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To teach or not to teach? The experiences and self-perceptions of early career teachers in Western Australian catholic primary schools that led them to remain in the profession

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TO TEACH OR NOT TO TEACH?
THE EXPERIENCES AND SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CAREER TEACHERS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS THAT LED THEM TO REMAIN IN THE PROFESSION.

Submitted by

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Western Australia, 6959

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Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. All research procedures in the thesis received approval of the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame, Australia.

Signed: Deborah Black

Date: 20th August, 2018
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Abstract

The focus of this research was Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in Western Australian Catholic primary schools, their experiences and self-perceptions that led them to remain in the profession. The review of literature highlighted four aspects that were pertinent to ECTs’ decisions to remain in the profession. These four areas were: motivation to join the teaching profession; likes and dislikes of teaching; challenges faced as a teacher; and, strategies used for coping with challenges faced that maintained motivation to remain in the teaching profession.

The study focused on an instrumental case study, the conduct of which was located predominantly in the paradigm of qualitative research. It was situated within the epistemology of constructivism, and the chosen theoretical perspective was interpretivism with a lens of symbolic interactionism. The data were gathered through a quantitative self-report survey, qualitative individual semi-structured interviewing, and researcher reflective journaling. Miles and Huberman’s (1994) interactive model of data management and analysis was used to display and interpret the data.

The study findings provided answers to the five specific research questions derived from the review of the literature. The ECTs in the present study expressed feeling motivated to join the teaching profession mainly due to personal enjoyment of working with children. The ECTs identified five factors that they liked about teaching: student learning and growth, relationships, variety, personal challenge, and holidays. The two main dislikes of the profession were workload and parental behaviour. The challenges that ECTs faced were closely aligned to their dislikes of teaching.

Early Career Teachers across all three cohorts raised the notion of obtaining support as the main strategy to cope with the challenges they faced. Other factors that helped them cope with challenges and contributed to their remaining in the profession included: personal and professional growth, students, resilience, CEWA ECT program, holidays and, personal responsibilities. Overall, the factors most likely to keep ECTs in the profession were those that linked to their initial motivations to join teaching. Workload, lack of support and difficult parental behaviours were strong disincentives for ECTs to remain in teaching.

As a result of the research, a Goodness-of-Fit Framework was proposed to explain potential pathways contributing to ECT retention and attrition. The research also presented recommendations and areas for future research.
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Chapter One: The Research Defined

1.1 Introduction to Early Career Teacher Attrition and Retention

The exodus of large numbers of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) from the profession is a major concern throughout the western world (Pamu, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Smithers & Robinson, 2003; Wang, 2007). A substantial body of research has been conducted internationally to investigate the factors that contribute to ECT attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, &Wyckoff, 2005; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Feng, 2006; Joerger, 2002). Some studies have found that as many as 50 per cent of new teachers leave within the first five years of starting teaching (Cooper & Davey, 2011; Murnane et al., 1993). Those most likely to leave are often the best and brightest ECTs as measured by university entrance exams (Ingersoll, 1999; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). These findings are particularly worrying given the significant amount of research suggesting the most well-prepared and capable teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2008). The difference between being taught by a highly capable and a less than capable teacher can translate into a full grade level of achievement in a single school year (Hanushek, 1992; Kane & Staiger, 2008).

Government administrations, policy makers, education sectors and schools alike are struggling with the impact that teacher attrition has had, and continues to have (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Aside from the economic costs, ECT attrition has a major impact on school communities and national education standards (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Moore, 2009; Paris, 2013; Schaefer, Long & Clandinin, 2012). The Australian government’s implementation of a range of initiatives, including holding the 2007 House of Representatives Inquiry into Australian teacher education (Paris, 2013) and the establishment of the Australian Institute of Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL, 2011), have attempted to address teacher retention. Another initiative was the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project “Addressing the Teacher Exodus: Enhancing Early Career Teacher Resilience and Retention in Changing Times”. The project was conducted from 2008 – 2012 (Johnson, Down, Le Cornu, Peters, Sullivan, Pearce, & Hunter, 2012) and involved ECTs from the government, Catholic and independent school sectors of Western Australia and South Australia. It provided valuable insight into the issue of teacher retention in Australia and added to the
relatively small body of research available (De Nobile & McCormick, 2010; Keogh, Jarvis & Pendergast, 2010; Patty, 2009; Williams, 2002;). The Department of Education in Western Australia implemented a Graduate program designed to provide ongoing professional workplace learning for teachers in their first two years post-graduation. In 2013, Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) began trialling an ECT program based in part on Johnson et al.’s (2010) research. The program aimed to increase the retention of ECTs in Western Australian Catholic schools (CEWA, 2016) and is currently being revised. An additional Federal Government initiative involved the establishment of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) in 2014 to advise on the improvement of teacher education courses. However, despite a range of approaches to addressing attrition, the loss of ECTs from the profession remains a concern.

1.2 Researcher Motives

The motivation for this research dates back to 2005 when I joined the teaching staff of a rural Catholic K-12 College in the South-West of Western Australia. Several other teachers commenced at the school at the same time including ‘Sarah’, a graduate teacher. Sarah was excited at the prospect of starting her career. She was full of ideas and enthusiasm and was passionate about working with young children. She was well respected by the parents, students and staff however by the end of Term Three, Sarah had resigned from the school and left teaching forever. I was shocked by the turn of events and felt a great sense of loss for both Sarah and the school community.

Whilst researching contemporary issues in Australian education some years later, I was dismayed to find that Sarah’s story was not an isolated case. What fascinated me however, was that I knew experienced teachers who had faced challenging issues within the early years of their career and yet they had remained in the profession. I was left wondering, why? What is different? In 2013, I worked at a metropolitan Catholic primary school that employed seven ECTs but initially had no support structures in place to guide them as they transitioned from pre-service to in-service teachers. The experiences of those seven young teachers, and Sarah’s story in particular, motivated me to examine the professional and personal circumstances of ECTs in order to consider ways the Catholic Education system could develop and support its new teachers.
1.3 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research was to explore the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools to determine why they have remained in the profession. Specifically, representatives from three ECT cohorts participated in the research: second-year, third-year, and fourth-year ECTs. Underlying the research purpose is the belief that by understanding the needs of ECTs in both their professional and personal realms, educational authorities may strengthen ECT preparation and support programs thereby potentially increasing the likelihood of ECTs remaining in the profession.

1.4 Research Questions

The overarching research question to be explored was: What are the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools that led them to remain in the profession? Five specific research questions were investigated. These were:
1. What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?
2. What do Early Career Teachers like/dislike about teaching?
3. What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?
4. How do Early Career Teachers cope with the challenges they face in light of their experiences?
5. What factor, or factors, in Early Career Teachers’ teaching experiences helped them work through the challenges and made them want to continue or leave?

1.5 Design of the Research and Data Analysis

The epistemological approach of this research is constructivist in nature and uses interpretivism as the theoretical perspective, with a lens of symbolic interactionism. The methodology is instrumental case study. Data collection methods included an online survey, semi-structured interviews and reflective journaling by the researcher. In accordance with Miles and Huberman’s (1994) interactive model of data management and analysis, three interactive stages were used to analyse the collected qualitative data: data condensation; data display; and, drawing and verifying conclusions. The online quantitative survey provided a ‘snapshot’ of the three ECT participant cohorts, namely second-year, third-year and fourth-year ECTs in Western Australian Catholic primary
schools. The quantitative survey results were analysed using the compare tool on Survey Monkey and provided descriptive statistics on the ECT participants which were displayed using graphs and percentages.

6. An interview guide directed both the ECT participant and CEWA ECT program facilitator groups’ qualitative interviews. Each participant member checked his or her interview which had been recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Researcher reflective journal notes were written during and after the interviews and provided additional information regarding the ECT participants’ and CEWA ECT program facilitators’ responses. During the data display phase, all interview data were transcribed and displayed in a table. The data were then analysed and patterns within the data were distinguished and condensed into codes. After the initial coding, the data were examined further, and the codes were clustered into themes. Common themes across the cohorts and cohort-specific themes were identified and displayed in tables. Data from the semi-structured interviews gave an insight into the lived experiences and self-perceptions of the ECT participants. The responses from the CEWA ECT program facilitator participants enhanced the understanding of the ECTs’ lived experiences and self-perceptions.

1.6 Context

Context allows the researcher to examine the “big picture” and to holistically look at the setting of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Dey (1993) suggests that context provides the “lens” that clarifies the conditions in which participants are immersed. As such, one can further understand the meaning presented by participants when the circumstances in which they exist are clarified (Dey, 1993). There are six dimensions within the context of the research which are overviewed in Table 1.1.
Table 1.1

Overview of the Context of the Research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension One: The State of Western Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension Two: Geo-political climate and education policy/legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension Three: Catholic education in Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension Four: Demographic data of Catholic primary schools in Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension Five: Teachers in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension Six: Early Career Teachers in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dimension One: The State of Western Australia

Western Australia is Australia’s western-most state and occupies one third of the continent (Columbia Encyclopaedia, 2014). Of the states and territories of Australia, Western Australia, has the greatest area covering 2,529,875 km$^2$ and spanning 2,400 kilometres from north to south (GeoScience Australia, 2013). According to the 2011 Census, Western Australia’s population is 2,239,170 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). Approximately 1.8 million people reside within the metropolitan area of Perth, the capital city of Western Australia. Western Australia is divided into ten regional areas: Metropolitan, Great Southern, South-West, Peel, Wheatbelt, Goldfields-Esperance, Mid-West, Gascoyne, Pilbara (North-West) and the Kimberley. Around 400,000 people live in regional areas of Western Australia (ABS). Each region of Western Australia has its own distinctive features: topography, climate, population, natural resources, flora and fauna. Figure 1.1 outlines the different geographical regions of Western Australia.
Participants in the research project represented six of the ten Western Australian geographic regions: Metropolitan, South-West, Goldfields-Esperance, Mid-West, Kimberley and Peel.

**Dimension Two: Geo-political climate and education policy/legislation**

Western Australia is naturally resource-rich and its economy is closely linked to the mining industry (Ye, 2006). The boom and down-turn phases in the mining industry impact on the teaching profession (Richardson & Denniss, 2011). During boom times some teachers leave the profession, drawn to the opportunity to earn large salaries however during down-turn periods teachers either return to the teaching profession or elect not to move from it.

There have been significant changes in education throughout Australia that have impacted on the Western Australian sector. These include development and implementation of the Australian Curriculum, the introduction of the Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL) professional standards (AITSL, 2010) and changes in registration requirements to practice as a teacher (Teacher...
Registration Board Western Australia, 2013). AITSL is a public company, founded in 2010 and funded by the Australian Government, that provides national leadership for the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. The AITSL Standards explicitly state what teachers and principals are expected to know, understand and do in their work. The AITSL Standards were endorsed by all Australian State and Territory Ministers for Education in July 2011 and commencing in January 2012 applied to all Australian teachers and principals (Education Services Australia, 2014). Whilst the intention of these initiatives was to create a unified curriculum across the nation, to raise teaching standards and ultimately to raise Australia’s educational ranking at a global level (AITSL, 2010; Reid, 2005), the potential impact on teacher attrition has not yet been measured or realised.

Other governmental, economic and geo-political matters have arisen which also have the potential to have either a positive or a negative impact on the teaching profession. In 2013, the Western Australian State Government announced major cutbacks to education funding which resulted in budget cuts for schools (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2015). In 2014, a freeze was placed on government advertising and on new teacher employment. The impact that these matters have had on people choosing to either enter, or remain in, the teaching profession in unknown.

Dimension Three: Catholic education in Western Australia

Catholic education is the second largest employer of teachers in Western Australia (CEWA, 2013). The Catholic Education system in Western Australia provides for more than 70,000 young people in 161 Catholic schools (110 primary schools, 30 secondary schools and 21 composite schools) spread across the four dioceses (CECWA, 2014).

Bishops individually lead their dioceses with their chief responsibility being Catholic education. The four Western Australian Diocesan Bishops, known collectively as the Western Australian Conference of Bishops, have undertaken a joint leadership role for Catholic education. Working in collaboration, each diocesan bishop has articulated his requirements for Catholic education through the Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015 (Hickey, Bianchini, Saunders, Holohan, & Sproxton, 2009). The Western Australian Conference of Bishops had delegated its authority for the running of Catholic education to Catholic Education
Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) to “assist them in exercising responsibility for the Catholic schools in their dioceses” (Hickey et al., 2009, para. 105). The responsibilities underpinning the work of CECWA are stated in the Terms of Reference of the Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015 (Hickey et al., 2009). Uniquely, CECWA has delegated the operation of its function to one Catholic Education Office, which has oversight over all schools in the four dioceses. Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), regarded as the secretariat of the CECWA, functions to ensure the responsibilities of the CECWA are carried out across the state (Hickey et al., 2009, para.107).

To support all dioceses, CEWA has one central office in the Archdiocese of Perth and smaller regional offices located in the Broome, Geraldton and Bunbury dioceses. Under the responsibility of the Executive Director of Catholic Education, CEWA supports Catholic schools in their religious and educational endeavours. Staff employed at the CEWA offices provide a range of support services to the Catholic schools in the diocese they represent. Figure 2 outlines the four Catholic dioceses within Western Australia and the number of Catholic schools within each (CECWA, 2013). The Catholic Education office of each diocese is located in the major city of the diocese.

![Figure 1.2. Map of Catholic Diocese in Australia: The four dioceses of Western Australia (The National Council of Priests in Australia).](image-url)
When describing the geographical location of a Catholic school in Western Australia, CEWA utilises the geo-locations identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The ABS provided four categories of geographic location to describe school location: metropolitan, provincial or rural, remote and very remote (ABS, 2013a; ACARA, 2012). Metropolitan locations are deemed as close to the capital city; provincial or rural is determined as an administration division within a state; remote is considered as spatially distant from the capital city of that state or territory; and very remote is an area considered very spatially distant from the capital city. This research utilises the term rural to include Catholic schools designated as provincial, the term remote, to describe those Catholic schools designated in remote and very remote locations, and metropolitan to describe those schools located in close proximity to the capital city of Perth. Participants in the research project represented all four dioceses and taught in schools located in metropolitan, rural and remote geo-locations. Table 1.2 presents the location and number of Catholic schools according to diocese and geolocation (CECWA, 2013).

Table 1.2

*Catholic School Location According to Dioceses and Geo-locations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
<th>Metropolitan</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>Very remote</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broome</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunbury</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geraldton</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2013)

*Dimension Four: Demographic data of Catholic primary schools in Western Australia*

Catholic Education in Western Australia employs over 9 000 staff of whom 4 270 are full-time equivalent teachers and school principals. With regard to teaching staff, there are 2 080 primary school teachers and 2 190 secondary teachers (CECWA,
The remaining employees are support staff. In 2013, there were 131 primary schools (solely primary and primary within a composite) schools within the Catholic education system of Western Australia. All Catholic primary schools in Western Australia are founded on the premise of providing a Christian education that develops the whole child (CEWA, 2013). Table 1.3 shows how the size and culture of Catholic primary schools varies greatly both between and within the different regions of Western Australia and reflects the diversity of those regions (CEWA, 2013).

Table 1.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
<th>K-PP</th>
<th>PreK-6</th>
<th>K-6 Girls</th>
<th>4-12 Boys</th>
<th>K-7</th>
<th>PP-7</th>
<th>K-10</th>
<th>K-12</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geraldton</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Catholic Education Commission Western Australia, 2013).

**Dimension Five: Teachers in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia**

The CECWA policy statement on the Appointment of Staff in Catholic Schools clearly outlines the requirements for teaching staff in Catholic schools (CECWA, 2014). Teachers are appointed by the principal as the designated representative of the Executive Director of Catholic Education Western Australia, who in turn is the diocesan Bishop’s designated representative. Employment may be temporary or ongoing. Expectations for employment as a primary teacher in a Catholic primary school are drawn from the *Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015* (Hickey et al., 2009). These inter-related expectations are in addition to the mandatory legislative requirements for teacher registration and ability to work with children and can be summarised as follows: evangelisation; commitment to Catholic
education; Christian Witness; and Accreditation and ongoing learning. These are now briefly explained.

Evangelisation refers to calling all people into a “relationship with God by repenting and believing in Jesus Christ and the good News he proclaimed” (Hickey, 2009, p. 12). As members of the Catholic school community, all primary teachers are expected to ensure that a Gospel atmosphere is spread throughout the school through its life and its curriculum. They are charged with the responsibility of spreading the Good News to their students, colleagues and members of the school community. Primary teachers employed in a Catholic school are required to be committed to Catholic education and to support the values of the Catholic Church. Part of this involves being prepared to live in a manner in keeping with the Catholic faith. Pastoral care and living as a Witness to Christ’s word is another requirement. This has implications for the manner in which teachers relate to students, staff and members of the school and broader community. Teachers are expected to value the human person and to “integrate faith, culture and life in all that they do” (Hickey, 2009, p. 44). As active, contributing members of the Catholic Church there is an expectation of a commitment on the part of the teacher to be up-to-date with Catholic teaching so that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to help their students integrate faith, culture and life. As such, Catholic primary school teachers have completed or undertake Accreditation to Teacher Religious Education (CEWA, 2018a; Hickey, 2009).

1.7 Research Participants

The research had two sets of participants, namely: ECTs and CEWA ECT program facilitators. Early Career Teachers were in their second, third or fourth year of teaching in Western Australian Catholic primary schools. Of the 50 ECT participants who completed the online, web-based survey, there were 44 females and six males. Twenty-two of the 50 ECTs, 17 females and five males, also consented to be interviewed. The age of the ECT participants ranged from 20 to 54 years of age. The ECT participants worked in schools that represented all four Catholic dioceses in Western Australia and six of the ten geopoliitical regions of the state. Four female CEWA ECT facilitators, one from each of the Catholic diocesan education offices, were interviewed. Table 1.4 shows the cohorts of ECT participants.
Table 1.4

*Cohorts of Early Career Teacher Research Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Sub-cohort</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey:</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECT Self-perceptions Survey</td>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} Year of Teaching</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} Year of Teaching</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview:</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} Year of Teaching</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECT semi-structured interview</td>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} Year of Teaching</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} Year of Teaching</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive statistics garnered from the ECT Self-perceptions survey provided an insight into the demographic of ECTs in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia. Across all cohorts, there were more females than males. This result is in keeping with the general trend identified in the literature that there are more women teachers in primary schools than men (ABS, 2007).

Figure 1.3 shows that there is a spread of ages within each cohort, indicating that each cohort had participants who had entered teaching later in life either as career switchers (Backes & Burnes, 2008), or due to other commitments.

*Figure 1.3. Age ranges amongst ECTs based on number of years teaching*

Most of the ECTs aged 20-24 were either in their second (n=17) or third year (n=7) of teaching, and most of the ECTs aged 25-29 (n=4) were in their fourth year of teaching. This suggests that ECTs had proceeded straight from secondary school into their
preservice teaching course and then into the workforce. However, overall the number of years teaching did not appear to be influenced by age.

The comparison of personal (relationship) status and number of years teaching is shown in Figure 2.4. All cohorts contained single, married and unmarried teachers in relationships. Single-status represented the majority of second or third-year ECTs. One second-year ECT was separated and none of the ECTs were divorced. Overall, personal status did not appear to be influenced by the number of years teaching and is more likely explained by the range of ages within each cohort.

Figure 1.4. Personal status based on number of years teaching.

The ECTs participants were well qualified. Across all three cohorts, Bachelor of Education was the main qualification followed by Bachelor of Arts/Graduate Diploma in Education combination. This trend most likely reflects the removal of the Graduate Diploma in Education course by Western Australian universities, in favour of a Master of Teaching course.

Across all three cohorts, Edith Cowan University (ECU) and The University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA), were the tertiary institutions through which most (83%) participants completed their teaching qualifications. Murdoch University was also attended by participants from all three cases. Only two participants, both in their second year of teaching attended Curtin University while one fourth-year ECT attended The University of Western Australia.
Figure 2.5 shows how many years an ECT had been teaching compared to the geographic region they worked in. The Metropolitan region had the greatest concentration of ECTs surveyed across all three cohorts which may be reflective of the fact that most Catholic primary schools are situated in that region.

![Figure 2.5](image.png)

**Figure 1.5.** Distribution of number of years teaching based on geographic location.

While all ECTs worked in primary schools, two second-year ECTs worked in composite Catholic Colleges. One ECT was employed in a K-10 school and the other in a K-12 school. In all three cohorts, ECTs taught across a range of year levels. The second-year and third-year cohorts had ECTs who taught multi-age classes and those who taught in specialist areas across multiple year levels.

Regarding employment status, both the second-year and fourth-year cohorts had ECTs who were employed less than full-time, while all third-year ECTs were employed full-time. Of those ECTs who worked less than full-time, three were employed in the Metropolitan area and one was employed in the Kimberley region.

The survey had two questions related to additional duties. Question 12 asked for information about duties the ECTs had been given over and above their main classroom duties. Across all three cohorts, 58% of ECTs (n=29) were not given additional duties by the school leadership team. There were 21 ECTs who were given additional duties. In all three cohorts, additional duties included LAB, CEI and other duties (school librarian, organising sports carnivals, liturgical music and coordinating special programs in the school). Survey question 13 asked participants to list additional duties over and
above their classroom teaching duties that they volunteered to be involved in. Fourteen percent of ECTs (n=7), 35.71% from second year (n=5) and 28.57% from fourth year (n=2), did not volunteer for additional duties. Those ECTs that volunteered were involved in a range of extra-curricular duties including art, school fete, Sport, Homework Club, and learning area budgets. Other voluntary activities included class excursions, school committees, co-ordinating school programs, before and after school sports, dance, and organising school discos.

Overall, female participants’ schools were located across a broader range of regions than males. It is difficult to state whether this signifies a trend given that there were more female participants than male participants. Region appeared to be influenced by personal status. Single ECTS were more likely to teach in the Metropolitan area while those who were married, engaged or had a partner were more likely to teach outside the Metropolitan area. Geographic region did not appear to influence the number of additional duties that an ECT was given. Early Career Teachers in rural, or remote regions were most likely to volunteer for additional duties. In these regions, ECTs may use extra-curricular activities to connect with the communities that they live in.

1.8 Significance of the Research

The significance of this study is twofold. First, within the State of Western Australia and within the Catholic Education Sector. The study has the potential to provide a window through which to view the experiences and self-perceptions of ECTs work experiences in the Catholic primary schools of Western Australia to gain a deeper understanding of why they have remained in the profession. Second, the findings have the potential to provide insight into the problem of teacher attrition currently affecting all education sectors in Western Australia (Johnson et al., 2012). The findings of this research may be of particular interest to leadership teams within Western Australian Catholic schools and Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA). Specifically, there appears to be limited research and literature published on why ECTs remain in the profession in Catholic primary schools of Western Australia. Therefore, it is anticipated that this project may provide valuable knowledge on this topic. CEWA commenced a trial graduate teacher program in 2013 to support ECTs with view to increase retention levels. The results of this proposed study could contribute to the body of knowledge
upon which the CEWA program is founded. The research findings may also be of interest to the Western Australian universities which offer graduate education programs.

Second, within the broader education research field. This research is unique in that it approaches the global concern of teacher attrition by focusing on what keeps teachers teaching. Rather than drawing on a deficit model so typical in education and psychology research, a positive approach has been adopted. The research also aims to generate theory about how different factors contribute to ECT retention.

1.9 Outline of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis consists of seven chapters. Table 1.2 provides an overview of this structure.

Table 1.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>The Research Defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>Context of the Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>Research Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td>Presentations of Research Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
<td>Discussion of Research Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven</td>
<td>Review and Conclusions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.10 Chapter outlines

Chapter One: The Research Defined introduces the research. The chapter provides a brief introduction to the research background, research participants, overarching research question and the five specific research questions that underpinned the study. The chapter outlines the purpose of the research with a personal statement from the researcher describing the motivation for conducting the study. Moreover, the chapter presents an overview of the research design that includes methodology, and the significance and limitations of the research. Finally, the chapter provides a summary of each of the seven chapters of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Context of the Research describes the six dimensions of context to familiarise the reader with the setting in which the research was conducted. The first
dimension focuses on the state of Western Australia. The second dimension discusses the geo-political and education policy/legislation that affect primary teachers at both the national and state level within Western Australia. The third dimension focuses on Catholic Education in Western Australia, its formation and purpose. The fourth dimension delves into the demographic data of Catholic primary schools in Western Australia including their composition and location. The fifth and sixth dimensions examined Catholic primary teachers in schools in Western Australia, including ECTs.

Chapter Three: Review of Literature discusses literature concentrating on four aspects of the research pertinent to ECTs’ decisions to remain in the profession. The four aspects were: motivation to join the teaching profession; likes and dislikes of teaching; challenges faced as a teacher; and, strategies used for coping with challenges faced that maintain motivation to remain in the teaching profession. These four aspects culminated in the formation of the five research questions that were used to guide the study.

Chapter Four: Research Plan maps out the framework for the research and justifies the constructivist epistemology and the interpretivist theoretical perspective utilised. With a predominantly qualitative foundation, the methodology was instrumental case study while the methods included survey, semi-structured interviews and reflective journaling. The research participants, measures adopted to ensure the study’s trustworthiness and the data analysis procedures are explained. The chapter concludes with a description of ethical considerations and a design summary for the research.

Chapter Five: Presentation of the Research Findings exhibits the findings of case study research pertaining to three cohorts: second-year, third-year and fourth-year ECTs in Western Australian Catholic Primary schools. The chapter is partitioned into three sections. Section One presents findings from qualitative interviewing of the Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) ECT program facilitators. Section Two provides a summary of the descriptive statistics for each cohort from the quantitative survey. Section Three presents the findings of qualitative interviewing of the ECTs and provides insight into their lived experiences and self-perceptions. Each cohort’s data addresses the five specific research questions.

Chapter Six: Discussion of the Findings provides an interpretive discussion of the data displayed in Chapter Five: Presentation of the Research Findings. The findings of this study are discussed and analysed according to each of the specific research
questions. Emerging themes are explored in conjunction with the available body of relevant scholarly literature and comparisons are made between and within each cohort.

Chapter Seven: Review and Conclusions reviews and interprets the research findings in light of the purpose of the study. Specific research questions are answered and conclusions to the research are presented. Theory pertaining to ECT retention is proposed along with two models designed to support ECTs. A conclusion to the research is presented and possible contributions that the research makes to the existing body of scholarly research are outlined. Recommendations for a range of stakeholders are proposed.

1.11 Glossary of Terms

The following terms have been used throughout the thesis.

*Administration/Leadership team of a Catholic Primary school*

The principal, assistant principal(s) and other staff appointed by the principal, who are responsible for leading the staff and school community in a Catholic school. Catholic school principals are employed by the bishop of the diocese and fall under the responsibility of the Executive Director of Catholic Education.

*Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)*

An independent statistical agency of the Federal Government of Australia responsible for conducting and analysing census’ to provide data to support government future planning and policy development.

*Australian Curriculum (AC)*

The educational curriculum endorsed by the Federal, State and territory governments of Australia overseen by The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). The Australian Curriculum is taught in all Catholic schools in Western Australia.

*Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL)*

The organisation that promotes excellence in profession of teaching and school leadership.
Aboriginal Teacher Assistants (ATAs)
Indigenous education assistants with strong cultural knowledge employed in schools to work with teachers to support indigenous students’ achievements.

The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (The CECWA)
A board that receives delegated responsibility from the Bishops of Western Australia for system governance of all Western Australian Catholic schools. The CECWA is also responsible for guiding the achievement of system vision (Hickey et al., 2009).

The Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA)
The Executive arm of the CECWA, responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy statements and procedures in all Western Australian Catholic schools (Hickey, et al., 2009)

Catholic Composite Schools
Catholic composite schools in Western Australia are Catholic educational institutions that combine both a primary and secondary school. Catholic composite schools cater for children from either the ages of four to sixteen (K-10), or four to eighteen (K-12). Catholic composite schools are located in all four Catholic dioceses.

Catholic Primary schools
Catholic primary schools in Western Australia are Catholic educational institutions catering for children from the ages of four to twelve years old (Kindergarten to Year Six). Catholic primary schools are located in all four dioceses.

Department of Education Western Australia (DoE)
A Western Australian government department, responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy statements and procedures in all Western Australian government schools. The Department of Education is the largest employer of teachers in Western Australia.

Duties Other Than Teaching (DOTT)
Non-contact hours allocated to teachers for planning, preparation, meetings and participation in professional learning.
Education Assistants (EAs)
Staff employed in schools to support the teaching and learning of students. Education assistants complement teachers in the delivery of education programs by encouraging supportive and inclusive learning environments in primary schools.

Early Career Teachers (ECTs)
Teachers who have completed their first year of teaching and meet the requirements or are close to meeting the requirements for registration at a Proficient level (AITSL, 2014) with the Teacher Registration Board Western Australia (TRBWA). Typically, ECTs will have completed at least 100 days of teaching in one or more Western Australian schools and be in their second, third, fourth or fifth year of teaching.

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)
A key component of the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care developed by the Federal, State and territory governments of Australia.

Experienced teachers
Teachers who have more than six years teaching experience who are proficient, highly accomplished teachers or lead teachers and are fully registered as with the Teacher Registration Board Western Australia (TRBWA).

Framework of Conditions Supporting Early Career Teacher Resilience
A framework developed by Johnson et al. (2014), that is based on resilience theory and forms a basis for action for the sustenance of graduate teachers in their first few years in the profession.

Graduate/beginning teachers
Teachers who have completed a qualification that meets the requirements of a nationally accredited program of initial teacher education (AITSL, 2014). are in the first year of their teaching career.
*Metropolitan schools*

Metropolitan schools are located within the Perth, the capital city of Western Australia and its outlying suburbs. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a).

*Quality Catholic Schooling (QCS) Framework and school improvement tool*

A framework and tool mandated by the CECWA School Personnel Committee for use in all Western Australian Catholic schools to evaluate and improve all processes, activities and the quality of services offered to the school community.

*Remote schools*

Remote schools in this study are considered to be located between the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia [ARIA] values 5.92 ≤ 10.53 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). For the purposes of this research, these schools are located in the Broome diocese.

*Rural schools*

Rural schools in this study are considered to be located between the ARIA values 0.2 ≤ 5.92 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). For the purposes of this research, these schools are located in the Bunbury, and Geraldton dioceses.

*Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA)*

A teacher registration board, which superseded the Western Australian College of Teaching (WACOT), responsible for the regulation of the teaching profession in Western Australia in order to promote high standards of expertise and professional conduct (TRBWA, 2018).

*The Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015*

A document written by the Bishops’ Conference that articulates their vision for the Western Australian Catholic education system.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction.

The purpose of the research was to explore the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers (ECT) in their second, third or fourth year of teaching in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession. In this chapter, literature will concentrate on four aspects of the research pertinent to ECT’s decisions to remain in the profession: motivation to join the teaching profession; job satisfaction within the teaching profession; challenges faced by ECTs; and, influences on ECT retention and attrition in the teaching profession. Figure 3.1 provides a diagrammatic configuration of the conceptual framework of literature relevant to these aspects.

Figure 2.1. Conceptual framework underpinning the literature on Early Career Teachers.

The four areas of review of the literature each influenced the formulation of the specific research questions. The review of the literature has been structured according to the conceptual framework and is described in Table 2.1.
Table 2.1

Overview of Chapter Two: Review of the literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Section One: Motivation for teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1</td>
<td>Sources of motivation</td>
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<td>2.2.2</td>
<td>Attachment and motivation</td>
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<td>Summary</td>
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<td>2.5.3</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Chapter Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Section One: Motivation for teaching.

Choosing a profession could be considered one of the hardest decisions in an individual’s life (Grant, 2013). The reason or reasons why one person chooses one profession and another person chooses a different one can be as unique as the individuals themselves. The question of what determines career choice is one that many researchers have pondered over the years. Some would say that career choice is a vocation, that all individuals have a calling to a particular career (Buijs, 2005; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982; Farkas, Johnson, & Folena, 2000; Grajczonek & Ryan, 2014; Mattarozzi Laming & Horne, 2013). Others argue that different factors are at play (Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Watt & Richardson, 2012). This section presents literature on two interrelated themes that researchers have identified influence individuals’ motivation to join the teaching profession; namely the source(s) of motivation to enter the profession and attachment theory.

Research into sources of motivation has been drawn from the fields of education, psychology and careers. Theories from each of these three fields offer explanations of what drives individuals to join the teaching profession and how motivation can change over time (Backes & Burns, 2008; Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Richardson & Watts, 2006; Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006). Literature on attachment delves into psychological explanations of the structure of the social relationships within teaching, an integral element of the profession, and examines the links between motivation and attachment (Bartholemew & Horowitz, 1991; Bowlby, 1982; Cortina & Liotti, 2010; Riley, 2013).

2.2.1 Sources of Motivation

There is a trend in the literature to classify the source or type of motivation that leads people to choose teaching as a profession, as either intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation or altruistic motivation (Bastik, 2000; Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Knight & Moore, 2012; Richardson & Watt, 2005). Intrinsic motivation refers to a drive or desire that comes from within the individual whereas extrinsic motivation refers to forces outside the individual that drive them to enter teaching. Altruistic motivation centres around a selfless concern for the wellbeing of others and a desire to do things that will benefit and improve the welfare of others (Richardson & Watts, 2006; Smethem, 2007). Each of these types of motivation will now be examined in more detail.
In their research into profiling the characteristics and motivations of pre-service teachers, Richardson and Watts (2006) studied graduate and undergraduate teachers at three East-coast Australian universities. They argued that “it is crucial to target the range of motivations that attracts people to the teaching profession” (Richardson & Watt, p. 30). The participants were enrolled in the secondary, primary and early childhood teacher education courses. Within the graduate group, Richardson and Watt identified participants who had left an established career to enter teaching. Most of the career switchers came from careers of equivalent occupational status to teaching including entertainment, science, information technology and management. The participants’ motivations for choosing to teach as a career were assessed using the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) scale. The results of the research indicated that enrolments in education were predominantly female regardless of the course being studied and whether the preservice teacher was a graduate or undergraduate.

Richardson and Watt (2006) identified that motivation for teaching fell into one of three main categories: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and altruistic motivation. Intrinsic motivation incorporated perceived teaching abilities, a desire to work with children/adolescents, job security and transferability, positive prior teaching experiences, time for family and a desire to make a social contribution and shape the future. Extrinsic motivations included teaching as a “fall back” (Richardson & Watt, p. 32) career and persuasion from others to pursue teaching as a career. These factors were the lowest rated motivations for choosing to teach. Altruistic motivations included shaping the future and enhancing social equity. When undergraduate and graduate students’ motivations were compared, undergraduates were more likely to list intrinsic motivators for choosing to teach as a career. Graduate students, including career switchers, were generally older than undergraduates and were more likely to list altruistic motivations for entering teaching.

Backes and Burns (2008) further investigated the phenomenon of career switchers, or new second-career teachers, who moved from other industry and healthcare careers into secondary teaching positions. Their research found that these teachers brought varying values and motivations to their initial teaching experience and held high expectations of themselves and their students. The researchers also identified that there are often many reasons why people were motivated to leave their former career and enter teaching. The main reasons included: religious or secular (non-religious)
calling; the provision of more regular working hours and holidays away from the work place; adequate pay and benefits – sick leave, retirement, insurance; and, love of subject matter. Other reasons included a personal love of teaching; an enjoyment of working with young people; coming from a family of teachers; needing a new challenge; and, always having wanted to be a teacher. However, Backes and Burns noted that career switchers perceptions changed over the first three years, with their personal/professional confidence and their belief in their students dropping markedly. Given these changes in confidence and beliefs, it could be suggested that whilst pre-service teachers know that teaching is a high demand profession that there is a mismatch between that knowledge and the experienced reality. Backes and Burns proposed that by understanding the reasons why these professionals become teachers, school systems could provide the resources and assignments that may lead toward a more satisfied, productive educator who is more likely to stay in the classroom. They found that having satisfied, productive teachers in the classroom, benefits students greatly.

In a Dutch study examining the relationship between motivation to become a secondary teacher and intention to remain in the profession, Bruinsma and Jansen (2010) agreed that motivation is an important aspect of attracting more people into teaching and then to retaining them. Their research reiterated the sentiment of Sinclair, Dowson and McInerney (2006), who emphasised the importance of attracting pre-service teacher students with the ‘right’ motives. Bruinsma and Jansen (2010) proposed that the motives for teaching can be distinguished by the extent to which they promote lasting and effective engagement in a task. For example, intrinsic or extrinsic motivations that facilitate deep and lasting engagement are adaptive motives. They concern self-efficacy and orientation towards mastery. Intrinsic motivation was found to be related to the quality of learning during the teacher training programme and the quality of the work in schools. Furthermore, Bruinsma and Jansen’s analyses indicated that pre-service teachers with higher intrinsic motivation expected to stay in the teacher profession for longer periods, a finding also supported by Krecic and Grmek, (2005). Bruinsma and Jansen (2010) added that intrinsic motivation is adaptive however extrinsic motivators can be either adaptive or maladaptive. Maladaptive motives can lead to disengagement or superficial engagement in tasks and pertain to uncertainty and anxiety about ability to effectively complete tasks, failure avoidance and uncertainty of control over performance within tasks. Such maladaptive motives related to the pre-service teacher’s perceived abilities and locus of control and become self-handicapping
within the teaching context. Bruinsma and Jansen stopped short of explaining whether these maladaptive motives are reflective of personal traits of the teacher or are a result of the interplay between teacher values and the teaching context, highlighting a potential area for further investigation.

Differences in motivating factors amongst teachers have been identified between countries in the Western world (Morgan, Ludlow, Kitching, O’Leary, & Clarke, 2010). In the United States teachers have been found to enter teaching based mainly on intrinsic factors such as making a difference, doing work they will enjoy and enhancing lives of children (Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2000; Shipp, 1999). In the United Kingdom, job satisfaction and working with children were among the most important intrinsic motivators for entering teaching while extrinsic motivators such as holidays, working hours, salaries and job security were less influential (Spear, 2000). In an Australian study, Sinclair, Dowson and McInerney (2006) found that working with children, helping others and intellectual challenge were major intrinsic motivators for people entering the teaching profession. Similar findings were identified in the Staff in Australia’s Schools (SiAS) 2013 Survey. McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy and McMillan (2014) reported that in the SiAS the most common factors motivating early-career primary teachers to choose teaching as a profession were: love of teaching; desire to work with young people; and, a desire to contribute to society. In all three countries, the low status and image of teaching and job dissatisfaction were found to counteract teacher motivation (Morgan et al., 2010).

According to Sinclair, Dowson, and McInerney (2006) pre-service teachers’ motivations change over time, mostly in a negative direction. These scholars postulated that it is important to track pre-service teachers’ motives longitudinally during their teacher training programme in the work force. For instance, teacher commitment is an important variable to be included in future research, since it has been found to relate to work performance, student achievement in and attitude towards school (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004), passion for teaching work (Elliott & Crosswell, 2001) and new teacher retention (Rots, Aelterman, Vlerick, & Vermeulen, 2007).

2.2.2. Attachment and motivation

Attachment theory has its roots in developmental psychology in the first half of the 20th Century and is based on the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth. As part of his attachment theory, Bowlby (1982) postulated that an individual’s psychological,
emotional and cognitive development were critically linked to that person having a strong emotional and physical attachment to at least one primary caregiver during their early childhood. While research into attachment theory and motivation is not new, the role of attachment in motivation to choose teaching as a profession is comparatively so. Individuals can be classified into four categories of attachment styles based on the dimensions of self-view and others’ view (Bartholemew & Horowitz, 1991). People who view themselves and others positively have a secure attachment style. Those with positive self-views and negative others view have dismissive attachment styles, while those who negatively view themselves but positively view others have a preoccupied attachment style. Fearful attachment styles develop when individuals view themselves and others negatively.

In an Australian study, Riley (2013) examined the need to care for others as a motivating factor for primary and secondary pre-service and experienced teachers and principals. Teaching is a relational profession and attachment theory proposes that attachment as a child to significant others, and as an adult to and from others, affects relational behaviour. Using a qualitative psychodynamic approach, Riley (2013) investigated teaching as a career choice stemming from “an expression of a need to be cared for as well as a desire to care for others” (p. 112). Within schools, teachers are often perceived as care givers and students as care seekers and the relationships between teachers and students in predicting student progress is well documented (Hattie, 2012).

Other researchers, however, suggest that the relationships between teachers and students are more complex than these stereotyped perceptions (Cortina & Liotti, 2010) with some teachers seeking care from students and some students providing care. Riley investigated the attachment type of three groups of participants: pre-service teachers, experienced teachers with more than five years in the profession, and principals. The research specifically focused on five variables: anxiety, age, avoidance, anger and gender. Preservice teachers were found to have higher levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance than experienced teachers and principals irrespective of age. Experience rather than gender or age had a greater influence on reducing attachment anxiety. Secondary preservice teachers reported greater levels of attachment anger than primary preservice teachers. Riley also reported that the study participants did not show the same distribution of attachment styles found in the general population and that the teachers tended towards insecure fearful attachment styles. It was proposed that further research was required into this area to provide an explanation for this finding. Riley’s
results supported the hypothesis that some teachers may choose teaching to meet an unconscious need to gain and give affection that corrects emotional experiences stemming from an insecure attachment style in childhood. Riley concluded by stating that ongoing education in the field of self-awareness and relationship dynamics could be provided to pre-service and experienced teachers to bolster resilience.

2.2.3 Summary

This section of the review of the literature looked at two interrelated themes identified in the research as influencing motivation to join the teaching profession, namely the source(s) of motivation to enter the profession and attachment theory. Generally, the literature identified that there are three main forms of motivation, intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic. The motivation for remaining in or leaving the profession can be influenced by a teacher’s motivation for choosing to teach as a career, their attachment style and level of resilience. These factors can be affected by both personal and contextual factors. The review of the literature on motivation to enter the teaching profession and attachment theory informed the first research question: What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?

2.3 Section Two: Job satisfaction within the teaching profession.

To understand both motivation to remain in a profession and well-being in the workplace, attention needs to be paid to satisfying and unsatisfying elements of work (Hertzberg, 1993; Luo, 1999). As a result, this section is comprised of two parts. The first part reviews literature related to what teachers’ like about the teaching profession; or, what teachers enjoy about teaching and what sustains their motivation to remain in the profession. Two components that influence what teachers like about teaching are focused on personal attributes and practical aspects (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2007; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). The second part of this section examines literature pertaining to what teachers’ dislike about the teaching profession, namely, factors that undermine teachers’ motivation to remain in the profession and that could lead to them leaving the profession. Two components that impact on teachers’ dislikes of teaching are relational issues with teaching, and logistical issues (McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy, & McMillan 2014).
2.3.1 Satisfying elements of the teaching profession.

Since the mid-1950s, literature pertaining to positive aspects the teaching profession has examined the construct through the lens of definitions that have changed over time as understanding on what makes a profession likable has developed. For example, Silvey and Silvey (1956) conducted research into what American elementary, junior- and senior-high and rural teachers liked and disliked about teaching. The teachers were asked to list five duties they found agreeable and five duties that they considered disagreeable. Regardless of year level(s) taught, all teachers liked classroom teaching, associating with young people and offering guidance and counselling to their students. Elementary school teachers liked parent meetings, working with students with special needs and conducting extra-class activities more than secondary school teachers. The focus of research prior to the late 1980s predominantly centred on the practical aspects or physical duties of teaching. The thinking of the time was that likes and dislikes were at opposite ends of a single continuum which was strongly influenced by behaviourism (Skinner, 1953).

In the late 1980s, the topic of what teachers liked or disliked broadened to encompass job satisfaction and enjoyment. Poppleton (1988) provided an incisive analysis of job satisfaction amongst secondary teachers and explored teacher job satisfaction more broadly. Job satisfaction was examined within the context of the classroom, organisation, as a career and profession, and in terms of potential career advancement. Drawing on Herzberg’s (1965) two-factor theory and research in organisational psychology and management, Lortie (1989) defined job satisfaction in terms of teacher reports of the most personally rewarding aspects of their work. By broadening the definition of the term ‘job satisfaction’, educational research allowed for satisfying aspects to be separated from unsatisfying aspects. Additionally, practical considerations were examined as well as personal fulfilment and attributes. In a study conducted across the 1970s and 1980s, Nias (2002) found that the key aspects that teachers enjoyed about teaching and which contributed to job satisfaction included: liking children, working with children, working within a positive classroom climate and feeling professionally competent. Although not explicitly examined, Nias’ longitudinal study also incorporated the intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation elements for teaching. For example, attachment needs being met (to love and be loved) was also cited, along with helping make a difference in students’ lives and helping others learn
and succeed. Opportunities for personal growth, life-long learning and intellectual challenges were other factors liked by teachers (Lam & Yan, 2005; Nias, 2002).

