.009$. The Post Hoc (Scheffé) test, $p = 0.035$, indicated that there were differences between teachers who had completed the study component and teachers who had not begun the study component.

Table 5.39 Stipulated Item: Consequences of social issues and trends on human nature by RE Tertiary Qualification

RE Tertiary Qualification	Respondents	Mean Rating ¹	Overall Rank ²
Yes	27	3.59	5.00
No	95	2.98	3.00
Total	122	3.11	3.00

Note:

1. The term 'Mean Rating' refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term 'Overall Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 30.

Table 5.40 Stipulated Item: How the Gospels relate to significant life experiences by RE Tertiary Qualification

RE Tertiary Qualification	Respondents	Mean Rating ¹	Overall Rank ²
Yes	27	2.67	1.00
No	95	3.27	5.00
Total	122	3.14	4.00

Note:

1. The term 'Mean Rating' refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term 'Overall Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 30.

Table 5.41 Stipulated Item: Consequences of social issues and trends on human nature by RE Tertiary Qualification

Accreditation to Teach RE: Study component	Respondents	Mean Rating ¹	Overall Rank ²
Not Begun	9	1.94	1.00
In Progress	46	2.89	3.00
Completed	67	3.43	5.00
Total	122	3.11	3.00

Note:

1. The term 'Mean Rating' refers to the average rating response (from 1 to 5) teachers gave to that stipulated item.
2. The term 'Overall Rank' refers to the order of priority (from 1 to 5) for that mean rating compared to the mean ratings of other stipulated items in Question 30.

Recently assigned RE teachers did want to emphasise the faith aspects in their teaching. In the Volunteered Items of Table 5.37 (p.205) teachers felt an emphasis on content dealing with the faith formation of their students such as ‘the relationship with Jesus’, ‘apologetics’, ‘relationship with God’ and ‘practical ways to live like Christ’ were important. Overall, the findings from Table 5.39 (p.207), Table 5.40 (p.207) and Table 5.41 (p.207) suggest that teachers with a professional background in RE are more likely to emphasise the catechetical aspects of the Units rather than remain focused on secular humanist aspects (Benson and Guerra 1985).

5.5.5 Important advice about what students need to learn

Based on their experiences of teaching RE, recently assigned RE teachers were asked to comment upon the most important advice they would give others about what was crucial for students to learn (Table 5.42, p.209). A sizeable proportion of teachers (16%) offered no advice. Among other alternatives, perhaps they did not wish to or, as the question was towards the end of the survey, perhaps they were becoming fatigued. Some teachers answered the question by giving advice to others about what they should do to help students learn (‘become very familiar with each Unit taught’, 11%). There were also two instances (1%) of teachers commenting that they ‘did not understand the question or what to answer’. Nonetheless, a number of teachers (14%) believed it was crucial to ‘offer a vision of a positive self-image, self love and personal development’, to deepen the ‘understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices’ of students (12%) and to ‘link Catholic beliefs and practices to the daily challenges faced by students’ (9%). This deepening appreciation for integration of life and faith was complemented by comments that recommended promoting the love of God as part of their faith development (10%), the transformation of society (9%), the relationships between Gospels and real life, society and lives of the students (9%) and an understanding of Jesus as a perfect role model (7%).

Table 5.42 Advice from recently assigned RE teachers about what was crucial for students to learn in Religious Education (Survey Question 31)

Comment themes or phrases	Frequency (%)
• Offer a vision of a positive self-image/ self love/ personal development	24 (14%)
• Deepening understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices	20 (12%)
• Become very familiar with each Unit you teach	18 (11%)
• Promote love of God, the Salvation offered, faith development, prayer/liturgy experiences as distinct from Catholic beliefs and practices	17 (10%)
• Link between Catholic beliefs and practice and the daily challenges faced by students	16 (9%)
• Promote the understanding and relationships between the Gospels and real life, society and their own lives	16 (9%)
• Promote transformation of society, seek social justice, love and tolerance, respect for all	15 (9%)
• Understanding Jesus as the perfect role model	13 (7%)
• Identifying human weaknesses, that actions have consequences, sin	5 (3%)
• Openness to reflect on ideas presented	4 (2%)
• Did not understand the question or what to answer	2 (1%)
• No advice stated	29 (16%)
Total	179 (100%)

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

5.5.6 Overview: Understandings of the Underlying Curriculum Principles by RARE Teachers

The depth of understanding about the principles and purposes of RE among recently assigned teachers was ambiguous but this is not surprising. At this stage, they seemed to recognise what they should understand but lacked the professional formation or experience to assimilate their understanding as a part of their teaching practice. Therefore, they wanted to portray a commitment towards involvement in the religious dimensions of the school but were uncertain about how they should implement these dimensions themselves (such as, organising Masses and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation). They expressed an agreeable attitude

towards teaching RE but seemed divided as to what were the aims of Religious Education. Formation and experience seemed to be two important ingredients of how well RARE teachers understood the aims of RE and what content to emphasise to students. The disparity between teachers appeared to be reinforced by the lack of comment and the variety of advice given (Table 5.42, p.209) as to what was crucial for students to learn in Religious Education. Finding out more of what recently assigned RE teachers understood about their role and the aims of RE became important to pursue later in the interviews.