In the 1990s, educational research returned its attention to teacher likes and a plethora of studies were conducted into teacher enjoyment and job satisfaction. People who were happy and satisfied with their work were found to be more likely to remain while those who were unhappy were most likely to leave an organisation (Schneider, Gunnarson & Niles-Jolly, 1994). By the turn of the century, research into factors that influence attrition and retention of teachers came to the fore to address supply and demand issues within the profession. Cumulatively, the literature into what teachers’ like about teaching can be simplified into two key themes: personal attributes and practical aspects (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2007; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski & Erez, 2001). Personal attributes and practical aspects will now be examined in more depth.

2.3.1.1 Personal attributes

The importance of personal aspects to people liking or being satisfied in their jobs, careers and organisations is relatively underrepresented in educational research however it is well documented in careers research. Feldman and Ng (2007) stated that teachers are more disposed to liking teaching as a profession if it is in accordance with their motivation, personal needs or drive for joining the profession. The literature from the field of business identifies a broad range of personal aspects that are related to ensuring job satisfaction and embeddedness. Job satisfaction refers to the extent to which the individual likes and feels positively inclined towards his or her job, career and/or organisation. Embeddedness on the other hand, could be defined as the degree of attachment or sense of belonging an individual has towards a job, career and/or organisation (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Moran, 1990). Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, and Erez (2001) suggested that embeddedness needed to incorporate three essential elements: fit, links and sacrifice. Applied to the teaching context, fit refers to how well or poorly a teacher’s job meshes with other areas of his or her life. Links refers to the extent of ties to other teachers and activities at work, while sacrifice refers to how easily these links can or cannot be broken. Those authors concluded that the greater the fit, the greater the number of links and the greater the degree of sacrifice, then the more embedded the teacher will be in the job, career and/or organisation (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Hottom & O’Neill, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001).
According to Feldman and Ng (2007), six perspectives can be used to discover which factors motivate employees to remain within their profession. These perspectives are: (1) structural labour markets factors; (2) occupational labour market factors; (3) organisational policies and procedures; (4) work group-level factors, (5) personal life factors; and, (6) personality and personal styles differences. The last three perspectives operate at a micro-level and pertain to personal attributes and factors over which individuals may have some influence. Work group-level factors, personal life factors and personality and personal styles differences will each be briefly examined in terms of how they contribute to teachers’ job satisfaction.

The work group-level factors are those relating to interpersonal relationships within the workplace (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Kyriacou, 2010). Within the teaching context these factors would include social support networks and group cohesiveness and the emotional intensity of the social ties. On that basis, one might reasonably expect that ECTs who work in environments which allow them to create strong emotional connections to established social support networks that demonstrate high group cohesiveness, would be more likely to enjoy their place of work and to remain in the profession. In the 2013 Staff in Australia Schools Survey, McKenzie et al. (2014) reported that 94% or primary teachers and 91.9% of secondary teachers identified that they were very satisfied/satisfied with their collegial working relationships. Relationships with colleagues ranked highest, followed by what teachers’ tasks they were currently accomplishing with their students, the amount of teaching teachers were expected to do, and their working relationship with their principal. These aspects were followed by managing student behaviour, freedom to decide how to do their job, the culture and organisation of the school and opportunities for professional learning (McKenzie et al., 2014).

Personal life factors incorporate family and friendship networks, support in resolving work-life conflicts and the impact of time demands (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Within the teaching profession, teachers may be more inclined to enjoy or like the profession overall if they have support afforded to them both within and outside their job. Furthermore, enjoyment is enhanced when teachers are able to effectively manage demands that personal and work factors place upon them. Perspectives on personality and personal styles links closely with research on what motivates teachers to enter the teaching profession (Lindley & Borgen, 2000). Research into personality and personal styles has mostly focused on four key interrelated predispositions, namely: attachment
styles, personality traits, career interests and intelligence. Teachers who have a positive self-view and a positive others-view are more likely to have secure attachment styles, have greater job satisfaction and enjoyment and career success (Collins, 1996). Personality traits incorporates a range of factors including degree of extraversion and neuroticism and perception of locus of control (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Career interests pertains to what a teacher seeks from the profession and can include social, investigative, enterprising, artistic and conventional interests. Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) made a distinction between two forms of intelligence, fluid and crystallised, with the former referring to intellectual abilities usually reached in the early twenties and the latter developing more in middle age. Applied to the teaching profession, changes in type of intelligence type could explain why teachers move into managerial roles and remain in one school as they become older. However, little research appears to be available examining whether there is a causal relationship between intelligence and liking teaching, and the extent to which intelligence is predictive of teachers’ decisions to remain in teaching.

Lam and Yan (2011) conducted a longitudinal study of job satisfaction and career development of primary school beginning teachers in Hong Kong. These researchers examined how the interaction of teacher orientation and school environment contributed to different teaching outlooks. Lam and Yan found that teachers’ motivations for teaching could be classified as either idealistic or pragmatic. Their idealistic orientation fits with altruistic and intrinsic motivations identified by other researchers, while pragmatic orientation aligned with extrinsic motivation (Bastik, 2000; Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Richardson & Watt, 2005). Lam and Yan (2011) classified the school environment beginning teachers worked in as being either suitable or unsuitable. Suitable school environments were those that beginning teachers liked and felt that they fitted into in terms of the school meeting their social and professional development needs. Conversely, unsuitable schools were disliked and did not meet the beginning teachers’ professional or social needs. From this research Lam and Yan (2011) developed a fourfold typology of teachers. Type One teachers, that is, those with idealistic motivations and a suitable school environment, liked teaching because there is a match between the environment and the teachers’ ideals. Type Two teachers, those with pragmatic motivations and a suitable school environment, also liked teaching. These teachers were found to be open to developing more intrinsic motivations for teaching over time. Type Three teachers, were those teachers with an idealistic
motivation placed in an unsuitable school environment. They were dissatisfied with teaching and were most likely to consider changing schools to meet their teaching ideals. Type Four teachers, those with pragmatic motivations and an unsuitable school environment, were found to become dissatisfied with and resentful of teaching (Lam & Yan).

In an Australian study exploring teacher attrition and retention, Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) collected a sample of current and former teachers. Howes and Goodman-Delahunty’s research investigated why the teachers chose teaching, their reasons for staying in the profession and their reasons for considering and/or making a career change from teaching. The teachers had trained as primary, middle-school or secondary teachers and had various lengths of professional service. Twenty percent had never considered a career change while 80 per cent had either left the profession or were considering a career change. Reasons for staying in the profession provided insight into aspects of the profession that teachers liked and were grouped into three categories: personal fulfilment, practical considerations and barriers to change. Within the personal fulfilment category, over half of the participants stated that they loved teaching, felt that they were personally suited to the profession and enjoyed teaching. The teachers reported that establishing and maintaining positive relationships with students and colleagues together with the knowledge that they were making a difference in the lives of others, provided personal fulfilment (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). The teachers also liked the ongoing challenges, flexibility, learning and training that teaching offered (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty).

2.3.1.2 Practical aspects

Within the literature, other factors that led to teacher job satisfaction are more practical in nature and are influenced by structural labour markets, occupational labour market and organisational policies and procedures (Feldman & Ng, 2007). These include having a dependable income, being able to meet their financial needs, both currently and in the future, and job security (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Teaching was also found to be satisfying for the opportunity it provided teachers to balance work and family life (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). The holidays that teachers receive was also perceived as a likable factor, not purely due to the time off work but because it afforded teachers with children time to care for their children during breaks (Dolnicar & Yanamandram, 2012). Job
security and dependability made teaching a profession that was convenient in which to stay. Cumulatively these aspects have been found to provide job satisfaction and constitute a barrier to leaving the teaching profession (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

2.3.2 Dissatisfying elements of the profession

Issues that teachers have with teaching, which could contribute to them being dissatisfied with the profession, or elements of it, are well publicised especially in careers research (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Feldman & Ng, 2007; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; McKenzie et al., 2014). Within the literature, dislikes of teaching can be categorised into two broad themes: (i) relational factors; and (ii) logistical aspects of the job. Literature pertaining to relational factors centres around issues concerning the individual teacher themselves as well as the interpersonal interactions that they have inside and outside the workplace (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). These factors include conflict between teachers’ values and current developments in education, loss or lack of enjoyment of teaching, negative interactions with others within the workplace, work place stress and perceived lack of support. Logistical factors identified in the literature included teacher workload and poor workplace conditions (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). While relational factors and logistical aspects of the job are not mutually exclusive, they will now be discussed separately for ease of reading.

2.3.2.1 Relational issues

Relational issues include personal factors that relate to the individual teachers themselves. These include personality traits such as mindset and resilience, changes in motivation for teaching, loss or lack of enjoyment of teaching, need for change and conflict between teacher’s values and current developments in education (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; McKenzie et al., 2014). A teacher’s attitudes, values and beliefs reflect the way in which that individual has perceived different life experiences and constructed his or her own understanding of the world around them. When there is a mismatch between the teacher’s work role and the fulfilment of values that are important to the teacher, the potential for cognitive dissonance arises (Bunting, 2005). The research has highlighted that conflict between teacher philosophies and beliefs and changes in education contributes to teacher attrition.
(Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012). This sentiment is echoed by Adoniou (2013) who proposed that the education system fails to support the motivation and vision that ECTs bring into the profession when they start their careers. Research into mindsets, proposed that teachers with a fixed rather than growth mindset, may not cope with the challenges that they face in the teaching profession or be open to feedback or professional learning that will develop their skills (Dweck, 2015; Greco, 2013). Having a fixed mindset may contribute to a loss or lack of enjoyment of teaching (Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

Sinclair, Dowson and McInerney (2006) suggested that one explanation for teachers dropping out of the profession may be that their “motivations are insufficient to sustain their involvement” (p. 1134). In this instance, the teacher’s dislike pertains to the profession itself. Insufficient motivation may apply particularly to teachers who are extrinsically motivated to enter the profession, that is, those who do so because it was suggested to them by others or because teaching required a lower tertiary entry score. When relational or logistical issues arise, these teachers may not have the internal drive or be sufficiently effective to remain in the profession (Henry, Bastian & Fortner, 2007; Sinclair, Dowson & McInerney, 2006).

In an Australian study, Howe and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) interviewed an intergenerational cross-section of teachers including early-, mid- and late-career teachers and former teachers. These researchers analysed influences on teachers’ decisions to stay or leave teaching and then categorised participants as either staying, undecided or former. Teachers who were undecided were still teaching but had considered or were considering leaving the profession while former teachers were those who had left the profession. Personal issues identified amongst the undecided and former teacher groups included loss or lack of enjoyment, and conflict between the teachers’ values and directions in education. In the 2013 Staff in Australia’s Schools Survey, McKenzie et al. (2014) reported approximately 16% of primary and 20% of secondary teachers stated that they never intended for teaching to be a long-term career. Unfortunately, the survey report did not provide reasons for this assertion and what the teachers’ longer-term intentions were.

Relational issues also include interpersonal issues within and outside the profession (Bruneau, Ruttan, & Dunlap, 1995; Goddard, O’Brien, & Goddard, 2006). Teaching is a highly relational profession (Noddings, 2003). Teachers are required daily to relate to a range of individuals in personal and professional relationships.
(Cranston, 2011). Each of those relationships has its own status, power structures, dynamics and responsibilities attached to it and teachers need to be able to adapt to and navigate through each form. For example, teachers manage student-student relationships as well as staff-student relationships, staff-staff relationships and staff-others’ relationships. Research has also found that interpersonal issues including negative interactions with staff and poor student behaviour contributed to stress that led to staff considering leaving or leaving the profession (Cranston, 2011; Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). The literature revealed that violence in schools, though not new, has escalated over the years both in its prevalence and intensity (Culley, Conkling, Emshoff, Blakely, & Gorman, 2006; Gillam, 2013; Hiatt, 2016a). The lack of respect that some children and their parents accord to teachers is reflective of the broader issue of the low status of the profession in many countries (Day, 2008).

A lack of support from leadership personnel, other staff or students has been well researched and has also been highlighted as an interpersonal issue that undermines personal fulfilment in teaching (Anthony & Ord, 2008; Cranston, 2011; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Peters & Pearce, 2012; Ward, 2011). In a meta-analysis of research into teacher attrition and retention, Borman and Dowling (2008) proposed that a teacher’s decision to leave the profession is based on careful analysis of the costs and benefits. The authors stated that ECTs were more likely than experienced teachers to leave because they had “…accumulated less specific capital, or knowledge that is specific to the occupation and that is non-transferable” (Borman & Dowling, p. 397). Other factors that Borman and Dowling identified as dislikes contributing to ECTs’ decision to leave teaching included factors relating to family, lack of support and induction, lack of support and professional collaboration and workload.

Work-life balance is a factor that could be described as both a relational and logistical issue that can result in an individual disliking their profession. It refers to the balance, or lack thereof, that a teacher creates between the personal and professional demands that are placed on him or her. Conducted in the United Kingdom, the VITAE project (2001-2006) explored variations in teachers’ lives, work and effectiveness (Day, 2008). The authors proposed that teachers progress through six career stages with each having different levels of demand. Although it was designed to assess changes in teacher effectiveness over time, the VITAE project provided insight into how the
demands of teachers’ work undermined work-life balance. Poor student behaviour, excessive workload, extra-curricular demands, family and health issues were identified as factors that negatively impacted on a teacher’s ability to effectively balance work-life commitments (Day, 2008; Smethem, 2007).

2.3.2.2 Logistical issues

Disliked aspects of teaching that can be described as logistical issues include those that lie outside of the sphere of influence of the teacher. These logistical issues include inadequate pay, work conditions, lack of prestige, lack of job security, poor leadership, and lack of professional development (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan, 2009; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Buchanan (2009) interviewed former Queensland teachers who had left the profession to identify indicators of professional dissatisfaction with teaching. Although many of the ex-teachers had taken a salary reduction upon leaving teaching, some were so desperate to leave teaching that it was considered a worthwhile sacrifice. The overall perception was that although teaching paid reasonably well, the remuneration offered did not match the level of responsibility or workload involved (Buchanan, 2009).

High workload and responsibility are logistical factors cited by teachers as aspects that they dislike about teaching (Buchanan, 2009; Day, 2008; Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Hiatt, 2007). Teaching is not a job in which an individual can simply ‘switch off’ when they lock the classroom door and enjoy outside work time solely for themselves (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012). In an American study, Brill and McCartney (2008) found that the workload of teachers had increased over the years. Additionally, Smethem (2007) reported that under the No Child Left Behind policy in the USA, pressure was placed on teachers to improve all their students’ results or risk missing out on bonuses or further employment.

Research into beginning teachers’ perceptions of enthusiasm, job satisfaction and equity revealed that after just their first year of teaching, ECTs show symptoms of burnout. The burnout stems from emotional exhaustion relating to workload (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003), feelings of depersonalisation and a sense of a lack of personal accomplishment (Goddard & Goddard, 2006). These findings were supported by McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy and McMillan (2014). McKenzie et al. found that the two most common reasons cited by ECTs for leaving the profession before retirement were “the workload is too heavy” and there was
“insufficient recognition or reward for teachers” (p. 107). Goddard and Goddard also identified that because of burnout, beginning teachers considered moving to another school or leaving the profession completely. The intention to change schools highlighted the significance of workplace conditions and culture, and the impact of these on teacher efficacy and motivation.

The level of motivation has been found to subside during the first year and to change at different stages of a teacher’s career (Huberman, 1989; Joerger, 2002; Moir, 1990). As part of the *Santa Cruz New Teacher Project*, Moir (1990) identified developmental phases that ECTs typically progressed through immediately before and during the first year of their career. Moir found that ECTs typically have high levels of motivation during their final practicum and at the commencement of their first year of teaching. This *anticipation phase* typically lasts for a few weeks and is followed by the *survival phase* in which ECTs can be overwhelmed by the rate of learning, responsibility and problems that they have not previously encountered. By the time ECTs start the second term of teaching, they enter what Moir termed the *disillusionment phase*. During this time, ECTs are confronted with more challenging situations including parent-teacher meetings and preparation for report writing. Lacking experience to effectively manage difficult parents and feeling unsupported by colleagues, coupled with classroom management issues can be a major source of stress. The final phases that Moir identified are the *rejuvenation* and *reflection phases*. These phases usually start in the second half of the year and can provide ECTs with a time to bounce back and reflect on what they have learned and achieved.

Research has found that poor workplace conditions such as lack of private offices, access to telephones for private calls, and lack of time to confer with colleagues can lead to dissatisfaction (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Spears, Gould & Lee, 2000). However, poor workplace conditions also go beyond the physical structures within which teachers work and include factors such as school leadership, workplace culture and changes imposed on schools from outside agencies. Such factors can negatively impact on a teacher’s sense of workplace autonomy and authenticity, which refer to personal freedom to exercise judgement (Inman & Marlow, 2004) and the need for professional excellence (Buchanan, 2009; Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012). Limited or perceived lack of support from leadership (Borman & Dowling, 2008), factions within staff and changes in curriculum have been identified as factors that increase teacher dissatisfaction (Anthony & Ord, 2008; Graziano, 2013; Griffeth, Hom,
& Gaertner, 2000; Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). In an English study, Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) compared teacher perceived control and well-being to other professions. These researchers found that teachers “perceived control and well-being were significantly lower than non-teachers” (p. 4).

The perceived low-status of teaching is a logistical issue that has been identified in several studies as a factor that can undermine teachers’ intrinsic motivation particularly in instances where the teachers’ morale may be low (Buchanan, 2009; Pillay, Goddard & Wils, 2005; Troman & Woods, 2000). Initiatives such as registration boards and professional standards for teachers and school leaders, have been put in place by governments and education sectors world-wide in an attempt to raise the status of the profession as a whole (Simola, 2007). In Western Australia for example, the Teacher Registration Board (TRBWA) was created and throughout Australia, teachers and school leaders adhere to the professional standards decreed by the Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL).

Linked to salary scales, limited promotional prospects is another factor that may leave teachers feeling dissatisfied with the profession (Buchanan, 2009; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). In Australia, teachers progress through a series of steps commensurate with the number of years they have been in the profession. Teachers reach a ceiling level beyond which they cannot progress unless they pursue leadership or middle-management positions which also involve greater responsibilities and higher workload (The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth Teachers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, 2015; Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, 2015).

Within all sectors of education, government and non-government alike, frustrations with temporary work and difficulty securing full-time, ongoing employment is a factor causing teacher dissatisfaction (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Smethem, 2007; The Age, 2011; Topsfield & Butt, 2012). A requirement to complete two years country-service to secure permanency in Western Australian government schools and an increasing number of teachers being assigned fixed-term contracts, has resulted in increased levels of teacher anxiety (Topsfield & Butt, 2012). The number of fixed-term contracts offered can be influenced by staff on maternity and long-service leave and are beyond the control of the employer. Fixed-term contracts offer temporary employment and place teachers in the position of not being able to secure loans, and not having guaranteed income or ongoing employment post-contract. The advent of Independent Public Schools in Western Australia, has encouraged principals to employ staff directly.
rather than through a central agency (Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, 2015); however, this initiative has not addressed the issue of fixed-term contracts. Within the non-government sector, principals have always employed staff directly although the number of full-time ongoing positions has dropped over the years with more teachers being placed on fixed-term contracts (The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth Teachers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, 2015).

Need for change refers to the need for variety and personal and professional growth through development within a career. When variety and growth are limited or absent, the likelihood of job dissatisfaction and becoming stale in a role increases (Ranke, 2009). Margolis (2008) proposed that after four to six years, teachers require new challenges to sustain their interest and motivation to teach. The need for change via a new challenge or role was supported by Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015). Some teachers attempt to make changes through additional professional learning and/or in other ways that reduce teaching time and become disillusioned and dissatisfied with unsuccessful attempts to achieve promotion or an alternative role (Cooper & Davey, 2011).

2.3.3 Summary

This section reviewed literature examining what job satisfaction within the teaching profession. In the first part, teacher likes were looked at, and three key factors were focused on: personal fulfilment, practical considerations and barriers to change. The literature revealed that education and career research has broadened its scope of what constitutes ‘liking one’s profession’. Generally, teachers’ like, enjoy or are satisfied with their career when there is a positive match between the teacher’s professional roles and responsibilities and their personal motivation, needs and drive. Positive work place relationships, support from within and outside the workplace and having a sense of belonging to the workplace and the people in it are essential elements. The literature highlighted that teaching was also satisfying when opportunities for ongoing personal and professional growth were provided, as well as for the remuneration, holidays and job security that it accorded. In the second part, what teachers disliked about the teaching profession was covered. Disliked factors included relational and logistical issues with teaching. Conversely, the literature identified that many of the factors that had made teaching likeable were also those that made it unlikeable when they were lacking or absent. Workload, negative workplace
relationships, poor pay scales, lack of job security and limited opportunities for professional and personal growth and career advancement were identified as factors that contributed to teacher dissatisfaction and increased the likelihood of teachers leaving the profession. The review of the literature on what ECTs’ satisfaction with the teaching profession, informed the second research question: *What do Early Career Teachers like/dislike about teaching?*

### 2.4 Section Three: Challenges faced by Early Career Teachers.

The previous section examined research into aspects of the teaching profession that contributed to or detracted from job satisfaction. The thinking behind research in these areas is that an understanding of what teachers like/dislike will help to create teaching contexts that will increase the likeable aspects whilst decreasing the dislikeable ones. Section Three provides a scope of the literature discussing the research that is available on the main challenges facing ECTs; that is, the factors contributing to teachers developing their likes and dislikes of the profession. All professions have elements within them that are challenging, and teaching is certainly no exception (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012). Being new to a career brings with it additional challenges that need to be faced and worked through if a new employee’s commitment to the profession is to be sustained in the short-, mid- and long-term (Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009; Gero, 2013). While ECTs will most likely have had exposure to varying levels of the roles and responsibilities associated with the classroom during their preservice training, school placements never fully prepare them for the moment when they are a teacher in their own right (Herbert & Worthy, 2001; McCormack & Thomas, 2003).

The literature reviewed on challenges faced by ECTs has been organised into four areas: personal challenges, classroom challenges, school community challenges; and sector challenges. Personal challenges refer to those psychological challenges that impact on the individual teacher themselves (Bartell, 2004; Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012; Jones, 2003), while classroom challenges incorporate managerial, instructional and cultural factors (Bartell, 2005; Downing, 1998). School community challenges cover procedural, professional and political factors and sector challenges examines factors that operate within the political system-level sphere (Bartell, 2005). While school community and sector challenges are not mutually exclusive, the literature pertaining to factors in each area will be examined separately.
2.4.1 Personal challenges

The literature on personal challenges that ECTs face centres around their transition from their role and identity as a student to their role and identity as a teacher (Bartell, 2004; Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013). Bartell (2004) described ECT identity transition in terms of psychological factors and proposed that it includes managing stress, gaining self-confidence, learning to handle challenges and disappointments and attending to physical and emotional well-being. Other researchers suggest that the formation of teacher identity commences during the preservice years (Crosswell & Beutel, 2017) and that it involves a transactional-ecological framework in which the dynamic interactions between the teacher and environmental context play out (Sameroff, 2010). Researchers and teaching bodies have suggested that ECTs progress through developmental phases on route to becoming highly accomplished practitioners (AITSL, 2010; Fogarty & Lennon, 1991; Katz, 1977; Moir, 1990; Steffy, 2000). The AITSL Standards propose that teachers progress through four key professional developmental stages: graduate, proficient, accomplished and lead (AITSL, 2010). The time spent in each of these stages will vary for each ECT depending on both personal factors such as family pressures, personality, self-concept and efficacy as well as external factors, including teaching context, support provided and social factors.

In the initial Graduate stage (AITSL) all ECTs encounter, and are generally overwhelmed and underprepared for, the workload associated with teaching, despite the preservice training they receive (Bartell, 2005; Crosswell & Beutel, 2017; Dinham, 1992; Myer, Dwyer & Washburn, 2005). Some researchers have argued that preservice courses can only guide students for entry into teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Buchanan, 1985; Joseph, 2011) and that real learning as a teacher occurs once the graduate is in the classroom (Crosswell & Beutel, 2017; Swabey, Castleton, & Penny, 2010). Learning to manage stress associated with work is critical if ECTs are to successfully adjust to the demands of teaching (Cenckseven & Sari, 2009). A heavy workload, desire to demonstrate competency in an increasingly competitive job market, and high levels of public scrutiny can lead to ECTs feeling physically and emotionally exhausted and finding it difficult to balance their work and domestic responsibilities (Hargreaves, 2010; Joseph, 2011; Lang, 1999; McCormack & Thomas, 2010; Price & McCallum, 2015). These factors can negatively impact on the well-being of teachers and possibly lead to burnout (Goddard & Goddard, 2006). Galton and MacBeath (2008) examined these same factors in ECTs and concluded that “the scale, complexity
and intensity of pressures on teachers in the postmodern world are unprecedented” (p.5). Many teachers, including those in managerial roles, perceive a lack of control and ownership over their work. This perception stems from the broad range of additional duties that they are required to perform that do not directly improve learning outcomes for students and for which teachers do not feel adequately trained (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012; Heitin, 2013).

In a British study into control and well-being, Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) identified that teachers’ perceived control and well-being were significantly lower than others in professions relating to health, social work, finance and human resources. Their findings suggested that regardless of profession, the need for having a sense of control over one’s work is important. However, continuing changes to sector initiatives, curriculum and assessment requirements undermined teachers’ perception that they have freedom, choice and control over what they do within their daily work. The additional workload relating to non-teaching tasks was found to leave most teachers struggling to cope (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell). Teachers were more likely to place importance on connections, relationships and meeting the needs of others compared to those in other professions. Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell proposed that teachers were more likely to have their well-being compromised due to their perceived lack of control and ownership. Given that well-being has been linked to school performance (Briner & Drewberry, 2007) this finding potentially has far-reaching implications for student outcomes on many levels.

Jones (2003) proposed that ECTs are faced with the challenge of forming a risk-conscious identity as part of developing their identity as primary teachers. Investigating ECT identity development in New Zealand, Jones (2003) suggested that a societal preoccupation with risk and safety has impacted on the way in which ECTs develop their identity as a teacher. Jones interviewed graduands from two primary teacher training programmes just prior to them graduating, about their understanding of practices related to touching children in their care. She concluded that touching children is now accepted as a risk that teachers, especially males, must manage as part of their professional practice.

Developing a growth mindset to manage emotional setback is also a challenge faced by ECTs, especially for young teachers who do not have a breadth and depth of life experiences to draw on to help them cope with challenges (Eckert, 2014). According to Dweck (2014) mindsets are “people’s beliefs about human attributes,
including abilities” (p. 10). Dweck described two mindsets, fixed and growth, and identified that people’s mindsets play an important role in achievement. People with a growth mindset believe that some abilities are set and unchangeable but that others can be developed whereas people with a fixed mindset perceive abilities and traits as unchangeable entities (Dweck). Dweck (2014) who stated that “[Teach-ers] who have more of a fixed mindset might be reluctant to put themselves under the microscope … fearing negative judgments from important colleagues … teachers with more of a growth mindset, speciﬁcally confronted problems in their teaching head on” (p.12). Gero (2013) applied the concept of mindset. He proposed that teachers have either an incremental mindset, which states that teacher practice can be improved irrespective of years of experience, or an entity mindset, which purports that teaching ability is innate and mostly set. Gero identiﬁed that both forms of teacher mindset were found to be predictors of teacher efﬁcacy, level of reﬂective practice, openness to feedback and involvement in professional learning; all factors that are essential for life-long learning and continual professional and personal improvement.

2.4.2 Classroom challenges

Early Career Teachers face many classroom challenges that can be grouped as either managerial, instructional or cultural in nature (Bartell, 2005). Within the classroom context, ECTs have many different managerial responsibilities ranging from classroom organisation, taking attendance, obtaining materials and supplies through to keeping records. Early Career Teachers need to have a palette of classroom management strategies that allow them to not only manage student behaviour but also skilfully organise the physical classroom and activities to achieve effective learning outcomes for all students (Clarke & Pittaway, 2010). Swabey, Castleton and Penney (2010) stated that classroom management was often linked with successes reported by ECTs however most often classroom management, particularly behaviour management, is denoted in the literature as a challenge (Clarke & Pittaway, 2010; Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Eckert, 2014; He & Cooper, 2011; Joseph, 2011; Romano, 2008; Yourn, 2000; Zepeda & Mayers, 2001). The challenge in managing student behaviour has been attributed to several factors.

Some researchers have proposed that all too frequently ECTs are given the most challenging classes and are often employed at hard-to-staff schools (Downing, 1998; Ramsey, 2000). Within the middle and secondary-school context, the challenge of
behaviour management has been linked to ECTs’ lack of familiarity with adolescent culture and difficulty establishing appropriate social distance, particularly in instances where the teacher is young themselves (Brock & Grady, 1997). Researchers have found that ECTs were also being required to teach outside their specialist subject area with little guidance and support (Lock, 2008; Ramsey, 2000; Sharplin, 2014). Consequently, this requirement placed additional stress on the teachers as they grappled to master the subject content as well as effective behaviour management. As part of establishing a connection between themselves and their students, ECTs working at all year levels can also fall into the trap of trying to befriend their students and face the challenge of learning the difference between being friendly and being a friend (Eckert, 2014).

Effective behaviour and classroom management also requires consistency in the application of consequences, use of extrinsic motivation, pedagogy that promotes student engagement, and awareness of what is happening in the room at any given time. While reflecting and developing each of these elements is part of the art of teaching and is another challenge for many ECTs (Eckert, 2014), Downing (1998) warned that ECTs’ well-being can be adversely affected if they are left to face these problems without support.

Melnick and Meister (2008) compared the concerns of ECTs and experienced teachers across four key areas: classroom management, time management, parent communication and conflict, and academic or lesson preparation. Their research identified that little difference existed between ECTs’ concerns and their experienced counterparts concerns regarding time management, and academic or lesson preparation. Early Career teachers reported more concerns about their classroom management abilities than experienced teachers; however, they reported less concern about dealing with students with disabilities. Early Career teachers expressed greater concerns with classroom management and parent communication and conflict. When dealing with parents, experienced teachers felt better prepared to manage conflict, provided more reports home about student progress and used more means of communicating with parents compared to ECTs. However, ECTs involved more parents in classroom activities than experienced teachers (Melnick & Meister).

Research has identified that parents’ attitudes towards school and academic expectations and the level of their involvement in their child’s education positively impacts on their children’s academic achievement (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Holbein, 2005; Hill & Craft, 2003; Joshi & Taylor, 2007). Since the 1980s there has
been a significant shift in the role of parents in education, with contemporary thinking stating that teachers and parents should work collaboratively to form a partnership for the benefit of the child (Bruneau, Ruttan & Dunlap, 2006). However, one of the challenges faced by ECTs is establishing those partnerships, understanding parents’ contexts and managing parent conflict when it arises (He & Cooper, 2011; Whittaker, 2013).

Keeping records of different student and teaching-learning issues that arise is also a challenge given the time that is required to keep accurate records to ensure that accountability requirements are met. Early career teachers must also prepare lessons, locate and discern effective teaching resources and use a range of other instructional practices to engage students effectively (Bartell, 2005; Clarke & Pittaway, 2010). Learning about the programs used in the school, where to locate them and how to use them effectively in teaching-learning programs is challenging, particularly if the ECT has had no prior exposure to the programs (Loewenberg Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 2014).

Although taught in preservice training, applying collaborative or cooperative learning strategies in the classroom can be a challenge; successful use of these techniques takes time to develop, and requires a solid understanding of both the teaching content and the student dynamics within the class (Clarke & Pittaway, 2010).

Instructional responsibilities extend to include assessing student progress through a variety of means, using data to inform instruction and adapting pedagogy to cater for student diversity (Bartell, 2005; Clarke & Pittaway, 2010). Assessment of student achievement is an essential part of teaching and focus on evidence-based pedagogy has become a focus for teacher accountability (AITSL, 2010; Clarke & Pittaway, 2010). Assessments inform the teacher about the success of the program they have taught not only in terms of student achievement but also in terms of the effectiveness of the teacher’s planning, preparation and pedagogy. Early Career teachers are faced with many challenges associated with assessment (William, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004; Veenman, 1984). For example, ECTs need to know how to select or develop the most appropriate form of assessments that provide accurate information about student achievement levels. Early Career teachers are faced with the challenge of how to properly assess students so that the results are fair, valid and reliable, and then how to interpret the results. Knowing how to use data to make informed decisions about future teaching and catering for student diversity is also a challenge faced by many ECTs (Tomlinson & Imbreau, 2011; Veenman, 1984).
Within the Australian context, several initiatives have required teachers to cater for student diversity within the mainstream classroom. The second goal of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Melbourne Declaration), decreed that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and, active and informed citizens (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008). Stemming from the Melbourne Declaration, the Australian Curriculum and its state derivatives, clearly stipulates teachers’ requirements to cater for student diversity including students with disability, students who are gifted and talented and students for whom English is another language or dialect (ACARA, 2017). In addition, teachers are required to cater for students considered at educational risk due to issues such as learning difficulties and complex trauma (Zetlin, MacLeod, & Kimm, 2012). Catering for diversity incorporates providing differentiated content, processes, products and environment according to each student’s readiness, interests and learning profile (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). The ability to effectively cater for diversity is a challenge for both ECTs and established teachers alike, as it requires teachers to have a deep understanding of their students’, so they can take proactive steps to meet each individual learner’s needs (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Melnick & Meister, 2008; Savolainen, Engelbracht, Nel, & Malinen, 2011; Tomlinson, Brimijoin & Narvaez, 2008). Knowing students as individuals and how they learn is a skill that teachers acquire with experience over time (AITSL, 2010; Clarke & Pittaway, 2010).

With the passing of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1992, all special education policies of states and territories in Australia recognised that students with disabilities will not be discriminated against because of their disability; in many states and the territories this referred to attendance at regular or mainstream schools (Human Rights Commission, 2017). The Disability Discrimination Act was elucidated in 2005 with the Disability Standards for Education which further articulated the roles and responsibilities of education providers and required schools to make provisions for students with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without a disability (Ruddock, 2005). A challenge for ECTs is understanding how to effectively cater for students with disabilities, how to meet accountability requirements including developing Individualised Plans, and how to work collaboratively with families, support staff and external agencies (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Chelsey & Jordan, 2012; Tomlinson & Imbreau,
Ingersoll and Smith (2004) found that teachers whose main teaching area was special education were far more likely than other teachers to move schools or leave teaching.

Writing student reports and giving effective feedback to students, parents and schools is another challenge faced by ECTs (Joseph, 2011). Report writing is a skill that requires both an understanding of the student’s achievement levels in relation to the curriculum judging standards (School Curriculum and Standards Authority [SCASA], 2018). Report writing is often not an area that ECTs gain experience with during their preservice training. While ECTs hone their instructional responsibilities, they are expected to deepen their understanding of the curriculum content, judging standards and use of reflective practices.

Bartell (2005) described the cultural challenges faced by ECTs as those associated with knowing and understanding students and becoming aware and sensitive to their culture. Teaching is a relational profession and establishing and maintaining rapport with students and their families is a critical aspect of the role (Bartell; Veenman, 1984). As part of coming to know each student individually, teachers are required to learn to understand and value the diversity that exists amongst their students including differing intellectual abilities, physical and social-emotional needs, linguistic backgrounds, socio-economic status, religious perspectives and cultural backgrounds.

2.4.3 School community challenges

School community challenges faced by ECTs are those that Bartell (2005) referred to as the procedural, professional and political aspects of teacher work. Procedural challenges include daily practices that are do not directly involve teaching but are essential to the day-to-day running of a classroom and school. Professional challenges are those that involve ongoing learning, understanding and applying teaching norms and practices. Political challenges within the school community context refer to identifying and reading the social dynamics within the workplace.

Procedural challenges encompass a plethora of tasks including taking the attendance register, following timetables and schedules, and fulfilling duty of care responsibilities. Early Career Teachers may be challenged by learning to access and use software for recording attendance, behaviour and achievement. For primary school ECTs an additional challenge can be setting up and following their classroom timetable, ensuring that the required amount of time is allocated to the teaching of different
learning areas. Fulfilling duty of care responsibilities can also be a challenge. Early Career Teachers must become familiar with the area that they are supervising during recess and lunch breaks as well as learn the procedures for recording and reporting issues that arise. They must also be aware of the behaviour requirements of students when using equipment and areas allocated to different student age-groups. The logistics of locating and using printers and photocopiers, the school library, and teacher resource and work rooms is a challenge for many ECTs (Bartell, 2005).

Professional challenges faced by ECTs include the need to understand the role and importance of professional organizations and to navigate through professional development/learning opportunities. Within Australia, ECTs are required to collect evidence to demonstrate improved performance across seven standards to secure full teacher registration within the state or territory that they are working (AITSL, 2010). Upon graduation, ECTs apply for provisional registration so that they can be employed. Within a two- to three-year period, ECTs must demonstrate professional growth from Graduate level to Proficient level to be granted full registration (AITSL). The challenges associated with the registration process are many and varied and include, collecting evidence across all seven standards, presenting the evidence, establishing and maintaining a mentor relationship and completing professional development. The experience of becoming fully registered can be influenced by factors over which the ECT has little to no control such as the level of support or mentoring provided and opportunities for professional development.

Navigating through professional development/learning programs is another challenge faced by ECTs. The form and structure of such programs varies within states and sectors and typically involves induction programs and mentoring. Since the 1990s, mentoring of ECTs has been well researched (Bradley & Gordon, 1994; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Johnson, 1990; Knight & Moore, 2012). In a critical review of mentoring program offered to ECTs, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) identified that while all the studies they reviewed had limitations, several key commonalities were identified. Mentoring and induction programs: (i) positively influenced ECTs’ job satisfaction, commitment and retention; (ii) improved ECTs’ teaching pedagogy, classroom management and ability to differentiate curriculum; and, (iii) had a positive flow on to the ECTs’ students’ academic achievement levels. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) added that some studies noted that the positive impact of mentoring and induction was dependent on the length
of time that the program ran for, and that participation in such programs could not predict retention in the profession. These researchers identified that further research was required to examine why induction and mentoring works, that is, what elements or structure are most beneficial (Ingersoll & Strong). A possible answer was provided by Bentley, Morway and Short (2013) who identified that mentoring was especially helpful when the mentor addressed the specific concerns and needs of the ECT they were supporting.

In a three-year longitudinal Dutch study, Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift and Maulana (2016) focused on the effects of induction on retention and improvement of teaching skills. They found that induction programs, including coaching and observing, improved ECTs’ teaching skills particularly by the third year. These researchers also identified that teachers had either high, average or low teaching skills and that teachers with high skill levels were more likely to remain in a school (Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift & Maulana, 2016). Early Career Teachers with average skill levels were more likely to move to a different school while those with low teaching skills were more likely to leave the profession. Within Western Australia, the Department of Education (DoE) and Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) are the largest employers of teachers in the state. Both organisations provide induction programmes designed to support Early Career Teachers in their first two years of teaching in public schools. As part of the DoE compulsory Graduate Teacher Induction Program, ECTs are provided with in-class and mentor support (Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, 2015). Graduate teachers also complete two learning modules and receive a monetary bonus at the end of each of the two years. The CEWA Early Career Teacher program runs for the first two years of a graduate’s career and is available to part-time and full-time ECTs in Catholic Schools (CEWA, 2016). Mentoring and induction programs are one form of professional development or professional learning that is offered to ECTs.

Other forms of professional learning are available to ECTs including school-based professional learning sessions and professional development offered by external agencies. One of the challenges faced by ECTs is discerning which areas of professional development are most suited to their needs and then how to access these areas. In-school professional learning is often based on school improvement practices and priorities that have been derived from the school’s performance data (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). School based professional development is generic in that it applies to all staff and does not necessarily make allowance for the different needs of teachers.
Professional learning offered through external agencies can meet an ECT’s needs more specifically if the teacher is aware of having a need in a particular area.

Early Career Teachers need to quickly become familiar with expectations regarding professional conduct and district procedures. In many countries a code of conduct has been applied to the teaching profession which stipulates expectations for professional conduct within the workplace (O’Neill & Bourke, 2010). Early Career Teachers also have the challenge of learning about potential legal issues and applying the legal requirements of the profession including mandatory reporting of sexual abuse and its implications (Budai, 2010; Humphreys, 2014; Oz & Balshan, 2008). In an Australian study, pre-service teachers were aware of the legal requirement of mandatory reporting but were identified as lacking confidence about accurately identifying child sexual abuse and their ability to respond to their suspicions of it (Goldman, 2007). In the United States, ECTs are faced with the challenge of understanding how statutory and common law applies within the education context to a range of issues ranging from sexual orientation and dress code, to the teaching of alternate theories of evolution in public schools (Stader, Graca & Stevens, 2010).

Reading and working within the political-cultural climate of a school is possibly one of the most complex challenges faced by ECTs and for some this will come more easily than for others (Rock-Kane, 1991; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). According to The Glossary of Education Reform (2013), school culture is typically referred to as the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, … also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity (p. 1).

In layperson’s terms, school culture is the way things are done in a school, its *vibe*. School culture is influenced by the school’s history and context, its leadership and broader school community and can be divided into two main categories: positive culture and negative culture (Stoll, 1998). Early Career Teachers are faced with the challenge of tuning into the school’s culture and then fitting in with its expectations and norms (McCormack & Thomas, 2003). Research has identified that it is important for ECTs to understand school culture for several reasons: it influences teacher identity (Edwards & Edwards, 2017; Palmer, 2016); it contributes to ECTs’ sense of belonging and
connectedness to the school (Klassen, Usher & Bong, 2010); and, it has been found to influence improvement practices and teachers’ professional learning (Carter & Francis, 2010; Glover & Coleman, 2005; Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016).

Political challenges include getting to know one’s colleagues and building relationships with colleagues, staff and leadership. When an ECT starts at a new school, they are faced with the challenge of working out who they fit with not just professionally but socially. Depending on what they teach, ECTs may find themselves already belonging to a specific cluster or department. While belonging to a collegial group may give ECTs a sense of belonging within the staff, the challenge is then finding other teachers they can trust, feel safe with and be supported by. Staff who have worked together for an extended period have often formed cliques which ECTs need to identify and then be accepted into. ECTs most often bring fresh ideas, skills, views and enthusiasm into the workplace which established staff may find challenging particularly if those ideas, skills and views unsettle ingrained practices and their teaching philosophy and pedagogy (Knight & Moore, 2012; McCormack & Thomas, 2003). Knight and Moore (2012) investigated the experiences of male teachers in Catholic and government schools in Eastern Australia. They found that generational differences between the older experienced teachers and the beginning male teachers, from Generation X (1961-1981) and Generation Y (1981-2000) led to different workplace expectations.

Myers, Dyer and Washburn (2005) identified 11 major issues faced by beginning agriculture teachers in the United States. Of the top five issues four were directly related to establishing and maintaining support groups. Feeling supported and having a sense of belonging to a group, is related to individual’s feeling of self-worth. Cenkseven-Onder and Sari (2009) identified that feeling worthy by colleagues, school leaders and students is critical to wellbeing in the workplace. Affective commitment was identified as an important predictor of teachers’ intentions to leave the profession which highlights the importance of sense of belonging within the workplace (Hong, 2010; Tiplic, Brandmo & Elstad, 2015). Lack of socialisation into the general teaching staff experienced by new teachers often results in feelings of isolation (Smith, 1993). The professional socialisation process of beginning teachers in Hong Kong was found to be influenced by individual traits, school context and societal factors, with school environment playing the most significant role in determining teacher job satisfaction (Choi & Tang, 2005).
In the 2012 Gallop-Healthways Well-being Index, teacher wellbeing was compared to 14 other professions including physicians and workers in fields such as agriculture, business and mining. Teachers ranked in the top five for emotional and physical health and were more likely to report that they had smiled or laughed regularly. Teachers however, ranked eighth out of the 14 professions in satisfaction with factors in the work environment. They were second only to physicians for work stress and ranked last among the 14 professions in terms of feeling that their school leaders created work places with a culture of openness and trust (Heitin, 2013).

In an Australian study examining the experiences of Early Career music teachers, Joseph (2011) identified that specialist teachers are often faced with the additional challenge of being the only teacher in their learning area in the school. In those instances, Early Career music teachers are faced with sole responsibility for school performances and productions, including budgeting, timetabling rehearsals, stage management and preparing and printing programme booklets (Bartell, 2005; Dowding, 1998; Joseph, 2011). While specialists can encourage participation from other staff, or delegate certain roles, for ECTs this in itself can be a challenge. At least initially, ECTs are faced with wanting to prove their worth and skills to themselves and others on the one hand, while learning that seeking support and involvement from others shows leadership and reduces workload on the other.

Receiving support from school leadership can be a challenge faced by ECTs (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; He & Cooper, 2011). Flores (2004) stated that school leaders play a crucial role in developing staff and fostering a professional learning community within a school. Research highlights the positive influence leaders can have on ECTs’ emotional and social wellbeing, and professional formation, especially when leadership expectations are clearly articulated through professional conversations and induction (Flores, 2004; Cheng & Szeto, 2016; Price, 2012). Conversely, in situations where there is an absence of leadership-teacher aligned objectives, where leaders pursue self-motivated goals or are under stress, ECTs who have been left on their own can have comparatively negative experiences (Flores).

Contributing to extracurricular programs such as staff meetings is also a challenge faced by ECTs (Klein, 2005; McCormack & Thomas, 2005). While ECTs have ideas to make such contributions, they can feel overwhelmed in staff meetings for several reasons. First, teachers may feel that they have insufficient experience to offer contributions that will be valued, particularly when compared to their more experienced
counterparts. Second, ECTs may fear saying the wrong thing and appearing ignorant in a public forum amongst colleagues with who they want to make a good impression. Third, these teachers might not be sufficiently aware of the context of matters being raised and discussed at the staff meeting.

School location can also be a challenge for ECTs (Bartell, 2004; He & Cooper, 2011). School geolocation can be described as metropolitan, rural, remote or very remote (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Metropolitan locations are deemed as close to the capital city; provincial or rural is determined as an administration division within a state; remote is considered as spatially distant from the capital city of that state or territory; and very remote is an area considered very spatially distant from the capital city. Globally, most schools are in metropolitan areas where there is the greatest concentration of the population, however schools are also located in rural, remote and very remote areas (Bartell, 2004). Each location brings with it factors that can be challenging.

The demographics of elementary, or primary, and secondary schools in urban areas greatly influences the teaching work environment. Schools in lower socio-economic areas often have students who come from families with low incomes, intergenerational unemployment, neglect and trauma, low parental education levels, and with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Bartell, 2004; Borman & Dowling, 2008). Depending on levels of government funding, these school may also be poorly resourced due to budget constraints, which is exacerbated if parents do not pay fees. Often these schools can be hard-to-staff and/or have high levels of teacher turnover (Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007; UNESCO, 2006). Students in these schools may not see the value in education, reinforced by limited parent involvement in their education. Schools in higher socio-economic areas also present with challenges including having parents that are highly qualified, occupy high-powered positions within the community and who can be overly critical of teachers and education. Rural and remote areas present their own and sometimes different challenges (Bartell, 2004; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Sharplin, 2014). Early Career Teachers can feel isolated especially if relocating away from family and friendship groups which offer support for the first time. They may lack the social and cultural opportunities that are available in metropolitan areas and may feel disconnected from professional colleagues and the lack of professional development opportunities afforded to their city counterparts (Bartell, 2004). In rural, remote and very remote schools, ECTs may be required to teach
multiple classes or multi-age groups within one class due to small student and teacher numbers, or to teach outside their area of specialisation or qualification (Sharplin, 2014).

Commonly referred to as out-of-field teaching, the phenomenon of teaching outside one’s specialisation or qualification, has been found to be most prevalent in the USA in secondary- and middle-school contexts (Ramsay, 2013). In Australia, McConney and Price (2009) estimated that the rate of out-of-field teaching across all sectors (government, Catholic and independent) to be 24%. Other researchers have added that when geographic location was considered, out-of-field teaching is less commonly reported but occurs at a higher rate in rural, remote and very remote areas (Gallant & Riley, 2017; Sharplin, 2014; Weldon & Ingvarsen, 2016). In rural schools in Western Australia, about 48% of teachers reported teaching out-of-field across all sectors with the independent sector reporting 70% of secondary teachers working out-of-field (McConney & Price, 2009). In a study investigating the impact of out-of-field teaching on early career and experienced teachers in rural and remote DoE schools, Sharplin (2014) found that teaching outside their area of expertise negatively impacted on teachers. In her study, the majority of out-of-field teachers were ECTs who had accepted the position rather than be unemployed. The stress caused by teaching outside their area of qualification or specialisation compounded the stresses associated with other challenges associated with starting teaching. The additional stress experienced was to the detriment of student achievement levels and increased the likelihood of teachers either leaving the school or the profession.

Teaching in the 21st Century presents further challenges for ECTs. In the contemporary classroom teachers are required to integrate pedagogies and technologies into the process of preparing future generations for careers that may not yet exist. Early Career Teachers are currently entering schools at a time where teachers and school leaders are grappling with how to transform traditional knowledge frameworks into those better suited to future labour forces within a global economy (Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe & Terry, 2013).

2.4.4 Catholic Sector challenges

Sector challenges are those that affect ECTs based on the education sector, government, independent or denominational, that they are employed in. In keeping with the Catholic theme of the current study, the review of the literature will examine sector
challenges that pertain to Catholic education in Australia. Arthur (2009) summarised the top ten challenges facing schools in the Catholic sector, namely:


In Australia, Catholic schools most often affiliate with a Catholic Education Commission or Office within a diocese, for support, governance and guidance. Thus, challenges such as those outlined by Arthur (2009), become the responsibility of both the Commission/Office and the schools. Sector challenges that can impact on ECTs, either directly or indirectly, include: recruitment of staff, faith formation, student attitudes to the Church, moral and social formation and the finance of Catholic education. Each of these areas will be briefly examined.

For ECTs, an inability to secure permanent or ongoing employment in the Catholic sector is a challenge. A range of factors influence the likelihood of this goal being realised including changes to laws pertaining to retirement age and to maternity/parental leave. Teacher and school leader numbers were predicted to reduce due to the post-World War II Baby Boomer generation reaching retirement (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). However, changes to laws affecting retirement age have encouraged mature, experienced teachers to remain in the profession longer. In countries such as Australia, laws pertaining to maternity and parental leave have changed significantly since the 1980s. Women are no longer required to resign from their position. Men are able to take parental leave and employers are required to hold an employee’s position open for them to return to upon the completion of the leave (Baird, 2005). Changes in workplace conditions, accommodate families and provide more flexibility for parents’ return to work. The flow-on-effect is that schools may only offer prospective employees, including ECTs, temporary contracts to cover the period of leave (Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, 2015).

Early Career Teachers who do not secure sufficient work to meet the required number of days of employment and hours of professional learning for teacher registration have been reported to be at risk of losing their certification or registration (Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia [TRBWA], 2017; AITSL, 2010).
Catholic schools are not legally permitted to employ teachers who do not meet the requirements for registration. Early Career Teachers with part-time or casual employment can also find it difficult to secure finance for loans and may have to accept less than ideal contracts to secure employment.

Recruitment of ECTs to fill positions at hard-to-staff schools is another challenge faced within the Catholic sector (Miles, Marshall, Rolfe, & Noonan, 2004; Lock, 2008). Throughout Australia, hard-to-staff schools often lie in low socio-economic areas and/or are located in rural, remote or very remote areas (Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007; Sharplin, 2002). Within Western Australia, the Catholic sector established *Kimberley Calling* (CEWA, 2018). This recruitment program was developed to attract experienced school leaders, experienced teachers and ECTs to hard-to-staff, rural, remote and very remote areas. A range of additional incentives are offered including financial bonuses, subsidised accommodation and additional long service leave. According to Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) country postings appear to be implemented in a bureaucratic manner stemming from a staffing formula that does not consider the individual teacher’s personal circumstances. Often ECTs are ill-prepared to cope with the rural, remote or very remote school context (Lock, 2008) and are given little choice but to accept the placement that they have been offered.

Early Career Teachers in the Catholic sector have the responsibility of ensuring that they are providing a Catholic Christian education (Flynn & Mok, 2000) at a time when an increasing number of students in Catholic schools are non-Catholic (Chambers, 2012; Chambers, Grajczonek, & Ryan, 2006; Grace, 2002). Catering for religious diversity may present an additional challenge to ECTs (Chambers, 2012) at the same time when they are coming to terms with curriculum, classroom management and other teaching responsibilities. Of those students who are Catholic, McLaughlin (2006) stated that the majority are non-practicing.

Within the Catholic sector, faith formation also applies to non-teaching and teaching staff (Treston, 2008; Topliss, 2017). With the declining number of religious working in schools, religious education falls to school leaders and teachers (McLaughlin, 2005; Sayce & Lavery, 2010). The Catholic sector has implemented strategies, namely different levels of accreditation, to ensure that teaching staff in Catholic schools have the knowledge required. All teaching staff, including ECTs, are required to complete ongoing professional learning to develop both their knowledge of Catholic teachings and their faith formation (CEWA, 2018). For ECTs having to
complete accreditation can place additional stress upon them at a time when they are still mastering the teaching of Religious Education and the Australian Curriculum (Gleeson, 2015; Lyle, 2013).

Another Catholic sector challenge is the moral and social formation of students within a context of changing societal attitudes particularly towards the church (Grajczonek, 2013; McLaughlin, 2005). Typically, teaching in these areas is covered through the Religious Education curriculum, and through the personal and social capabilities component of the General Capabilities of the Australian Curriculum. As set out in the Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015, Religious Education is the first learning area followed by the other learning areas outlined in the Australian Curriculum (Hickey et al., 2009). Early Career Teachers in Western Australia have to teach religion using the Religious Education units of work (Catholic Education Office of Western Australian, n.d.). Currently, the Units of Work suggest teaching resources that are outdated, do not include a scope and sequence, provide limited examples of assessment and make no reference to judging standards (S. Peterson, personal communication, February 19, 2018). Working with such materials can place additional stress and work on ECTs to find resources that make the units relevant to their students.

Ensuring the effective dissemination of educational reforms and practices into schools is another challenge faced within the Catholic sector. Whether it be curriculum changes, assessment requirements or other matters, these reforms and practices filter down into classroom practice and ECTs, their colleagues and school leaders are faced with the challenge of comprehending and implementing them in a way that is relevant to the school context (Kilgallon, Maloney, & Lock, 2008; Watson & Michael, 2016). The process also requires teachers to accommodate and assimilate new paradigms into their beliefs and practices in order to implement imposed educational change. As part of initiatives aimed at improving the professional status of teaching, and promoting life-long learning, teachers are encouraged to strive for continual improvement and to deliver quality education to their students (Kilgallon, Maloney & Lock, 2008; Watson & Michael, 2016). These initiatives can be a challenge to ECTs who could be overwhelmed by all of the changes they must contend with as they begin their teaching careers.

The finance of Catholic education (Arthur, 2009) is another challenge faced by the Catholic sector within Australia. Catholic education receives partial funding from
the State and Federal governments (Australian Education Act, 2013). Schools usually charge school fees which parents pay for their children to attend a Catholic school however, given that Catholic schools were established to educate the poor, fees may be waived in instances of financial hardship (Catholic Education Commission Western Australia, 2009). In poorer and hard-to-staff schools, government funding may be the sole source of income which impacts on the availability of resources for ECTs to use to support teaching-learning experiences. In the area of Information Technology for example, limited resources can be a problem for ECTs. Early Career Teachers learn about IT integration during their pre-service studies and may find a mismatch between the IT resources they are trained to use and what they have available in the school.

To address the challenge of staff succession in Western Australia, CEWA provided an ECT program to assist ECTs in the first two years of their careers in Catholic schools. The ECT Program was one component in a larger suite of leadership programs provided to identify and develop leaders within Catholic schools. The Graduate program was trialled in 2014 and removed in 2017 (Topliss, 2017). Topliss argued that it is essential that the Catholic sector provide support to ECTs and proposed a model that could be adopted at a system level. The model proposed a system in which mentoring co-ordinators would work directly with ECTs and mentors via a professional supervision unit. The mentoring co-ordinators would also liaise directly with principals and leaders and school-based mentoring co-ordinators if implemented in the Catholic sector (Topliss, 2017).

2.4.5 Summary

Section Three reviewed literature examining the main challenges faced by ECTs as they embark on their career and develop professional identity as a teacher. Challenges were broadly categorised as either personal, classroom, school or sector with some challenges fitting in multiple categories. Overall, the literature reviewed identified that ECTs face a series of challenges as they transition from preservice student to in-service teacher and progress through the different stages of career development. The myriad challenges that many ECTs may face, include the following: heavy teaching loads, multiple preparations, the most behaviourally difficult classes, extracurricular duties, few instructional resources, little collegial support, discipline issues, differentiating the curriculum, professional isolation, inadequate salaries, high parent expectations, poor administrative support, securing employment, unfamiliarity
with routines and procedures, and a mismatch between their expectations of teaching and the realities of the classroom. The review of the literature on challenges faced by Early Career Teachers informed the third research question: *What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?*

### 2.5 Section Four: Influences on retention and attrition in the teaching profession.

In the previous section, the research clearly showed that a myriad of challenges confront ECTs. For some ECTs, the challenges they face may create a chasm between their perceived ideal of being a teacher and the lived reality. Various researchers have reported that approximately 30 – 50% of ECTs will leave the profession within the first five years of graduating (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2003; Schaeffer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012). However, what is often overlooked in the literature is the fact that 50-70% of ECTs remain in the profession. So why is it that some ECTs remain while others leave? Are there fundamental differences between those who leave and those who stay in terms of their personal traits or their work contexts? Or does the decision to remain reflect the dynamic interaction of both nature and nurture?

The purpose of Section Four is to explore the literature that discusses influences impact on ECTs as they navigate their way through the challenges they may face and that support them to remain in the teaching profession. The literature will be reviewed in two parts. The first part focuses on personal influences; that is, what ECTs use at a personal level to help them cope with the challenges of teaching so that they remain in the profession. Within this part, personal traits as well as skills and strategies used will be examined. In the second part, attention is placed on influences that impact at a school and sector level to support ECTs to cope with the challenges they may face and retain them as teachers.

#### 2.5.1 Personal influences: coping strategies

The literature on personal influences is drawn primarily from the fields of psychology and education and focus on individual coping strategies. Coping strategies vary from individual to individual and are dependent upon a range of factors. The interplay between an individual’s temperament and his or her environment directly influences how that individual constructs meaning of the world around them and interprets their different life experiences (Cresswell, 2014). When applied to the school
context, this interplay helps to explain why ECTs may respond to, and cope with, the same challenge differently. There are five main factors that emerge from the literature that pertain to the personal influences that impact on ECTs and the development of coping strategies that they may employ: self-regulation, emotional intelligence, resilience, grit and mindset. Each of these themes will be briefly explored.

Self-regulation is a term used to refer to an individual’s ability to control their emotion, thinking and behaviour, and stems from Bandura’s (1991) social cognitive theory of self-regulation. To cope with the challenges they may face, ECTs need to be able to reflect on their behaviour, the environmental triggers that influence it and to reflect on how their behaviour affects others (self-monitoring). Early Career Teachers must also be able to reflect on their behaviour in relation to their values and workplace circumstances (self-reflection) and manage their emotional reactions to situations (self-reaction). According to Bandura (1991) self-regulation impacts on self-efficacy which in turn affects how one approaches goals, tasks and challenges.

Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke and Baumert (2008) investigated whether teachers’ self-regulatory patterns explained their occupational wellbeing and the quality of their teaching instruction. These commentators focused on two self-regulatory behaviours, work engagement and resilience. Work engagement was defined both in terms of the amount of energy a teacher is prepared to invest in their job and their state of mind when doing so (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Klusmann et al., 2008). In their study, Klusmann et al. described resilience not just in terms of a teacher’s ability to bounce back after failure, but also in terms of the teacher’s ability to emotionally distance themselves from failure, to not give up, to remain mentally stable and to actively cope. Four different patterns of self-regulation in teachers were investigated: healthy ambitious, unambitious, excessively ambitious and resigned. Healthy ambitious teachers were those with high levels of work engagement and resilience, while unambitious teachers were those who had low work engagement and high resilience. Excessively ambitious teachers were high on work engagement but low on resilience, while the teachers categorised as resigned were low on both factors. Klusmann et al. found that teachers who had healthy ambitious self-regulation were considered to adapt best to challenges, followed by those categorised as unambitious. Teachers who had excessively ambitious or resigned patterns of self-regulation were most at risk of burnout and stress.
Emotional intelligence is a construct that was first proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). They defined emotional intelligence as 
a set of skills hypothesized to contribute to the accurate appraisal and expression
of emotion in oneself and in others, the effective regulation of emotion in self
and in others, and the use of feelings to motivate, plan and achieve in one’s life
(p. 185).

The term was popularised by Goleman (1996) who purported that emotional
intelligence (EQ) was a greater predictor of happiness and success in life than a person’s
intelligence quotient (IQ). EQ has been well researched over the years and is now
regarded as a personality trait that is linked to coping (Austin, Saklofske, & Mastoras,
2010), and educational and occupational performance (Hackett & Hortman, 2008). Hen
and Sharabi-Nov (2014) investigated whether emotional intelligence training for
teachers would increase their emotional intelligence and empathy. Their findings
indicated that emotional intelligence training improved elementary teachers’ self-
awareness, emotional expression and empathy while decreasing personal stress. Hen &
Sharabi-Nov concluded that teachers’ emotional abilities can be developed with training
which may better prepare them for the emotionally challenging job of being a teacher.

Resilience is another example of a personal trait that assists individuals to cope
with challenges. Resilience refers to “a process of adaptation when there is exposure to
adversity.” (Masten, 2011; Rutter, 2012; Ungar, 2015). However, within an educational
context such a definition has been considered as too narrow as it focuses solely on the
individual with little regard for contextual factors (Fitz-enz, 2009; Gu & Day, 2013;
the profession and strength and determination to fulfil their original call to teach and to
manage and thrive professionally are characteristics of resilient teachers” (p. 1314). In
simple terms it refers to how well an ECT can ‘bounce back’ when faced with a
challenge (McGrath & Noble, 2000). Resilience develops throughout the lifespan as a
response to facing and living through negative emotional experiences (Ungar, 2015).

Before entering the teaching profession, ECTs will have developed different
levels of resilience as a result of facing challenges in their lives. However, upon
entering the workforce, they most likely will be confronted by new situations that they
have not encountered before, for which they have to either build resilience or generalise
resilience from previous experiences. Thus, in order to build resilience an ECT has to
experience challenges and bounce back from them. Although not directly linked to
motivation for teaching, literature on resilience provides insight into what sustains an individual’s motivation to remain in the teaching profession, as well as drawing upon research in both education and positive psychology (Johnson, Down, Le Cornu, Peters, Sullivan, Pearce, & Hunter, 2012; Keogh, Jarvis & Pendergast 2010; Seligman, 2011).

As part of an address to a national teacher shortage in Australia in 2008, Johnson, Down, Le Cornu, Peters, Sullivan, Pearce and Hunter (2012) conducted qualitative interviews with 60 Early Career Teachers from Western Australia and South Australia. Entitled “Addressing the Teacher Exodus: Enhancing Early Career Teacher Resilience and Retention in Changing Times”, the project focused on ECT resilience. Retention or attrition was described as a reflection of the ability of ECTs to successfully adapt to circumstances in their workplace or personal lives despite challenges (Johnson, et al., 2012). The researchers identified some of the key factors that contribute to the development of ECT resilience and from this identification developed a framework entitled Conditions Supporting Early Career Teacher Resilience. The framework examined five key themes, namely: relationships; policies and practices, teachers’ work, teacher identity, and school culture.

Focusing on the theme of relationships, Le Cornu (2013) used Jordan’s (2006) model of relational resilience as a means to understand the relationships contributing to ECT resilience. Jordan’s model postulated that resilience is based on an individual’s capacity for connection and stems from the core belief that psychological growth occurs in relationships characterised by mutuality, empowerment and the development of courage. Le Cornu (2013) identified that the relationships that ECTs form with their students, staff, leaders, family and friends, students’ parents and the broader school community all work together to promote resilience. Relationships with others was found to contribute to positive feelings which in turn fostered hope, a powerful emotion underpinning resilience (Fullan, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Le Cornu (2013) found that having significant personal and professional relationships built an ECT’s self-esteem and professional identity. These findings supported other research on ECT resilience that has found that developing a positive teacher identity is pivotal to becoming a resilient teacher (Day & Gu, 2007; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Morrison, 2012).

In a study of Australian middle-school teachers, Keogh, Jarvis and Pendergast (2010) proposed that resilience was an important skill that could be, and needed to be, taught to pre-service teachers to help them deal with the emotional demands that teachers confront in their workplace. The promotion of resilience has been found to
enhance teaching effectiveness, heighten career satisfaction, and help teachers to be able to adjust to the ever-changing demands of school (Bobek, 2002; Day & Gu, 2014; Elitharp, 2006). Mansfield, Beltman, Price and McConney (2012) developed a framework based on teacher perceptions of resilience and how it impacted on different aspects of Australian ECTs’ work. The framework proposed that teacher resilience is derived from four dimensions, namely: professional related, emotional, social and motivational. Each dimension is comprised of a range of positive attributes or factors that when present, equip the teacher with resilience skills. Research has identified that personal factors that enhance resilience include, having self-belief (Le Cornu, 2013), intrinsic motivation (Hong, 2012) and efficacy (Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, & Weatherby-Fell, 2016).

Grit is a personality trait that has been linked to resilience. Duckworth, Quinn and Seligman (2009) defined grit as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (p. 541). Grit has been found to predict retention and performance with gritty individuals more likely to work harder and remain more committed to their chosen pursuits than their less gritty counterparts (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Grit has been associated with optimism and life satisfaction. When faced with adversity people who are optimistic have been found to be more likely to sustain their effort at a task (grit), to maintain their own sense of wellbeing and to perceive that they have control over and responsibility for their performance on a task (Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman). In a range of contexts, grit has been found to improve work performance, work retention and success in marriage (Eskreis-Winkler, Shulman, Beal, & Duckworth, 2014). Educational research into grit and Early Career Teachers is limited however Duckworth and Eskreis-Winkler (2013) found that more optimistic ECTs rated themselves higher in both grit and life satisfaction and grit has been found to be a positive predictor of teacher effectiveness (Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman). Research into the relationship between grit and mindset, while still in its infancy, has found that students who demonstrate a growth mindset and grit achieve at higher levels that those who do not (Laursen, 2015).

Research into teacher mindsets has identified that a teacher’s mindset impacts on student achievement (Dweck, 2014; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). Students perceived to be of low-ability in a class with a teacher with a fixed mindset achieve at a low level. In contrast, a student of low ability in a class with a teacher with a growth mindset achieved at much higher levels (Dweck, 2014). Teachers with growth mindsets
have been found to take more risks, explore new teaching methods, engage in more professional learning, observe other teachers and to ask for feedback from others (Dweck, 2014; Gero, 2013). In describing the practical strategy of writing a personal professional development plan to address new teachers’ concerns, Bentley, Morway and Short (2013) identified that teachers who demonstrated a growth mindset focused on more positive factors including continual self-improvement through problem-solving, reflective conversations and professional reflection, rather than the more physical and emotional aspects of teaching.

Since the 2000s however, a less well-known trait, spiritual intelligence, has received growing attention in the fields of psychology and to a lesser extent education (Emmons, 2000). Zohar and Marshall (2000) presented spiritual intelligence (SQ) as a construct that is difficult to define and described it as the foundation of emotional intelligence (EQ) and general intelligence (IQ). While IQ accounts for an individual’s cognitive capacity and adaptability and EQ accounts for their feelings and social behaviour, SQ is associated with the spiritual, creative dimension of a person (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Emmons (2000) proposed that there are five components of spiritual intelligence, namely: transcendence, mysticism, sanctification, religious and spiritual coping, and virtuous traits. Emmons (2000) stated:

spiritually intelligent individuals are characterized by (a) the capacity for transcendence; (b) the ability to enter into heightened spiritual states of consciousness; (c) the ability to invest everyday activities, events, and relationships with a sense of the sacred; (d) the ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems in living; and (e) the capacity to engage in virtuous behaviour or to be virtuous (to show forgiveness, to express gratitude, to be humble, to display compassion) (p. 10).

While spirituality is not synonymous with religion, it resonates with the essence of what it means to be Catholic and the core work and purpose of a Catholic school in Western Australia (CECWA, 2009). For that reason, spirituality could be a personality trait utilised by ECTs and therefore requires inclusion in this review of the literature.

Self-regulation, emotional intelligence, resilience, grit and growth mindset are essential character traits that equip ECTs with the ability to develop both the skills and strategies that promote self-care and management, as well as relationships with others (Brown, 2006; He & Cooper, 2011; Russell, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987). He and Cooper (2011) identified that ECTs need to learn to adopt individual ways to manage
the stresses and frustrations experienced during the course of teaching. These scholars found that some ECTs cope with the challenges of teaching by discussing concerns with a mentor, colleagues, non-teaching friends or leisure activities (He & Cooper, 2011). Developing relationships with others, in particular their students, was also found to be an effective way in which ECTs could cope with challenges. The benefits of doing so were described as follows: it helped motivate students in content area learning; it helped ECTs to sustain their passion for teaching by focusing on positive experiences; and, it helped to establish common ground between the ECT and the students and their families (He & Cooper, 2011). In essence, these strategies helped to ensure that the ECTs had a sense of belonging and connectedness to their students and others inside and outside the work environment. When the challenge is more pedagogical in nature however, different strategies may be required.

In an Australian study that examined how Early Career primary teachers coped with teaching science, Appleton (2003) identified that there were varying degrees of competence in science pedagogical content knowledge amongst elementary, or primary school, teachers. Those ECTs who had good scientific knowledge coped well when teaching science content while those who had limited scientific knowledge developed a number of pedagogical coping strategies. Some ECTs coped by avoiding teaching science altogether or postponing the teaching of science lessons. Others used a thematic approach to teaching and incorporated science lessons and activities within the theme. However, ECTs with limited science content knowledge or experience relied heavily on resources including books, CD-ROM, activities based on strategies from other learning areas and packaged-science activities with hands-on components (Appleton, 2003).

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014), in a Norwegian study examining job satisfaction, stress and coping strategies amongst teachers, found that age was a variable that determined the types of strategies that teachers reported using to cope with challenges and strains. The main strategy reported by young teachers, those aged 27 to 34, was to work hard and be well prepared, a strategy that contributed further to stress in the long term. Some young teachers also reported using sport and exercise as a coping strategy. Middle aged teachers, those in the 35 to 50-year old age bracket, used sick leave and reducing their full-time equivalent hours as strategies to cope with challenges. Teachers aged 51 to 63 years were classified as Senior teachers. These teachers used short-term sick leave, reduced work hours, reduced teaching preparation time and either exercised or relaxed after work.
Research has indicated that Generation Y teachers are more likely to be motivated by extrinsic factors such as flexible work schedules, recognition, feedback and varied tasks (Armour, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2004); characteristics that are most often not available in the work of teachers based on school structures. Berman (2004) stated that teachers will not remain in a profession that is not sensitive to their needs and does not promote their professional growth. He proposed that challenging professional development that develops leadership, promotes professional dialogue about practice, values teacher contributions and challenges thinking increases commitment to teaching. Margolis (2008) offered three possible solutions to keep teachers motivated and committed to teaching: merit pay, differentiated jobs and university-school partnerships. The effectiveness of each of these options would be dependent on individual teachers’ motivation for entering the teaching profession.

2.5.2 School and sector influences

Based on Huberman’s (1989) influential work describing phases that teachers transition through during their career, Margolis (2008) researched what factors keep current teachers teaching. The four- to six-year period of their teaching career, described by Huberman as the Stabilization phase, was identified as a time where ECTs were at risk of contemplating leaving the profession. Margolis suggested that during the Stabilization phase, ECTs have reached a level of proficiency and are at risk of becoming stale with the routine of teaching. At this point in an ECT’s career, employee-employer relations are important to both motivation to remain in the profession and building resilience (Le Cornu, 2013). Fitz-enz (2009) stated that “A good relationship with one’s supervisor (including care, availability and praise) will make a worker more resilient … “(p. 223). This finding is in keeping with research into teacher attrition and retention (Ingersoll, 2001; The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, 2005).

Since 2010, educational research focusing on resilience, especially in ECTs, has come to the fore (Mansfield, Beltman, & Price, 2014). Mansfield, Beltman and Price (2014) proposed a model of ECT resilience integrating a resilience process. The resilience process acts as an interplay between a range of personal factors unique to the individual ECT and the contextual factors within which the teacher operates. This process is the space within which all teachers draw on a range of resources and strategies to bounce back from setbacks (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2010; Mansfield,
Beltman & Price, 2014). Early Career Teachers were found to be faced by many challenges, more professional than personal, and relationships outside the school context were found to be crucial even when a school-based mentor was present. Mansfield, Beltman and Price (2014) also proposed that Universities, and in particular, teacher education programmes need, to prepare preservice teachers for the challenges they will face as well as help them establish personal resources to utilise during challenging times.

On a global level, a range of strategies have been implemented at both the school and sector levels to help ECTs to cope with the challenges of teaching in an attempt to retain them in the profession. Education sectors in different countries have adopted various practices including induction programs, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), internships, orientation programs, mentoring and coaching (Angelides & Mylordou, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b; De Angelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift & Maulana, 2016; Howe, 2006; Paris, 2013; Ralph, Walker, & Wimmer, 2009; Tickle, 1994, 2000). Participation in such practices has gained momentum since the 1990s, where less than 50% of ECTs participated (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004), to the present date where in some sectors participation is mandatory (CEWA, 2016; DoE, 2017). While the most effective ECT programs vary, reflecting different cultural, social, geopolitical and economic contexts, they have common attributes. For example, one attribute is that funds are attributed, usually at a national, state or sector level, to provide supportive, ongoing professional learning to ECTs to continue developing their potential beyond their teacher preparation course (Howe, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). A second element is that programs provide the opportunity for expert teachers, school leaders and ECTs “to learn together in supportive environment promoting time for collaboration, reflection and a gradual acculturation into the teaching profession” (Howe, 2006, p. 288). A third attribute is that each program contains flexibility to allow for individual differences between ECTs’ needs. While all ECTs participating in a program may need to complete core elements of the program, the program is structured in such a way as to allow ECTs to pursue areas of specific need or interest. Another element is that funds are directed to schools to cover the cost of releasing ECTs to participate in professional learning programs (Howe, 2006). A final element is that the programs provide ECTs with time and assistance for reflective practice with experienced, well-qualified and specially trained mentors. Darling-Hammond (1997) argued that quality ECT programs pay for
themselves with reduced attrition and improved learning. The literature on the different forms of school based and sector strategies will now be briefly examined.

Sector strategies are those that are implemented at the school district, sector and/or state level to support ECTs in the initial years of their career (Hallam, Chou, & Hite, 2012; Helms-Lorenz et al., 2016; Howe, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The most common form is graduate induction programs that are offered by the different sectors, governmental, religious and non-denominational, to all ECTs in the first two years of their career (CEWA, 2016; DoE, 2017; Howe, 2006; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Topliss, 2017). Typically, these programs involve an online training component, school-based action research, additional classroom release time (Sullivan & Morrison, 2014) and opportunities for ECTs to come together for networking, support and collaboration (DoE, 2017; Howe, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Induction programs often link to school-based strategies through action research that ECTs conduct within their own classrooms with collegial support often from a designated mentor.

Schools play an essential role in attending to the needs of ECTs in the first five years of joining the profession (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Donaldson, 2005; Goodlad & McMannon, 2004) and there are many different school-based strategies that run independently of sector initiatives. Johnson (2006) identified that “new teachers are likely to change schools or leave teaching if they are dissatisfied … there is much to understand about how teachers’ effectiveness with students depends on the characteristics and quality of the school as a workplace” (p. 1). Lovett and Cameron (2011) proposed that three categories of conditions, school culture, structures and roles, needed to be present to promote ECT learning. These researchers referred to school culture as the environment that promoted opportunities for ECTs to have conversations about teaching and learning while structures referred to things that were put in place for teachers to have these conversations (staff meetings, mentoring, coaching, professional learning communities, cluster meetings). Roles referred to the dynamics behind how experienced teachers either promoted or hindered the professional learning of ECTs. Pivotal to all three conditions is the school principal and school leadership (Flores, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lovett & Cameron, 2011; Watkins, 2005). Ingersoll and Smith (2011) stated

the data show that beginning teachers, in particular, report that one of the main factors behind their decision to depart is a lack of adequate support from the
school administration. These are the kinds or occupational ills that effective employee orientation and induction programs seek to address (p. 202). Many schools offer orientation to new staff to familiarise them with the school, its culture, charter of professional behaviour and the logistics of locating and accessing resources (Howe, 2006). Other strategies include coaching and mentoring, two distinct ways of supporting ECTs, creating professional learning communities and professional development/professional learning.

Mentoring programs are designed to provide an ECT with specific support usually from an experienced teacher (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Topliss, 2017). Coaching within a school context can take many different forms depending on the needs of the staff (AITSL, 2010). Explained simply, coaching typically involves professional conversations between a coach and a coachee which seek to empower the coachee to identify areas of professional need, set realistic goals and actively achieve them. In a coaching relationship, the coach does not have to be more experienced that the coachee. Within some educational research the term mentor and coach have been used synonymously (Shields & Murray, 2017) although the two strategies are different. For ease of reading and as the focus of this literature review is to examine strategies used within schools rather than draw a distinction between the two strategies, the term mentor will be used to encapsulate both. The effectiveness of mentors has been found to significantly increase when mentors themselves receive specific training for the role (Howe, 2006; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Leonard, 2012; Whitaker, 2013).

Mentor programs can vary immensely in terms of the frequency and length of support and are influenced by the relationship between the mentee and the mentor (Howe, 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Paris, 2013; Shields & Murray, 2017; Topliss, 2017). Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) in a critical review of research on induction and mentoring programs, stated “collectively the studies do provide empirical support for the claim that assistance for new teachers, and in particular, mentoring programs have a positive impact on teachers and their retention” (p. 2). Research has also found mentoring programs improve student performance with increased number of ECT mentoring hours positively correlated to higher student achievement in numeracy and literacy (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In an exploration of mentoring in Western Australian Catholic primary and secondary schools, Topliss (2017) identified that while mentors did not alleviate every challenge faced by Early Career Teachers they eased the transition from being a pre-service teacher to a classroom teacher. Topliss was critical
of the lack of feedback offered to ECTs, the variation in the quality of mentoring that was provided within the participating Catholic schools, and the cessation of the Graduate Program at a sector level which was designed to support ECTs as they embarked on their careers.

Establishing a community of professional learners’ culture within a school is another strategy that is employed to support ECTs and teachers alike (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Lovett & Cameron, 2011). When properly established, professional learning communities have been found to empower all teachers, including ECTs (Hagerman Pangan & Lupton, 2015), as classroom practitioners who seek lifelong learning, support each other’s professional practice (Bond, 2015), keep current with educational research, and conduct action research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) to improve student and school outcomes (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). When facilitated by effective school leadership, professional learning communities also develop the leadership potential of ECTs by creating a sense of belonging, giving them a valued voice, increasing their professional competence and supporting the development of their teacher identity (Bond, 2015; Shield & Murray, 2017). Within the context of a professional learning community, teachers may provide professional learning to other staff while at the same time supporting their own growth. Professional learning communities can open the door to other collaborative and supportive strategies including peer observations of practice and professional conversations (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Timperley & Earl, 2008). Peer observation can be implemented in a range of different ways to suit the needs of the individual teacher and can provide an opportunity for reflective practice, feedback and affirmation as well as collegial support (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

The model of a community of professional learners moves away from the old paradigm of workshop style professional development. Generally professional development or professional learning can take one of two forms: consultants or expert teachers offering workshops within the school on designated professional development days, or teachers seeking learning or support from an agency external to the school (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Research has found that this approach is not as effective in supporting ECTs as strategies such as working in clusters on a school-based area of need or creating a professional learning community (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).
Creating a school culture that places a focus on maintaining a positive work environment is another strategy that can be implemented at a school level to assist ECTs to face the challenges of teaching (Ward, 2011). Teacher job satisfaction and retention has been found to be higher in schools that create such an environment (Certo & Fox, 2002) particularly when teachers are provided with greater levels of autonomy and greater involvement in decision making processes (Ingersoll, 2001). Ward (2011) investigated the work environments of early career secondary school science teachers and identified that positive work environments greatly impacted on early career teacher retention. The key elements of positive work environments were those that made the ECT feel valued and that gave them a sense of belonging. These feelings resulted from receiving feedback and professional development, having opportunities for professional conversations in which ideas were shared and accepted, having opportunities for leadership development and having a manageable level of autonomy. The responsibility for developing and maintaining a positive work environment rests on all staff members within a school, however the principal and leadership team play a pivotal role (Leonard, 2012; Peters & Pearce, 2012; Sullivan & Morrison, 2014; Ward, 2011). In an Australian study, Peters and Pearce (2012) highlighted the importance of the principal in not only setting the tone for the school culture but also in supporting ECTs both personally and also by creating structures and processes within the school to provide them with the support that they needed (Watkins, 2005). In one case study cited, the principal met with ECTs regularly both formally and informally to see how they were progressing so that the support that they required was provided (Peters & Pearce). Research has stressed the crucial role that principals play in supporting ECTs and has also highlighted the pressures that are placed on principals which can restrict them from doing so to the extent that is required (Peters & Pearce, 2012; Sullivan & Morrison, 2014; Topliss, 2017; Watkins, 2005).

In the United States, the Positive Psychology movement has developed a range of programs relating to happiness and well-being (Seligman, 2011b). Many of these programs have been used within the armed services. The results have indicated that building resilience, understanding an individual’s motivation and structuring personal development to meet the specific needs of the individual, has a significant positive impact on that individual’s ability to bounce back from traumatic events (Seligman, 2011). Research in the Positive Psychology movement has been instrumental in the development of the Positive Education movement worldwide (Kristjansson, 2012;
Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009). To date research in Positive Education has focused on primary and secondary student well-being, with little if any research available on its impact upon pre-service, ECT or established teachers.

2.5.3 Summary

In this fourth section of the review of the literature, attention turned to research on how ECTs coped with the challenges they faced as part of teaching. The research showed that there are innate personal attributes that, when present, equip ECTs with the grit and tenacity to persist in the face of challenges. The literature also highlighted the importance of having school and sector level strategies in place to offer ECTs with emotional support, professional guidance and the opportunity to share experiences with other colleagues. The review of the literature on how Early Career Teachers cope with the challenges of teaching informed the fourth and fifth research questions: *How do Early Career Teachers cope with the challenges in light of their experiences?* and, *What factors, if any, in Early Career Teachers’ experiences made them want to continue in/leave the profession?*

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, literature concentrating on four aspects of the research pertinent to ECTs’ decisions to remain in the profession was reviewed. The four aspects were: motivation for teaching; job satisfaction within the teaching profession; challenges faced by ECTs; and, influences in retention or attrition in the teaching profession. The review of the literature resulted in the researcher developing an overarching research question which formed the purpose of the study: *What are the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools that led to remain in the profession?* From the overarching research question five specific research questions were posed, each derived from a section of the literature review, namely:

*Research question 1: What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?*
*Research question 2: What do Early Career Teachers like/dislike about teaching?*
*Research question 3: What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?*
*Research question 4: How do Early Career Teachers cope with the challenges in light of their experiences?*
Research question 5: What factors, if any, in Early Career Teachers’ experiences made them want to continue in/leave the profession?

The next chapter, Research Plan, describes the theoretical framework for the research, research participants, the measures adopted to ensure the study’s trustworthiness and the data analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with a description of ethical considerations and a design summary for the research.
Chapter Three: Research Plan

3.1 Introduction

The review of the literature in Chapter Three focused attention on four aspects of the research pertinent to Early Career Teachers’ (ECTs) decisions to remain in the teaching profession, namely: Motivation to join the teaching profession; likes and dislikes of teaching; main challenges faced by ECTs; and, strategies used to cope with challenges that help maintain motivation to remain in the teaching profession. The review of the literature resulted in the development of an overarching research question which formed the purpose of the study: What are the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools that led them to remain in the profession? From the overarching research question five specific research questions were posed that directed the focus of this study:

Research question 1: What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?
Research question 2: What do Early Career Teachers like/dislike about teaching?
Research question 3: What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?
Research question 4: How do Early Career Teachers cope with challenges, in light of their experiences?
Research question 5: What factors, if any, in Early Career Teachers’ experiences made them want to continue in/leave the teaching profession?

This chapter is concerned with the design for the research including the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. The research participants, measures adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and data analysis processes are described. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the ethical considerations associated with the research and a design summary. An overview of this chapter is provided in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1

Overview of Chapter Three: Research Plan

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3.2 Theoretical Framework

When planning to conduct a study, researchers make numerous choices including which cases to study and which data collection and analytical methods to use (Crotty, 1998; Silverman, 2013). A theoretical framework displays those choices and decisions and is comprised of four elements, namely, epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. The first element, epistemology, refers to the branch of philosophy concerning the theory of knowledge and how sense is made of the world (Crotty, 1998). Examples of epistemologies include constructivism, objectivism and subjectivism. The second element, theoretical perspective is informed by the epistemology and refers to the philosophical stance adopted. Examples of theoretical
perspectives include interpretivism, positivism and critical theory (Crotty, 1998). The theoretical perspective in turn, informs the methodology which pertains to the strategies, practices and rules used to conduct the research. The final element, methods refers to the procedures used to collect and analyse data related to the research questions or hypothesis proposed (Crotty, 1998) Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Schram, 2006; Strauss, 1995).

O’Donoghue (2006) recommended the use of four questions when making decisions regarding the theoretical framework for a prospective study: (1) What research paradigm informs our approach to our research area of interest?; (2) What theoretical perspective do we choose within this paradigm regarding our research area of interest?; (3) What methodology do we choose as a result of our location of the research area of interest within a particular theoretical perspective derived from a particular paradigm?; and, (4) What methods are most appropriate to use in light of our chosen methodology? (O’Donoghue, 2006). The theoretical framework for this research, illustrated in Figure 3.1, was determined in light of these four questions. The remainder of this section describes the elements of this framework.

Figure 3.1: Theoretical framework for the research. (Adapted from Crotty, 1998, p. 4)
3.2.1 Epistemology

Maynard (1994) defines epistemology as “a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (p. 10). To ensure strong research design, researchers must choose an epistemology that aligns with their beliefs about the nature of reality (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The epistemological approach selected for this study was constructivism which holds that individuals interact with the objects and subjects in the world around them (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Cresswell, 2014). Through these interactions and experiences individuals construct their own understanding of that world (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). In adopting a constructivist approach, the researcher acknowledges that he or she is a subject in the research participants’ world. The researcher also understands that his or her interpretation of the research participants’ reality is influenced by the researcher’s own personal experiences and world view (Cresswell, 2014; Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014). As such, the constructivist approach predominantly employs more qualitative research methods. In some instances, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used, with the quantitative data typically being used to support the qualitative data (Cresswell, 2014). The present study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods but is predominantly qualitative.

Qualitative research is based on an inductive approach that focuses on specific situation or people with an emphasis on words rather than numbers (Bryman, 2012; Maxwell, 2005). One of the main features of qualitative research is the emphasis on uncovering meanings by participants in a particular social context (Bogdan & Bilkin, 2007). Specifically, qualitative research methods were used to collect and analyse data regarding ECTs’ perceptions and experiences of working in Western Australian Catholic primary schools. The remainder of this section discusses the key foundational principles of the underlying epistemology of qualitative research and the present study. Qualitative research is concerned with the systematic collection, arrangement, presentation and interpretation of text-based data (Flick, 2014).