5.6 Selection of the Interview Participants

After developing baseline data, it was possible to select a purposive sample of interview participants based upon the responses to Likert items in the three sections of the survey, instructional resources, teaching approach and underlying principles (Chapter 4, p.143). Table 5.43 (p.211) lists alphabetically the 28 participants (using pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and retain a level of humaneness, Chapter 4, p.150) and their backgrounds in terms of age range, main teaching area, Accreditation, teaching experience in Religious Education and the category from which they were selected (Chapter 4, p.146). The table was also a useful contextual backdrop to the verbatim comments provided by the participants in Chapters 6 and 7 dealing with the First and Second Round of Interview Findings.

Table 5.43 Background to the Interview Participants

Participant Pseudonyms	Age Range (Years)	Main Teaching Area	Accreditation		RE Teaching Experience	Selection Category*
			Study	Inservice		
Amber	21-25	English	✓	✓	2 nd year	TAPP-Mean
Anne	51-55	T & E	✓	✓	2 nd year	UPRI-Low
Barbara	21-25	LOTE	✓	✓	3 rd year	TAPP-Low
Brian	26-30	Arts	✓	✓	4 th year	UPRI-Low
Charles	36-40	Arts	IP	×	2 nd year	IRES-High
Clare	21-25	T & E	✓	✓	2 nd year	IRES-High TAPP-High
Darla	46-50	English	✓	✓	4 th year	UPIN-High
Diana	26-30	English	✓	✓	2 nd year	IRES-Mean TAPP-Mean UPRI-Mean
Edith	26-30	English	✓	✓	6 th year	TAPP-Low
Edward	21-25	SOSE	IP	✓	3 rd year	UPRI-Low
Pat	26-30	English	✓	×	2 nd year	IRES-High TAPP-High
Fran	41-45	Science	IP	IP	3 rd year	IRES-Mean
Frank	21-25	Science	IP	×	5 th year	IRES-Mean
Gayle	41-45	T & E	✓	✓	5 th year	IRES-Mean
Gwen	46-50	English	IP	IP	6 th year	TAPP-High
Hailey	26-30	Science	IP	✓	4 th year	UPRI-Mean
Ian	31-35	Arts	IP	✓	4 th year	UPRI-High
Jessica	46-50	English	✓	✓	2 nd year	IRES-High
Kate	21-25	SOSE	✓	×	2 nd year	UPRI-High
Mark	36-40	Science	IP	✓	2 nd year	IRES-Low UPRI-Low
Nancy	26-30	English	✓	✓	4 th year	IRES-Mean TAPP-Mean UPRI-Mean
Olivia	31-35	T & E	✓	✓	3 rd year	IRES -High
Pippa	21-25	Science	IP	✓	3 rd year	UPRI-Mean
Rose	21-25	RE	✓	✓	3 rd year	TAPP-High
Steven	41-45	T & E	×	IP	3 rd year	IRES-Low TAPP-Mean UPRI-Low
Tim	26-30	English	✓	✓	4 th year	TAPP-Low
Ursula	21-25	LOTE	✓	✓	5 th year	TAPP-Low
Victor	21-25	H & PE	IP	✓	2 nd year	IRES-High UPRI-High

Note:

Involvement:

Did not participate in Second Round of Interviews

Learning Areas (abbreviations):

- H & PE = Health & Physical Education
- LOTE = Language other than English
- SOSE = Studies of Society & Environment
- RE = Religious Education
- T & E = Technology & Enterprise

Accreditation status:

- ✓ = completed
- IP = in progress
- ×

Selection Categories:

- * = see Table 4.3, p.146
- IRES = Instructional resources
- TAPP = Teaching approach
- UPRI = Underlying principles

Overall, the interview participants in Table 5.43 (p.211) were characterised by certain demographic and professional backgrounds. The majority of the participants were lay female teachers (64%) from the Archdiocese of Perth (75%) who taught mainly in learning areas of the Humanities (60%). The age categories of these teachers ranged from 21-25 years (36%), 26-30 years (25%) to >30 years (39%). A high proportion of the interview participants were accredited to teach RE with 61% of teachers having completed the study component and 75% having completed the inservice component. Most teachers (61%) were in their second or third year of teaching Religious Education. The distribution of the number of teachers in the Selection Categories (Table 5.44) was based on Table 4.3 (p.146) after teachers consented to be involved in the interview stages of the research. The result was a sample cohort that reflected as closely as possible the target population of RARE teachers based not only on their survey responses but also on their backgrounds.