Qualitative data may be generated from conversations recorded in interviews then converted to transcripts, observation of research participants and/or analysis of source documents relevant to the study (Silverman, 2013). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggested that qualitative research places “an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity,
amount, intensity, or frequency” (p.8). The goal of qualitative research is to study participants in their natural context as they experience a phenomenon of some kind (Punch, 2014). The desired outcome of qualitative research is to make conceptual generalisations from the context of the study to other settings (Flick, 2014). Qualitative research enables the researcher to better explain the outcomes of actual events (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The current study concentrated on exploring the experiences and self-perceptions of ECTs, and as such, is well placed within a qualitative research paradigm. In addition to the abovementioned features of qualitative research, the role of the researcher is an important element in investigating phenomena. Bryman (2012) suggested that the qualitative researcher “seeks close involvement with the people being investigated, so that he or she can genuinely understand the world through their eyes” (p. 394). This research drew upon the researcher’s particular background and understanding in Catholic education in Western Australian primary schools, thus enabling a deeper insight into the participants’ perspectives and professional needs. Terms such as ‘trustworthiness’, assessed against the criteria of credibility, generalisability, dependability and confirmability, are used to judge the quality of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In keeping with the constructivist epistemology, the current study also employed a quantitative survey to gather descriptive statistics about the participants’ contexts.

3.2.2 Theoretical perspective.

Crotty (1998) described theoretical perspective as the philosophical stance behind the methodology that infuses the reason for the research, its criteria and conduct. The theoretical perspective chosen for this research was interpretivism. Interpretivism stems from a constructivist epistemology, which holds that “there is no meaning without a mind … meaning is not discovered but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon.

An interpretive perspective is based on Weber’s concept of verstehen, which is comprised of techniques that are sensitive to context, provide insights into others’ world views, and that are concerned with empathetic understanding (Neuman, 2011). Of prime importance to interpretivism are the social meanings that people attach to the world around them. The interpretivist perspective involves searching for those patterns
of meaning that people use to make sense of the world (Bryman, 2012; Schwandt, 1998). The interpretive nature of the project means that the research is concerned with giving a voice to the ECTs who participated in the study. Through these teachers’ involvement, the researcher was able to develop an understanding of their lived experiences and reasons for remaining in the profession.

Within the interpretivist perspective, there are different approaches or lenses that can be used to understand the beliefs, thoughts and behaviours of research participants (Bryman, 2012). One of these approaches is symbolic interactionism which assumes that people transmit and receive symbolic communication when they interact socially, and that through these interactions, perceptions are created. The perceptions that they create of the interaction, each other and themselves are shaped by both the culture and the situation in which the interaction occurs, which determines how they act, and in turn, influences their perceptions (Blumer, 1969; Crotty, 1998). Symbolic interactionism assumes that the perceptions and interpretations that people have of the world around them hold significant meaning to those people (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Crotty (1998) suggested that it is important for the researcher to explore the manner in which participants arrive at their understanding about the phenomena of interest. If the aim of the interpretive approach is to “get inside the actors’ heads and see how they define the situation” (Blackledge & Hunt, 1985, p. 236), then the researcher needs to be aware of personal biases and assumptions, interpretations and preconceived ideas that may lead to misinterpretation of the participants’ meanings.

Consistent with a symbolic interactionist approach, this study sought to explore the perspectives of participants as they experienced their second-, third- or fourth year of teaching. The research involved the collection and analysis of text-based data, specifically interview transcripts generated through qualitative, semi-structured interviews. The interviews captured the participants’ experiences and self-perceptions of working in a Catholic primary school in Western Australia.

3.3 Methodology

Methodology refers to the strategy underpinning the choice and use of particular research methods suitable for a study’s desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998). In keeping with the theoretical perspective of interpretivism and the lens of symbolic interactionism, the methodology chosen for this inquiry was a case study design. The methodology underpinning this inquiry is now discussed.
3.3.1 Case study.

As a method of qualitative inquiry Bryman (2008, p. 52) stated that the case study design “favours qualitative methods such as participant observation and interviewing … because these methods are viewed as particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case”. Case study methodology provides an approach through which to investigate how social structures and forces influence the actions of individuals to produce results in a particular context (Neuman, 2011; Payne & Payne, 2004). Yin (2009, p. 4) argued that as a methodology the case study approach should be considered when the researcher is seeking to “explain some present circumstance such as the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of a social phenomenon … and when the questions require an extensive in-depth description (of the phenomena)”. In addition, Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 545) suggested that the case study approach be considered “when you want to uncover contextual conditions because the researcher believes they are relevant to the phenomena under review”. In the current study, the researcher was interested in identifying contextual conditions that led to ECTs in Western Australian Catholic primary schools remaining in the profession.

Punch (2014) argued that a case study has four characteristics. Firstly, a case study has boundaries that must be delineated as clearly as possible. Secondly, a case study “is a case of something” that must be defined to “give focus to the research, and to make the logic and strategy of the research clear” (Ragin & Becker, 1992, p.150). Thirdly, when adopting case study as a research methodology, there must be an explicit attempt made to “preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case” (Ragin & Becker, 1992, p.150) usually through the use of clearly stated specific research questions. Fourthly, a case study typically relies upon the analysis of multiple data sources collected from participants in naturalistic settings. All of the above characteristics apply to the current research.

Within this research the case study had a clear boundary; it applied to ECTs in their second, third or fourth year of teaching in Western Australian Catholic primary schools. Additionally, the case study was a case of something, namely an exploration of the experiences and self-perceptions of ECTs. An attempt was made to “preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case” (Punch, 2014, p.150), by the use of five specific research questions appropriate for the study’s purpose. The research relied upon analysis of multiple sources namely survey and interview data from ECTs and interview data from CEWA staff involved in the ECT Program (Catholic Education
Western Australia, 2016). In addition, ECTs’ experiences and perceptions were examined both individually and collectively during the data analysis process.

3.3.2 Instrumental case study

Stake (1995) placed case study research into one of three main case categories: (i) intrinsic, (ii) instrumental, and (iii) collective. The intrinsic case study involves research undertaken to enhance understanding of a particular case. The instrumental case study is concerned with the examination of a particular case to provide insight into an issue or refine a theory. The collective case study extends an instrumental case study to examine multiple cases where the focus is both within and across cases. Instrumental case study was chosen for this research.

Underpinning the methodological structure of instrumental case study is the rationale for choosing the case study approach. In this instance, the inquiry was organised around a “snapshot” (Neuman, 2011, p. 44) of the ECTs’ perspectives. Berg (2007, p. 293) described the snapshot case study as “a detailed and objective study of one research entity at one point in time”. Specifically, the snapshot case study involved research into three perspectives relating to the ECTs in Western Australian Catholic primary schools, the perceptions and experiences of ECTs in their second-year, third-year or fourth-year of professional experience. The issue of years of experience in this research presented an opportunity to compare the experiences and self-perceptions of ECTs. Of particular interest were the various personal and professional situations of each participant and the respective impacts on their experience and self-perception of teaching. The focus of this research was to understand the participants’ reasons for remaining in the profession.

There are a number of concerns about engaging the case study approach. These include: generalisability, subjectivity, volume of information, quality of the research and methodological rigour. These five concerns will now be addressed. Firstly, one of the standard criticisms of the case study approach is that findings drawn from the study cannot be generalised (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2009). Stake (1994, p. 4) contended that the primary purpose of a case study is “to maximise what we can understand about the case”. As such, Stake (1994) postulated that a case should be studied and understood as an entity in itself rather than for the purpose of understanding other cases. Thus, this first criticism concerning generalisability is addressed as the intention of the case to understand a single research phenomenon.
A second criticism of the case study approach concerns the subjectivity of the researcher. Burns (2000) suggested that case study design, since it is highly subjective and interpretative in nature, can be dismissed as an impure methodology, which is value-laden and questionable. Yin (2009) recognised that bias can enter into the conduct of a variety of experiments and contends that bias occurs more frequently in case studies. To counter this challenge, it is necessary for the researcher to report on the collected data fairly and without prejudice. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014, p. 63) contended that “member checks” are useful in verifying interpretations of the collected data. Member checks involve the participants approving the accuracy of their data by checking its content. In the study, member checks were conducted for all interviews. Prior to the interview participants were sent a copy the semi-structured interview questions so that they could prepare what they wanted to discuss. After the interviews, participants were sent a transcribed copy of their interview and asked to check it to ensure that it was an accurate portrayal of what they had said during the interview. Participants were also given the option to amend any information that they had provided during the interview so that the interview transcript provided what they perceived to be an accurate portrayal of their situation.

A third criticism about case studies is that it is a time-consuming methodology that can result in a large volume of collected information (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Yin, 2009). In response to this criticism, Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that a trade-off to this criticism is that this large volume of information is rich in data and thick in description. Another criticism in dealing with a mass of information is that it leads to a potential tendency of the researcher to be biased and selective of the data (Yin, 2009). To avoid this tendency, Burns (2000) suggested that the researcher choose a manageable topic, specify succinctly the initial proposition, identify the essential interviewees and observational settings and analyse the data once they are collected.

With regard to this particular research, the topic was clearly stated and so highlighted the intention of the study. The participants volunteered according to their interest and desire to contribute to this study. Interviews were conducted over 45 to 60-minute time periods via telephone while each participant was at his or her place of employment or a venue of their choice. The interviews were focused on eliciting responses to the research topic questions, and the data were analysed shortly after they were collected. The fourth and fifth criticisms are concerned with research quality and methodological rigour respectively. Both criticisms are addressed in the Section 4.6.
3.4 Method

Three methods of data collection were used in this project; surveying, semi-structured interviewing, and reflective journaling. Multiple methods were included to ensure that a wide generation and comparison of perspectives was available to the researcher. These three methods of data collection will now be discussed.

3.4.1 Surveying

Surveying is a method of data collection commonly associated with quantitative research; however, it can also be integrated into qualitative research (Neuman, 2011). Surveys can take different forms, including: telephone, mail, web-based, and face-to-face. Moreover, “surveys can provide quite accurate, reliable and valid data” when used for exploratory, descriptive or explanatory research where they “ask many questions at once, thereby measuring many variables at once” (Neuman, 2011, p. 309). A web-based survey developed with Survey Monkey was used to obtain descriptive statistics and explanatory data about the ECT participants (Appendix A).

Web-based surveying was selected due to the advantages it has over more traditional approaches (Neuman, 2011), related to efficiency of delivery and the cost of data collection as well as data quality (Fleming & Bowden, 2009; Neuman, 2011). Some authors however have stated that web-based surveys may be biased by low and selective participation and that the rate of completing all sections of the survey is much lower for web-based surveys than face-to-face surveys (Heiervang & Goodman, 2011). In the current study every effort was made to reduce the potential impact of these issues. The ECT participants consented to complete the survey and data quality was ensured through the careful design of the survey questions and the survey structure (Neuman, 2011). All participants had reliable access to the internet, were required to complete each survey question and were also given the option of completing the survey over multiple sessions.

The survey comprised two sections each asking about different forms of information regarding the participants’ personal and place of employment characteristics. Table 4.2 shows the survey sections and information collected.
Table 3.2

Survey Sections and Information Collected.

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The survey design followed the steps in developing and conducting a survey outlined by Neuman (2011). Questions were formulated based on personal and environmental factors identified in the review of the literature as potentially impacting on ECTs’ decisions to remain in the profession. Neuman stated that it is important in the development of the survey that the proposed questions are field tested prior to the survey being conducted. Doing so enables ambiguity and confusing language to be removed. This field-testing process also enhanced the trustworthiness of the collected data. In the current study, the survey was field tested with five ECTs who were professional colleagues working at the same primary school as the researcher. Due to a perceived power differential these ECTs were used to field test to promote trustworthiness and rigour of the survey and were not included in the main data set.

3.4.2 Qualitative semi-structured interviewing

Central to the role of an interpretivist researcher is understanding people from their own frame of reference and perceived reality (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Therefore, it is a requirement that the research plan aligns the methods of data collection with what people actually say and do. By examining transcriptions of interviews and
listening to participants discussing concerns in their professional environment, the researcher can obtain firsthand information on the research topic. What the participants report and how they interact in their unique setting captures how they perceive their reality (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This research utilised single semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary source of data collection to gain:

(i) the ECT participants’ view on their teaching experiences; and,

(ii) the Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) ECT Program facilitators’ description and perception of the ECT Program and its influence on the teaching experiences of ECTs.

Qualitative interviewing is a respected and widely-used method of collecting data that allows a researcher to establish or discover various perspectives on situations that may differ from their own (Neuman, 2011; Turner, 2010; Yin, 2018). Qualitative interviewing was chosen as the main method of data collection for both sets of participants in this project. Qualitative interviewing was selected because it engaged the ECT and CEWA participants in meaningful conversations concerning their experiences and self-perceptions within their respective work environments. Qualitative interviews necessitate the researcher expressing interest, asking theoretically relevant questions, using careful and reflective listening techniques and recording what was said for subsequent structured analysis (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011; Yin, 2018). Qualitative interviews can take different forms, with different researchers using different categories or classifications, depending on the research questions and the field of study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). For example, DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) refer to unstructured, semi-structured and individual in-depth interviews. Alternatively, Turner (2010) categorised interviews as: informal conversation interviews, the general interview guide approach and standardised open-ended interviews. For this project, a sub-category of standardised open-ended interviews, the semi-structured interview, was used. Semi-structured interviewing is a guided conversation comprised of a set of well-chosen initial questions, usually related to the specific research questions, put to the interviewee by the interviewer as a way of focusing and channelling the desired conversation (Stringer, 2008). The semi-structure interview also has flexibility for the interviewer to ask other questions in order to gain a deeper understanding of topics that are raised by the interviewee (Yin, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews can be conducted with individual participants or with a focus group (Bohnsack, 2000). Individual interviews were held in the present study.
Neuman (2011) explained that during semi-structured interview, the researcher asks pre-arranged questions and records answers from the participants. These interviews “provide opportunities for participants to describe situations in their own terms” (Stringer, 2008, p. 69), which assists researchers in gathering rich, factual, deep and meaningful data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview process provides a record of the participants’ views and in doing so creates a shared oral and/or written record which legitimises their experiences (Stringer, 2008). Neuman (2011) insisted that during individual interviews, researchers must:

obtain co-operation and build rapport yet remain neutral and objective. They encroach on the respondents’ time and privacy for information that may not directly benefit the respondents. They try to reduce embarrassment, fear and suspicion so that respondents feel comfortable revealing information (p. 292).

An interview guide is a list of questions used by the interviewer as an aide-memoire to guide the semi-structured interview (Henninck, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). In the present study, two interview guides, one for interviews with ECTs (Appendix B) and one for CEWA consultant interviews (Appendix C), were used to direct the questions and ensure that there was consistency of the interview process. The interview guide ensured that there was consistency in the questions used with all participants thus aiding the analysis process (Bryman, 2008). The interview guide also included a general introduction designed to give the participants an overview of the study, to put them at ease and build rapport with the interviewer. The introduction also reminded both sets of participants of confidentiality and ethical factors. A reflective journal entry was written by the researcher during each interview, and each interview was digitally-recorded and transcribed. While conducting each ECT and CEWA staff semi-structured interview, the researcher remained engaged with the respondent, whilst acting in a manner that built trust and facilitated discussion.

It is important that in the development of the interview guide, the proposed questions are field tested prior to the interviews (Hennick, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). Multiple commentators have advocated the use of piloting the interview guide as a process of determining if the guide questions work as intended and to assist in revisions as necessary (Bryman, 2008; Hennick et al., 2011; Maxwell, 2005). This process also enhanced the trustworthiness of the collected data. As previously mentioned, the researcher field tested the interview guide with five ECTs who were employed in a metropolitan Catholic primary school and two university academics with extensive
primary and secondary school teaching experience. No CEWA participants were used for field-testing for two reasons. Firstly, there were only four CEWA participants, one from each diocesan region, and field-testing would have resulted in at least one being removed from the study thus reducing the available data. Secondly, the type and style of questions being used with the ECT participants was very similar to those used with the CEWA participants. If amendments were required for the ECT interview guide then those changes would have been generalised to the CEWA participant interview guide. Through the field testing process of the interview guide, the feedback demonstrated that questions were appropriate, clear and suitable to the research. Appendix B provides the specific questions that formed the interview guide. The interview guide questions that were developed were drawn from the five specific research questions. Table 4.3 highlights the relationship between the specific research questions and the explicit interview guide questions.

Table 3.3

*Linking of Specific Research Questions to the Interview Guide.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Guide Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SRQ1 What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?</td>
<td>IGQ1 Why did you become a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRQ2 What do Early Career Teachers like about teaching?</td>
<td>IGQ2 What is it that you like about teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IGQ3 What is it that you dislike about teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRQ3 What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?</td>
<td>IGQ4 What are the main challenges, professional and/or personal, that you have faced in your career?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRQ4 How do Early Career Teachers cope with challenges in light of their experiences?</td>
<td>IGQ5 What has helped you cope with the main challenges that you have faced as a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRQ5 What factors, if any, in Early Career Teachers’ experiences made them want to continue in the teaching profession?</td>
<td>IGQ6 Were there any factors that have helped you to work through the challenges and make you want to keep teaching? If so, please explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IGQ7 What factor or factors attracted, or helped, you to want to leave teaching?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many authors have discussed the issues associated with the role of the researcher in individual interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Neuman, 2003; Stringer, 2007). For instance, Cohen, Manion and Morrison argued that one-on-one interviews are prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the researcher. In keeping with Creswell’s (1998) recommendations to address such issues, the question guide was followed for each interview, the interview time was kept to around 60 minutes, and the interviewer was respectful, courteous and offered few questions and advice. Immediately after the completion of each interview, the research undertook reflective journaling to record ideas and insights relating to each participant and interview.

3.4.3 Reflective journaling.

Journaling provides an ongoing record of the researcher’s salient and emerging interpretations, questions, provisional hypotheses and reflections, throughout the course of an investigation (Spradley, 1979). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) stated that journaling is “used mostly to keep ongoing records of the researcher’s practices and reflections and his or her reflections on them in an effort to make sense of what has happened” (pp. 167-168). The researcher used a spiral bound notebook as a fieldwork journal to record ideas and insights when they arose during the course of the interviews or emerged in subsequent reflections.

During the collection of data, the researcher completed a journal entry soon after each interview to (a) maintain an ongoing record of the schedule and practices, and (b) reflect upon and interpret the interview experience. The process of reflection and interpretation aided the clarification of emerging topics and themes. Journaling was also used for potential auditing processes. A concise record was kept of all of the steps that were followed during the conduct of all stages of the research.

3.5 Research Participants

There were two sets of participants in the research. The first and main set were ECTs in Western Australian Catholic primary schools in their second, third or fourth year of teaching. The entire population of ECTs meeting the criteria of being in their second, third or fourth year of teaching in Western Australian Catholic primary school, was invited to participate in the study. The second set of participants comprised staff from CEWA involved in facilitating the ECT Program for ECTs. The CEWA staff had
knowledge of the contexts and challenges of the ECT from each of the regional offices and the metropolitan office.

3.5.1 Recruitment of Early Career Teachers

All one hundred and thirty-one (131) Catholic primary schools in Western Australia were contacted in three stages over the course of six weeks between June and August 2014. In the first stage, an email was sent to all Western Australian Catholic primary school principals inviting them to: (i) state whether they had ECTs in their second, third or fourth year of teaching in their school, and (ii) give consent for interested ECTs to participate in the study. Although the principals did not participate in the study directly, consent was obtained from them for the ECTs in their school to participate. In this way, the principals were fully apprised on matters affecting staff in their school. The email was sent to the school’s general administration email address. Emailing was chosen for two reasons: first, it is efficient and inexpensive; and second, to reduce the likelihood of documents being mislaid due to remote location and irregular postal service. The following documents were attached to the email sent to all principals:

1. A general letter of introduction asking principals to consent to permitting Early Career Teachers within their school to participate (Appendix D);
2. A copy of letters from the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research and Ethics Committee (Appendix E) and Catholic Education Western Australia (Appendix F) showing that ethics approval had been granted;
3. An Information Package describing the study (Appendix G);
4. Principal (Appendix H) and Early Career teacher consent forms (Appendix I); and,
5. A copy of the key research questions and the proposed semi-structured interview questions (Appendix A).

In the second stage, three weeks after the initial email, the documents were emailed directly to each principal’s school email address. In the third and final stage, the researcher telephoned each school that had not yet responded to the previous emails and spoke either to the Administrative Officer, the Bursar or a member of the Leadership team directly. All schools that indicated that they had ECTs on staff in their second, third or fourth year of teaching were sent a package via Australia Post.
containing the documents that had previously been emailed together with a stamped return envelope.

Early Career Teachers who expressed interest in participating in the project completed and returned the ECT consent form and their Principal’s consent form, to the researcher. Early Career Teachers were then contacted via a nominated email address and sent a link to the online, web-based Early Career Teachers’ Self-Perceptions Survey. After the survey closed, the ECTs who consented to be interviewed were contacted via email to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone interview to be conducted.

3.5.2 Early Career Teacher participants.

Fifty-six ECTs returned a consent form to accept the invitation to participate in the study. All ECT participants were emailed the link to the Early Career Teachers’ Self-Perceptions Survey via their nominated email. The survey was open for a period of 11 weeks. Participants who had not completed the online survey within two weeks of receiving the link were sent a reminder email inviting them to complete it. If the ECT did not complete the online survey after this reminder, no further contact was made and the ECT was deemed to have withdrawn consent to participate in the study on the basis that further contact would be intrusive and could lead to a perceived power differential (Grbich, 2007; Stangor, 2010). At the time the survey was closed, 50 of the 56 participants had completed the survey. Of those 50, 25 had consented to complete the survey only and 25 consented to complete both the survey and the interview.

The 25 ECTs who agreed to be interviewed were emailed a letter (Appendix I). The letter confirmed their consent to be interviewed, provided them with the interview questions, the timeframe for the interviews and asked them to nominate three times and dates that were suitable to them to be interviewed. Twenty-two of the 25 ECTs responded. The three who did not respond were emailed the letter a second time after which a non-response was deemed that they had withdrawn their consent to be interviewed. The researcher devised an interview schedule and emailed each consenting participant to confirm the time and date of their interview.

Each participant was interviewed via mobile telephone. Telephoning, whilst not as personable as face-to-face interviewing, was chosen due to the spread of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). To ensure the trustworthiness of the inquiry, the same interviewing approach was used with all participants. Each interview started with
an introduction, participants were thanked for their involvement and the interview structure was explained. To ensure that all ethical requirements were met an introductory preamble was included in the Interview Guide. The preamble also contributed to the trustworthiness of the study and ensured that all participants were reminded of confidentiality protocols, the option to withdraw from the interview at any time without prejudice, and their right to disclose only that information with which they felt comfortable. Participants were also informed that at times they could be asked to elaborate on their answers to the interview questions and that it was their choice as to whether or not they did. Each interview lasted between 45 – 60 minutes and was recorded using the Tape-A-Call App. At the conclusion of the interview the participants were thanked for their contribution and were invited to ask any questions they had. The interviews were transcribed and emailed to the participant within 48 hours for member checking. Table 4.4 shows the cohorts of ECT participants.

Table 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Sub-cohort</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey:</td>
<td>2nd Year of Teaching</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECT Self-perceptions</td>
<td>3rd Year of Teaching</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>4th Year of Teaching</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview:</td>
<td>2nd Year of Teaching</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECT semi-structured</td>
<td>3rd Year of Teaching</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interview</td>
<td>4th Year of Teaching</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.3 Catholic Education Western Australia Early Career Teacher Program facilitator participants.

The second set of participants were the four key consultants involved in developing and presenting the CEWA ECT Program. In the review of the literature in Chapter Three, one of the factors identified as supporting the decision by ECTs’ to remain in the profession was that of support programs. Several ECTs highlighted during their interviews how the CEWA ECT program was a factor that helped them cope with professional challenges.
Initially, the main consultant responsible for the CEWA ECT Program was telephoned and the purpose of the current study explained to her. The consultant who worked from the metropolitan CEWA office, recommended that the key ECT Program facilitators from the three CEWA Regional Offices also be contacted. The Regional Offices are located in the Bunbury, Geraldton and Broome dioceses. As a result, all four key CEWA ECT Program facilitators were contacted by telephone and emailed the CEWA participants Information Sheet (Appendix J) and the CEWA Informed Consent form (Appendix K). Upon receipt of the consent forms, the participants were emailed the CEWA Participant Interview Details and Interview Questions (Appendix C). Interview times and dates were then established.

3.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the measure of a study’s legitimacy and quality (Silverman, 2013). Qualitative research attempts to build trustworthiness in order to establish methodological soundness (Erlandson, Edwards, Skipper & Allen, 1993). In competent qualitative research “terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 14). For the present study, trustworthiness was established through the researcher’s gaining of experience and expertise in conducting interviews, the prior field testing of the data collection instruments and the researcher’s consistent attention to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981).

Patton (1990) stressed that in qualitative research the researcher is also the instrument of measurement. As such, trustworthiness can be influenced by the skill, competence and commitment to methodological rigour of the person undertaking the fieldwork. Burns (1994) outlined five skills required by the case study investigator. These include formulating relevant and precise questions, listening well, being adaptive and flexible, being able to grasp the issues studied, and exercising a lack of bias in interpreting evidence. These important skills were employed consciously and consistently in the conduct of the project. A summary of the measures used in this research to meet these criteria is provided in Table 4.5.
### Table 3.5

**Measures Used to Establish the Trustworthiness of the Research.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality criterion</th>
<th>Measures adopted during the conduct of the research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **3.4.1 Credibility** | Utilising established qualitative research methods  
Exploring related research findings  
Documenting the research context and establishing trust  
Mitigating potential for power differential and researcher bias |
| **3.4.2 Generalisability** | Assisting readers to determine generalisability potential by:  
• defining research context;  
• producing thickly described case study narratives;  
• providing detailed cross-case analysis;  
• linking research findings to the literature review. |
| **3.4.3 Dependability** | Stating research questions and using them to guide the study  
Collecting data as required by research questions  
Member checking interview transcripts and triangulating data  
Demonstrating meaningful parallelism across data sources  
Participating in a CEWA peer-review process  
Adopting an ‘auditing approach’ to data collection |
| **3.4.4 Confirmability** | Explicitly stating concerns regarding research limitations  
Adopting measures to mitigate research limitations  
Explicitly detailing research methods and procedures  
Linking research conclusions with reduced/displayed data  
Retaining research data for five years post-submission of thesis |

#### 3.6.1 Credibility.

The credibility of a qualitative study refers to the ability of the researcher “to take into account all of the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained” (Mills, 2003, p. 78). Some authors have reasoned that the credibility of a qualitative study can be assessed “by determining whether the description developed through inquiry in a particular setting ‘rings true’ for those persons who are members of that setting” (Erlandson, Edwards, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 30). Prolonged participation, member checking, triangulation, and peer debriefing are methods that can be used to achieve credibility (Guba, 1981). In the current study member checking and triangulation were conducted.

Individual transcriptions of the digitally-recorded interviews were presented to respective participants for their verification of accuracy. Three participants made amendments to the transcript of their interview by either removing or adding...
information to their interview transcripts. No corrections were made by any of the ECT participants.

Triangulation is the use of multiple sources of information or methods in a study (Bryman, 2008), and stems from the idea that accuracy is improved by looking at something from multiple viewpoints (Neumann, 2011; Stringer, 2007). Shenton (2004, p. 66) stated that: “individual viewpoints and experiences can be verified against others and, ultimately, a rich picture of attitudes, needs or behaviours of those under scrutiny may be constructed based on the contributions of a range of people”. This particular inquiry explored the experiences and self-perceptions of ECTs in Western Australian Catholic primary schools. By triangulating the data collected according to teaching cohorts (second, third or fourth year of teaching), the research elicited multiple perspectives on the experiences and self-perceptions of the ECT participants. In addition, the semi-structured interview arrangement, coupled with an interview guide and field notes enabled the researcher to not only ensure comparability of data sources, but also provided the opportunity for delving more deeply into the responses of participants.

3.6.2 Transferability.

Transferability denotes the extent to which research findings in one context can be applied to other contexts. According to Mills (2003, p. 79), transferability “demonstrates qualitative researchers’ beliefs that everything they study is context bound and that the goal of their work is not to develop ‘truth’ statements that can be generalised to larger groups of people”. Guba (1981) proposed two actions to assist the composition of descriptive and context-bound accounts.

First, the researcher should collect detailed, descriptive data from the participants. In the case of the present study the interview questions for both sets of participants were designed intentionally to allow the participants to respond broadly. The interview guide also allowed the researcher to invite participants to elaborate and expand on their responses if the researcher believed that more descriptive data were needed. Second, detailed descriptions of the context should be developed. For ECT participants, information gathered from both the online survey and the interview, provided the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of each participant’s personal and professional context. For CEWA participants, the data garnered from the interview provided this understanding. Both actions increase the likelihood that
comparison of a given context to other possible contexts where transferability might be considered. Mills (2003) noted that the transferability of qualitative research depends on the degree to which the research audience identifies with the context.

With regard to the present study, the question is whether one can accurately generalise from what is learned from a specific cohort of ECTs to other populations of ECTs in Western Australian and Australian schools? Stake (1994) recognised that whilst each case is unique, it can be considered as part of a broader group and thus the research can be considered as transferable to other studies. Bryman (2008, p. 378) stated that qualitative findings focus more on the contextual uniqueness and significance and as such, required “rich accounts of the details” in which the research is placed. The “thick descriptions” are what provide the reader with the necessary details to judge the possibility of generalisability of findings to other contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 316). Chapter Two provided the context in which this study was located. Detailed accounts of those circumstances from which each ECT and his or her employing Western Australian Catholic school enables the reader to transfer the results to a different context; however, the reader has the responsibility for making the judgment of how comparable this transfer is.

3.6.3 Dependability.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 278) viewed dependability as a means of ensuring the consistency of the study. Dependability includes the study “being stable over time and across researchers and methods”. Guba’s (1981) two suggested methods to enhance the dependability of a study have both been used in this research. The first suggestion is for researchers to use multiple data collection methods to help overcome the perceived weakness of one method by the strength of another. The second suggestion is to establish an audit trail by keeping a detailed log or journal of all research activities including collection and analysis procedures. According to Mills (2003), an audit trail “makes it possible for an external ‘auditor’ to examine the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation” (p. 79). In the current study, multiple data collection methods were used to enhance dependability, namely a quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews. Further, the researcher kept a reflective journal to critically reflect on each interview as it was completed to record all thought processes and decisions related to the research activities.
3.6.4 Confirmability.

Confirmability is the feature of trustworthiness which determines the degree to which a study’s findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not the biases of the researcher (Erlandson, Edwards, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Typically, confirmability seeks to determine the neutrality, or objectivity, of the data collected and is enhanced by two practices: triangulation and reflexivity (Guba, 1981). According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984) the practice of triangulation helps the researcher to eliminate bias by comparing the data collected from one method with information gathered through other data collection methods. In this study, data concerning ECTs was collected from an online survey, a semi-structured interview and reflective journaling. Using multiple sources identified the phenomenon of interest from multiple participants’ perspectives, confirmed gathered information, and obtained a contextually rich base of data.

Reflexivity involves attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction and particularly to the effect of the researcher at every step of the research process. According to Malterud (2001, pp. 483-484), a researcher’s background will “affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions”. To address the impact a researcher’s personal context has on knowledge construction, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested researchers use a reflective journal to make regular entries during the process of conducting the research. In these entries, the researcher records methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study, and reflection upon what is happening in terms of one’s own values and interests (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A reflective journal was kept throughout the study and updated regularly. In terms of reflexivity, it was a helpful way for the researcher to keep a check on the thought processes and personal responses to data from the participants’ interviews.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted on the web-based survey and the semi-structured interviews. The analysis procedures applied to both methods will be described in this section. The research findings are presented in Chapter Five.
3.7.1 Survey

An analysis of the survey findings was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the personal and professional characteristics of the ECT participants. Personal characteristics included gender, age, personal (relationship) status, number of years teaching and qualifications. Professional characteristics included type, region and diocese of school, year level taught and ECTs’ additional duties. Analysis of the ECT survey data was completed using the functions available through the Survey Monkey software and was undertaken in two waves. In keeping with an instrumental case study methodology, in the first wave of analysis, the data was filtered based on the number of years teaching. Information was gained about the ECTs in their second-, third- or fourth-year as discrete cohorts through the first wave of analysis. The second wave of analysis involved comparisons to be made between ECTs in the second-, third- and fourth-year cohorts. Data representing the descriptive statistics was displayed through column graphs and percentages.

3.7.2 Semi-structured interviews

An interpretive analysis of the research findings sought to ascertain: (i) the experiences and self-perceptions of ECTs within the second-, third- or fourth-year of their teaching appointment; and, (ii) the experiences of the CEWA participants in the CEWA ECT program. The qualitative analytical approaches provide ways of discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). The guidelines offered by Miles and Huberman (1994), which aim to identify stable relationships among social phenomena, based on the consistencies and sequences that link these phenomena, were adhered to when analysing the collected data. Miles and Huberman considered data analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction or condensation, data display and, verification and drawing conclusions. These three highly interactive and reiterative processes occurred before data collection began, during the research design and planning phase, during data collection and after data collection. Figure 4.2 illustrates the approach and components to analysing the data from Miles and Huberman’s interactive model (1994) in this study.
These four stages do not represent a sequential process, but an interactive one where “even at the final stage of writing up, gaps or inconsistencies may trigger the need for further data collection” (Gray, 2013, p. 612).

3.7.3 Data condensation

Data condensation is the process in which the researcher examines the entire body of qualitative data collected and begins to condense and organise the information into more manageable chunks (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data condensation is often used synonymously with the term data reduction. However, as Miles and Huberman (1994) stated, the term reduction implies the loss of data. As such in the current study the term data condensation was used. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) the process of condensation begins prior to data collection when the researcher is formulating the methodology. Condensing data is an essential part of the data analysis process. During the process of condensing and coding data, researchers constantly analyse, distinguish patterns or themes within the data and find ways in which these patterns can be clustered. The condensation process is the stage in which the researcher “sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organises data…” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.12).

The methodological needs of the study were taken into account when determining the coding approach used. Given that this inquiry is an instrumental case study, the interview transcripts were divided into the three cohorts being investigated, namely the second-, third- or fourth- year of teaching. For each cohort, two forms of coding were used: initial coding and descriptive coding. Initial coding involved breaking down the participants’ interview transcripts into discrete parts, namely the
specific research questions, and closely examining and comparing the content for similarities and differences. The transcripts were re-examined after the initial coding and then descriptive coding was applied. During the process of descriptive coding the researcher aimed to summarise in a word or short phrase the basic topic of the passage and assigned basic labels to the data. Charmaz (2006, p. 57) stated that initial and descriptive coding techniques “may help crystallize and condense meanings”, and thus allow a researcher to grasp what is significant in the participant’s world-view. These forms of coding were the most appropriate for the study because they honoured each participant’s voice and aided in the identification of the topic of a passage (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

In the first wave of data condensation, the transcript of each ECTs semi-structured interview was separated into responses to each of the specific research questions. Following Miles, Huberman and Saldaña’s (2014) suggestion, initial coding, or first cycle, was used to identify initial codes based on the chunks of data associated within each research question. A code is a construct assigned by the researcher to represent or capture the primary essence and content of a piece of datum (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña). Pattern coding was used in the second cycle and involved scanning the initial codes for common patterns or themes and then condensing the codes into categories. Further condensation occurred by examining categories for emerging themes or concepts. The data analysis process is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

![Figure 3.3](image-url)

*Figure 3.3. Schematic overview of the process used for analysing the data based on Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 12.)*
### 3.7.4 Data display

A data display is an “organised, compressed assembly of information that allows conclusions to be drawn.” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 13). Displays used in this research were used to draw out a range of perspectives influencing ECTs’ decisions to remain in the profession. In addition, the display tables allowed comparison to be made between the three ECT cohorts in the study. Tables 4.6-4.8 provide examples of the coding used to identify the key themes that emerged from each of the three cohorts in response to Specific Research Question 1: What motivated you to become a teacher?

#### Table 3.6

*Examples of coding used to identify emergent themes amongst Early Career Teachers in their second year of teaching for specific research question 1: What motivated you to become a teacher?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Codes</th>
<th>Sub-codes</th>
<th>Condensed themes</th>
<th>Generated issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calling</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Vocation (VOC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with current career</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Career change</td>
<td>Career Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted a challenge</td>
<td>Others’ knowledge of self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer suggestion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of teachers</td>
<td>Family (FAM)</td>
<td></td>
<td>External influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love sport</td>
<td>Inspired (INS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love children</td>
<td>Working with children (CHN)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a difference in a child’s life</td>
<td>Make a difference (DIFF)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.7

*Examples of coding used to identify emergent themes amongst Early Career Teachers in their third year of teaching for specific research question 1: What motivated you to become a teacher?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Codes</th>
<th>Sub-codes</th>
<th>Condensed themes</th>
<th>Generated issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always wanted to be</td>
<td>Calling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocation (VOC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawn to it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with</td>
<td>Career change</td>
<td>Career change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational teachers</td>
<td>Inspired (INS)</td>
<td>External</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive influence on</td>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td>motivates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children's lives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important job</td>
<td>Male role model</td>
<td>Make a difference</td>
<td>Positive change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help people</td>
<td>Impart knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>(DIFF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with children</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>Fringe benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.8

Examples of coding used to identify emergent themes amongst Early Career Teachers in their fourth year of teaching for specific research question 1: What motivated you to become a teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Codes</th>
<th>Sub-codes</th>
<th>Condensed themes</th>
<th>Generated issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career change</td>
<td></td>
<td>Career change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important profession</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like working with children</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work with children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum is a teacher</td>
<td>Family influence</td>
<td>Family influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inspirational role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To inspire and motivate others</td>
<td>Make a difference</td>
<td>Positive change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(DIFF)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suits my personality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass on religious calling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Calling</td>
<td>Vocation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7.5 Drawing and verifying conclusions.

Analysing and tabulating data places a researcher in a position to begin drawing and verifying conclusions based on the data. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) noted that “without verification, you’re just another researcher with a hunch” (p. 276). The guidelines prescribed by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña were used when conducting further analysis of the data tables to ensure that the conclusions drawn were verifiable and that the element of bias had been minimised as much as possible. Specifically, preliminary codes were clustered into condensed themes based on similar plausible patterns or characteristics. In some instances, preliminary codes were subdivided because they represented different concepts. In Table 4.8, for example, the preliminary codes drawn from the participants’ interview transcripts were positive influence on children’s lives, important job, and to help people. At face value these codes appeared to relate to the more abstract theme of making a difference in people’s lives. To ensure that this clustering was plausible, the interview texts were examined for further
meaning. The preliminary codes were then partitioned into sub-codes *helping others motivates, male role model, and impart knowledge*, all of which supported the condensed theme of making a difference in people’s lives. Condensed themes were then further analysed for similarities and categorisation as generated issues. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014, p. 285) referred to this process as “subsuming particulars into the general”.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

To ensure that this research project adhered to the highest possible standards of professional conduct, the following principles were carefully considered for their relevance to the study and its processes and have been conscientiously implemented as appropriate.

#### 3.8.1 Human research ethics.

Two documents pertaining to ethical clearance have been included as appendices to this thesis:

1. a letter of ethical clearance and approval to commence research from The University of Notre Dame Human Research and Ethics Committee (Appendix E),
2. a letter of ethical clearance the Executive Director of CEWA (Appendix F)

#### 3.8.2 Respect for people’s rights and dignity.

Each ECT participant (Appendix G) and CEWA participant (Appendix J) was presented with an information document outlining a summary of the research procedures to ensure that they were fully informed of what the research involved and his/her rights. Assurance was given that no personal information would be divulged at any point and the anonymity of all participants was secured through the allocation of aliases in the data records. Furthermore, the research participants’ employers were not identified. All records of interviews and questionnaires were securely stored on the researcher’s computer and will be for a period of five years.

#### 3.8.3 Informed consent to research.

Informed consent was obtained from three sources: the ECTs (Appendix I), the principal of each ECT’s employing school (Appendix H), and the CEWA employee...
(Appendix K) involved in the ECT program. Informed consent for the use of recording technology was obtained from all research participants prior to the commencement of the interview.

3.8.4 Research responsibility.

The researcher has understood her ethical obligation to provide information to all participants concerning the research and their expected roles in the study. This information included a written clarification of the nature of the research and the responsibilities of the investigator prior to conducting the research and used language that was understandable to and respectful of the participants.

3.9 Design Summary

A design summary for the research is provided in Table 4.9. Details regarding the timeline of the research, milestones and person(s) responsible are provided within this table.

Table 3.9

*Design Summary for the Research*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Responsible person(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 2014</td>
<td>❖ ECTs’ Self-perception Survey developed, piloted and confirmed.</td>
<td>❖ Researcher&lt;br&gt;❖ Researcher in consultation with supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>❖ Low risk ethics clearance granted by UNDA HREC</td>
<td>UNDA HREC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>❖ Research approval granted by the CEWA Research Ethics Committee&lt;br&gt;❖ Approval to proceed with research granted by the Executive Director, CEWA</td>
<td>❖ CEWA Research Ethics Committee&lt;br&gt;❖ Executive Director, CEWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Responsible Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| June 2014    | - Letter of invitation, research information sheet and participation consent form confirmed and sent to schools.  
                 - Signed consent forms collected.  
                 - Interview guides drafted, piloted and confirmed. | Researcher         |
| August 2014  | - ECTs’ Self-perception Survey opened.                                             | Researcher         |
| September 2014| - Survey closed.                                                                  | Researcher         |
| October 2014 | - Interview dates arranged.  
                 - Individual interviews with ECTs  
                 - Interviews transcribed and member checked.  
                 - Descriptive statistics prepared from survey data. | Researcher         |
| November 2014| - Letter of invitations, research information and participation consent form sent to key CEWA personnel.  
                 - Interviews with key CEWA personnel conducted, transcribed and member checked. | Researcher         |
| December 2014| - Data analysis  
                 - Thesis writing commenced | Researcher         |
| March 2015   | - Refinement of data                                                              | Researcher         |
| June 2015    | - Ongoing writing of thesis                                                       | Researcher         |
| 2016 – 2017  | - Ongoing writing of thesis.                                                      | Researcher, supervisors |
| August 2018  | - Thesis submitted for examination.                                               | Researcher, supervisors |
3.10 Conclusion

This chapter explained the research design that informed and directed the conduct of this research into the experiences and self-perceptions of ECTs in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession. In the chapter, justification was provided for the use of constructivism as the epistemology, with interpretivism as the theoretical perspective of this qualitative research and instrumental case study as the methodology. The methods adopted for the collection and analysis of data were also explained. A description of the research participants was provided along with measures adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, the ethical considerations associated with the study were explained and a design summary for the research was provided. The following chapter, Presentation of Research Findings, is comprised of three sections: the findings of the web-based survey; and, the findings of the semi-structured interviews of both the ECT and the CEWA Graduate program staff.
Chapter Four: Presentation of Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of a thesis that explores the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers (ECT) in their second, third or fourth year of teaching in Western Australian Catholic primary schools that led them to remain in the profession. These findings are a combination of the data gathered from surveying (online, web-based survey), individual qualitative interviewing, field notes, and researcher reflective journaling. The chapter is organised into three sections. Section One presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) ECT Program facilitators; these findings are presented first as the data provided additional insight into issues relevant to the ECT participants. The second section presents descriptive statistics gathered on the ECTs from the online, web-based survey. In the third section, attention turns to the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the ECTs. An overview of the structure of the presentation of the research findings is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Overview of Chapter Four: Presentation of Research Findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.1 Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Section One: CEWA ECT program facilitator interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Section Two: Early Career Teacher survey findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Second-year ECTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Third-year ECTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3 Fourth-year ECTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.4 Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Section Three: Early Career Teacher semi-structured interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1 Second-year cohort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2 Third-year cohort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3 Fourth-year cohort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.4 Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Chapter Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Section One: Findings from Catholic Education Western Australia ECT program facilitator interviews.

This section presents the findings from the interviews with the four female CEWA ECT Program facilitators and is arranged based on their responses to the five questions used to guide the interview. The facilitators’ natural language has been portrayed where applicable and quotations reflect the key themes identified through the data condensation and display stages of data management and analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Question 1: Why was the ECT program developed? What is it that you personally and professionally hope to achieve by offering the program?**

The ECT program facilitators disclosed that the program was developed for four main reasons. Firstly, to increase the retention of ECTs particularly in Catholic education. Secondly, to fulfil CEWA’s accountability. Despite being the second largest employer of teachers in Western Australia, prior to the pilot in 2013, CEWA did not offer a program to support ECTs. The third reason related to providing an apprenticeship to assist ECTs transition from University into the workplace. The final reason focused on succession, that is meeting future needs for leadership in the Catholic sector. The structure of the ECT program was based on the suite of CEWA Leadership programs but differed from the other programs based on the ECTs’ career phase. The program facilitators expressed their main personal and professional achievements as: increasing ECT retention in Catholic schools; giving back to the teaching profession; establishing professional relationships with ECTs and school personnel; and, improving their presentation skills.

**Question 2: What is the structure of the program and how was it determined?**

The ECT program was structured as part of the CEWA Leadership suite and covered Catholic Identity, Stewardship, Community and Education. The program was intentionally designed to include a mix of primary and secondary graduates because, as one facilitator noted, ECTs “need to understand that big picture … students are coming through from primary to secondary … we’ve been in silos for far too long … it’s good to hear about issues from someone else’s perspective.” The modules were delivered over a two-year time-period, with Modules 1, 2 and 3 being trialled in 2013, and amended for delivery with the next graduate intake in 2014. Modules 4 and 5 were trialled in 2014. The structure of the program was determined after the Perth facilitator consulted with
Catholic principals, university School of Education staff and one of the authors of the *Conditions Supporting Early Career Teacher Resilience* framework. These personnel, based on their experiences with ECTs, provided insights into areas that could potentially assist in supporting and professionally developing ECTs during their initial years in the teaching profession. Following the consultation process, the Perth facilitator formed a working party. The working party determined that the program would comprise five modules, would be available to all graduate teachers in Western Australian Catholic schools and cater for early child, primary and secondary teachers.

**Question 3: Are there any factors or challenges that have had to be considered in developing a course that caters for the needs of ECTs in Western Australia? How have they been addressed?**

The facilitators identified five factors or challenges that had to be considered when developing the CEWA ECT Program. These factors were: location of ECTs, developing an ECT-centred professional learning program, availability of suitable mentors, access to relief teachers, and teacher registration. The location of the ECTs’ school was the main factor or challenge cited. The working party deemed the CEWA regional offices to be most suitable for program facilitation given the size of Western Australia, placement of schools and contextual issues in the different regions. The location of schools affected how the program was offered, access to relief teachers to release ECTs to attend modules, and how easily the facilitator could physically access the school. These challenges were addressed by adapting the sequence in which modules were presented, shortening the length of module sessions in remote schools, and the use of technology. One facilitator added that it was more convenient for some ECTs to travel to Perth to complete the program rather than through their CEWA regional office.

A second challenge was developing a program that was ECT-centred, engaging and different from typical school-based professional learning. The facilitators believed that this challenge was addressed by focusing on inquiry and integrating action research projects for the ECTs into the CEWA program. The facilitators reported that the working party wanted ECTs “to have inquiring minds”, to think and “to be learning about themselves in the classroom around a whole range of different topics”. The ECTs shared the results of their action research projects during module sessions. Action research empowered ECTs to identify areas of interest or need pertinent to their context, and emulated school-based processes that would allow them to drive discussion and inquiry.
The third challenge was having the school principal as the ECT’s mentor, particularly in small schools with limited teaching staff. The facilitators disclosed that ECTs sought additional support due to issues relating to the perceived power differential between the principal and the ECT. Moreover, principals were not always able to maintain regular mentoring with ECTs due to other responsibilities related to leading the school. The fourth challenge was access to relief staff to cover ECTs while they attended modules. This factor was particularly problematic in remote and rural schools. Meeting teacher registration requirements was the final challenge raised. The program modules were designed to align to the Australian Institute of Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL) standards so that ECTs could meet the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA) requirements to transition from provisional to full registration.

Question 4: What are some of the key factors or challenges that ECTs have raised during the course of the program?

The facilitators highlighted sixteen factors or challenges that ECTs raised with them during the course of the program. These factors are outlined in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors or Challenges that ECTs Raised with CEWA ECT Program Facilitators</th>
<th>Most frequently cited</th>
<th>Least frequently cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Leaving home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate school support</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Behaviour management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting TRBWA requirements</td>
<td>Contracts</td>
<td>Self-esteem/confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Primary-secondary balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering for student diversity</td>
<td>Age-life experiences</td>
<td>Accessing resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Module delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Networking was considered “important”, particularly for ECTs in remote areas and who were the sole ECT in their school, as “they are in a safe zone way from their school/principals and they can just compare and question … those conversations with peers are really important.” Inadequate school support was raised by ECTs in schools with limited staff and where the role of mentor often fell to the principal. The facilitators explained that a lack of policies pertaining to induction, mentoring or coaching of staff compounded the issue. In schools with designated mentors, timetabling ECT-mentor
meetings was an issue and often mentoring covered “pastoral care but didn’t offer guidance with learning areas.” Additionally, the mentors were rarely given extra time and had received little or no training on “how to have difficult conversations, or what to really pinpoint so they (ECTs) can meet all the AITSL/TRBWA expectations.” In some instances, the mentor and ECT relationship was a challenge and affected the provision of support.

Teacher registration and TRBWA requirements were challenges that two facilitators stated ECTs had discussed. The facilitators explained that some ECTs showed limited understanding that demonstration of proficiency would vary from ECT to ECT. Location was another challenge. The facilitators reported that remote ECTs expressed feelings of isolation, especially if they did not get to meet other ECTs at their regional orientation or had limited opportunities during the school year. A big challenge ECTs raised was catering for diversity. Two participants discussed how overwhelmed many ECTs reported they felt when faced with students with Special Needs as well as Gifted and Talented students in their class. Catering for a broad spectrum of student abilities and effectively utilising the skills of Education Assistants to support students was another concerning issue presented by ECTs.

Two participants explained that many ECTs had issues with parents. The issues were attributed to several factors including “the parents are older than them” and “sometimes the parents are on a mission to catch them (ECTs) out.” Both participants acknowledged that most ECTs did not know how to “manage those difficult conversations with parents” because they hadn’t developed the skills at that early stage of their careers.

Reporting was another challenge that ECTs raised with facilitators. Generally, ECTs had not yet developed the skill required to provide feedback while also reporting to parents “honestly and in a way that gave relevant information while also respecting the parent’s view of their child.” Associated with the reporting was parent-teacher meetings. One facilitator discussed the Kimberley region and how “catering for cultural etiquette with indigenous parents” was something that ECTs had to learn in addition to report writing.

Two additional challenges raised were contracts and technology. One facilitator disclosed that 80% of ECTs were on short-term contracts and needed further information about effective integration of technology into their pedagogy. One facilitator discussed age-life experience as a factor that influenced how ECTs coped with challenges. She stated, “you can definitely see that difference between the ages. Most of them (ECTs)
are straight out of Uni and are very young.” Mature-age ECTs, many of whom were career switchers, were observed to cope better overall with different challenges based on having a broader palette of life experiences to draw upon.

For many ECTs in regional areas, it was their first time away from home requiring them to connect with a new school and community. One facilitator stated that one school in her region had regular turnover of staff to the point where very few of the current staff were experienced teachers. The consequence was difficulty finding experienced staff to support the ECTs. She posited that many ECTs left the area after several years because they had found a partner and either want to travel or start a family. The facilitator added that most ECTs who came to the country usually came back to teaching after four or five years away.

In one facilitator’s opinion, behaviour management was “the biggest challenge without a doubt.” ECTs regularly sought advice from the facilitators during module days often asking, “What do I do with these kids? Do I just send them to the principal?” Behaviour management was particularly problematic when there was no clear school policy in place, if parents became involved and when ECTs felt unsupported. Early Career Teachers’ lack of self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities was a challenge observed by one facilitator who explained that a large part of her role was “encouraging ECTs to have confidence to say ‘I don’t know how to do that. Can I watch you?’” She added with disappointment that she rarely heard positive comments from schools about how much ECTs offered in terms of new ideas, enthusiasm and skills.

**Question 5: What have been key experiences, positive and/or negative, that you have had from working in the ECT program?**

All four facilitators offered positive and negative experiences from working in the CEWA ECT program. Three positive experiences pertained to facilitators’ observations of the impact that the CEWA ECT program was having on ECTs and schools. The first positive experience was noting the effect that action research projects had on the ECTs’ day-to-day running of classrooms. One participant cited the case of an ECT who had investigated where his students were disengaged, and in the process had realised that his Aboriginal Teacher Assistants (ATAs) were also disengaged. Through personal reflection, the teacher made changes to his teaching, classroom layout and also had “hard data which gave him a platform to approach the ATAs.” Having research data made it easier for him to address issues. The second positive experience...
was that principals were seeing the benefit of the program and had asked CEWA to extend it to include second and third-year ECTs. The third positive experience centred around discussion amongst the program facilitators that the program could be extended to cater for teachers who were returning to work after an extended period away.

Three positive experiences were personal in nature. The first related to the facilitators’ enjoyment of the CEWA ECT program. One facilitator’s comment encapsulated the sentiment of the group when she stated, “I love it. I absolutely love the program.” Other facilitators commented that they “got a buzz” from “seeing the passion of the people” and “meeting with ECTs because it’s invigorating.” The second positive experience stemmed from one facilitator observing “these young people wanting to be so good” and which she stated, “restored her faith in the future direction of education”. The final positive episode related to how facilitating the ECT program had honed facilitators’ presentation skills and brought them up-to-date with the AITSL standards and compliance requirements for graduates.

In contrast, negative experiences were much fewer and centred around the lack of importance attributed to the CEWA ECT program at the school and sector levels. One facilitator stated:

The negative is that schools don’t actually have processes in place to support the graduates. And some will leave schools for that reason. They’ve not been supported in the school. They’ve looked at other schools and they can see that other teachers are getting support … you can see that ECTs have got quite a good reason to be leaving.

Another said she “felt sad” by the lack of priority given to supporting ECTs. She believed that some principals were oblivious to how committed their ECTs were and focused too quickly on deficits in the ECT’s skills and lack of experience rather than on how much value ECTs added to the school.

4.2.1 Summary

Four CEWA ECT program facilitators, one from each of the CEWA offices, consented to be interviewed and share their experiences of the program. The program was developed as part of CEWA’s accountability and to increase ECT retention in CEWA schools. The program was designed to support all graduate teachers in the Catholic sector, was part of CEWA’s suite of leadership programs and was trialled in 2013. Based on an inquiry model involving Action Research, the program ran over two
years and was comprised of five modules. Five factors or challenges were considered in the development of the course. During the course, ECTs discussed numerous individual, classroom-based and school-based challenges with the CEWA facilitators. The facilitators expressed positive and negative experiences that they had from working in the program. Overall, the facilitators enjoyed being involved in the program, providing ECTs with networking opportunities and observing the positive impact that action research projects had on ECTs’ pedagogy and reflective practice. By contrast, negative experiences were much fewer and centred around a lack of processes in place in schools to effectively support ECTs.

4.3 Section Two: Early Career Teacher survey findings

Fifty participants completed the survey. Descriptive statistics from the survey provided a snapshot of the demographic of ECTs in Western Australian Catholic schools. This section starts with descriptive statistics for the second-year ECTs followed by the third and fourth-year cohorts.

4.3.1 Second-year ECT cohort.

Twenty-eight of the ECTs, 25 females and three males, were in their second year of teaching. The age range for this cohort varied from 20-49 years. Fifteen of the second-year ECTs were single, six were married, one was separated and six were in a relationship. Regarding qualifications, three ECTs had a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree, 24 had a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed), two had a Graduate Diploma in Education (Grad. Dip Ed) and six stated that they had further qualifications. These qualifications included: Certificate in Music, Bachelor of Health and Physical Education, outdoor education, information technology and post-graduate Early Childhood studies. Twenty-six ECTs had studied at Western Australian universities and two had studied elsewhere. One ECT worked in a composite K-10 school, one in a composite K-12 school and the remainder in primary schools. Twenty-two ECTs worked in the Perth diocese, four in the Bunbury diocese and two in the Broome diocese. The geographic regions represented in this cohort were Metropolitan, South-West and Kimberley. A range of year levels were taught by ECTs in this cohort, including three who taught across all year levels in specialist areas (Physical Education, Music) and one who taught a composite Year 1/2 class. In terms of workload, one ECT taught part-time (0.5FTE), two taught 0.8 FTE and 25 taught full-time. Twenty-one second-year ECTs had
classroom duties only and no extra-curricular duties. However, 12 had been given additional duties over and above their main classroom teaching duties, namely: learning area budgets (n=1), Key Teacher Literacy (n=1), organising camps, excursions and incursions for the school (n=6) and coaching colleagues (n=6). Five of the second year ECTs had not volunteered for additional duties while 23 had. Volunteered extra-curricular duties included art, school fete, sport activities, homework club and learning area budgets.

4.3.2 Third-year ECT cohort.

The third-year cohort was comprised of twelve ECTs, nine females and three males, with an age range of 20-39 years. Seven of the third-year ECTs were single, two were married, and three were in a relationship. Regarding qualifications, one ECT had a B.A, nine had achieved a B.Ed, two had a Grad. Dip. Ed. Two ECTs stated that they had another qualification, namely: Bachelor of Psychology and Bachelor of Sports Science. All third-year ECTs had studied at Western Australian universities and all worked in primary schools. Nine ECTs worked in the Perth diocese, two in the Bunbury diocese and one in the Geraldton diocese. The geographic regions represented in this cohort were Metropolitan, South-West, Mid-West and Goldfields-Esperance. Except for Kindergarten and Year 2, the third-year ECTs taught across all primary levels. Two ECTs taught composite classes: one in a Year 2/3 class and in a Year 3/4 class. All taught full-time. Five third-year ECTs had classroom duties only and no extra-curricular duties. However, seven had been given additional duties over and above their main classroom teaching duties, namely: information technology (n=3), learning area budgets (n=2), Key Teacher Literacy (n=1), Key Teacher Numeracy (n=2), organising camps, excursions and incursions for the school (n=2) and coaching colleagues (n=4). All third-year ECTs had volunteered for additional extra-curricular duties such as art, school fete, sport activities, homework club and learning area budgets.

4.3.3 Fourth-year ECT cohort.

The ten surveyed fourth-year ECTs were all female. The age range for this cohort was 25-54 years. Four were single, five were married and one was in a relationship. Regarding qualifications, one ECT had a B.A, five had a B.Ed., three had a Grad. Dip. Ed, one had a Master of Teaching degree and three stated that they had
another qualification. These other qualifications included: Bachelor of Arts (Science), Graduate Diploma in Journalism and Bachelor of Marketing and Public Relations. All fourth-year ECTs had studied at Western Australian universities and all worked in primary schools. Eight taught in the Perth diocese and two in the Bunbury diocese. The geographic regions represented were Metropolitan, Peel, South-West and Goldfields-Esperance. The ECTs taught a range of year levels, from Kindergarten to Year 4 and one ECT taught part-time (0.5FTE) while nine taught full-time. Three fourth-year ECTs had classroom duties only and no extra-curricular duties. However, seven had been given additional duties over and above their main classroom teaching duties, namely: learning area budgets (n=2), organising camps, excursions and incursions for the school (n=1), coaching colleagues (n=4) and other duties (n=4). Other duties included: Science co-ordinator, drama teacher in middle and upper primary, and National Quality Standards team. Two of the fourth-year ECTs had not volunteered for additional duties while eight had, including art, school fete, sport activities, Homework Club and learning area budgets.

4.3.4 Summary

Section Two of the research findings presented descriptive statistics that were gleaned from an online, web-based survey. The data provided a demographic snapshot of the ECTs found in Western Australian Catholic primary schools. Of the 50 ECTs who completed the survey, there were more females than males, most were in their second year, were single and worked in the Metropolitan region. Overall, the ECTs were appropriately qualified and taught across a range of primary year levels. All four Catholic dioceses and six of the ten geopolitical regions in WA were represented by the ECTs surveyed.

4.4 Section Three: Findings from ECTs’ semi-structured interviews.

Twenty-two ECTs were interviewed. In keeping with Yin’s (2003) suggestions for reporting a case study, Section Three presents the findings from each of the ECT cohorts, namely: second, third and fourth year. Each cohort begins with a brief statistical description of the participants who were interviewed, and then presents the participants’ responses to the five specific research questions (SRQ) used to guide the study. SRQ 2 and SRQ 5 each have two components which have been separated using the Interview Guide question. Information from the interviews provided an
understanding of the lived experiences and self-perceptions of the participants. The ECTs’ natural language has been portrayed and quotations reflect the key themes identified through the data condensation and display stages of data management and analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4.4.1 Findings from the second-year Early Career Teacher cohort.

Eleven of the ECTs interviewed were in their second year of teaching. Table 5.3 provides an overview of these participants.

Table 4.3

*Overview of Participants in the Second-year ECT Cohort.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>8 females, 3 males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>20–49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal status</td>
<td>Single (n=5), married (n=4), in a relationship (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary institution</td>
<td>Western Australian Universities (n=9), other universities (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>B. Ed (n=8), B.A/Grad. Dip. Ed. (n=2), Bachelor of Health &amp; Physical Education (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocese</td>
<td>Perth diocese (n=8), Broome diocese (n=2), Bunbury diocese (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic regions lived in</td>
<td>Metropolitan, Goldfields-Esperance and Kimberley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year levels taught</td>
<td>Kinder/Preprimary - Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time equivalent workload</td>
<td>0.7 FTE (n=1), 0.8 FTE (n=1), 1.0 FTE (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given extra-curricular responsibilities</td>
<td>5 ECTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered extra-curricular responsibilities</td>
<td>10 ECTs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SRQ 1: What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?*

The second-year ECTs offered a variety of responses explaining what had led them to become teachers. The key themes were: vocation; working with children; inspirational role model; a personal challenge; and, contributing to society. Vocation
was a significant reason given, with six ECTs stating that they believed that they had been drawn to the profession as it was a ‘good fit’ for their personality and interests. One ECT explained, “There was something missing in the occupation that I was doing … that led me to teaching.” A mature-age ECT stated that the profession that she had originally started in was not right for her and that teaching was where she belonged. She said, “I really thought ‘This is not who I want to be’… it was to do with the work-life balance and making sure that your life is better all round … so I thought then that I really needed to pursue a teaching career.” Two of the ECTs who had sports backgrounds had been attracted to teaching because it offered them a way to share their passion for sport with others whilst also continuing to play sport.

Another motivation for becoming a teacher was an enjoyment of working with children. Four second-year ECTs stated that this was their main reason for entering the profession, expressed a love of children from a young age and explained they had a natural affinity with children. One ECT’s sentiment summed up the collective feeling of the four teachers: “I just love working with kids. I’ve always liked working with kids, and I just feel like it’s a really rewarding profession.”

Four second-year ECTs drew on childhood experiences when referring to inspirational primary and secondary-school teacher role models. These school teachers had been admired and respected for the way in which they had related to and influenced the students in their care. One ECT stated, ‘I remember having a really inspirational teacher when I was in Year 4 and wanting to be able to do that for other children too when I got older.” Within the theme, ECTs also referred to family members who were teachers and inspirations.

One mature-age ECT took great pride in taking on a challenge and making a life change to become a teacher. This ECT started a career in Day Care, became an Education Assistant and through that work experience went on to become a teacher. For her it was a natural progression that followed the growth of her children. Another ECT was attracted to teaching by a personal desire to contribute in a productive way to society.

**SRQ 2: What is it that you like/dislike about teaching?**

In the semi-structured interview, the second-year ECTs were asked two questions related to SRQ 2. Interview question two asked ECTs to explain what they
like about teaching, while Interview question three asked ECTs to discuss what they disliked about teaching.

Interview guide question 2: What is it that you like about teaching?

Nine themes emerged relating to what second-year ECTs liked about teaching emerged: students’ learning and growth, relationships, variety, students, location, personal challenge, being yourself, holidays, and, teacher designed school. All 11 ECTs stated that student learning and growth was a key reason as to why they liked teaching. Student learning and growth included the satisfaction and enjoyment that the teacher gained from observing positive changes in their students’ learning and personal development. In some instances, the teacher’s enjoyment was derived from knowing that they had facilitated these changes. One ECT expressed it as “being able to ‘plant that seed’”, while another ECT stated, “For me, just seeing their progress. You don’t quite really realise, until you’ve done the test again, how much they’ve improved … Kids that couldn’t read before and now they’re reading quite fluently.” Another ECT explained that she took joy from former students recollecting learning experiences they shared when in her class.

Nine of the ECTs said that relationships were something that they liked about teaching. Relationships was a broad theme that encompassed a range of different connections that the ECTs formed within the context of their school community. These connections included: students, parents, colleagues, and community. Six teachers cited relationships with students as one of the factors that they liked about teaching, two teachers respectively cited relationships with colleagues and parents, and one teacher cited relationships with community. One teacher explained that she believed “it is really important to form positive and strong relationships … get to know kids outside of the classroom … and it in turn helps your behaviour management because you have formed stronger relationships.”

Having a career that offered variety was a factor that three ECTs liked about teaching. Variety included changes in routine within the day, working with students from different backgrounds and that “no two days are the same”. One teacher offered, “For me it’s just having something different to do every day … I’ve got 25 kids to deal with and they’re always different … I could never do a job when you’re going and sitting at a desk or something.”
Two ECTs raised school location as an element that they liked about teaching. In both cases the schools that they worked in were in different rural regions of Western Australia. In particular, the two ECTs discussed the differences they perceived between city and country students. One ECT explained:

With the city kids we’re constantly taking phones and computers away from them and it was a real struggle to get them involved. It was ‘I want to this, I want that’. Whereas country kids are so much fun to work with and when I use country kids I include indigenous kids in that conversation.

Country location was liked for the quieter, more personal lifestyle that it offered and the different way that ECTs could relate to students.

One ECT liked belonging to a Teacher Designed School (TDS). A TDS is one in which staff have collectively created a shared vision over a period of years and conducted Action Research as part of teacher-centred school improvement processes. The female teacher explained:

It’s really good and we’ve been involved with that for five years now and there’s a lot of work with that. Everyone works really well together, we’re very reflective in everything we do and we do it all through this Teacher Designed School model.

In TDS, teachers work collaboratively, forge strong collegial networks and develop a sense of ownership of the school.

One ECT explained that one of the reasons she liked teaching was because she could be herself and be in control. Within a classroom, she felt that she could be authentic and not be constrained by social expectations and status within the school. She explained, “You’re sort of [a] master of your domain for all intents and purposes. With children I perform and be silly … I still have that professionalism … with kids, laughter is another way of communication.” Only one teacher listed holidays as a reason for liking teaching. It was the additional time that it allowed him to be with his family rather than the break from teaching per se that made holidays attractive. Having opportunities to “challenge myself” was a factor one ECT liked about teaching.

Interview guide question 3: What is it that you dislike about teaching?

Five themes emerged among the second-year ECTs as to what they disliked about teaching: workload, politics, parents, extracurricular expectations, and, separating work from home. Each of these themes will be explored starting with the most
frequently cited theme. Four ECTs raised workload, which incorporated assessments and belonging to a school in the Catholic sector, as a factor that they disliked about teaching. These ECTs commented on the physical and emotional demand that the large number of hours that teaching required and the impact that it had on them. One ECT described her situation in the following way:

I would say, especially being in the Catholic system, it’s just the hours that go into a day. I get home at 5.30/6.00 pm, and it’s quite a long drive and I’m just exhausted. Towards the end of the term I can feel myself wearing down. I need that holiday. It’s just the whole effort that you put in, and the fact that you’re always having to be 100% there and you can’t switch off … You’re always interacting and doing something.

Another ECT described a particularly heavy workload. Keen to secure an ongoing position within the school in which she worked, she felt obliged to accept leadership’s decision that she would take on a dual teaching role within the school. She reported:

I also have my dance background and I didn’t have a choice. I teach my Year 2s full time and then I also teach Cluster dance … Term 2 I had Year 2 and 3 … Year 4 and 5 in Term 3, and I have Year 6s this term. I also taught Performing Art dance on Friday afternoons. On top of my usual workload I was also doing teaching extra. That workload for me has definitely been a negative … it was quite unrealistic. It’s been too much for one person to do and the school know that.

One ECT who taught Physical Education to all year levels in his school, stated that “working across a range of ages” was an aspect that added to his workload. In addition to preparing the athletics and interschool carnivals, cross-country and swimming events, the ECT reported that having to change from teaching upper-primary to early-childhood added to his workload.

Three of the ECTs expressed that school politics was an aspect of teaching they disliked. For one ECT politics referred to a mismatch between the culture that the leadership team purported to uphold and the behaviour that they displayed towards staff. He explained a situation in which leadership had been stating, “We’re working as a team, we’re working as a team” until an issue arose and then “the boss was screaming big fines.” The ECT was left feeling disillusioned and unsupported by what he perceived to be hypocrisy. Another ECT said, “I’ve only really just noticed the politics behind teaching”. She reflected on her growing awareness of the machinations within a
school, what is considered appropriate, the “CEWA-leadership-teachers dynamics”, and things that “go on behind the scenes”. An ECT on a temporary contract gave a different perspective and referred to politics within the context of securing employment. She said, “I dislike the politics to be honest … when it comes to jobs at the end of the year people start gossiping and talking around.”

Three ECTs cited parents as a factor that they disliked about teaching. The parental theme encompassed three main aspects. One ECT described the first aspect, parent criticism, as follows, “You notice the parents are always there and they can be in your face about things if something goes wrong. But you don’t really see that, as much when you are on prac’ or at Uni, until you’re teaching.” A second aspect was parent protectiveness or a desire to ensure that their child was considered over-and-above others. One ECT explained: “A lot of parents only have their child in mind whereas I’ve got 400 (to teach). I can’t devote all of my time to just one child or to one incident and I feel like that’s not taken into account by parents.” A third aspect linked with the theme of school politics and centred round the relationships between teachers and parents. On this aspect, one ECT commented on how the parent-teacher dynamic became a power issue particularly with regard to parents playing ‘favourites’ by showing preference for one teacher over another.

One ECT raised concerns over the expectation placed on teachers in Catholic primary schools to participate in extracurricular activities as an aspect that she disliked about teaching. She explained her dislike of the expectation that teachers attend “the out-of-school things, like Confirmation” and the professional standards that are expected by principals. In her opinion “all of it seems to be a lot more full-on compared to the government system.” The ECT perceived that “it just seems never ending with the Catholics” when compared to a friend of hers who worked in the government system.

One ECT expressed a dislike of how workplace problems impacted on his work and home life. To illustrate, the teacher explained, “You can take your work home with you if you’ve had a bad day. It [a school] is not a good environment to work in when you have negative experiences with teachers who might have a bit of baggage.” This ECT’s situation brought to the fore, the importance of ECTs being able to separate themselves from work-based issues to ensure that they have personal renewal.
SRQ 3: What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?

Fourteen themes emerged amongst the second-year ECT cohort which are outlined in Table 4.4. The themes will be examined based on frequency cited, beginning with the first five most frequently cited.

Table 4.4

Main Challenges that Second-year ECTs Face.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most frequently cited</th>
<th>Least frequently cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td>Workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Behaviour management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling unprepared for the workforce</td>
<td>Report writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being consciously unskilled</td>
<td>Emotional demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Catering for diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generational differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five ECTs referred to the issue of lack of support as a challenge. This theme encompassed three main areas, colleagues, leadership, and spouse. For example, four ECTs cited lack of support from and between colleagues as a challenge. Not being assigned a mentor and not knowing who to turn to for answers fitted in this issue. In schools where staff were required to work in teams, two ECTs described instances where they observed experienced staff at odds with each other and not sharing information for the benefit of all group members. One ECT commented on how another ECT who had joined his school had upset the dynamics between staff in the year level she worked in by not being prepared to fit in with established group norms. In another instance, one ECT stated that he had been let down by staff who he thought he could trust and rely on. One ECT referred to inconsistent support from leadership regarding needing help to manage attendance and behaviourally difficult students. An ECT living in the remote Kimberley region reported that lack of spousal support made it difficult for her to balance extra-curricular work activities and home commitments.

Maintaining a work-life balance was raised by five ECTs as challenging. All five alluded to the additional effort and time that they had put into establishing themselves in the first two years of their career. The comment of one ECT working in a Metropolitan school summed up the sentiment of the group:
I think it’s just that you want to put in 110%. You want to do everything for your kids and for the school … so I would be at school until really late at night just doing work … I didn’t have a balance. Especially in my first year it was really hard juggling my outside life. This year is more of a balance, but it really can be a challenge.

All five ECTs were aware of the need to establish a work-life balance and realised the difficulty in doing so. One ECT with a young family commented on how intrusive teaching could be to his family life. Another ECT expressed the difficulty associated with working full-time while also studying. He stated that he had school leadership position aspirations and understood that sacrifices needed to be made to achieve this goal. He perceived the end of year holiday break as compensation for not having a good work-life balance during the year.

Five ECTs reported that parents could be a professional challenge. Parental attitudes, perceptions, overprotectiveness and disrespect for professional boundaries were the main issues. One ECT’s comment incorporated a range of parent-related issues:

We put a lot of expectation on our kids to be independent … but some parents are still hanging on to their little ones. There’s some who come and say, ‘My child is being bullied’, when the child just had a bad day. There are parents who are very worried about their children fitting in … Parents are catastrophising over little things … it seems to be happening more. I was hesitant to begin with but now I’ve realised what to say. I did my prac’ at this school. Parents are still seeing me as a prac teacher, and not as much, their child’s teacher that they can talk to and that sort of thing.

Another ECT reported that the parents of one of her students became verbally aggressive towards her after only listening to their child’s account of a classroom incident. One ECT stated that he had a parent who spoke rudely to him and added that as a teacher he would not be allowed to speak to a person in that way.

Four ECTs described their perceived lack of preparation for the teaching workplace as a challenge. All four stated that their pre-service university training had not given a broad enough understanding of the scope of responsibilities nor the time and effort required in teaching. One ECT explained:
I was so green and you don’t realise it because in the classroom on practicum the mentor teacher is there to guide you and pick things up … University doesn’t prepare you for the amount of work you’re going to have to do.

Two ECTs recognised that their practicum teacher had already established some structures, routines and responsibilities (for example homework) in the classroom. They had not attended to these details until they were faced with setting them up in their own classroom. Four ECTs expressed feeling consciously unskilled. The ECTs explained, “I can’t know as much as these teachers and it can be naturally quite intimidating”, “often you fail to ask the question because you don’t know the question needs to be asked”, and “you do not know if what you are doing is right is quite stressful”.

Four ECTs highlighted the workload associated with being a teacher as a challenge. Workload referred to aspects of the job that directly related to classroom teaching and also those aspects that covertly related to classroom practices. One ECT explained he had not fully appreciated the time and effort involved in the physical organisation of the classroom and establishing structures and routine such as homework. Another ECT stated that managing the volume of paperwork, including keeping assessment records for each student, was an issue. The ECTs discussed school improvement processes, such as meeting National Quality Schools (NQS) standards, implementing the Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), and being part of professional learning community (PLC) teams, as other aspects that required additional time and effort and that made the workload challenging.

Three ECTs who lived in rural or remote areas raised location as a concern, which encapsulated a range of issues. To begin, one ECT stated that people living in his town constantly questioned him as to whether he liked living in the area. He found that challenging and stated that he had not encountered it while living in other areas. This ECT also reported that given the large number of indigenous students in the area, absenteeism was a significant issue. Non-attendance or irregular school attendance impacted on the overall running of his classroom and impacted on behaviour within the class. All three ECTs reported that attendance to externally provided professional development (PD) was an issue related to distance from larger centres. To attend PD meant at least three days away from school. In addition, because the ECTs lived long distances from where most PD was offered, travel and accommodation costs also impacted on whether the ECTs could attend. In all three cases, the ECTs either did not
attend external PD, attended in their own holiday time, or only participated in PD offered in the local area. The ECTs location also resulted in significant distance from family and friends and affected access to social event and family support networks. One of the ECT’s stated that living in a small town made it more difficult to break into the social cliques within the community, especially since many of the locals were related.

Three ECTs described behaviour management as a challenge. Behaviour management was a broad theme that was related to school location, ECT behaviour management skills and parenting styles and attitudes. Two ECTs worked in remote primary schools where transiency and irregular student attendance impacted on student behaviour. Two of the ECTs acknowledged their teaching inexperience as an issue that affected student behaviour. One teacher stated “I guess it’s my inconsistency with behaviour management … I have a lack of confidence in my ability”, while another added “I think the behaviour of the kids was the biggest problem and added to the workload, it’s so intense … but I know what to expect from my children now”.

Regarding parenting styles and attitudes, one ECT attributed his students’ challenging behaviour to their parents allowing them to spend time with older students outside of school. Many of the older students were described as chronic school truants who were known to the police.

Three ECTs cited report writing as a concern. Linked to the theme of feeling unprepared for the workforce, the ECTs stated that they had not learned about report writing until they had their own class. One ECT stated that while report writing was a challenge so too were the associated responsibilities that came with it. She disclosed:

They teach you assessment very well and they don’t teach you report writing. I know it comes with the job but those two areas within the school are the biggest. There are meetings that come with that, parents come with that, everything come with it and you don’t ever get properly prepared for it. That was hard.

Report writing was considered additionally challenging by one ECT who spent the first term as a relief teacher and had to prepare and leave information for when the regular classroom teacher returned. Additionally, the ECT then secured a full-time position in a different class within the school and had to write reports for students in the new class after only teaching them for one term.

Another challenge cited by ECTs was the emotionally demanding nature of teaching. Three ECTs explained that dealing with personal issues in others’ lives,
including colleagues, students and students’ parents, for long periods of time every day was emotionally taxing. The strain of dealing with emotional demands was something that one ECT said, “took a strain on her personally”. The three ECTs stated that initially they took things to heart but that over time they learned to distance themselves from others’ issues.

Three ECTs reported that it was difficult to find time to complete different tasks due to the ‘busy-ness’ of each day. Time management was a challenge due to the sheer volume of teaching duties and other extracurricular duties, such as staff and committee meetings, that the ECTs juggled. Timetable changes from term to term also presented as an issue for two main reasons. The first reason was learning the new timetable and changes to Duties Other Than Teaching (DOTT) times. For one ECT, who taught Year Two and Dance as a specialist teacher across the school, timetable changes were especially problematic. The second reason was the impact that timetable changes had on maintaining consistency of student routines, particularly if the ECT had students with special needs in their class.

Two ECTs mentioned that catering for diversity was a challenge. One ECT described this challenge in the following way:

It’s the vast range of abilities within the classroom. That was quite a challenge and I don’t think I was fully prepared for it. I always knew there were going to be gaps in children’s abilities, but I was not aware of how bad it could be.

The challenge of catering for diversity stemmed from planning through to the teaching of a lesson. The ECTs stated that it was hard to stick with the steps of a lesson because children would complete tasks and learn concepts at different rates. It was difficult accommodating those differences and meeting the needs of each student.

One of the ECTs, who was on a temporary contract, reported that job security was a challenge. He explained that it made planning for the future difficult and that he had taken relief on a term-by-term basis wherever it was available. He stated that the principal for whom he currently worked was honest about employment prospects within the school and added that other ECTs with whom he talked still had no idea if they had a job the following year.

Generational differences were a factor raised by one ECT who worked “in a school that’s running, I’ll use the word archaic, in ways that seem backwards to what we were trained”. This ECT referred to the mismatch between ECTs’ training and ideas and the reluctance of experienced staff to adopt and assimilate new approaches into
their teaching repertoire to keep abreast of educational changes. The ECT expressed his frustration in watching teachers use iPad apps to ‘babysit students’ rather than looking for ways to effectively integrate IT to engage students and enhance their learning.

**SRQ 4: How do Early Career Teachers cope with challenges in light of their experiences?**

Nine themes emerged among the second year ECTs. These themes were, in order of frequency: support, resilience, location, being mature-aged, community involvement, students, sense of belonging in a school, school structures, and additional responsibilities.

Support was a broad theme that incorporated professional and personal backing from colleagues, friends and parents. All eleven ECTs described the support they received at work, from colleagues, leadership and Education Assistants, as the main way in which they had coped with the challenges they experienced as a teacher. In larger, multiple-stream schools, ECTs discussed the support that they received from having a partner-teacher in the same year level. One ECT described his experience as follows, “I had the most amazing co-worker … we just had great rapport … she was a pillar of support and she liked the new ideas from my training”. Early Career Teachers working in single-stream schools spoke of support that they received generally from all staff. In four instances, support from colleagues was discussed in relation to the culture of the school. Teachers made the comments such as, “At my school everybody is so amazing. There is such a beautiful culture at my school”, and “the whole staff have been supportive of me, it’s the teachers and the school.” One ECT who participated in the CEWA ECT program said that she did not need a designated mentor because she received support and advice from all the staff with whom she worked. Support from the leadership team, be it the principal, head of school or assistant principal, was cited by eight ECTs as something that helped them manage their challenges. Challenges included dealing with student behaviour, questions about teaching pedagogy and dealing with parents. Linked with support from work, five ECTs named mentoring and coaching within their school as a factor that helped them cope with the challenges they experienced. That it, having a mentor or coach to discuss issues with and receive feedback from, was described as an effective support mechanism.

Seven ECTs highlighted the importance of family support. Three of the four had teachers in their family and explained that having an experienced teacher in the
family provided mentor-like support that was not directly part of the ECTs school context. Four ECTs attributed their coping to supportive spouses or partners. One ECT described her spouse in the following way, “Oh, it’s excellent. I can just come home and go, “blah, blah, blah’, and it is excellent because hubby [husband] just listens.” Having support from a loving-other provided ECTs with an opportunity to vent concerns while also reducing home responsibilities and workload. Further, four ECTs cited being able to talk through issues with friends, especially if they were also in teaching, was very supportive. Spending time with friends and pursuing other interests including sport, was also considered an effective coping strategy.

Six ECTs discussed personal traits and factors that helped them cope with the challenges they experienced as teachers. Condensed into the theme resilience, one ECT described himself in the following way, “Emotionally I’m okay. I don’t get too depressed about things and I don’t get too worried. It helps to have that rationality, to know what I’m doing and where I am going.” Other factors within this theme included being able to emotionally distance themselves from issues so that they did not take them personally, having bounced back from other challenging life experiences and having a positive outlook.

Two ECTs liked their school location and considered it a factor that helped them cope. One of the ECTs worked in a rural school while the other was working in a Metropolitan school. Both ECTs believed that ECTs cope and adapt to where they are at the time and believed that location helped them cope because they liked the region that they worked and lived in. One ECT stated, “It depends on the type of person you are and where you are.” She had always wanted to teach in the country and was grateful for the experiences that the location had given her as a teacher. The other teacher enjoyed city living because it meant she had family and friends close by.

Two mature-age female ECTs reported that their age helped them cope with the challenges that they had experienced in the first two years of teaching. For instance, one of the women described how being older gave her more credibility with parents and how students saw her as having more authority than the younger ECTs that she worked with. One ECT summed it up this way, “I think they just look at me and think I’m old and forget that it’s my second year.”

School structures, community involvement, students, sense of belonging in a school and additional responsibilities were five other factors that emerged when second-year ECTs were asked to explain what had helped them cope with the challenges that
they experienced. Each factor was cited by one ECT. The school structures were those factors that assisted ECTs to work with the curriculum, plan and be organised. For instance, Explicit Instruction was introduced and provided a structure for teachers to collaborate and plan together thereby reducing the teachers’ workload. Community involvement referred to participating in activities that were unrelated to work and that allowed ECTs to connect with others from the broader community in which they lived. The ECT explained that her way of coping was to use sport as both a physical release, to have a break from work and to relax. Having a sense of belonging in a school was described as feeling part of the school, of being emotionally connected.

Another ECT stated that being with her students because “my kids this year, they’re really, really good” helped her cope with challenges. She had been motivated to become a teacher because she loved being with children and the thought of having them look up to her. The ECT added that she knew that no matter how hard her day had been, she had 25 students looking forward to her being their teacher the next day, and that helped her cope. One ECT who worked in a small school explained that all the teachers had ‘special jobs’ that they could nominate to do. Having an additional responsibility helped this ECT cope because it gave her variety in her teaching role, responsibility within the school while also allowing her to develop her interest in the area.

SRQ 5: What factors, if any, in Early Career Teachers’ experiences made them want to continue in/leave the profession?

The ECTs were asked two questions related to SRQ 5. The first question invited ECTs to describe factors that made them want to continue teaching, while the second question asked them to describe factors that made them consider leaving teaching.

Interview guide question 6: Were there any factors that have helped you to work through the challenges and make you want to keep teaching?

Thirteen themes emerged from the second-year ECTs’ responses to what made them wish to continue teaching. These factors are displayed in Table 4.5. Many of the themes were similar to those identified as helping the ECTs cope with challenges while others related to what had motivated the ECTs to become teachers.
Nine ECTs described personal and professional growth as a factor that helped keep them in the profession. The ECTs reflected on how they had changed during the first two years of teaching. Personal growth included having improved self-regulation, communication skills and work-life balance. Professional growth included increased knowledge of the curriculum content and how to teach it, improved time management and organisation, as well as the ability to identify and deal with what is important at the time.

Six of the ECTs stated that the support that they received from friends and family, colleagues, leadership and other ECTs encouraged them to remain in the teaching profession. Two of the ECTs said that they had participated in the CEWA ECT program which had provided them with information that was relevant to their professional needs. The mentorship, undertaking action research projects and networking with other graduates provided the ECTs with support that helped them feel empowered. One ECT stated “often it (CEWA program) focused on things that school did not … stuff like AITSL”. The other ECT added “we set up a portfolio … my principal wants me to explain to the staff what is expected through AITSL”. Both ECTs commented on how the CEWA ECT program had helped both them and their mentors develop skills. The ECTs’ teacher identities were developed as they transitioned from being pre-service to registered teachers due to the program content and the mentor structures that schools were requested to implement.

Six ECTs identified students, which encompassed working with children and the joy attached to that work, as a factor that kept them in the profession. Two ECTs disclosed that the joy came from “when you teach them something”, and “when you get them to love something that they didn’t like or know how to do before”. Other ECTs
described knowing that they were “making a difference”, and “the relationships, the ones with the kids in my class, they’re really strong and they’re really lovely children” as aspects that made them want to keep teaching. Being able to “build a bridge”, to establish that connection and relationship of trust with a student, especially if the students were “Hard to reach … (with) challenging behaviour”, was a factor that made one ECT say, “Yes, I’m doing the right thing, and this is where I’m meant to be.”

Five of the second-year ECTs discussed factors such as being strong, being able to work through difficult situations, placing emotional distance between oneself and challenges, tenacity and grit. Collectively these factors were grouped under the theme of resilience. One ECT stated “I don’t like failing at things”, while another said, “you’ve just got to look at it as a bad day and realise that you just get over it … because it doesn’t matter in the long run”. The ECTs all indicated that they had learned to work through challenges over time. Moreover, different challenges had helped them not only develop resilience but realise that it was part of the process of beginning as a teacher.

Enjoyment of teaching was described by two ECTs as something that made them want to remain in the profession. This theme was distinguishable from the ‘students’ theme because both ECTs focused on the feelings associated with the activity of teaching. One ECT stated, “The main thing is that I am still enjoying teaching. If I wasn’t enjoying it, I would do something else.” For the other teacher, her enjoyment of teaching was attributed in part to knowing that she had attained a teaching career at an older age.

Working in a school where there is a good balance of male and female staff was raised by one female ECT. She explained that “the male staff are so good to talk to. I think they are much more down-to-earth regarding teaching issues than women often are.” Being part of a faith community was another theme helped make one ECT remain in the profession. Working in a low-socioeconomic area in a ‘tough’ school, the ECT stated, “we have prayer on Wednesday … we always have a focus on the students who cause problems … it’s a good way to refocus the negative attitude and to turn it into a positive one.” Staff were united as a faith community which gave them a way to work collectively with a Christian mindset to treat students with respect and dignity.

One ECT, although only in his second year of teaching, cited career opportunities as a factor that made him remain in teaching. Frustrated with the mismatch between his preservice training and IT use in his school, the ECT was given
the opportunity to take on a specialist IT role. The opportunity would allow him to further pursue an area of interest while also taking a lead role in the school.

Being ‘the bread-winner’ meant that one male ECT knew that he had to remain in teaching to be able to provide for his young family. This factor was described as personal responsibilities. Another ECT said that while he “didn’t get into the job for the holidays” he was grateful for “the time that I get to have with my son … extra time where I don’t have to hand him off to someone.” For this ECT, holidays were seen as advantageous because of the family time that it afforded him.