Table 5.44 Distribution of Interviewees across the Curriculum Implementation Categories

Sub-Groups	Instructional Resources (IRES)	Teaching Approach (TAPP)	Underlying Principles (UPRI)	Total
Low Score (Positive)				
First Interview	2*	4	5	11
<i>Second Interview</i>	2*	2	5	9
Mean Score (Typical)				
First Interview	5	4	4	13
<i>Second Interview</i>	3	3	4	10
High Score (Critical)				
First Interview	6	4	4	14
<i>Second Interview</i>	5	4	3	12
Total				
First Interview	13	12	13	38
<i>Second Interview</i>	10	9	12	31

Note:

* *The mean scores for Instructional Resources were very low (i.e. many teachers responded with agree or strongly agree) and the standard deviation was narrow. As a result, the low score cluster grouping was small in comparison to other groupings.*

5.7 Conclusion: Recently Assigned RE Teachers implementing the draft RE Units

This study explored the perceptions of RARE teachers across the three dimensions of curriculum implementation. The concerns expressed previously by religious educators about recently assigned RE teachers (Chapter 2, p.46) were premised on these teachers being a coherent and large group of RE teachers (Table 4.1, p.141). The survey has highlighted that these teachers do share much in common with each other. However, there is a need to recognise that there are some significant differences between sub-groups of teachers. These differences seem to revolve around demographic and professional variables such as gender, age, RE teaching load and tertiary study. These variables were kept in mind when selecting participants for the interviews (Table 5.43, p.211) and for reporting from the two rounds of interviews. The survey results suggest that further research also needs to be undertaken to explore the influence of these variables not only on this cohort but also across all categories of RE teachers (Chapter 9, p.345). However, a number of issues about implementing the draft RE Units emerged from the survey responses that warranted further exploration. Each aspect of implementation is discussed next. Questions were proposed as a focus for the interview phase of the study.

Use of Instructional Resources

Recently assigned RE teachers initially used the materials provided by the draft RE Units, especially the frequent use of the Mastersheets and Student Books. These resources became the cornerstone of their teaching. Why these teachers had a seemingly over-reliance on these resources was investigated in the interviews. Teachers also commented that they used other resources available to them. They were convinced that the resources provided reduced their lesson preparation time because of the accessibility. This perception raised a number of questions for further exploration:

- Why were recently assigned RE teachers concerned about the priority RE received in their preparation time?
- Why did these teachers rely so much on the Mastersheets and Student Book?

- Why did teachers change their use of resources, preferring resources they or others created?

Application of Teaching Approach

Respondents indicated that they were comfortable with the teaching approach as translated in the Teaching and Learning Programs of the draft RE Units. As competent teachers, they felt they had the skills to create lessons from these programs using the ‘Steps of the Teaching Process’ outlined in the Teacher’s Manual (Figure 2.1, p.39). However, while familiar with student-centred approaches to learning, they seemed less able to make links between life experiences of students and the faith concepts or understandings presented in the draft Units. The use of Scripture and organisation of liturgies were particularly worrisome to recently assigned RE teachers. Perhaps these RE teachers had the generic teaching and management skills but lacked the specialist skills to assist students in integrating faith understandings into their lives. This situation raised a number of further questions to be explored in later chapters:

- Why did recently assigned RE teachers closely adhere to the ‘Steps of the Teaching Process’ promoted in the draft RE Units?
- Why did recently assigned RE teachers who seem to feel confident about student-centred strategies also seem uncomfortable making links between life experiences of students and faith understandings?
- How did these teachers manage the difficulties of using Scripture and organising liturgies as part of their RE teaching?
- What changes in teaching approach occurred as recently assigned RE teachers became more experienced in teaching the draft RE Units?

Teacher Understanding of Underlying Curriculum Principles

Recently assigned RE teachers seemed to be very enthusiastic about how they portrayed themselves. Many were eager to participate in the religious life of the school (although there was a difference between helping out and managing the organisation of religious activities such as liturgies). Part of their teacher persona was to appear positive about promoting a faith witness and a Christian environment

conducive to learning. However, their understanding of the purposes of RE remained mixed and couched in catechetical or personal faith commitment terms rather than as educational outcomes. This mixed understanding also raised a number of questions:

- Why did recently assigned RE teachers appear eager to be involved in some aspects of the religious dimensions of the school and not others?
- Why did these teachers have diverse perceptions about the purposes of Religious Education?
- Why did an emphasis on humanitarian issues come to the fore in the perceptions of some of these teachers?

Chapter 6 draws upon these above questions as a basis for the interview questions. The questions were designed to assist in addressing the primary research question:

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

The intention was to delve more deeply into how these teachers coped with the demands of curriculum implementation placed on them. The survey responses from recently assigned RE teachers have suggested their situation was characterised by a lack of familiarity with specific aspects of teaching Religious Education due to inexperience and limited personal and professional formation.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the development of a database from the survey responses of recently assigned RE teachers about their experience of implementing the draft PAREC. The database included data on the demographic and professional backgrounds of teachers as well as responses to items concerning the use of instructional resources, teaching approach and understanding of the underlying RE curriculum principles. The database provided a clearer picture of the target population and assisted the process in selecting a sample group of recently assigned RE teachers. A number of issues also emerged from the survey, which warranted further exploration, and became the basis for the interview questions in the next chapter.