Salary was cited by one ECT who said, “I know people say that teachers don’t get paid a lot but when you’ve not had a lot before you think ‘Wow!’” This ECT had worked many years as an Education Assistant before switching careers and becoming a teacher. For her, a teacher’s salary was significantly more in comparison. Establishing work-life balance was a factor that another ECT raised. He commented on how he had reached a point at the end of his second year of teaching where he no longer took work home either physically, cognitively or emotionally. He summed it up in the following way, “I don’t take any work with me when I go home anymore. I like to have that mentality because I’d be losing my mind if I didn’t”. Working in a school where student behaviour is challenging, he added that staff were very supportive of each other and the focus was on developing the social and emotional development of each child rather than academic grades. One mature-age ECT living in a remote area cited the ‘effort to get into the profession’ as a factor that kept her teaching. She explained that “it took a lot to get into Uni’” and that her husband and children had made a lot of sacrifices for her to become a teacher. Although teaching was challenging at times, she felt that leaving would be letting her family down.

Interview guide question 7: What factor or factors attracted, or helped, you to want to leave teaching?

Eight themes were identified among the factors that made second-year ECTs consider leaving teaching. Two ECTs cited workload and discussed factors such as administrative duties, meetings, reports, assessment within this theme. One ECT stated that she felt that she was putting more into her job than people in other professions and that this made her wonder whether “there is something else out there that is less stressful and where I get the same amount of money.” The other ECT said that she fluctuated between feeling overwhelmed by the workload and coping with it. For her
“It’s the stress of the workload; trying to keep up with the latest trends and trying to be the best teacher you can takes its toll.” In her case, the physical, cognitive and emotional workload associated with teaching was one aspect that contributed to stress. The other aspect was the pressure she put on herself to be the best teacher she could.

Two ECTs reported that lack of job security was something that would make them consider leaving teaching. Both teachers had started their second year of teaching on temporary contracts after doing relief during their first year. One ECT stated, “It’s the whole contract issue. I’m not sure when I’m going to get a permanent position and that sort of weighs into my thinking.” The other ECT had been offered an ongoing position at his school however he had a different mindset about the theme of job security saying that “If I didn’t get the job for next year I would see it as an opportunity to do something else.” Grateful for his new contract he added, “But I think it’s time for me to settle down and stick in one spot. The fact that I know I can now be here for as long as I want to be, attracts me to stay in teaching.”

Two ECTs referred to future direction of schools as “getting more business-like” and education as “a money-making venture.” To them this was a deterrent to remaining in teaching. One of the ECTs was studying business “because of the way education is heading these days”, believing that a business background would support his school leadership aspiration or give him a way out of teaching.

One ECT raised teaching special needs students as a factor that made her consider leaving the profession. The young female ECT had a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in her class. It was the first time she had worked with a student with ASD which had challenged her. She reached a point where she “felt that I was letting her (student) down as her teacher because I couldn’t make her feel safe and secure at school. I reached a point where I thought ‘Am I cut out for this? Can I do this?” Another ECT said that salary was something that could potentially make him consider leaving teaching but “I’d leave because of a job that would pay a lot more money.”

One ECT described the issue of ‘not a good fit’ when describing a friend who had left teaching permanently after two years after discovering that it was not her passion or calling. The final factor that was identified amongst the second-year ECTs that would contribute to leaving teaching was family. One ECT said that she was considering “taking next year off” so that she could spend more time with her young children.
Five ECTs could not think of any factors that would make them consider leaving the profession. One teacher stated, “I really love teaching … there’s always going to be that tough kid, or that one parent … I think that comes with teaching, that’s all. You’re not going to love every single thing all the time”. Another said that she could not consider leaving teaching because, “Once I am over being tired and I am on holiday, I just miss it so much.” One ECT said that felt that he knew what he was getting into when he became a teacher and that it was “exactly what I expected [regarding] everything.” One teacher said that she would not consider leaving teaching but that at some point in her career she would consider leaving one school to go to another school.

4.4.2. Findings from the third-year Early Career Teacher cohort

Six of the ECTs interviewed were in their third year of teaching. Table 4.6 provides an overview of these participants.

Table 4.6

Overview of Participants in the Third-year ECT Cohort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>4 females, 2 males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>20-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal status</td>
<td>Single (n=2), married (n=3), in a relationship (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary institution</td>
<td>Western Australian Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>B. Ed (n=4), B.A/Grad. Dip. Ed. (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocese</td>
<td>Perth diocese (n=3), Geraldton diocese (n=1) Bunbury diocese (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic regions lived in</td>
<td>Metropolitan, Goldfields-Esperance, South-West and Mid-West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year levels taught</td>
<td>Year 1 - 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time equivalent workload</td>
<td>1.0 FTE (n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given extra-curricular responsibilities</td>
<td>4 ECTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered extra-curricular responsibilities</td>
<td>6 ECTs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SRQ 1: What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?

The main reasons third-year ECTs presented for becoming a teacher centred on five themes: inspirational role model, being a positive influence on others, an intrinsic desire to help, enjoying working with children, and, career switch. Three ECTs stated that they had been inspired by role model teachers, mainly in their early childhood years. As one ECT stated:

Well that idea came to my mind when I was in Pre-Primary and met my first sports teachers. I thought he had the best job in the world, so I decided that that’s what I wanted to be. So that was my goal from the first go and I always knew what I wanted to do!

Three ECTS cited the importance of being a positive influence on others and a desire to be able make a difference in children’s lives. That is, to be able to help, guide and direct children so that the children could realise their potential. On a broader level, the teachers wanted to equip children with skills, over and above academic ones, that could empower them to make a difference in their own lives. One ECT expressed her thoughts on this in the following way:

I think that teaching is a really important job - you can help to positively influence and impact children’s lives, and teach them really significant, valuable life lessons. I want to be able to really make a difference and I think that teaching is one of the best ways to do that.

Another ECT explained that because “there’s lots of broken families, lots of social issues” he wanted to be available to help students, not just as a teacher but as someone for them to listen to and talk to. He added that he was motivated to support them and make their lives easier.

Having an enjoyment of working with children was a reason cited by two ECTs for wanting to become a teacher. One teacher expressed this sentiment in the following way, “I like being around kids, I enjoy working with children. From Year 12, I went straight in to a University degree and I enjoyed the first year of practicum.” One mature-aged ECT stated that she became a teacher because it was something that she had always wanted to do but had never had the opportunity. Later in life she had a ‘career switch’ and became a teacher.
SRQ 2: What do Early Career Teachers like/dislike about teaching?

In the semi-structured interview, the third-year ECTs were asked two questions related to the specific research question. The first question asked ECTs to explain what they like about teaching, while the second question asked ECTs to discuss what they disliked about teaching.

Interview question 2: What is it that you like about teaching?

Six themes emerged from third-year ECTs responses as to what they liked about teaching, namely: Student learning and growth, variety, relationships, personal challenge, positive affect, and holidays. The most frequently cited reason for liking teaching was having a positive influence on student learning and growth, with four ECTs discussing this point. All four ECTs referred to the rewards that they gained from watching their students develop throughout the year. One ECT’s comment summed up the views of the other ECTs:

You can sit there at the end of the year and say I had a positive effect on that child this year. I’ve helped them to be a better person or a better student or I’ve just helped them improve. I feel like my own position in the world is really validated because I am making a positive difference to others.

Another ECT stated that she enjoyed watching the students in the upper year levels develop their leadership skills and inspire or help younger students.

Three ECTs discussed the variety that teaching offers as something that they liked. In particular, the ECTs discussed how even with regular routines, each day offered changes whether it be due to the students or other school events. One ECT discussed co-curricular activities such as excursions or incursions, while another said that the daily challenges that come from working with different colleagues and students was a great source of variety.

Relationships was a theme offered by three ECTs as an aspect of teaching that they liked. One ECT said, “So the best thing about teaching for me is the relationships that you build with the kids … and the people that you work with.” An ECT stated that she liked “the closeness and the relationships that you form with the children and families.” Another ECT believed that living in the country made it easier for her to form relationships with the parents and students. Being able to work alongside other people who are passionate about teaching children and giving them a good start in life, was discussed when referring to relationships with colleagues. Closely linked to
relationships, one ECT provided positive affect as a factor based on the fun and laughter that occurred almost every day while teaching.

One ECT stated that she liked the personal challenge that teaching gave her. Being in a profession that continually encouraged her to change, adapt and grow meant that she could not remain static. She expressed gratitude for having a career that involved relating with a wide variety of people every day, be it students, their families, or colleagues, and required her to learn to be flexible and adaptive. The final factor pertaining to liking teaching was holidays. One ECT said that she liked the school holidays and after a busy term it was nice to have a break.

Interview guide question 3: What is it that you dislike about teaching?

When asked what they disliked about teaching, third-year ECTs discussed five themes. The most frequently cited theme was parents, followed by workload, manner of life, location and student behaviour. The parental theme incorporated parents’ attitudes and behaviour, conducting parent interviews and professional relationships with parents. Two ECTs expressed that it was really difficult to connect with some parents and to receive support from them. In one case the ECT suggested that the difficulty came from the school’s location and large numbers of immigrants. In another instance, an ECT said that some parents were quick to be judgmental and accusatory. This ECT added that he took things too personally.

Two ECTs disliked the workload, particularly the administrative and extra-curricular demands of the teaching profession. Both felt that school improvement meetings, emails, paperwork and other duties, detracted from their teaching and putting time into their students. One ECT said that location was something that she disliked about teaching. The ECT lived in a rural area many hours from the city. Distance from the metropolitan area affected her ability to attend professional development (PD). She explained, “We are always having to spend extra hours getting to PD and it costs our school a lot … there’s a big impact on yourself in the classroom because of the driving time to get back.” The same ECT also raised the issue of manner of life. She expressed her frustration in the following way

In a Catholic school, my manner of life is always under scrutiny. Economically in Western Australia the cost of living is higher. For everyone else it’s fine to live with a partner or a boyfriend but for living in a country town especially it can be very isolating and lonely being by yourself.
The ECT discussed the concern of inconsistent standards and stated that she knew of unmarried teachers and school leaders living with partners in the city where they went unnoticed because of the population.

One ECT discussed the issue of student behaviour as something that he disliked about teaching. Perceiving that he had been “loaded up with a class full of behaviour issues”, he explained that it had been too much to deal with until he was provided with additional support in the classroom. Finally, one third-year ECT disclosed that there was nothing that she disliked about teaching.

**SRQ 3: What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?**

Among the third-year cohort, thirteen themes emerged in response to SRQ 3. The themes are displayed in Table 4.7 and will be examined beginning with the most frequently cited themes.

Table 4.7

*Main Challenges that Third-year ECTs Face.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most frequently cited</th>
<th>Least frequently cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting to change</td>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Behaviour management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering for diversity</td>
<td>Organisation and time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving support</td>
<td>Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confronting issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manner of life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workload, particularly additional responsibilities and duties, was the theme cited as the main challenge of teaching. Five of the ECTs alluded to phone calls, emails, documentation of events, recording student incidents, meetings that they attended and extra roles that they were given, as frustrating and challenging. One ECT explained, “In teaching these days I feel there’s more admin than there is teaching!” Another added “I think there’s a lot of things we do that take away from, and either aren’t in the best interest of the kids or they don’t have any effect on student learning”. One ECT stated that small schools have the same number of roles that exist in larger schools but have fewer teachers to fill them. She stated, “The fact that there are only four classes, and all those extra key teacher roles … then all of the other community events that we participate in … these are all extra jobs because we only have four classroom teachers”.

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Reflecting on his criticism of all the additional responsibilities and duties that teachers have, one ECT added that his opinion was probably skewed by his relative lack of experience in the profession and that it would probably change over time.

Adjusting to change was a theme discussed by four ECTs. The theme incorporated changes to partner teacher, class size and year level taught. One ECT stated that she had worked with a partner teacher who collaborated well and that a change in staffing resulted in her working with a teacher who preferred to plan and teach independently. She described her situation in the following way, “I was really used to working closely with someone and programming together and everything, so that been a big adjustment and challenge this year.” One ECT explained how change of year level and class size impacted on her. She had started her teaching career with a class of eight Kindergarten/Preprimary students however, in her new school, she was teaching 30 students of mixed ability in a composite Year 2/3 class. Working with the younger students, she recalled feeling that “I could learn without making too many mistakes.” However, “Moving to a Year 2/3 class was a lot more challenging … just the difference between the work and the number and ability of the kids.”

Two ECTs raised loneliness as a concern. The ECTs stated that the loneliness came from being much younger than the other teaching staff with whom they worked. One of the ECTs who lived in a rural location said that she felt being alone was the hardest thing especially if it involved relocating. The main challenge came from moving away from family and support systems to having no-one.

Two ECTs discussed catering for diversity as a challenge. Catering for diversity was a theme that encompassed meeting the needs of students with special needs and also the different ability levels and learning rates of students. One male ECT reported that “within my class I’ve got three children with Autism and three with ADHD. It’s almost like I have a separate plan for every student!” Initially the ECT had limited Education Assistant support. However, the situation improved after discussions with parents and the principal. The other ECT stated, “Probably the hardest thing I find is differentiation. It’s a challenge to cater for all the needs of the kids.” He explained that the logistics of directing one lesson at three levels, support, year level and extension, was a lot of work and hard to monitor.

Not receiving support was considered a challenge. Three ECTs described the leadership team at their school as “not very supportive” and “negative”. One ECT stated that although his school had an Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE),
staff were expected to organise sacraments and then pass the information on to the APRE. Another ECT explained that she felt unsupported by other teachers because “We’re only a small school, with a small [number] of teachers and everyone’s always busy with their own things.” She added that “A lot of the Education Assistants (EAs), they’re born and bred here, and they never really made the effort to get to know me or help in any way.” The ECT expressed excitement at the possibility of receiving more support at the next school she worked at. The third ECT, who worked at a rural school, stated that she “did not have any induction at all … no handover about the kids or for the organisational stuff.” She also added that she had been in an untenable situation where the EA in her class was undermining her efforts to establish herself in the school and community. The ECT perceived that she did not receive support from the leadership team in terms of feedback and strategies to make working with the EA more conducive to all.

Two ECTs living in rural areas discussed location as a challenge. For one ECT several factors contributed to his situation including the limited range of activities to do on the weekend, having a wife and young baby isolated from family supports, and the insular nature of the town itself. While he liked the school he was employed at, he struggled with low expectations that many parents had for their children. He attributed the parents’ attitudes to the fact that many of the town residents spent their entire life there. One ECT stated, “I moved to the country to get country experience and I’ve put a lot of work into my school.” For her, the challenge associated with location linked to working with older teachers who had lifelong connections to the community and whom she perceived were reluctant to try new teaching ideas and accept outsiders.

Two ECTs raised establishing work-life balance as an issue. Referring to a teacher’s workload one ECT stated, “It’s just non-stop. I get jealous of my husband who comes home from work at 5 o’clock and that’s it, his day is over. I think it would be nice to have a job like that!” For this ECT finding the balance so that work was not “all consuming” was a challenge. The other ECT commented on the impact not having a work-life balance had on her time with her family.

Behaviour management was cited by one ECT as a challenge. He stated that “I’ve stripped back the reward system … they don’t get prizes anymore because they wouldn’t behave right unless you gave them a reward.” The ECT changed his behaviour management approach to encourage positive recognition and intrinsic student
motivation to reverse prior conditioning of his students through receipt of extrinsic rewards.

Organisation and time management were factors discussed by one ECT who stated, “I wish I had a receptionist … I’m trying to be as organised as I can, but it feels like you’ve got a million things going on.” Coping with the volume of information that he collected and received was a challenge. One ECT raised parents as a challenge. He said, “Parents are the most difficult part of the job. They just stick their beaks in where it’s not required … they complain about too much … they twist stories and make things my fault.” The ECT added, “Parents will be parents … their child’s wellbeing is paramount, and you can fully understand why they’re worried. It’s just their way of dealing with it that I don’t like.” Politics was another issue discussed by one ECT referring to leadership purportedly involving staff in decision-making, when the decisions had already been made. Another ECT stated that the cost of teaching resources was a difficulty, when professional resources were being established.

One ECT said that workload was a challenge especially when school leadership had an expectation that term programs would be submitted in the first two weeks of term. The ECT stated that she found the program requirement a concern as it did not fit with her personal philosophy, nor the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), both of which necessitated a student-focus and flexible planning. Another ECT disclosed that job security was a concern. She had been unaware of the difference between the Catholic and government sectors regarding permanent employment when she accepted a rural teaching position. When she wanted to return to Perth and to build a house, she was faced with the prospect of securing an ongoing position in the city.

One ECT reported facing confronting issues such as emotionally traumatic situations and expressed the impact that such issues had on delaying her desire to start a family. She stated, “I’ve seen a lot of horrible situations where children have been neglected and are in foster care. It’s kind of affected me to see some of the issues that children are faced with.” The final factor that was cited by the third-year ECTs was manner of life. One ECT found the situation very “frustrating, very contradicting … it could be seen as a little hypocritical”, especially when some of the teachers that she worked with were divorced or single parents. Despite being engaged, the ECT was not permitted by her principal to live with her fiancé prior to marrying.

SRQ 4: How do Early Career Teachers cope with challenges in light of their experiences?
Six themes emerged when third-year ECTs were asked how they coped with the challenges they experienced when teaching. These themes were: Support, resilience, community involvement, students, being mature-aged, and alcohol. All ECTs cited support as the main coping factor. Support was a broad theme that incorporated six sources, namely: work, community, students, friends, partner or spouse and family. Key to all sources was the relationships that ECTs had with others that gave them a sense of connectedness.

Three ECTs discussed the role that a mentor or coach, usually another teacher or leadership member, played in providing support. One ECT stated, “My coach is always there and he’s one of the best blokes you’ll meet”, while another said, “They have mentors within the school, so you can go and ask and they show you stuff”. Mentors or coaches were valued because of their approachability, professional knowledge and the feedback that they provided to reassure the ECTs. In two cases, ECTs sought guidance and support from their year level partner teacher, or another experienced colleague whom they respected. Key to their conversations was nonjudgmental, active listening. One ECT said, “The Science and Arts teacher came every day that she was working and just listened, it helped so much”. Another ECT mentioned, “I find talking to our support teacher is helpful … she’s a really good listener … and she’s often got ideas and strategies for helping deal with the things that are giving me trouble”.

Three ECTs found that being involved in community organisations, particularly sporting clubs, offered a chance to “form a connection, talk to other people and form friendships”. One ECT gained support from the relationships that sporting interests helped her establish with her students, their parents and the broader community; these relationships had a flow on effect to her classroom relationships. Another ECT actively involved herself in extra-curricular ventures including fundraising, school discos and the interschool carnival, which helped her form supportive relationships with a broad range of people both within and outside the school. Support from students was raised by three ECTs, one of whom reported, “I enjoy working with the students, their unconditional regard makes me feel supported.” Support from friends, partner or spouse, and family provided ECTs with a chance to “gas-bag and vent” while providing unconditional acceptance, because “they’re there for you”.

Four ECTs cited personal qualities that contributed to resilience as factors that helped them cope with challenges. Traits such as not taking things personally, getting on with the job and doing what needs to be done were discussed. The ECTs comments
included, “My personality is one to not take offense” and “If you’ve got something to do you just do it and don’t bother complaining about it or let it pull you down.” Being able to focus on what is important, and to emotionally distance oneself from issues were two traits discussed by one ECT. She stated, “Things I dislike and the lack of support I get … I just push that aside and think ‘I’m here for the children’ … I move on, focus on what’s important and that gets me through”. Mindset was also a trait that was mentioned by one ECT who said that rather than dwell on the challenges she chose to think of them as opportunities to learn. She added, “You really have to be willing to look at it as a way to learn new things … that continual learning about ourselves”.

Three ECTs cited various other reasons, including students and working with children, as coping mechanisms. One ECT perceived that being mature-aged provided him with a broader perspective on life and greater emotional maturity which helped him cope with challenges. In a jovial manner, one female ECT explained, “Wine supports me too … yes, I never drank wine before I became a teacher”. For this teacher, a glass of wine with her partner at the end of the day helped.

SRQ 5: What factors, if any, in Early Career Teachers’ experiences made them want to continue in/leave the profession?

During the semi-structured interviews, the ECTs were asked two questions related to SRQ 5. The first question asked ECTs to describe factors that made them want to continue teaching, while the second question asked them to describe factors that made them consider leaving teaching.

Interview guide question 6: Were there any factors that have helped you to work through the challenges and make you want to keep teaching? If so, please explain.

Five themes emerged from the ECTs responses, namely: personal and professional growth, students, job security/salary, personal responsibilities, resilience, and holidays. Four ECTs cited that the opportunities for new growth, both professional and personal, that the career offered made them want to continue teaching. One ECT stated, “Because I’m rather young myself, I’ve been maturing with the job … you grow up as you move through your career. You get more organised, more experienced, you learn more and that makes it easier to cope”. Another ECT added, “I haven’t reached a point where I could leave the profession … I still have a lot to learn through the job”. Knowing that she was constantly improving as a teacher, and that she had grown
professionally during the year, motivated one ECT to continue teaching. Another, ECT perceived that teaching offered her the opportunity to learn new things outside of the classroom as well as in it. The ECT had actively involved herself in a range of community activities and had sought to work in a rural location to have new life experiences that would help her flourish personally and professionally.

Being in a position where they were helping children was a factor that four ECTs stated made them want to continue teaching. Comments included, “It’s the students’ reactions that make it so rewarding and keep you teaching”, “A struggling student is feeling more confident now and that’s encouraging and makes me feel positively about teaching”, and “Getting children in a place where they feel safe and comfortable makes you even more passionate about teaching and makes you want to help children more”. In these instances, the ECTs’ motivation to keep teaching linked to their motivation to become a teacher.

Three ECTs discussed job security/salary as a factor that kept them teaching. Although the two entities are separate, the ECTs linked having a consistent salary to permanent employment. One ECT stated, “It’s the pay and being permanent that keep me in the job”, while another said, “I understand why people leave teaching … money is such a stressor and you need that job security … but in Catholic Education I feel safe in my job and secure”. The ECTs had secured full-time ongoing contracts in their schools and preferred the way the Catholic sector employed teachers to the government sector system. Two of the ECTs also had mortgages which they had been able to secure and afford because they had full-time ongoing salaries.

Two ECTs cited having personal responsibilities as a reason to remain a teacher. Both felt a sense of financial obligation to provide for their families. Two ECTs alluded to personal traits that promoted resilience. One ECT who had faced difficult personal and professional challenges in her first three years as a teacher, felt that life experience had equipped her with the knowledge that she was “not a quitter” and could work through challenges and succeed. An ECT found that having a positive mindset and the ability to focus on what was important helped her to work through challenges as they arose. One ECT discussed the theme of holidays and stated that she utilised the time to reconnect with people who provided emotional security.
Interview guide question 7: What factor or factors attracted, or helped, you to want to leave teaching?

Four themes emerged in response to the question regarding what would make the ECTs want to leave teaching, namely: Workload; manner of life; other life experiences; and, starting a family. Two ECTs discussed workload, especially in the initial weeks of each year when they were establishing routines and systems. One of the ECTs stated that having taught in the same year level for three years made a big difference and that she was finding that the workload was becoming easier. However, this ECT acknowledged that if she was placed in a different year level that she would feel as though she was starting over.

Manner of life was an issue that one ECT raised. She disclosed that she had considered leaving the profession and using her skills elsewhere because, “You live an active Christian life, live in the community as an active, helpful member but in the end, who you sleep with at night dictates whether you are a good person or not.” The ECT lived in a rural setting and felt that it was “like living in a fishbowl … the kids know exactly where each teacher lives … you are always on your guard because of your occupation”.

The last two factors were other life experiences and starting a family. One ECT stated that she would consider temporarily leaving teaching to go travelling and have other life experiences along the way. One female ECT said that she would possibly leave teaching to start a family, wanting to be at home as the primary caregiver of her children.

Three ECTs stated that nothing would make them want to leave teaching. One ECT’s comment reflected the sentiment of the others. He stated, “I think I can honestly say that I’ve never considered leaving teaching. Teaching is a great job … I couldn’t imagine doing anything else. I don’t think there’s anything more personally satisfying”.

4.4.3 Findings from the fourth-year Early Career Teacher cohort

Five of the ECT interview participants were in their fourth year of teaching. Table 4.8 provides an overview of these participants.
Table 4.8

Overview of Participants in the Fourth-year ECT Cohort.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Year levels taught</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteered extra-curricular responsibilities</td>
<td>5 ECTs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SRQ 1: What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?

The fourth-year ECTs offered five reasons for becoming a teacher. The reasons were: Enjoyment of working with children; inspire and motivate others; quest for knowledge; overcome prejudice; and, vocation. Three mature-aged ECTs, all of whom started in other child-focused careers and then entered primary teaching later in life, cited enjoyment of working with children. As one of these ECTs stated, “I didn’t set out to become a teacher. When I left school, I went and did a Child Care Certificate and worked with very young children for almost 20 years”. After studying and working as an EA at a catholic school the ECT elected to purse a teaching career. Her decision to do so was driven by her love of working with children.

One ECT was driven to become a teacher by a desire to motivate and inspire others. She explained, “I became a teacher to inspire and motivate others, particularly children. I discovered this when I did work experience in a school in high school. Teaching gives me an important professional role”. A quest for knowledge was the motivation for one mature-age woman to become a teacher. As the wife of an indigenous man and the mother of a son with learning difficulties, she was increasingly
frustrated by how best to meet her child’s learning needs, amidst a climate of perceived racial prejudice. She explained her situation as follows:

[Doctors, specialists and teachers] would look at us like we’re half-wits. It was just too hard. We made the decision that I would go to university and get a degree so that at the very least, we could help our son. And so that’s how I got into University. At every prac[ticum] I went to, I kept asking ‘Why is it difficult for some children to learn spell and to read and why do some find it so easy?’

One ECT, who described her mother as “a fantastic teacher and an inspirational role model” perceived that teaching was her vocation. She explained, “I’m very big on my religion”. The ECT believed that teaching would allow her to share her professional and religious calling to others.

SRQ 2: What do Early Career Teachers like/dislike about teaching?

In the semi-structured interview, the fourth-year ECTs were asked two questions related to the SRQ 2. The first question asked them to explain what they like about teaching, while the second question asked about what they disliked about teaching.

Interview guide question 2: What is it that you like about teaching?

The fourth-year ECTs’ likes of teaching were condensed into four themes, namely: relationships, students’ learning and growth, variety and challenge, and the curriculum. All five ECTs cited relationships as the main theme. Relationships with students and colleagues were at the core of the theme. The ECTs stated that the value of the working relationships they established with children, particularly those in their own classes, could not be understated. All ECTs liked the students’ personalities, their “honesty and enthusiasm”, and the privilege of listening “to them sharing their stories”. One ECT said that having a “close knit relationship with the staff … made a difference day-to-day”.

Three ECTs raised the theme of student learning and growth. This theme centred around the students’ “thirst for learning” and “the minute when they ‘get it’ … you taught them something and you see it click in their eyes”. At the core of this theme was the self-acknowledgement that the ECT had played a pivotal role in enabling their students to learn and that the growth and development that they witnessed was, in part, due to their invested effort in the students. Two ECTs said that the variety and challenge of teaching was something that they liked about the profession. Both enjoyed
the fact that each day was different and that they were continually challenged to develop new, creative ways to help children learn. One ECT who liked the Australian Curriculum stated that it was “much easier to see the targets and it’s much easier to plan from”. She found that it helped her with planning and reporting.

Interview guide question 3: What is it that you dislike about teaching?

The fourth-year ECTs generated six themes in response to being asked what disliked about teaching, namely: workload; curriculum; sense of underachievement; catering for diversity; leadership style; and, parents. Two ECTs described a dislike of “all the paperwork” and “the weight of things that they want you to do that is outside the needs of the children … the administration side of things” which encapsulated the workload theme. Another two ECTs discussed curriculum as something that they disliked about teaching due to three factors: (i) accommodating the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework; (ii) coping with the weight of information that kept coming in regarding curriculum; and, (iii) learning new curriculum when they taught a different year level.

One ECT described a sense of underachievement as a factor that she disliked about being a teacher. She explained that “You don’t feel like you achieve your goals. In other jobs you can tick things off your to-do list but you never really get that with teaching … there’s more that you can do all the time.” Catering for diversity was a dislike of one ECT who expressed, “They’ve ‘dumped’ all of the kids with learning difficulties in mainstream. Initially they provided EAs, now they’ve taken them away!” The ECT’s concern reflected a perceived lack of support for teachers and the future direction of classroom teaching. One ECT cited as a dislike, the leadership style at her school. She stated that the leadership team’s lack of consultation with staff when it came to decision-making, especially regarding professional development, was somethings that she found frustrating. This ECT resented “not feeling heard”, felt undervalued and that her opinion did not matter. The final dislike was parents. For example, one ECT expressed her concern about the lack of parenting provided to some students in her class who were permitted to play computer games all night. Lack of sleep affected the students’ behaviour and learning which in turn impacted others in the class.
SRQ 3: What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?

Twelve challenges emerged from the fourth-year ECT responses. These are displayed in Table 4.9. The themes will be discussed in order from most frequently cited to least frequently cited.

Table 4.9

Main Challenges that Fourth-year ECTs Face.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most frequently cited</th>
<th>Least frequently cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Crowded curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership style/school culture</td>
<td>PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>Adjusting to change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Different expectations</td>
<td>Behaviour management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politics and secrecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confronting issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four ECTs discussed workload as a challenge which included the myriad of curricular and extra-curricular teaching duties that ECTs accept. Associated with the sheer volume of work that needed to be done was developing systems to manage the workload and enable a work-life balance. One ECT explained that coping with the workload was “really hard … working, raising three kids, trying to have balance …with my workload I feel that I’m never home.” Another ECT discussed the additional work that teachers do in the Catholic sector as a “double whammy!” compared to the government school.

Three ECTs cited parents as a challenge. These ECTs described how parenting styles, parental attitudes and behaviour had the capacity to leave them feeling disempowered, disrespected and unappreciated. While discussing verbally aggressive parents, one ECT stated, “I was about ready to hurl it in the other day … it was too difficult and too awful”, while another said, “Parents can be very harsh. They can be very protective of their children and sometimes that protection comes out not necessarily in positive ways.” Part of the challenge for ECTs was knowing how to effectively deal with parents’ behaviours and attitudes.

Three ECTs raised the theme of leadership style and school culture. The ECTs’ comments covered a range of factors, most of which were directly influenced by the
principal’s leadership style. One ECT expressed concern about a perceived lack of support from leadership when dealing with student behaviour and parent issues. She also stated that she was rarely provided with feedback about her teaching performance. Staff resistance, trust and communication were discussed in relation to leadership style and culture. One ECT reported that staff at her school perceived that their ideas and contributions were not valued and that many had become disenchanted. She said that at staff meetings, staff often say “Well, I’m not going to say anything, because no one listens to me anyway.” Experienced staff would say very little and the ECT said that she kept quiet because she “didn’t want to rock the boat because I want my job next year”. Another ECT disclosed that at her school there had been high staff turnover following the arrival of a new principal which she attributed to his leadership style. She stated that the new principal treated temporary ECTs disparagingly, often telling them “There’s no job for you next year” when they inquired about the possibility of an ongoing contract. She recounted that two weeks after another ECT had been told there was not position for her and had accepted a contract at a different school, the principal said, “If I make you ongoing will you stay?” Leadership style reportedly influenced the culture of the school and flowed down into how the staff communicated and supported each other.

Three ECTs cited the theme of interpersonal relationships, including working with staff with different worldviews and dealing with parents. In particular, two ECTs discussed the issue of collegial collaboration. One ECT explained her challenge in working with a very experienced teacher who would not collaborate or share information or resources. She stated “I learned very soon in my career that you have to get along with the very different personalities and expectations of different school personnel. It’s a real challenge but you have to build relationships and cooperate with different people in different ways.” Another ECT reflected on how she had learned over her four years as a teacher to be more open and less sensitive about relationships with colleagues and students’ parents. She added that it was not something she was taught at University and that she had learned that often she had to “be like a social worker” and deal with people’s personal problems too.

Two ECTs discussed different expectations and that the theme applied to two contexts: leadership and staff engagement. The first situation was where leadership and staff had different expectations. One ECT stated that, “We are timetabled right from the beginning of the year as to the content of our staff meetings.” Staff expected flexibility
in the agenda so that pressing issues could be discussed as they arose, however leadership did not. The ECT explained that in another instance, staff engagement had been a focus. Some staff said, “Well, we’d like to do this to make the teachers’ job easier and this is what teachers are needing. And then the admin will say, ‘No, no, no … that’s not what we want you to do’.” The second situation pertained to differences between teacher and parent expectations. One ECT explained, “I had a run in where a parent wasn’t happy … academically their child was very weak … expectations about what they thought the student could be doing and what I thought the student could be doing were different.”

Two ECTs discussed responsibility for student wellbeing as a challenge with reference to the point of realisation of the enormous responsibility attached to teaching. One ECT summed the feeling up in this way, “It can be really quite confronting because you are responsible for the welfare of the students. It’s different to other jobs … you can literally ‘make or break’ a child.” One ECT stated that PD was difficult to access because of her location and the travel and accommodation costs associated with attending courses in Perth. Behaviour management was a challenge cited by one ECT who explained “Last year I had a difficult class with lots of personalities and every lunch time I dealt with social issues.” One ECT raised school politics and secrecy in relation to several issues. The first issue was a perceived lack of openness with parents and parents lack of openness with each other. She was concerned by the lack of communication that could assist parents to address their children’s learning and behaviour issues. The second issue the ECT perceived was how the education system, in its attempt to be fair and equitable, did not allow children to develop their natural talents and predispositions.

One ECT raised the issue of having a crowded curriculum. This ECT calculated that the timetable could not “fit” the content that was required to be taught. Another ECT raised adjusting to change as a challenge that overlapped with several other themes. Adjusting to change referred to change of leadership and how that influenced staffing and school culture. Adjusting to change also referred to coping with a change to the year level taught and how that resulted in adjustments to the colleagues that the ECT worked with and the curriculum that she taught. The fourth-year ECTs identified facing confronting issues as the final challenge. One ECT explained how her “safe, middle-class upbringing” resulted in her being “overprotected by family and friends”, which meant that working in a low socio-economic area “was a really hard, rude shock
about how some people are.” She disclosed that exposure to the “not-so-nice side of social problems” had made her wiser, given her greater empathy and that she dealt with the issues better in her fourth year than she would have as a graduate.

**SRQ 4: How do Early Career Teachers cope with challenges in light of their experiences?**

Fourth-year ECTs discussed three themes when asked how they coped with the challenges they experienced, namely: support, being mature-aged, and physical activity. Support was the most frequently cited coping strategy. Support encapsulated several sources including family, leadership, partner/spouse, school support, community support, personal friends and students’ parents. Each of these sources will be briefly discussed.

Three ECTs stated that support from family provided “unconditional support and …help with looking after children” so that ECTs could attend extra-curricular work activities. All three ECTs cited support from the leadership team, particularly the principal. One mature-aged ECT stated, “I always make friends with the Administration team. They are your biggest support.” Another mature-aged ECT explained, “The first principal I had, she trusted me implicitly … and I could trust that I could always count on her.” The Assistant Principal at one ECT’s school had been very supportive by informally checking on her well-being. Two ECTs stated that their spouses had been very supportive and listened to their concerns.

One ECT raised school support and referred to structures that had been put in place in the school. As part of school improvement practices, teachers who had a specific interest in an area were given the opportunity to provide internal PD for staff. The ECT stated that this structure helped her know which teacher to consult to assist with an issue while also giving her knowledge on a range of topics. Having friends outside of work was seen as helpful by two ECTs. One ECT said that many of her friends were teachers which assisted with working through school related challenges. The other ECT said that having friends with careers in other fields helped her realise that all professions have challenges and gave her other topics to talk about rather than her work.

One ECT employed inviting parents, senior citizens and other members of the community into her classroom as a coping strategy. This ECT stated
I run an open classroom and people are always very welcome …I’ve got four mums who have come into my classroom on a regular basis … and I’ve got a third-year psychology student … and there are some senior citizens who want to come into class and help.

The ECT said that having extras in the class helped her and was beneficial to supporting the students too. One ECT cited mature-age as a factor that aided her to cope with the challenges of teaching. The ECT had switched careers and entered teaching later in life. She believed that having a depth and breadth of life experience prepared her to manage different issues that she encountered as a teacher. The final coping strategy, physical activity, was raised by one ECT who said that she liked to go running. Physical exercise was a way of physically releasing the stresses of teaching, keeping fit and to having some time for herself.

SRQ 5: What factors, if any, in Early Career Teachers’ experiences made them want to continue in /leave the profession?

During the semi-structured interviews, the ECTs were asked two questions related to SRQ 5. The first question asked ECTs to describe factors that made them want to continue teaching, while the second question asked them to describe factors that made them consider leaving teaching.

Interview guide question 6: Were there any factors that have helped you to work through the challenges and make you want to keep teaching?

Relationships with students, personal resilience, support and self-development were the four themes that emerged in response to Interview Guide question six. Three ECTs raised relationships with students. These ECTs referred to the connections they formed through student interactions, and the joy they gained in watching the students learn, grow and reach that “a-ha!” moment. Personal resilience incorporated traits such as grit, ego and self-motivation. One ECT stated, “I have never really wanted to quit because I always pull through”. Another ECT, who had become a teacher after working in Child Care felt that her ego would not allow her to take a “step backwards” if she left teaching. The third ECT referred to her self-motivation and determination to keep going. Support from colleagues, students’ parents, the leadership team, family, friends, and spouses, was discussed by two ECTs as factors that helped them cope with challenges and keep teaching. One ECT discussed the final factor, self-development,
and was proud of how teaching had helped her develop “as a person, a professional and a teacher.” She said that made her want to keep teaching.

Interview guide question 7: What factor or factors attracted, or helped, you to want to leave teaching?

Seven themes were identified among the factors that made ECTs consider leaving teaching. The themes were: leadership; parents; student behaviour; stress and workload; system imperfections; job security; and, other interests and opportunities. Two ECTs discussed leadership in terms of how either the Assistant Principal (AP) or Principal had dealt with an issue they had. One ECT confessed to having problems managing student behaviour. While she accepted the criticism given by the AP regarding behaviour management, she also felt that she had been treated unfairly. According to this ECT, at no time had a member of leadership spent time in her class observing her skills nor had they met with her to give her feedback and offer support. The other ECT stated that her principal was more interested in presenting the school in a positive light and “looking good and keeping up appearances”, than supporting ECTs and new staff.

One ECT reported that the behaviour and attitudes of students’ parents were something that would make her consider leaving teaching. She explained, “I had a lot of parents complaining because I have a very play-based way of working in Preprimary compared to my partner teacher.” Initially disheartened by parents’ distrust, over time she had become more confident in dealing with parents. One ECT stated stress from workload led to her say, “I have wanted to give up when I got too stressed … it’s the workload and I don’t like it when I feel I work more than others.” Part of the issue was her perception that she did more for her students than other ECTs or more experienced staff at her school. The same ECT specified system imperfections as an issue. She explained that “I find the teaching easy, the parents are easy but the system itself needs a good rocket I reckon … there are system constraints and then you get enculturated into the system.” The ECT reflected on how her enthusiasm, passion and creativity had been suppressed by how the education system worked, particularly policies, procedures and protocols.

One ECT raised job security as a factor that had almost led to her leaving teaching. Trying to secure an ongoing full-time position had proved very challenging, especially since she needed to work close to home to balance work-life commitments.
The final issue that was cited by fourth-year ECTs was other interests and opportunities. One ECT explained that she was interested in other fields that allowed her to work with children. As part of wanting to continually extend and improve herself, she had considered doing further study with a view to working in child protection.

4.4.4 Summary

Amongst the ECTs responses to each SRQ, common themes were identified across all three cohorts. Each cohort also had themes that were unique that year level for each SRQ. A summary of the key themes identified for the second, third and fourth-year ECTs for each SRQ is presented in Table 4.10. Common themes, that is those discussed by at least two ECT cohorts, are italicised.

Table 4.10

Summary of Key Themes Identified for the Second, Third and Fourth-year ECTs for each SRQ.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Second year ECTs</th>
<th>Third year ECTs</th>
<th>Fourth year ECTs</th>
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<td>Enjoy working with children</td>
<td>Enjoy working with children</td>
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<td>Inspirational role model</td>
<td>Vocation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal challenge – career switch</td>
<td>Career switch</td>
<td>Inspire and motivate others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contribute to society</td>
<td>Positive influence on others</td>
<td>Quest for knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intrinsic desire to help</td>
<td>Overcome prejudice – help own child</td>
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<td>SRQ 2</td>
<td>Student learning and growth</td>
<td>Student learning and growth</td>
<td>Student learning and growth</td>
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<td>What do ECTs like/dislike about teaching?</td>
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<td>SRQ 2</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do ECTs like/dislike about teaching?</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Likes’</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Manner of life</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Extracurricular expectations</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Sense of underachievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separating work and home</td>
<td>Student behaviour</td>
<td>Catering for diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>Leadership style</td>
</tr>
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<td>SRQ 3</td>
<td>What are the main challenges that ECTs face?</td>
<td>Second year ECTs</td>
<td>Third year ECTs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Workload</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Behaviour management</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
<td>management</td>
<td>Work-life</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Work-life</td>
<td>balance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>management</td>
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<td>Catering for diversity</td>
<td>Job security</td>
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<td>Job security</td>
<td>Sense of</td>
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<td>Consciously unskilled</td>
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<td>Feeling unprepared for the workforce</td>
<td>school</td>
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<td>Report writing</td>
<td>structures</td>
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<td>Emotional demands</td>
<td>Additional</td>
<td></td>
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<td>responsibilities</td>
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<th>Third year ECTs</th>
<th>Fourth year ECTs</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>management</td>
<td>management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Sense of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of belonging in school</td>
<td>belonging in</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>School structures</td>
<td>school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Additional responsibilities</td>
<td>Additional</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>responsibilities</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>What factors, if any, in ECTs experiences made them want to continue/leave?</th>
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<th>Third year ECTs</th>
<th>Fourth year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Personal and</td>
<td>Personal and</td>
<td>Personal and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal and professional growth</td>
<td>professional</td>
<td>professional</td>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support/CEWA ECT program</td>
<td>growth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enjoy teaching</td>
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<td>Gender balanced staff</td>
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<td>Faith community</td>
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<td>Career opportunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Holidays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Salary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establishing work-life balance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effort to get into profession</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SRQ 5</th>
<th>What factors, if any, in ECTs experiences made them want to continue/leave?</th>
<th>Second year ECTs</th>
<th>Third year ECTs</th>
<th>Fourth year ECTs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Workload</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Nothing</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>Start a family</td>
<td>Start a family</td>
<td>Start a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Start a family</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>Manner of life</td>
<td>Manner of life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>Preparing for</td>
<td>Other life</td>
<td>Other life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing for future direction of education</td>
<td>direction of</td>
<td>experiences</td>
<td>experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Needs students</td>
<td>education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Salary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not a good fit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SRQ 5</th>
<th>What factors, if any, in ECTs experiences made them want to continue/leave?</th>
<th>Second year ECTs</th>
<th>Third year ECTs</th>
<th>Fourth year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Leave’</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Workload</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Admin judgments</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Start a family</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Start a family</td>
<td>Start a family</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>behaviour</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>Job security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing for future direction of education</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>Manner of life</td>
<td>Manner of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Needs students</td>
<td>imperfections</td>
<td>Other life</td>
<td>Other life</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Salary</td>
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<td>experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not a good fit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of case study research pertaining to three cohorts: second, third and fourth-year ECTs in Western Australian Catholic primary schools. Section One explained the findings of qualitative interviewing of the facilitators of the CEWA ECT program. Section Two presented findings from quantitative surveying (online, web-based survey) and provided a snapshot of the ECTs in Catholic schools in WA. Section Three portrayed the findings of qualitative interviewing of the participant ECTs and provided insight into their lived experiences and self-perceptions. The data presented for each cohort addressed the five specific research questions. Discussion of the research findings is interpreted and discussed in relation to relevant literature in Chapter Five: Discussion of the Research Findings.
Chapter Five: Discussion of Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings of the study exploring the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in their second, third or fourth year of teaching in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession. The discussion draws on the third stage of Miles and Huberman, Grounauer, and Marti’s (1993) interactive model of data management and analysis: drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Themes identified in Chapter Four: Presentation of Research findings are compared and contrasted, then discussed in relation to the body of scholarly knowledge outlined in Chapter Two: Review of the Literature.

The discussion of the findings is organised into sections based on overarching themes linked directly to the research questions. These themes are: motivation for teaching; job satisfaction within the teaching profession; challenges faced by ECTs; and, influences on retention and attrition in the teaching profession. Within each section, common themes identified across the second, third and fourth year ECT cohorts are considered; that is, themes that were cited by two or all three of the year levels. Themes unique to each cohort are also discussed. In some instances, cohort-specific themes have been raised by ECTs in the second year cohort only. In instances where only one ECT raised a cohort-specific theme, the term theme has been applied lightly, and the information included to honour the ECT’s contribution. This consideration is outlined more clearly in limitation of the research in Chapter Six: Review and Conclusions. The chapter overview is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Overview of Chapter Five: Discussion of Research Findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.1</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Section One: Motivation for teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Section Two: Job satisfaction within the teaching profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Section One. Motivation for teaching

The review of the literature identified two inter-related factors as influences on motivation to join the teaching profession: sources of motivation and attachment theory. Section One starts by discussing the common themes identified across the second, third and fourth-year ECT cohorts for becoming a teacher. Elements unique to each cohort are then discussed. The themes are summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Common and Cohort-specific Themes for Motivation for Teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes across cohorts</th>
<th>2nd Year ECTs</th>
<th>3rd Year ECTs</th>
<th>4th Year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy working with children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational role model</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Challenge – career switch</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire and motivate others</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Cohort specific themes                                            |              |              |              |
| Contribute to society                                            | ✓            |              |              |
| Intrinsic desire to help                                          |              | ✓            |              |
| Quest for knowledge                                               |              |              | ✓            |
| Overcome prejudice – help own child                              |              |              | ✓            |

5.2.1 Common themes across cohorts

Participants in all three cohorts cited factors pertaining to a sense of joy from working with children as a motivation for becoming a teacher. Central to the theme was the personal enjoyment that nine ECTs experienced from being around children,
learning with them and the self-perception that teaching was a rewarding profession. The basis of that enjoyment stemmed from the teachers’ early life experiences, a natural affinity with children, and/or work experiences with children. All these factors suggest that intrinsic motivation was the underlying driver for these ECTs to choose teaching as a profession, a concept strongly reflected by the literature (Bastick, 2000; Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Knight & Moore, 2012; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Sinclair, Dowson, and McInerney (2006) noted that it is important to attract students with the right motives into the teaching profession, while Bruinsma and Jansen (2010) suggested that motives must also be examined for the extent to which they adaptive and therefore promote lasting and effective engagement in teaching. However, neither group of researchers delved into the affective values associated with teachers’ intrinsic motivation.

The ECTs in the present study reported that they derived personal enjoyment from teaching and perceived it as a rewarding profession. As such it is important that the affective or values associated with motivation are considered and this is an area that warrants further investigation, especially in relation to the retention of ECTs in the teaching profession. The field of psychology, particularly expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation, may provide further insight into motivation to become a teacher (Watts & Richardson, 2012; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Morgan, Ludlow, Kitching, O’Leary, and Clarke (2010) investigated the importance of affect, motivation, and resilience. They found that the presence and frequency of positive affective experiences contributed strongly to teachers’ commitment to the profession and helped to reinforce their motivation to join the teaching profession in the first place.

Seven second and fourth year ECTs raised the notion of vocation and stated that they perceived that teaching was the profession that they were best suited to and for which they had a natural affinity. The finding suggests the possibility of some people being more naturally aligned with pursuing the teaching profession based on personal attributes such as their own faith experience, personality, and skills. This finding aligns with the literature on career selection as a vocation (Farkas, Johnson, & Folena, 2000; Mattarozzi Laming & Horne, 2013). For example, Buijs (2005) proposed that vocation is an inner calling that stems from one’s faith, an invitation from God to pursue a calling and service. In the case of teachers, it involves educating others in faith, knowledge, and skills.
Among the second and third year cohorts, seven ECTs stated that they were motivated to become teachers by inspirational role models. In all cases, those role models had been exemplary primary or secondary teachers in the ECTs lives. Two of the ECTs had a parent who was a teacher, and they reported being inspired by the relationships they observed these parents had with students. These two ECTs wanted the opportunity to have the same positive impact on others that they saw their parents have. Having an inspirational role model exemplified extrinsic motivation for joining the teaching profession. This finding is apparent in the work of Backes and Burns (2008) who found that one reason people entered teaching was because they came from a family of teachers.

Two third-year and one fourth-year ECT were motivated to join the teaching profession because they wanted to inspire and motivate others. While perhaps in some ways similar to being inspired by others, this decision distinctly different based on the source of motivation. The three ECTs were intrinsically/altruistically motivated to positively influence, guide and support, and teach significant valuable life lessons to others (Richardson & Watts, 2006; Smethem, 2007). Within this theme, the ECTs wanted to make a difference in the world by helping others and perceived that teaching was one of the best ways to achieve that aim.

Two ECTs, one each from the second and third year cohorts, raised the theme of making a career switch. Prior to entering teaching these ECTs had worked in either child-care or the music industry. Both had a sense that teaching was a career that they felt they would be better suited to. This finding is apparent in the work of Backes and Burns (2006) who identified that the main reasons why people were motivated to leave their former career and enter teaching included: regular working hours and holidays, adequate pay and benefits, a personal love of teaching, needing a new challenge, and, always having wanted to be a teacher. In the case of the two ECTs, making a career switch stemmed from the ECTs’ innate sense that teaching aligned to their personality, skills, experiences and motivations as well as their need for a profession that offered a challenge.

5.2.2 Cohort Specific Themes

Each of the cohort specific themes was raised by one ECT from each cohort. As a result, the term theme has been applied lightly, and the information included to honour the ECT’s contribution. One ECT from the second-year cohort stated that she was
motivated to become a teacher by a desire to contribute to society in a meaningful way. A career switcher who had previously worked in administration, the ECT believed that teaching would be a more productive way to spend her life. While perhaps in some ways similar to the theme of inspiring and motivating others, a distinction was apparent between the two themes. This ECT’s motivation, while also intrinsic was self-serving and had no altruistic undertones. The ECT wanted a career where she was no longer “lining the pockets of others” but instead was going to personally reap the rewards of her efforts and skills. While desire to contribute to society is reflected in the literature (McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy & McMillan, 2014; Richardson & Watts, 2006), this finding is interesting as teachers’ remuneration is usually viewed as a disincentive to entering and remaining in the profession (Imazeki, 2005; Murnane & Olsen, 1989).

Among the third-year cohort, one ECT stated that she was motivated to become a teacher because of an intrinsic desire to help others. Coming from a family who worked in helping professions, including nursing, the ECT wanted to be in a profession where she was going to be able to help people or make a difference. The ECT’s comments can be related to a similar observation made by Riley (2013) who examined the need to care for others as a motivating factor and reported that teaching as a career choice could stem from a desire to care for others.

One fourth-year ECT stated that she became a teacher because she was driven by a quest for knowledge and a need to overcome prejudice to help her own child. The ECT’s son had learning difficulties and was not making the expected progress at school. Married to an indigenous man, the ECT stated that she had repeatedly come up against prejudice from health and education professionals who would not offer her adequate explanations about her son’s learning needs. Her perception was that she and her husband were treated as though they were feeble-minded because of her husband’s and their children’s cultural identity. This ECT had been a public servant before having a family and was later driven by the intrinsic motivation to become a teacher so that she could understand and work within the parameters of the health and education systems for her child’s benefit. The ECT’s situation also demonstrated a degree of resilience associated with her motivation. This finding is reflected in Hong’s (2012) research which identified that personal factors such as intrinsic motivation enhance resilience.
5.2.3 Summary

The literature on the motivation for joining a profession proposed four forms of motivation: vocation, intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic. The themes identified in ECT response to the motivation for teaching (Table 5.2) provided examples of each form. Early Career Teachers from all three cohorts cited an enjoyment of working with children when asked what motivated them to join the teaching profession. Early Career Teachers from two cohorts cited vocation, inspirational role model, personal challenge career switch and the desire to inspire and motivate others as motivation for becoming teachers. A range of cohort specific themes that included wanting to contribute to society, intrinsic desire to help, quest for knowledge and overcoming prejudice, were also discussed.

The ECTs’ responses to SRQ 1 offered some suggestion that attachment and resilience influenced the motivation for ECTs to join the teaching profession but their responses did not provide insights into the extent of that influence. For example, while ECTs stated that enjoyment of working with and helping children motivated them to join the teaching profession, no elaboration was provided that indicated that this stemmed from specific attachment styles amongst the ECTs.

5.3 Section Two. Job satisfaction within the teaching profession

The literature proposed that to understand both motivation to remain in a profession and well-being in the workplace, attention needs to be paid to satisfying and dissatisfying elements of work (Hertzberg, 1993; Luo, 1999). As such, job satisfaction within teaching was explored through two Interview Guide questions. The first question asked ECTs to explain their likes of teaching, while the second question asked ECTs to discuss their dislikes of teaching. Discussion of these findings will start with what ECTs reported they liked about teaching. A range of factors ECTs stated they disliked about teaching will then be examined.

5.3.1 Satisfying elements of teaching.

The participants discussed a range of factors that appealed to them about teaching. Table 5.3 provides a summary of common themes across cohorts and cohort-specific themes identified for job satisfaction.
### Table 5.3

**Summary of Common and Cohort-specific Themes for ECTs satisfying elements of teaching.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes across cohorts</th>
<th>2(^{nd}) Year ECTs</th>
<th>3(^{rd}) Year ECTs</th>
<th>4(^{th}) Year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student learning and growth</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Challenge</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort-specific themes</th>
<th>2(^{nd}) Year ECTs</th>
<th>3(^{rd}) Year ECTs</th>
<th>4(^{th}) Year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher designed school</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be yourself and control</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive affect</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.3.1.1 Common themes across cohorts

Five common themes were identified when ECTs were asked to explain what they liked about teaching, namely: student learning and growth, relationships, variety, personal challenge, and holidays. Eighteen ECTs from the second, third and fourth year cohorts cited student learning and growth as a factor they liked about teaching. Student learning and growth included the satisfaction and enjoyment that the ECTs gained from observing positive changes in their students’ learning and personal development. Their enjoyment was derived from the self-acknowledgment they had played a pivotal role in enabling their students to learn and that the growth and development that they witnessed was, in part, due to their invested effort in those students. This finding is reflected in the literature which identified that the knowledge of their contribution to student success increases a teacher’s enthusiasm for teaching, which in turn positively influences their job satisfaction (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Ornstein & Levine, 2006).

Fifteen ECTs across the three cohorts cited factors pertaining to relationships. Relationships encompassed a range of different connections that the ECTs formed within the context of their school community including those with students, parents, colleagues, and community. Relationships played several essential roles. First, relationships provided ECTs with a sense of belonging to the school and/or community.
Particularly important to this was the relationships that ECTs formed with their students and being able to work alongside other people who were passionate about teaching children. Second, relationships offered support structures both inside and out of work. Finally, relationships reinforced the ECTs’ motivation for entering the teaching profession. These factors are reflected in the literature which highlighted that interpersonal relationships and support within the workplace contribute to teachers’ enjoyment of the teaching profession (Feldman & Ng, 2007). The literature also indicated that teachers are more disposed to enjoying teaching as a profession if it is in accordance with their motivation, personal needs or drive for joining the profession (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Furthermore, Le Cornu (2013) identified that the relationships that ECTs form with their students, staff, leaders, family and friends, students’ parents and the broader school community all work together to promote resilience.

Eight ECTs from across all three cohorts offered variety as a factor that they liked about teaching and four teachers enjoyed the challenge associated with teaching. Having a career that offered variety on a daily basis appeared to appeal to the ECTs. Teaching gave the ECTs the opportunity to work with a variety of students, colleagues and families in a range of different ways. Variety was an important factor that linked with the challenge theme in several distinct ways. Variety meant that ECTs were continually challenged to develop new and creative ways to help children learn. Variety also required ECTs to learn to be flexible and adaptive in dealing with different people and issues as they arose. The ECTs’ reported experiences are reflected in the literature, which proposed that teachers need variety as part of their personal and professional growth within their career (Margolis, 2008; Ornstein & Levine, 2006; Rinke, 2009). For example, Margolis (2008) identified that around the four- to six-year period of their teaching career, ECTs were at risk of contemplating leaving the profession. The author suggested that this occurred because ECTs have reached a level of proficiency and are at risk of becoming complacent with the routine of teaching.

Holidays was a factor that one second- and one third-year ECT enjoyed about the teaching profession. The second-year ECT liked holidays because they gave him time to be with his young family. This factor was liked by the third-year ECT for the opportunity it gave her for professional renewal and rejuvenation. Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) found teaching to be liked for the opportunity it provided teachers to balance work and family life. In keeping with Howe’s and Goodman-Delahunty’s work, the present findings identified that the holidays that teachers receive
are perceived as a likable factor, not purely due to the time off work but because these afforded teachers with their own children time to care for their family during breaks.

5.3.1.2 Cohort specific themes

Each cohort identified factors that they liked about teaching that were specific to that cohort. For example, the second year ECTs discussed students, location, teacher-designed school (TDS), be yourself and control. Two second-year ECTs cited students as a factor that they liked about teaching. This theme related closely to their motivation for becoming a teacher. These ECTs expressed their enjoyment of their students’ personalities, humour and way of making sense of the world around them which correlated with the ECTs’ motivation for joining the teaching profession. One of the ECTs spoke about the delight associated with working with indigenous and country students. Little research was available that discussed teachers, especially ECTs’ experiences, of working with indigenous students particularly in Western Australia. This is an area that warrants further investigation.

School location was an element that two second year ECTs liked about teaching. In this instance, both ECTs worked in rural schools and location was liked for the quieter, more personal lifestyle that it offered. Linked to school location, the two ECTs discussed their perception that country students were more fun to work with, more grateful for what they had and received, and were less self-centred than metropolitan students. A review of the literature did not identify research that could support nor refute this finding. Given the geopolitical diversity within the state of Western Australia, the findings from the present study highlight the need for further research into how school location impacts on the experiences and self-perceptions of ECTs.

For instance, CEWA offers the Kimberley Calling program to attract teachers to the Kimberley region of Western Australia (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2018b). As far as the researcher is aware, no studies have been conducted into the effectiveness of the recruitment process in terms of selecting staff who will remain in remote and very remote school locations. Neither are data available on how teachers, especially ECTs, cope with the distinctive challenges that they face living and working in the Kimberley region or other remote areas within Western Australia.

One second year ECT appreciated belonging to a teacher-designed school (TDS). A TDS is one in which staff have collectively created a shared vision for the school over a period of time and conducted an action research project as part of teacher-
driven school improvement processes. In TDS, teachers work collaboratively, forge strong collegial networks and develop a sense of shared ownership of the school. The review of the literature did not reveal any research specifically on TDS. However, there is a plethora of research available on strategies that are utilised in schools to facilitate teacher collaboration (Angelides & Mylordou, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b; De Angelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift & Maulana, 2016; Howe, 2006; Paris, 2013; Ralph, Walker, & Wimmer, 2009; Tickle, 1994, 2000). These strategies include Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), internships, orientation programs, mentoring and coaching. The literature clearly demonstrates that such strategies can contribute to providing a supportive environment in which ECTs can collaborate, reflect, network and become acculturated into the teaching profession (Howe, 2006). Given that collaborative strategies appear to be but one component of TDS, further investigation is warranted into the processes involved, particularly regarding the potential positive impact on ECT retention.

One second-year ECT stated that she adored teaching because it allowed her to be an authentic version of herself. This ECT explained that when working with children, she did not need to be as mindful of the social mores that strongly influence the social dynamics amongst adults. She also liked teaching because it allowed her to be in control of what was happening throughout the day, week and term. In essence, this ECT enjoyed being a leader of the classroom domain. Such feelings of autonomy are reflected in the literature by Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) who identified that autonomy and authenticity are important workplace conditions that increase teacher wellbeing. The authors referred to autonomy as the relative freedom that a teacher has to exercise professional judgement while authenticity was described as the extent to which teachers are able to operate within their values (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012). The findings from the present study provide a different perspective on the importance of authenticity. The ECT alluded to being able to operate within her values but also expressed the enjoyment she derived from being able to be her true self when working with children. This insight may suggest a connection to the notion of vocation, in that the ECT was pursuing a career that allowed her to freely express her true personality and to not be inhibited by social constraints and expectations.

One third-year and one-fourth year ECT raised the final cohort specific themes pertaining to IGQ2, namely, positive affect and Australian Curriculum (AC). One third-year ECT liked teaching for the fun and laughter than occurred almost every day
through interactions with students and colleagues in particular. These factors were condensed into the theme of positive affect. In the review of the literature Morgan et al. (2010) highlighted the importance of positive affect to sustain teachers’ commitment and efficacy. The authors stressed that the frequency with which teachers experience positive episodes is more important than the intensity of those episodes. Other researchers have identified that teacher efficacy increases teachers’ persistence, resilience and enthusiasm for teaching (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). To that extent, reports of fun and laughter every day must be seen in a positive light and something that schools and teachers should be emulating and promoting. Positive affect could potentially integrate a broader range of factors including teacher mindset, class management, relationships and school culture. This area may warrant further research.

One fourth-year ECT liked the Australian Curriculum (AC) because she found that it made it easier for her to know what to teach and how to make consistent professional judgments. There is a relative dearth of literature on teacher perceptions of the AC. A few researchers have alluded to how the AC has improved content for teachers to teach; for example, a stronger focus on grammar in the English language strand and the use of technology for learning (Derewianka, 2012; Leu, McVerry, O’Byrne, Kiili, Zawilinski, Everett-Cacopardo, Kennedy, & Forzani, 2011). However, others have been critical that insufficient has been done to increase the knowledge base during Australian Curriculum reforms (Lyle, 2013; Yates & Collins, 2010).

5.3.2 Dissatisfying elements of teaching.

The ECTs cited a range of factors that they disliked about teaching. Table 5.4 provides a summary of common themes across cohorts and cohort specific themes for dissatisfying elements of teaching.

Table 5.4

Summary of Common and cohort specific themes for dissatisfying elements of teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes across cohorts</th>
<th>2nd Year ECTs</th>
<th>3rd Year ECTs</th>
<th>4th Year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort specific themes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.2.1 Common themes across cohorts

Seven ECTs from the second, third and fourth year cohorts cited the parent theme which encompassed two main aspects, parenting style and teacher-parent relationships. Parenting style referred to parents’ attitudes and beliefs and the relationship between the parent and their child. All seven ECTs discussed the tendency of parents to be quick to judge and react when things went wrong at school. They also commented on how parents tended to side with their child and to lay blame with the teacher when there was an issue. Early Career Teachers stated, moreover, that they often did not see parents until there was a problem. The ECTs cited parental over-protectiveness and parents’ desire to value their child over and above others as another concerning factor. Two ECTs stated that they had experience dealing with parents who expected that their child would be given preferential treatment. One ECT explained that she had observed instances where parents tried to be friends with their children, empowering the child to do as he or she pleased and to assume more of a parent role. The ECTs added that this style of parenting negatively affected the child’s behaviour at school because the child often expected to be in control, and have the same status as adults, within the classroom context. One fourth-year ECT provided an example of a student who frequently fell asleep in class due to his parents allowing him to set his own bedtime because he liked to play electronic games at night.

Teacher-parent relationships was an aspect of the parent theme that was closely associated with power. The ECTs spoke initially of feeling disempowered and of having to establish credibility with parents to balance the power distribution in the teacher-parent relationship. This issue was most prevalent among the second year ECTs. Amongst this cohort, younger ECTs, that is those who had come from school to University to the workforce, talked about feeling unprepared for dealing with parents. Parents were particularly problematic if they displayed abusive behaviour, in either
informal and formal meetings. Those ECTs who were career switchers and entered teaching later in life had more life experiences and interpersonal skills to draw on when dealing with parents. Although parents’ behaviours and attitudes are something they disliked, they appeared to manage parents more effectively. The ECTs also discussed politicking and explained how they perceived that parents favoured some teachers over others, usually to try and have an influence over decision-making in the school.

The ECTs’ reported experiences with parents are reflected in the literature by Day’s (2008) work. Day (2008) proposed that the lack of respect that some children and their parents accord to teachers may well be reflective of the broader issue of the low status of the profession in many countries including Australia. Research has also found that interpersonal issues, including poor student behaviour stemming from parental behaviours, contributed to stress that led to staff considering leaving or leaving the profession (Cranston, 2011; Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). The literature also revealed that violence in schools, including that directed by parents towards teachers, has escalated over the years both in its prevalence and intensity (Culley, Conkling, Emshoff, Blakely, & Gorman, 2006; Gillam, 2013; Hiatt, 2016a). In their discussions regarding parents, ECTs in the present study reported that they had been verbally assaulted by parents and that they had felt disempowered because they would be in breach of their school’s Code of Conduct if they behaved in the same way towards parents.

Seven ECTs in the present study discussed workload, which incorporated regular teaching and administrative duties, teaching across multiple ages and the extracurricular expectations associated with belonging to the Catholic sector. Administrative duties were disliked by ECTs because they detracted from time and effort that they perceived should be put into teaching. Extra-curricular expectations referred to duties outside of school and was disliked by two ECTs who felt that it placed additional stress on teachers in Catholic schools.

High workload and responsibility are logistical factors cited by teachers in the literature as aspects that they dislike about teaching (Buchanan, 2009; Day, 2008; Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Hiatt, 2007). The ECTs also commented on the physical and emotional impact that the large number of hours that teaching required had on them and added that they felt unprepared by their University training for the workload. In one instance, an ECT reported that she experienced headaches almost daily due to stress. The ECTs’ reported experiences may suggest symptoms of burnout stemming
from emotional exhaustion relating to workload (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Some ECTs chose not to raise the concern of excessive workload as a concern with their principal or leadership team. In particular, those ECTs on temporary contracts reported that they felt bound to keep quiet about the workload to increase their chances of securing ongoing employment. This finding is worrying for several reasons. First, it indicates that some ECTs feel disempowered to be able to speak openly and honestly about their workplace conditions. This reluctance to communicate could be a poor reflection upon the school leadership team and workplace culture of the school. It may indicate a lack of confidence in the leadership team, or an underlying fear of jeopardising future employment opportunities. Secondly, keeping quiet could result in the school leadership team not being aware of their staff’s wellbeing and are therefore not in a position to amend the situation. Third, ECTs may elect to move schools in order to remove themselves from a stressful work environment without leaders being fully aware of the motivation behind them leaving (Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Lam & Yan, 2011).

The ECTs’ experiences with high workload and responsibility are reflected in the literature. Workplace conditions such as workload, including non-teaching tasks, and employment contracts, affect ECTs’ stress and burnout levels which contributes to them disliking the teaching profession. (Buchanan, 2009; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Furthermore, Goddard and Goddard (2006) identified that ECTs experience significant levels of emotional exhaustion which influenced their decision to either move school or consider leaving the teaching profession permanently. What is especially worrisome about these authors’ findings is that the beginning teachers who participated in the study were only in their first or second year of teaching. Numerous authors have provided evidence that work stress and burnout have a negative impact on both the individual teacher and the school (Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009; Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012; Topsfield & Butt, 2012). For example, Yong and Yue (2007) postulated that long-term stress compromises teachers’ enthusiasm, lowers their physical fitness and effects their mental health. Collectively, the present findings and the literature highlight it is crucial that teacher well-being is promoted, in order to foster prosocial teacher-student relationships and increase student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Johnson, 2012; Roffey, 2012). The findings add further support for the growing body of research that proposes that interventions should be integrated into preservice training...
courses to enhance wellbeing and resilience (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011). However, ECT wellbeing requires ongoing attention and schools and sector governing bodies should also share the responsibility in equipping ECTs with the skills required to promote wellbeing and providing workplace conditions that are nurturing and supportive.

5.3.2.2 Cohort specific themes

Among the second year cohort, three themes were raised, namely: politics, extracurricular expectations and separating work and home. Three second year ECTs stated that politics was an aspect of teaching they disliked. For one ECT, who explained a hypocritical situation that left him feeling disillusioned and unsupported, politics referred to a mismatch between the culture that the school leadership team purported to uphold and the behaviour that they displayed towards staff. For another ECT, politics reflected a growing awareness of the machinations of a school particularly the social dynamics and power plays between the different stakeholder levels (e.g. CEWA-leadership-staff-students-parents). An ECT on a temporary contract gave a different perspective, describing politics within the context of securing employment and the not-so-positive aspects of school culture and social dynamics that it highlighted.

The ECTs’ reported experiences are reflected in the literature, which identified that it is important for ECTs to understand school culture and politics for several reasons. First, school culture influences teacher identity (Edwards & Edwards, 2017; Palmer, 2016). Second, school culture and politics contribute to ECTs’ sense of belonging and connectedness to the school (Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010). Third, school culture and politics have been found to influence improvement practices and teachers’ professional learning (Carter & Francis, 2010; Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016). A plethora of authors have found that relational workplace conditions, including factors such as school leadership and workplace culture, can lead to dissatisfaction (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Spears, Gould, & Lee, 2000). Such factors can negatively impact on a teacher’s sense of workplace autonomy and authenticity. Within the present study, ECTs highlighted five factors that are commensurate with the literature, namely: politics, leadership style, student behaviour, separating work and home, and sense of underachievement.

One second-year ECT who accepted as his own, problems that belonged to others, stated that separating work and home life was an aspect of teaching he disliked.
The theme was not raised in the third or fourth-year cohorts, suggesting that the ability to emotionally distance oneself from issues may be learned over time with experience. Problem ownership also raised the issue of the ability of some ECTs to separate themselves from work-based issues to ensure that they have personal rejuvenation. Early Career Teachers who are unable to distance themselves from others’ personal issues, are at risk of stress and burnout. These findings highlight the importance of emotional intelligence (EQ) as a trait that teachers should possess, especially given the relational nature of the profession.

According to Goleman (1996), EQ can be learned, which adds weight to the argument proffered by some authors that it should be integrated into pre-service teacher courses. For example, Hen and Sharabi-Nov (2014) found that emotional intelligence training improved elementary teachers’ self-awareness, emotional expression and empathy while decreasing personal stress. Hen and Sharabi-Nov concluded that teachers’ emotional abilities could be developed with training which may better prepare them for the emotionally challenging job of being a teacher.

Another second-year ECT described a sense of underachievement as a factor that she disliked about being a teacher. This ECT explained that due to the ongoing workload demands of teaching she perceived that she rarely achieved her personal goals. Goddard and Goddard (2006) stressed that a sense of a lack of personal accomplishment is one factor that can contribute to emotional exhaustion and teacher burnout.

Among the third-year cohort, four themes were raised, namely: manner of life, location, student behaviour, and nothing. One third-year ECT stated that manner of life was disliked as it was perceived to place her life under scrutiny, increased the cost of living and left her feeling isolated and lonely. Manner of life requires teachers employed in Catholic schools to maintain the Catholicity of the school by living in a manner in keeping with the teachings of the Church (The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth Teachers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, 2015). As such, unmarried staff are not permitted to live with a partner out of wedlock. The issue of inconsistent and hypocritical standards being applied in Catholic schools was raised in relation to manner of life. For example, the ECT provided examples of single parents and divorcees being employed in Catholic schools. This ECT also discussed cases of breaches to the manner of life clause by unmarried teachers and school leaders who lived with their partners in both country and metropolitan schools. The ECT’s dislike of
manner of life stemmed from hypocrisy; she lived in a country location and was expected by her principal to live apart from her fiancé who lived in the same town. In this instance, the issue with manner of life reflects a conflict between the ECT’s values and educational direction. The literature review highlighted the importance of a teacher’s attitudes, values and beliefs for the construction of his or her own understanding of the world around them. When there is a mismatch between the teacher’s work role and the fulfilment of values that are important to the teacher, the potential for cognitive dissonance arises (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Bunting, 2005). The same ECT said that location was something that she disliked about teaching. She had only accepted a teaching position in a rural area many hours from the city to secure ongoing employment. Distance from the metropolitan area affected her ability to attend professional development and to access family and friend support networks.

One third-year ECT discussed the theme of student behaviour as something that he disliked about teaching, not purely for the associated behaviour management challenges, but because of the stress it caused and the lack of support offered to him. A lack of support from leadership personnel, other staff or students has been highlighted as an interpersonal issue undermining personal fulfilment in teaching (Anthony & Ord, 2008; Cranston, 2011; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Peters & Pearce, 2012).

Among the fourth-year ECTs, four themes were raised about their dislikes of teaching, namely: curriculum, sense of underachievement, catering for diversity and leadership style. Two fourth-year ECTs discussed curriculum as something that they disliked about teaching due to three factors: (i) accommodating the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF); (ii) coping with the weight of information that kept coming in regarding curriculum; and, (iii) learning new curriculum when they taught a different year level. Changes in the curriculum have been identified in the literature as a factor that increases teacher dissatisfaction (Anthony & Ord, 2008; Graziano, 2013; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

Catering for diversity was a dislike of one fourth-year ECT whose concern reflected three areas: a perceived lack of support for teachers of students with special needs, teachers not being able to properly meet students’ needs, and, the future direction of classroom teaching. This ECT expressed concern at what she perceived to be a growing number of students with special education needs in the mainstream classroom,
and the physical and emotional impact it had on the teacher. She explained that within her class there were students with diagnosed physical, social-emotional and cognitive impairments, dyslexia, vision problems, speech delays and sensory perception issues. The day-to-day logistics of catering for diversity was physically and emotionally exhausting. At times she reported that she felt that she did not adequately meet her students’ needs despite her best efforts to do so, which left her feeling discouraged. The ECT had little support provided by the school because the students did not attract sufficient funding for a Special Education assistant to be employed. The ECT expressed her deep concern about the educational outcomes of her students and questioned the future direction of education based on her experiences.

A plethora of research is available on the impact of the inclusion and integration of students with special education needs into the mainstream classroom. While some authors have reported favourable teacher attitudes (Melnick & Meister, 2008; Savolainen, Engelbracht, Nel, & Malinen, 2011), many do not and call for greater pre-service and in-service training (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Within the classroom context, catering for diversity is a challenge that places additional stress on ECTs and experienced teachers alike (Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Narvaez, 2008). Most of the current research on the impact of catering for diversity on teachers has focused on the process of differentiation within the classroom (Tomlinson & Imbreau, 2011) and what teachers’ attitudes towards inclusivity are (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). For example, Tomlinson & Moon (2013) postulated that catering for diversity incorporates providing differentiated content, processes, products and environment according to each student’s readiness, interests and learning profile. The findings of the present study suggest that more research needs to be conducted into the physical and emotional impact that differentiating the curriculum to cater for student diversity has on ECTs given that it requires teachers to have a deep understanding of their students’, so they can take proactive steps to meet each individual learner’s needs.

One fourth-year ECT stated that school leadership style was a factor that they disliked about teaching. In this instance, the ECT was critical of the leadership team’s lack of consultation with staff when it came to decision making, especially regarding professional development. The ECT stated that lack of consultation was frustrating and left staff feeling unimportant and undervalued. This finding is in keeping with literature which refers to the importance of teachers having personal freedom to exercise
judgement in the workplace (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012; Inman & Marlow, 2004).

5.3.3 Summary

Section Two explored the ECTs’ satisfying and dissatisfying elements of teaching. The ECTs cited four common themes from the findings of what they found satisfying with, or liked about, teaching. These themes were: student learning and growth, relationships, variety and personal challenge. Several cohort specific themes relating to likes of the profession were also highlighted. The literature on what leads to teacher job satisfaction can be simplified into two key categories: personal attributes and practical aspects (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2007; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). Personal attributes included the following: liking children, feeling professionally competent, interpersonal relationships (Lortie, 1989; Nias, 2002), opportunities for personal growth, life-long learning and intellectual challenges (Lam & Yan, 2005). Practical aspects identified in the literature included: working with children, working within a positive class climate, dependable income, job security, work-life balance and holidays (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Feldman & Ng, 2007; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). The findings from the present study supported those articulated in the literature and also identified one theme, Teacher Designed School, that was not reported in the review of the literature.

Early Career Teachers across all three cohorts, raised parents and workload as factors that were dissatisfied with, or they disliked about, teaching. Numerous cohort specific dislikes were identified in the findings while one third year ECT disclosed that there was nothing that she disliked about teaching. The literature on dislikes of teaching can be categorised into two broad themes: (i) relational factors; and (ii) logistical aspects of the job. Literature pertaining to relational factors centred around issues concerning the individual teacher themselves as well as the interpersonal interactions that they have inside and outside the workplace (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). The findings from the current study are generally commensurate with themes reported in the research. However, school location and catering for diversity were two areas that were identified as warranting further investigation. Overall, the factors that ECTs cited as dislikes of teacher generally contributed to them feeling as though they are not keeping up with the workload or
achieving goals. These factors have been found to impact negatively on ECTs’ level of work satisfaction and lead to feelings of inadequacy and a loss of confidence (Hargreaves, 2010; Joseph, 2011; Lang, 1999; McCormack & Thomas, 2010; Price & McCallum, 2015). Cumulatively, these factors can negatively impact on the well-being of teachers and contribute to burnout (Goddard & Goddard, 2006).

5.4 Section Three. Challenges faced by Early Career Teachers

Specific Research Question 3 which investigated the challenges ECTs faced in their careers, evolved from the literature discussing the research that is available on the main challenges facing ECTs; that is, the factors contributing to teachers developing their likes and dislikes of the profession. Section Three begins by discussing the common themes identified across the second, third and fourth-year ECT cohorts for challenges ECTs face. Elements pertinent to each cohort are then discussed. The themes are summarised in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5

Summary of Common and Cohort-specific Themes for Challenges Faced by ECTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes across cohorts</th>
<th>2nd Year ECTs</th>
<th>3rd Year ECTs</th>
<th>4th Year ECTs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Workload</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Behaviour management</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohort-specific themes

| Feeling unprepared for the workforce | ✓ |
| Consciously unskilled              | ✓ |
| Report writing                     | ✓ |
| Emotional demands                  | ✓ |
| Generational differences           | ✓ |
| Loneliness                         | ✓ |
5.4.1 Common themes across cohorts

Parents, workload and behaviour management were common themes reported by all three cohorts in relation to the challenges faced by ECTs. Nine ECTs reported on parents as a challenge. Parents encompassed issues relating to the parenting style, including parents’ attitudes, values and behaviour, and teacher-parent relationships and were perceived as challenges for several reasons. One reason was that ECTs generally felt unprepared to manage difficult parent attitudes and behaviours when they arose. The feeling of unpreparedness might be explained by the fact that most ECTs were in their second year and were aged under 25 years, with limited life and/or professional experience. A second reason could be that difficult parents and conflict situations may leave ECTs considering themselves unsafe in their work environment. Such feelings may contribute to ECTs experiencing anxiety and stress. Another reason parents were perceived as a challenge was that ECTs expressed feeling disempowered, disrespected and unappreciated by the way in which some parents behaved towards them. Three ECTs described challenging parent behaviours that they had experienced including politicking.

The ECTs’ concerns with parents were corroborated by two CEWA facilitators who explained that many ECTs have issues with parents. The CEWA participants attributed ECTs’ issues with parents to several factors. One factor was the age difference between the parents and ECTs, especially in instances where the ECTs had gone straight from school to university to the workforce and were only in their early twenties. For example, one ECT stated that because she looked so young, it took parents time to accept her as their children’s teacher; many parents questioned whether she was old enough to have teaching qualifications let alone accept responsibility for their children. Another factor pertained to the attitudes of some parents who as part of social politicking tried to challenge the ECTs to test their competency. The final factor that both CEWA participants acknowledged was that most ECTs did not know how to manage difficult
conversations with parents because they had not developed the skills at that early stage of their careers.

These findings are reflected to a limited extent in the literature (He & Cooper, 2011; Melnick & Meister, 2008; Whittaker, 2013). For example, Melnick and Meister (2008) compared the concerns of ECTs and experienced teachers across four key areas: classroom management, time management, parent communication and conflict, and academic or lesson preparation. Their research identified that ECTs reported feeling less prepared than experienced teachers to manage communication with parents and dealing with parent conflict. However, Melnick and Meister’s (2008) study stopped short of providing insight into why the ECTs felt unprepared and explaining proactive steps that could be taken to address the situation. The current findings offer some understanding of the impact that dealing with parent communication and conflict has on ECTs. The findings indicate that ECTs do not gain sufficient exposure to dealing with parents as part of their pre-service training, nor do they necessarily have sufficient life experience in dealing with conflict in the work place. The findings also suggest the need for additional support to be offered to ECTs, at least in the initial years of their careers, so that they can learn and practice effective strategies for working with parents. The support could take the form of semi-formal professional development, within the school and/or at a sector level, observing an experienced teacher liaise with parents on a range of issues, or having an experienced teacher attend parent meetings with ECTs.

Workload was a concern discussed by nine ECTs and referred to the myriad of curricular and extra-curricular teaching duties that teachers are required to complete. The way in which workload affected ECTs appeared to be dependent on the number of years of teaching experience. Second year ECTs were challenged and overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work that they were required to do, while third and fourth year teachers were comparatively less so. One explanation for this finding may be that many second year ECTs were still learning new facets of teachers’ work and developing systems to effectively manage that work. By the third year and fourth year of teaching, ECTs appeared to have implemented effective pedagogical and classroom management strategies and their challenge was more with dealing with administrative duties, school improvement processes and being part of professional learning community teams.

The finding of the difference between the cohorts, in terms of their ability to manage workload, may add weight to the argument presented by some authors in the literature who proposed that ECTs should have a lessened workload. For example,
Howe (2006) reported that a number of countries reduce the workload of ECTs, at least in the initial years of their career, while other nations provide additional school-based in-servicing and mentoring. Reducing workload could be advantageous, as it would give ECTs a smaller number of workplace issues or responsibilities to focus on. Doing so might allow ECTs to: feel a greater sense of accomplishment, feel more in control, feel as though they are coping, and establish a work-life balance more easily. Collectively, reduced workload could potentially reduce stress and burnout. Once ECTs have mastered skills and implemented classroom management routines, then the workload could gradually be increased. Associated with workload was developing systems that enabled ECTs to establish a work-life balance. Within educational research literature, a number of factors including excessive workload and extra-curricular demands have been identified as factors that negatively impacted on a teacher’s ability to effectively balance work-life commitments (Day, 2008; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; Smethem, 2007).

Behaviour management was cited as a challenge by five ECTs and encompassed several factors. One factor was school location; ECTs discussed how location influenced student behaviour, especially in schools in rural or remote areas where transiency and truancy were issues. Students who returned after a period of absence from school altered the social dynamics within the class and often had to be re-socialised into school. A second factor was behaviour management skills, with two second year ECTs acknowledging that their lack of consistency due to teaching inexperience affected student behaviour. Another factor was parenting styles and attitudes. Early Career Teachers attributed their students’ challenging behaviours to the students’ parents who did not provide structure, routines and consequences at home. As a result, the school adopted a pseudo parent role and the teacher became responsible for discipline and teaching prosocial behaviours. A final factor was student personalities and the social dynamics within the classroom. A fourth year ECT discussed how student personality clashes occurred and affected behaviour management in the class. Another element of this factor related to incentives, with one third year ECT explaining that he had to completely remove reward systems from his class because students would only behave if they were guaranteed to receive something in return.

The CEWA participants described behaviour management as the biggest challenge reported by ECTs, adding that behaviour management was particularly problematic when: (i) there was no clear school policy in place, (ii) ECTs felt
unsupported, and (iii) if parents became involved. The CEWA participant findings support the large quantity of literature that purports that often classroom management, particularly behaviour management, is a challenge for ECTs (Clarke & Pittaway, 2010; Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Eckert, 2014; Joseph, 2011; Romano, 2008; Youn, 2000; Zepeda & Mayers, 2001). For example, Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) stated that classroom management is usually the most frequently reported ECT concern. Some researchers have proposed that all too frequently ECTs are given the most challenging classes and are often employed at hard-to-staff schools (Downing, 1998; Ramsey, 2000). Several ECTs in the present study who worked in remote, rural or hard-to-staff schools discussed having challenging students in their classes as well as limited in-class or leadership support. However, in the present study, descriptive statistics garnered through the ECTs’ survey indicated that while some of the ECTs were employed in hard-to-staff schools and potentially had challenging classes, the number of years of teaching experience and the ECT’s age was more likely to predict whether behaviour management was an issue. For instance, young second year ECTs who had come straight from school to university to work were more likely to find student behaviour challenging that mature-age, career switchers irrespective of the school demographic.

Eight second and third year ECTs referred to lack of support from colleagues, leadership, and spouses, as a challenge. The ECTs reported that colleagues and leadership often did not offer or provide the support they required to help them feel connected, encouraged and valued. In three instances, ECTs were not formally inducted into their schools. Another three ECTs were not designated a mentor teacher. The ECTs expressed that a lack of formal induction and/or mentor made it difficult for them to familiarise themselves with the day to day logistics of working in a school and left them feeling isolated, uncertain and unimportant. One mature-age ECT reported that a lack of support from her spouse was problematic as it added to her sense of isolation. Inadequate school support was a challenge proffered by the CEWA participants when discussing the key factors of challenges that ECTs raised during the CEWA ECT program.

These support-related challenges are strongly reflected in the literature which highlighted the crucial role that leadership plays in providing adequate support (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Flores, 2004; Cheng & Szeto, 2016; De Nobile & McCormick, 2010; He & Cooper, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011; Price, 2012; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). For instance, Flores (2004) reported the importance of school leadership in
creating and maintaining workplace conditions that generate the school as a professional learning community that encourages collaboration between experienced staff members and ECTs. The literature also articulated the importance of the characteristics and quality of the workplace in ECTs’ decision to remain in the profession (Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009; Choi & Tang, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Myers, Dyer & Washburn, 2005). Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) cited that teacher attrition may result from the work environment including inadequate support from administrators and non-involvement of teachers in decision-making processes.

Seven second and third year ECTs discussed the challenge of creating a work-life balance. All seven ECTs alluded to the additional effort and time that they put into establishing themselves, especially in the first two-to-three years of their career. Many of these ECTs were keen to set the right impression, gain professional credibility and prove themselves. They were also enthusiastic and driven by a desire to do everything they feasibly could for their students and the school. As a result, they spent long hours at work usually at the expense of time for personal rejuvenation. For ECTs with additional commitments such as family or self-education, the pendulum was skewed towards work, which placed added stress and workload on the ECTs.

Work-life balance, or lack thereof, is discussed in the literature (Buchanan, 2009; Day, 2008; Smethem, 2007) as a factor that adversely impacts on teacher effectiveness over time. The findings of this study suggest that ECTs can have difficulty separating their teachers’ work from their personal lives shed, which complements the work of other authors including Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012). Of concern is the fact that lack of work-life balance can contribute to stress and burnout. Various authors have reported that burnout stems from emotional exhaustion relating to workload (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003), feelings of depersonalisation and a sense of a lack of personal accomplishment (Goddard & Goddard, 2006). Only ECTs in the second and third-year cohorts reported difficulty establishing a work-life balance. This fact may indicate that by fourth year, ECTs have sufficient teaching experience, have reached a stage of being consciously skilled and are therefore better able to maintain a work-life balance. IF so, this finding may add further evidence for specific factors that influence the different stages in teacher development.

Six ECTs from the second and third-year cohorts, all of whom lived in rural or remote areas, discussed location. Descriptive statistics collected on the ECTs showed that the two males and four females were all married and lived in towns at least 200
kilometres from the nearest regional centre or city. Location was perceived as a challenge because it restricted ECTs’ access to personal and professional resources. For example, attendance at externally provided professional development was an issue due to the distance from larger centres. Location was also a challenge because of the limited range of recreational activities available, isolation from family supports, and the insular nature of the town itself. CEWA participants reported that location was a challenge raised by ECTs working in remote locations who disclosed feeling isolated especially if they did not get to meet other ECTs at their regional orientation or had limited opportunities to meet with other ECTs.

The literature on the impact of location on ECTs focuses primarily on the socio-economic status of the school (Bartell, 2004; Borman & Dowling, 2008), and out-of-field teaching (Sharplin, 2014). Neither of these aspects were evident in the findings of the present study. Instead, the analysed data indicated that location was a challenge because of the way in which it restricted ECTs from access to personal and professional resources. Since none of the fourth-year ECTs lived in remote or rural locations, it is difficult to draw conclusions about whether location is a challenge regardless of the number of years of teaching. However, based on the literature on school demographics and teacher attrition, it is plausible that location would be a challenge irrespective of years teaching (Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007; UNESCO, 2006). This is an area that requires further research.

Five third and fourth-year ECTs expressed adjusting to change was a challenge. The ECTs referred to a number of changes that they experienced including changes to work colleagues, leadership, class size, location of school, year level and curriculum taught. In each instance, the ECTs’ structure, routine and sense of security was destabilised due to change. Many ECTs experienced their first change of year level in their third or fourth year of teaching. Having had two to three years teaching in one year-level, the ECTs had established classroom management strategies, knowledge of the curriculum and how to teach it, appropriate for that year level. A new year level required them to learn new curriculum, adjust to the developmental needs of a different age group of children and often required the ECTs to work with different colleagues. Working with different colleagues involves establishing new relationships and adjusting to different social dynamics within the workplace. The challenge of adjusting to change was often further exacerbated if the ECT also had a change of school. A change of school involved adjusting to a different leadership team and leadership style and a new
such as change also necessitated establishing credibility, a sense of belonging and forming relationships within the school community.

In reviewing the literature, many authors focused on adjusting to change within the context of beginning teachers transitioning from pre-service training to in-service practice (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012; Heitin, 2013). Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) identified that changes within teaching undermine teachers’ perceived control and well-being which suggested that the need for having a sense of control over one’s work is important. The findings of this research may be helpful in providing further insight into elements of change within the first four years of teaching that can place additional stresses on ECTs. While learning to manage stress associated with work is critical to successfully adjusting to the demands of teaching and the changes that occur (Cenckseven & Sari, 2009), these findings indicate that it may be beneficial for ECTs to remain teaching in one year level for at least two to three years to build confidence and competence. As part of their staff placement planning, school principals often consult ECTs about changing year level to give the ECT time to prepare for the change, and to provide them with a sense of autonomy and control over decisions affecting their work (Ingersoll, 2001). School leadership personnel may also consider providing ECTs with opportunities to build relationships with the different staff members with whom they will collaborate with once the year level change has occurred.

Four ECTs from the second and third-year cohorts referred to time management as a challenge. Time management was considered a challenge due to the sheer volume of teaching duties and other extracurricular duties, such as staff, Professional Learning Community and committee meetings, that the ECTs perceived they needed to juggle. ECTs reported that it was difficult to find time to complete different tasks due to the busyness of each day and unexpected issues that arose that required immediate attention. Timetable changes from term-to-term added to the challenge for two ways: firstly, ECTs had to adjust to the new timetable and changes to Duties Other Than Teaching (DOTT) times; and secondly, changes to the consistency of student routines, particularly if the ECT had students with special needs in their class. Time management was not raised as a challenge by any ECTs in the fourth-year cohort suggesting that it is a skill that may well develop with experience. However, Melnick and Meister (2008) compared the concerns of ECTs and experienced teachers across four key areas one of which was time management. These researchers identified that little difference existed between the two groups of teachers regarding time management.
Four ECTs from the second and third-year cohorts, discussed the need to cater for diversity as a challenge. Catering for diversity was a theme that encompassed meeting the broad range of needs of the students, particularly regarding students with disabilities, and the different ability levels and learning rates of students. Differentiating the curriculum to cater for diversity was an integral part of the challenge. The logistics of preparing one lesson for three achievement levels, support group, year level group and extension group, was a lot of work. Additionally, the four ECTs reported that monitoring student progress across the three achievement levels was difficult. This concern was also relevant when ECTs were asked about what they disliked about teaching.

Three third and fourth-year ECTs discussed politics and secrecy as a challenge. In particular, two third-year ECTs considered politics in relation to their growing awareness of the covert social dynamics that occurred in the school. One ECT referred to the notion of the school as *faux* democracy whereby the leadership team purported to include teachers in decision-making but actually making decisions independently. The other third year ECT referred to the hostility of the work environment and how staff members were perceived to be overly critical of each other. One mature-aged fourth-year ECT, described politics with reference to what she described as secrecy. This ECT explained what she perceived to be the school’s lack of openness with parents and parents lack of openness with each other. She was concerned by the lack of communication that could assist parents to address their children’s learning and behaviour issues.

The above comments by the third and fourth-year ECTs highlight that politics can be intricately entwined within school culture, a point well reflected in the literature (Edwards & Edwards, 2017; McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Palmer, 2016; Stoll, 1998). Early Career Teachers are faced with the process of learning the culture, a task made more difficult because each school is unique as is its student population (Glover & Coleman, 2005). None of the second-year ECTs raised politics as a challenge. However, politics was raised by second-year ECTs in response to aspects of teaching that they disliked. One possible explanation for this finding may be that the second year ECTs were still more focused on other aspects of being a teacher to have developed full awareness of the socio-political dynamics within the school. However, given that several of the second year ECTs were career switchers and had experience in another career, this second option may be an unlikely explanation for some ECTs. Another
plausible explanation for this finding is that by the third or fourth year of teaching, ECTs typically experience a change to the year level that they are teaching. As a result, they may be required to collaborate with different teachers and to move within different social circles. Adjusting to such a change could be challenging as the ECTs go through the process of forming new groups and establishing accepted group norms with which to work. A further explanation is that while the second-year ECTs were aware of and disliked the politicking, they not yet reached a stage in their career where workplace politics had started to impact on them directly. For instance, at this early stage of their teaching career ECTs have insufficient teaching experience to apply for leadership positions and are therefore not a threat to more experienced teachers who may be considering career progression.

Two ECTs (one third and one fourth-year) cited as a challenge confronting issues about child neglect and abuse. The challenge came from the reality shock experienced from working with students who were at educational risk due to poverty and/or cross- or intergenerational complex trauma involving neglect and/or abuse. While the ECTs knew that social issues existed, their upbringing had protected them from being exposed to those issues. Dealing with confrontational issues affecting children was emotionally traumatic for both ECTs. Authors such as Zetlin, MacLeod and Kimm (2012) discussed the impact on ECTs of teaching students in foster care. These authors highlighted the behavioural and academic issues that many children with backgrounds of complex trauma display. Zetlin et al. (2012) also discussed the challenges associated with accessing support services and additional teacher training. The findings from the present study provide a different perspective. Neither of the two ECTs conversed about the behaviour or academic performance of the students as a challenge. For both ECTs, the emotional reaction that they had when these social issues became real to them was at the core of the challenge; child abuse and neglect became tangible in the form of students that they knew and taught. The ECTs’ experience suggests the following: (i) the placement of ECTs into schools may need to be carefully screened to match suitably prepared ECTs to schools in challenging areas, and, (ii) better preparation may be required during University training and as part of any induction.

Job security was a theme raised by two ECTs (one second year and one third year). Being on a temporary contract made planning for the future difficult and both ECTs stated that they were left feeling uncertain and insecure. Lack of job security also
had the potential to jeopardise ECTs’ ability to complete sufficient formal hours of professional development to meet Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia registration renewal requirements. Additionally, one of the ECTs reported that she observed inconsistency in the manner in which principals handled ECTs and temporary contracts. She disclosed the she knew of ECTs who were kept informed of job opportunities and their prospects of securing ongoing employment, and others who had no clear idea of what the future held. One CEWA participant disclosed that 80% of ECTs in the CEWA ECT Program were on short-term contracts. This finding is reflected by research into labour markets (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987) and policies and laws pertaining to workplace entitlements (Baird, 2005; Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, 2015).

5.4.2 Cohort specific themes

The second-year ECTs reported five cohort specific themes, namely: feeling unprepared for the workforce, consciously unskilled, report writing, emotional demands and generational differences. Lack of preparation for the workplace was perceived as a challenge among the second-year ECTs. Four ECTs stated that their pre-service university training, including their school-based practical experiences, had not given a broad enough understanding of the scope of responsibilities nor the time and effort required in teaching. Numerous authors have reported that ECTs are generally overwhelmed and underprepared for, the workload associated with teaching, despite the preservice training they receive (Bartell, 2005; Crosswell & Beutel, 2017; Dinham, 1992; Myer, Dwyer, & Washburn, 2005). Some researchers have argued that pre-service courses can only guide students for entry into teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Buchanan, 1985; Joseph, 2011) and that real learning as a teacher occurs once the graduate is in the classroom (Crosswell & Beutel, 2017; Swabey, Castleton, & Penny, 2010).

Linked to feeling unprepared for the workforce, four second year ECTs raised feeling consciously unskilled as a challenge. During their second year, the ECTs began to recognise their relative inexperience compared to established teachers and how much workplace learning was needed to become proficient professionals. These challenges were not raised among the third or fourth year ECTs. The realisation of their ‘limitations’ is possibly part of the ECTs’ transition from their role and identity as a student to their role and identity as a teacher. As such one might expect that with time
and experience, for example by their third or fourth year of teaching, ECTs would transition to becoming consciously skilled. When compared with the literature review, the ECTs reported experiences cast new light on feeling unprepared for the workforce (Melnick & Meister, 2012). The present findings suggest that as part of their professional growth and the development of their professional identity, ECTs may progress through a series of steps involving reflection and realisation.

Three second-year ECTs considered report writing challenging for several reasons. The first reason for finding report writing a challenge was knowing what to write and how much to write. The second reason stemmed from the need for ECTs to understand the curriculum and the judging standards in order to make consistent judgments of achievement levels. The ECTs shared that they felt that they were still learning about the curriculum and assessment and described how they often felt unsure of whether their judgement was accurate. This challenge was particularly relevant to single stream schools in which the ECT did not have a partner teacher to moderate with. The third reason reporting was reported as a challenge related to legal accountability. One ECT who was employed term-by-term as relief teacher for long service leave described the stress that he felt at having to prepare materials to leave for the returning teacher and also for writing reports based on another teacher’s records and after only teaching a class for one term. These reported experiences of the second year ECTs’ are apparent in the literature, which identified that writing student reports and giving effective feedback to students, parents and schools is a challenge (Joseph, 2011; SCASA, 2018). The third and fourth year ECTs did not discuss report writing as a challenge, suggesting that it may be a skill that is developed and refined with experience.

Another challenge cited by three second-year ECTs is the emotionally demanding nature of teaching. These ECTs explained that it was emotionally taxing dealing with others’ personal lives, colleagues, students and students’ parents on a daily basis. Part of the challenge was learning not to take things personally and also being able to emotionally distance oneself from others’ issues. These findings highlight the importance of emotional intelligence (EQ) as a trait that teachers should possess, especially given the relational nature of the profession. Hen and Sharabi-Nov (2014) concluded that teachers’ emotional abilities can be developed with training which may better prepare them for the emotionally challenging job of being a teacher.

A perceived mismatch between training and resources was a factor that was
raised by one second-year ECT. This ECT was comparing the information technology (IT) that was available for teachers to use in schools and the way it was actually being used by staff. As part of his pre-service training, the ECT had been taught to use IT for a range of administrative and assessment purposes as well as to enhance student learning. In his workplace however, staff and leadership practices encouraged continued use of pencil-and-paper practices. Linked to the mismatch between training and resources was the theme of reluctant staff. Reluctant staff referred to experienced teachers who were perceived by ECTs to be reluctant to adopt and assimilate new approaches into their teaching repertoire to keep abreast of educational changes. This finding possibly indicates generational differences in workplace expectations and is reflected in the work of Knight and Moore (2012).

Among the third-year ECTs, loneliness, cost of resources and manner of life, were raised as cohort specific challenges. Two third-year ECTs described loneliness as a challenge that they faced. The ECTs stated that the loneliness came from being much younger than the other teaching staff with whom they worked. One of those ECTs who lived in a rural location, said that she felt that being alone was the hardest thing especially if it involved relocating. Moving away from family and support systems to having no one was perceived as particularly challenging.

One third-year ECT was challenged by manner of life. Despite being engaged, she was not permitted by her principal to live with her fiancé prior to marrying. The third-year ECT reported that she found the situation very frustrating especially when some of the teachers that she worked with were divorced or single parents. Apart from increasing her cost of living, the ECT also stated that not being permitted to live with her partner left her feeling isolated and lonely. Pathways that may potentially contribute to ECTs’ feelings of loneliness are illustrated in Figure 5.1.
No literature was found on manner of life and its impact on ECTs’ perceptions of teaching and decision to remain or leave the profession, indicating that this is an area that requires further investigation. The limited sources of literature that focus on ECTs’ reported feelings of loneliness mainly focused on the ECTs first months and years of teaching and feelings within the school context (Kyriacou, 2010; Moran, 1990). This finding suggests that contextual factors that contribute to loneliness and feelings of disconnectedness is another area that requires further research. It is plausible that feelings of loneliness and disconnectedness would undermine embeddedness within a school (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001), leading to decreased job satisfaction and the potential of an ECT leaving the profession.

Different expectations was a challenge discussed by two fourth-year ECTs that applied to both the classroom and school contexts. In the classroom, one ECT described a situation where the teacher and parent had different perceptions of a student’s ability and therefore had different expectations of the student. Within the school context, one ECT described the situation where leadership and staff had different expectations about the content of meetings and how they should be conducted. Australian Curriculum was a factor raised by one ECT as a challenge in that she calculated that the timetable could not “fit” the content that was required to be taught. Politics was another theme discussed by one ECT referring to leadership purportedly involving staff in decision making, when they had already made the decisions (for further elaboration on the discussion regarding the impact of politicking on ECTs refer to Section 5.3.4).
Two fourth-year ECTs discussed the theme of responsibility as a challenge. The theme referred to their realisation of the enormous responsibility attached to teaching and the influence that a teacher can have on a child’s wellbeing and development. One fourth year described tall poppy syndrome as a challenge. She used the metaphor to describe how she perceived the education system, in its attempt to be fair and equitable, did not allow children to develop their natural talents and predispositions. One third-year described the cost of resources as a challenge, referring to the purchase of resources in the initial years of his career.

Leadership style and school culture was a theme raised by three fourth-year ECTs. Based on the ECTs’ comments, the theme covered a range of factors which were influenced by the principal’s leadership style, affected the culture of the school and flowed down into how the staff communicated and supported each other. One factor was perceived lack of support from leadership when dealing with student behaviour and parent issues. A second factor was lack of feedback about teaching performance. A third factor was staff resistance stemming from staff perceptions that their ideas and contributions were not valued and that many had become disenchanted. One ECT disclosed that experienced staff would say very little at staff meetings and that ECTs kept quiet because they were concerned about their job security. Another ECT disclosed that at her school there had been high staff turnover following the arrival of a new principal. She believed that the principal’s leadership style was the contributing factor and she added that the new principal treated temporary ECTs discouragingly.

The findings indicated that ECTs are faced with the challenge of tuning in to the school’s culture and fitting in with its expectations and norms. Leadership style and culture are challenges that are reflected in the literature which highlights the importance role the principal plays in the establishment and maintenance of a school’s culture (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Flores, 2004; Cheng & Szeto, 2016; De Nobile & McCormick, 2010; He & Cooper, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011; Price, 2012; Stoll, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The literature also pointed to the importance for ECTs to understand school culture because it: influences teacher identity (Edwards & Edwards, 2017; Palmer, 2016); contributes to ECTs’ sense of belonging and connectedness to the school (Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010); and, has been found to influence improvement practices and teachers’ professional learning (Carter & Francis, 2010; Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016).
Interpersonal relationships, including working with staff with different world views, and dealing with parents, was a theme raised by three ECTs in their fourth year of teaching. Collegial collaboration was discussed as part of the issue. The ECTs alluded to the professional expectation of building relationships and cooperating with school personnel who have different personalities, world views and expectations. Part of the challenge for ECTs was learning to be flexible, adaptable and to emotionally distance themselves from issues that arose within professional relationships with colleagues and students’ parents. These findings are reflected in the literature which indicated that teaching is a highly relational profession (Noddings, 2003) and that negative interpersonal interactions contributed to stress that led to staff considering leaving or leaving the profession (Cranston, 2011; Howe & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014).

5.4.3 Summary

There was a strong link between what ECTs reported they disliked about teaching and the challenges that they faced. Early Career Teachers from all three cohorts reported factors that they found challenging which were condensed into three themes: parents, workload and behaviour management. These findings were apparent in the research covered in the review of the literature. All three factors have been linked to increased ECT stress and have been found to undermine ECTs’ self-confidence.

Location, work-life balance, time management, support, job security and catering for diversity were themes that applied to the second and third year ECT cohorts in the present study but not the fourth-year cohort. Politics, confronting issues and adjusting to change were themes cited among the third and fourth year ECTs study participants only. The findings suggest that some challenges are potentially aligned to the stage of ECTs’ career development and that ECTs face different challenges as their teaching experience levels increase.

A range of cohort specific themes were identified. Among the second year ECTs, many of the challenges may potentially reflect their limited experience within the profession. As such, the challenges focused more on the logistics of doing the job and adjustment to the emotional and time demands of teaching. By the third and fourth year of teaching, the cohort specific themes identified in the present study had changed to reflect broader school-based and interpersonal relationship issues. The ECTs’
responses identified two key areas, manner of life and social connectedness, that warranted further investigation.

5.5 Section Four: Strategies for coping with the challenges of teaching

The empirical literature base concerning how ECTs cope with the main challenges they face informed Specific Research Question 4. A summary of common themes across cohorts and cohort specific themes from the findings is displayed in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6

Summary of Common and Cohort-specific Themes for Strategies for Coping with the Challenges of Teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes across cohorts</th>
<th>2nd Year ECTs</th>
<th>3rd Year ECTs</th>
<th>4th Year ECTs</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature-age</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal resilience</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
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<th>Cohort specific themes</th>
<th>2nd Year ECTs</th>
<th>3rd Year ECTs</th>
<th>4th Year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging in school</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School structures</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional responsibilities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5.1 Common themes

The support ECTs receive and being mature-aged were two themes common to all cohorts as factors that helped ECTs cope with the challenges that they faced. All 22 ECTs cited support; no other factor in SRQ 4 or the other research questions received such an overwhelming response from the ECTs. Support was a broad theme that incorporated six factors, namely: work, community, students, friends, partner/spouse and family. Key to all these was the relationships that ECTs had with others that gave them a sense of connectedness and being valued. Figure 5.2 displays the factors associated with support.
Support received at work, from colleagues, leadership and Education Assistants, was described by ECTs as the main way in which they had coped with the challenges they experienced as a teacher. In larger, multiple-stream schools, ECTs discussed the support that they received from having a partner teacher in the same year level. Having a mentor was described as an effective support mechanism because it provided ECTs with a trusted person to discuss issues with and receive feedback from. Mentors were valued because of their approachability, professional knowledge and the feedback that they provided to reassure the ECTs. In the absence of an assigned mentor, ECTs sought guidance and support from their year level partner teacher, or another experienced colleague whom they respected. Key to the professional conversations with mentors, or colleagues was the exercise of nonjudgmental, active listening.

School structures including staff providing PD for other staff, and the adoption of specific teaching programs, also afforded ECTs support. Internally presented PD helped ECTs know which teachers to consult to assist with different issues while also giving providing knowledge on a range of topics. The adoption of specific teaching programs, including Explicit (Direct) Instruction and commercialised numeracy and literacy programs, helped ECTs cope by making explicit the links between curriculum and pedagogy and reducing the ECTs’ planning and preparation workload.

These experiences of the ECTs align with observations made by a number of researchers who have identified the significant role that school and sector level strategies, such as mentoring, play in helping ECTs to cope with the challenges of teaching (Angelides & Mylordou, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b; De Angelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift, & Maulana, 2016; Howe, 2006; Paris,
However, when compared with the literature review, ECTs in the present study only discussed mentoring as a strategy. Other strategies including Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), coaching, orientation programmes and internships were not raised. The finding of an ECT preference for mentoring, staff provided PD and specific teaching programs, may reflect that mentoring is an effective strategy. Indeed, in an exploration of mentoring in Western Australian Catholic primary and secondary schools, Topliss (2017) identified that while mentors did not alleviate every challenge faced by ECTs they eased the transition from being a pre-service teacher to a classroom teacher. Alternatively, the findings may present the possibility that only a limited range of strategies are being utilised within Catholic primary schools in Western Australia to support ECTs. Topliss (2017) criticised the inconsistent approach to, and the variation in the quality of, mentoring ECTs were afforded by Catholic schools in Western Australia.

In the present study, ECTs discussed strategies that: (i) provided them with information that helped them do their job (mentors, specific teaching programs); (ii) reassured them that what they were doing was correct (mentors); and, (iii) lightened their workload (specific teaching programs.) In essence, mentoring, PD from staff and specific teaching programs appeared to provide ECTs with ways in which to navigate a path through the workload they faced in the most expedient manner. Being able to do so, could potentially allow ECTs to cope more effectively with the workload, which could decrease stress and the possibility of burnout.

Being involved in community organisations, particularly sporting clubs, offered ECTs a chance to form connections and friendships with other people who possessed similar interests. In addition, such involvement also helped support ECTs to establish relationships with their students, the students’ parents and the broader community. Active participation in extra-curricular ventures including fundraising, school discos and the interschool carnival. Such participation provided networking opportunities and opportunities to establish supportive relationships with a broad range of people both within and outside the school. One mature-age ECT drew on community support by inviting parents, senior citizens and other members into her classroom. With structures and routines in place, the ECT said that having extras in the class helped support her and was also beneficial to supporting the students.
Thirteen ECTs reported that family and support from home helped them cope. In instances where the ECT had another teacher in the family that person covertly provided mentor-like support that was not directly part of the ECT’s school context. Having a personal friend was another support structure that helped ECTs cope. Nine ECTs described being able to talk through issues with friends, especially if the friend was also in teaching, as very supportive. Spending time with friends and pursuing other interests including sport, was also considered an effective coping strategy. Seven ECTs attributed their coping to supportive spouses or partners. All seven stated that having support from a loving other provided the ECTs with an opportunity to vent and have their concerns listened to unconditionally. One of the seven ECTs reported that having a spouse with a teaching background. She explained that she found it highly beneficial because her spouse understood the pressures and demands of teaching. The ECTs’ reported experiences are apparent in the literature which identified that individuals who have supportive social relationships are able to rely on others to help them manage stressful situations (He & Cooper, 2011; Russell, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987). As a result, work-related stress does not have negative effects on their physical and psychological health.

Five ECTs stated that being mature-aged helped them cope with challenges that they faced as teachers. The findings from the descriptive statistics showed that the two males and three females were aged 30-49 and were all married. Three of these participants were career switchers with qualifications in fields such as psychology, marketing and science, while the other two had entered teaching later in life. These ECTs perceived that being mature-aged meant that they had a range of life experiences that provided them with a broader perspective on life and greater emotional maturity to manage issues when they arose. For instance, one of the women described how being older gave her more credibility with parents and how students saw her as having more authority than the younger ECTs that she worked with. Age-life experience was a factor discussed by one CEWA participant. In her opinion, mature-age ECTs (many of whom were career switchers) were observed to cope better overall with different challenges based on having a broader palette of life experiences to draw on.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) found that age was a variable that determined the types of strategies that teachers reported using to cope with the challenges and strains of teaching. However, their research did not examine the influence of career switching, nor whether mature-aged teachers coped better than younger teachers. The findings of the
present study add a different perspective on the influence of age on coping strategies and highlight the potential way in which age and life experience may equip ECTs with the strategies, resilience and social supports necessary to cope with the challenges of teaching.

Nine second and third year ECTs discussed resilience. The ECTs expressed being able to emotionally distance themselves from interpersonal issues so that they did not take them personally. This finding is in accordance with the literature on self-regulation (Bandura, 1991; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Klusmann et al., 2008). The ECTs also described having learned to bounce back from other challenging life experiences. In some instances, the ECTs stated that they had learned earlier in life that they could face challenges and work through them. In other instances, the ECTs described workplace issues that had contributed to them learning to bounce back from adversity. The experiences of the ECTs align with observations made by authors of emotional intelligence (Austin, Saklofske, & Mastoras, 2010; Hackett & Hortman, 2008; Hen & Sharabi-Nov, 2014) and resilience (Bobek, 2002; Day & Gu, 2014; Elitharp, 2006). The ECTs’ reported experiences also indicated that they maintained a focus on the future which involved being able to prioritise what was important, disregard irrelevant issues and get on with what needed to be done. One of the ECTs stated that having a positive outlook and rethinking challenges as opportunities to learn also was highly beneficial when facing challenges. This finding is supported by research on teacher mindsets (Dweck, 2014; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015) and grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman, 2009).

The descriptive statistics collected from the nine ECTs were examined to identify whether there were common elements, such as age, location and personal status, which could explain the resilience that the ECTs demonstrated. The survey findings showed that of the three males and six females, four were aged 20-24, two were aged 25-29 and three were 30-39 years of age. In terms of personal status, four of the ECTs were single and five were either married or in a relationship. Six of the ECTs lived in the Perth Archdiocese and one each in the Broome, Bunbury and Geraldton dioceses. These findings suggest that age, personal status and location do not explain the resilience that the ECTs described. This finding is somewhat surprising given that being mature-aged was identified as a coping factor common among all cohorts. The ECTs’ personal resilience is most likely explained by the dynamic interplay of their
temperament, life experiences before becoming a teacher, and experiences as a teacher (Johnson et al., 2012).

Four ECTs from the second and third-year cohorts, explained that they involved themselves in community organisations. According to these ECTs, participation in sporting clubs, charities and groups outside of the work arena served several purposes. First, participation helped ECTs establish connections with others who shared similar interests. Second, involvement expanded the ECTs social network beyond the workplace which enhanced their sense of belonging within the community. Another reason was that participation boosted the relationships that ECTs had with their students. The final reason was that involvement provided ECTs with a way to establish work-life balance, to have a break from work and relax.

Four second and third-year ECTs cited students as a coping mechanism. The ECTs discussed how their students’ unconditional acceptance and positive behaviour towards them made them feel accepted, valued and supported. All four ECTs commented on how these feelings reinforced their motivation for becoming teachers. For two of the ECTs, their motivation for joining the profession was expressed as a sense of vocation. The other two ECTs reported feeling intrinsically motivated to become teachers and stated having an enjoyment of working with children. The findings of the present study add further weight to the work of several authors who proposed that ECT retention could be increased if motivations for joining the profession are understood and people with the appropriate motives are attracted to teaching (Bruisma & Jansen, 2010; Krecic & Grmek, 2005; Sinclair, Dowson & McInerney, 2006). However, this finding may also have implications for school leaders and suggests that careful attention may need to be given to both understand ECTs’ motivations and ensuring that contextual elements within the workplace are present to reinforce those motivations.

According to Sinclair, Dowson, and McInerney (2006), pre-service teachers’ motivations change over time and mostly in a negative direction. Although the present study provides a snapshot rather than a longitudinal study of teacher motivations, the findings suggest the possibility that ECTs’ motivations may remain positive at least within the first three years of teaching. The findings of the present study may also add to the literature on motivation and attachment. Several authors have investigated teaching as a career choice stemming from the need to care for others and be cared for by others as a motivating factor for teachers and principals (Cortina & Liotti, 2010; Riley, 2013). The ECTs’ motivation for becoming teachers showed that they all
enjoyed working with children, inspiring them and being a positive role model for them. All of these factors may indicate a desire to care for others. The ECTs comments about how their students’ behaviour and regard for them made them feel valued and supported, also indicated the likelihood that the students were covertly caring for the ECTs.

5.5.2 Cohort specific themes

Among the second year ECTs, four cohort-specific themes were derived from factors that ECTs stated had helped them cope with challenges in light of their experiences. These factors were: location, sense of belonging in school, school structures, and additional responsibilities. Two second-year ECTs raised school location as a factor that helped them cope. One of the ECTs worked in a rural school while the other worked in a Metropolitan school. Both ECTs believed that ECTs cope and adapt to where they are at the time, however, each had a liking for the region in which they worked and lived. The rural based ECT stated that she believed it came down to personal preferences. In her case, she had always wanted to teach in the country. She added that she was grateful for the experiences that the location had given her as a teacher. The other teacher enjoyed city living, particularly having family and friends close by.

Having a sense of belonging in a school was cited by one second year ECT. He differentiated his understanding of belonging from support from others and expressed that the feeling came from being offered a full-time teaching role for the following year. This finding suggests that for some ECTs, their sense of belonging in a school may be associated with job security. Knowing that he had ongoing work in the school, possibly allowed the ECT to feel that he could establish relationships and organise himself within the school. As a result, he may have been better able to plan and prepare for the future suggesting that for some ECTs, job security may be linked with embeddedness. The literature review highlighted the importance of embeddedness, the degree of attachment or sense of belonging an individual has towards a job, career and/or organisation, in people linking their careers (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Moran, 1990).

School structures was a theme cited by one second-year ECT who explained that her school had moved into Explicit Instruction (EI). This ECT explained that she perceived that EI provided a structure for teachers to collaborate and plan together thus reducing the teachers’ workloads. Factors that help ECTs to cope with the workload
and feel a sense of achievement are reported in the literature as contributing to reduced stress and burnout (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003). The final coping mechanism cited was additional duties. One second-year ECT who was working in a small school explained that all the teachers had ‘special jobs’ that they could nominate to do. Having an additional responsibility helped this ECT cope because it gave her variety in her teaching role and responsibility within the school while also allowing her to develop her interest in the area.

One third-year female ECT explained in a jovial manner, that a glass of wine with her partner at the end of the day helped her cope workplace stress, while one fourth-year ECT explained that physical activity provided a way of physically releasing stress, keeping fit and allowing time for herself. Older experienced teachers, rather than ECTs, are reported in the literature more commonly using exercise and relaxation as coping mechanisms (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). However, in the present study, the ECT who reported using exercise as a coping mechanism was a mature-aged career switcher.

5.5.3 Summary
ECTs from all three cohorts reported coping strategies that were analysed and condensed into two themes: support and being mature-aged. Support from a range of sources provided ECTs with the knowledge that they needed to do the job, as well as giving them confidence, a sense of connectedness and of being valued. Other common themes included personal resilience, community involvement, and students. These themes were reported by ECTs in the second and third year cohorts only but not by the fourth year ECTs.

A range of cohort-specific strategies were discussed. Among the second year ECTs, the coping strategies reflected their need to connect with others within the school and to forge relationships within the broader community. The cohort-specific themes raised by the third and fourth-year ECTs related to relaxation and stress reduction coping mechanisms.
5.6 Section Five: Influences on ECT retention in and attrition from teaching

The discussion of the findings for Section Five is will start with what ECTs reported would make them stay followed by what ECTs stated would make them leave the profession.

5.6.1 Influences on ECT retention in teaching

Many of the factors that helped the ECTs work through the challenges and made them want to continue in teaching, were similar to the factors that motivated them to become teachers. Table 5.7 provides a summary of common and cohort specific themes for Interview Question Six.

Table 5.7

Summary of Common and Cohort-specific Themes relating to ECT retention in teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes across cohorts</th>
<th>2\textsuperscript{nd} Year ECTs</th>
<th>3\textsuperscript{rd} Year ECTs</th>
<th>4\textsuperscript{th} Year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal &amp; professional growth</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/CEWA ECT program</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal responsibilities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohort-specific themes

| Enjoy teaching                                   | ✓                             |
| Gender balanced staff                            | ✓                             |
| Faith community                                  | ✓                             |
| Career opportunities                             | ✓                             |
| Salary                                           | ✓                             |
| Establishing work-life balance                   | ✓                             |
| Effort to get into the profession.              |                               |
| Job security                                     |                               |

5.6.1.1 Common themes across cohorts

Early Career Teachers in all three cohorts referred to a range of factors that had helped them cope with the challenges they faced and encouraged them to continue in the profession. Those factors were analysed and condensed into six themes: personal and professional growth, students, resilience, support/CEWA ECT program, holidays and, personal responsibilities. Fourteen ECTs conversed about how they had changed
personally and professionally during the early years of their career. Personal growth included having improved self-regulation, communication skills and work-life balance. For example, three second-year ECTs stated that they were considerably less anxious when faced with challenges (parents, changes to daily routine) than they had been in their first year of teaching. Professional growth included having an increased knowledge of the curriculum content and how to teach it, as well as improved time management and organisational skills. The ability to identify and prioritise what was important, to reduce factors such as workload-related stress, was also reflected in statements about professional growth. For instance, four third-year ECTs alluded to maturing with the profession and expressed excitement at the knowledge that they expected that they would continue to develop. Overall, the ECTs expressed a sense of pride in how their experiences as teachers had helped them develop cognitively, socio-emotionally, behaviourally and spiritually. Cumulatively, this pride and expected future growth made the ECTs want to remain in the profession.

The review of the literature highlighted the importance of self-regulation for coping with challenges (Bandura, 1991; Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke, & Baumert, 2008). According to Bandura (1991), ECTs need to be able to reflect on their behaviour, the environmental triggers that influence their behaviour and how their behaviour affects others (self-monitoring). Early Career teachers in the present study demonstrated self-reflection and self-monitoring when they identified lowered workplace anxiety due to their increased knowledge and skills. Bandura (1991) also posited that ECTs must be able to reflect on their behaviour in relation to their values and workplace circumstances (self-reflection) and manage their emotional reactions to situations (self-reaction). Self-regulation was found to impact on self-efficacy which in turn affects how one approaches goals, tasks and challenges (Bandura, 1991). Klusmann et al., (2008) investigated whether teachers’ self-regulatory patterns explained their occupational wellbeing and the quality of their teaching instruction. These authors categorised ECTs based on their level of work engagement and resilience; ECTs with high levels of work engagement and resilience were considered to adapt best to challenges. The findings from current project highlight the potential importance of creating safe, supportive work environments that allow ECTs to develop skills and knowledge that positively impact on their self-efficacy.

Thirteen ECTs from across all three cohorts discussed students as a factor that helped them work through the challenges of teaching. This factor encompassed
working with children, the joy and satisfaction derived from that work and the relationships that the ECTs formed with their students. The theme was closely linked with the ECTs’ vocational and intrinsic motivations for joining the profession. This finding reinforces the idea proposed by Richardson and Watt (2006) that it is crucial to target the sources of motivation that attract individuals to the teaching profession.

Ten ECTs cited factors such as being strong, being able to work through difficult situations, placing emotional distance between oneself and challenges, tenacity and grit. Collectively these factors were grouped under the theme of resilience. All 10 ECTs discussed personal traits that they displayed that they perceived were indicative of resilience, including self-motivation, positive mindset and determination. In particular, the third and fourth year ECTs, articulated challenges associated with teaching that had taught them to work through challenges over time. The main challenges they raised were lack of support, parents and workload. Central to the main challenges was relationships with others. The ECTs added that facing those challenges had helped them develop resilience and to realise that facing challenges was part of the process of becoming a teacher. This finding presents a paradox as it suggests that in order to face challenges ECTs must possess resilience but at the same time, successfully confronting those challenges builds ECTs’ resilience.

Resilience has been well researched within education (Johnson, et al., 2012; Le Cornu, 2013; Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, & Weatherby-Fell, 2016). The ECTs reported experiences in the present study, are reflected in the literature which suggests that ECT resilience is the expression of the dynamic interplay between an ECT’s traits and the social context within which they function (Mansfield, Beltman, & Price, 2014). Le Cornu (2013) used Jordan’s (2006) model of relational resilience as a means to understand the relationships contributing to ECT resilience. Jordan’s model postulated that resilience is based on an individual’s capacity for connection and stems from the core belief that psychological growth occurs in relationships characterised by mutuality, empowerment and the development of courage. Within the present study, the ECTs reported that the type and strength of relationships they formed with their students, staff, leaders, family and friends, students’ parents and the broader school community all worked together to influence their resilience levels.

The literature also pointed to theoretical developments that placed affective outcomes at the centre of an individual’s sense of self-identity and self-worth (Morgan et al., 2010). Given that teachers experience both good and bad events on any given
day, Morgan et al. (2010) proposed that positive events can reduce the impact of negative ones, thus helping teachers become more resilient in the face of challenges. Morgan et al. also postulated that the strongest affective events are those that linking to the reason that teachers entered teaching in the first place.

Eight second and fourth-year ECTs stated that the support that they received from colleagues, leadership, friends and family encouraged them to remain in the teaching profession. The ECTs’ reported self-perceptions and experiences suggest that support from colleagues, including mentors and coaches, and leadership helped to retain the ECTs in the profession for several reasons. First, it gave them a sense of connection with the people and physical environs of the workplace. The second reason was that it provided the ECTs with content and pedagogical knowledge to assist with the transition from pre-service to in-service status which assisted in teacher identity. For instance, two of the second year ECTs had participated in the CEWA ECT program which they reported had provided them with information that was relevant to their professional needs. The CEWA ECT program also provided the ECTs with mentorship, action research and networking with other graduates, forms of support that helped them feel empowered. Both ECTs commented on how the CEWA ECT program had helped both them and their mentors develop skills. The ECTs’ reported experiences suggested that their teacher identities developed as they transitioned from being pre-service to registered teachers due to the CEWA program content and the mentor structures that schools were requested to implement.

There is a plethora of literature on how access to positive and relevant support structures are critical to ECTs’ development (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Topliss, 2017) and the current ECT participants’ experiences reflect those findings. Induction programs, mentoring, coaching and establishing a community of professional learners have all been found to be effective ways to support ECTs, particularly within the first few years of their transition from pre-service to in-service status. Those ECTs in the present study who participated in the CEWA Graduate program reported that it was highly beneficial to their personal and professional growth as teachers. The cessation of the CEWA Graduate program at the end of 2016 has left the Western Australian Catholic sector without a system level program to support the ECTs in Catholic schools. As a result, schools have been left to assume full responsibility for supporting ECTs which is less than satisfactory and demonstrates inadequate system accountability (Topliss, 2017).
Three second and third-year ECTs associated having a consistent salary with job security. Although the two entities are separate, having gainful employment and guaranteed income removed what can potentially be a significant stressor for these ECTs. All three ECTs had secured ongoing full-time contracts in their schools which had enabled them to secure mortgages. Having personal responsibility for financially supporting their families, was one reason these ECTs remained in teaching. The findings of the present study suggest that job security, rather than remuneration, may be an important influence on ECT retention. One CEWA participant provided evidence for this idea. She disclosed that one of the main challenges that ECTs raised was job security and that 80% of ECTs in the CEWA ECT program were on short-term contracts. Numerous authors have identified that within all sectors of education, government and non-government alike, frustrations with temporary work and difficulty securing full-time, ongoing employment is a factor causing teacher dissatisfaction (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Smethem, 2007; The Age, 2011; Topsfield & Butt, 2012). However, how to overcome the issue with employment contracts is an area that all education sectors will need to examine. The problem with temporary contracts may not be resolved easily, due to changes in Australian laws pertaining to maternity and parental leave. Schools are now required to hold a teachers’ positions for him or her for the duration of the designated leave. The flow on effect is that prospective employees, including ECTs, are only offered temporary contracts to cover the period of leave (Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, 2015).

5.6.1.2 Cohort specific themes

Only second and third-year ECTs offered cohort-specific themes. These themes were: salary, enjoyment of teaching, gender balanced staff, faith community, career opportunities, establishing a work-life balance, effort to get into the profession, and job security. Four second-year ECTs proffered salary as a factor that kept them teaching. Salary was also discussed by one of these ECTs regarding the amount that teachers get paid. This ECT had worked in a lesser paying field before switching to teaching and was impressed with the remuneration that the teaching profession offered. Within the literature, there are mixed reports about the influence of teacher salaries on teachers’ job satisfaction and retention in the profession. For example, inadequate pay was presented as a factor that ECTs disliked about teaching (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan, 2009; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). On the other hand, Buchanan (2009)
found that teachers perceived that teaching paid reasonably well, but that the remuneration offered did not match the level of responsibility or workload involved.

Two second-year ECTs described the enjoyment of teaching as something that made them want to keep teaching. One mature-aged ECT explained that her happiness derived from her sense of achievement from making a career change and pursuing her dream of being a teacher. The other, younger ECT enjoyed all aspects of teaching and stated that if he did not, he would have left the profession. One second-year ECT cited the theme of building bridges which linked closely with the enjoyment of teaching and relationships. This ECT referred to being able to establish and develop trusting connections with challenging students. He explained that having success with students who presented with behaviour and learning challenges, affectively reinforced his perception that he was in the career to which he was best suited. Enjoyment of teaching and building bridges both speak to the importance of relationships and motivation as factors that encourage ECTs to remain in the profession (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Richardson & Watts, 2006; Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006).

One second-year ECT explained that she perceived that having men and women on staff balanced the social dynamics. Working in a school where there is a balance of male and female staff was labelled as gender balance. No research was located to reflect this finding. One second-year ECT stated that being part of a faith community encouraged her to remain in the profession. According to Hickey (2009) staff in Western Australian Catholic schools unite as a community in faith. Working in a school located in a low-socioeconomic area, the ECT stated that being in a faith community united staff and gave them a way to work collectively with a Christian mindset to treat students with respect and dignity.

Although only in his second year of teaching, one ECT cited career opportunities as a factor that made him remain in the profession. Frustrated with the mismatch between his pre-service training and IT use in his school, the ECT took the opportunity to take on a specialist IT role. This ECT expressed excitement that the chance could allow him to pursue an area of interest further while also taking a lead role in the school. Within the literature, poor promotional prospects have been linked to teacher dissatisfaction (Buchanan, 2009; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). The present finding suggests that being presented with promotional opportunities, mainly when related to areas of interest, may increase teacher satisfaction which may potentially increase the likelihood of ECTs remaining in the profession.
One second-year ECT stated that school holidays were an enticement to remain in the profession. For this ECT, holidays were advantageous because of the family time that it afforded him. While the prevailing community perception is that teaching involves short work hours and long holidays (Parliament of Australia, 2018), holidays have been found to positively influence people’s life satisfaction (Dolnicar & Yanamandram, 2012). Another second-year ECT raised establishing a work-life balance as a factor that kept him in the profession. Having developed his time management and organisational skills during the first two years of his career, he had reached a point at the end of his second year of teaching where he no longer took work home either physically, cognitively or emotionally. Working in a school where student behaviour was challenging, he added that staff were very supportive of each other and the focus was on developing the social and emotional development of each child rather than academic grades. This ECT’s experiences further illustrate the critical role that supportive relationships play in reducing workplace stress.

One mature-age second-year ECT living in a remote area cited the effort to get into the profession as a factor that kept her teaching. She explained that her family had made considerable effort for her to pursue her dream to become a teacher. Although the career was challenging at times, she felt that leaving the profession would be letting her family down. In this ECT’s case, her intrinsic motivation to become a teacher combined with her sense of obligation to provide for her family and repay them for the sacrifices they had made for her, kept her in the profession.

Early Career Teachers from the second and third-year cohorts, presented cohort-specific themes or factors. There were no cohort-specific themes from the fourth year ECTs. This finding may more likely reflect the number of participants in the second year cohort compared to the third and fourth year cohorts. This consideration is outlined more clearly in limitation in Chapter Seven: Review and Conclusions.

5.6.2 Influences on ECT attrition from teaching

Table 5.8 provides a summary of common themes across cohorts and cohort-specific themes relating to ECT attrition from teaching.
Table 5.8

Summary of Common and Cohort-specific Themes relating to ECT attrition from teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes across cohorts</th>
<th>2nd Year ECTs</th>
<th>3rd Year ECTs</th>
<th>4th Year ECTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start a family</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interests and life experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
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| Cohort-specific themes                     |               |               |               |
| Preparing for the future direction of education | ✓             |               |               |
| Special needs students                     |               | ✓             |               |
| Salary                                     |               | ✓             |               |
| Not a good fit                             |               |               | ✓             |
| Manner of life                             |               |               | ✓             |
| Leadership judgments                       |               |               |               |
| Parents                                    |               |               | ✓             |
| Student behaviour                          |               |               |               |
| System imperfections                       |               |               |               |

5.6.2.1 Common themes across cohorts

Five ECTs across all three groups, stated that they would consider leaving the profession due to the workload. The issue of workload stemmed from the stress that came from trying to cope with the volume of work associated with education. The ECTs discussed workload regarding teaching, planning and preparation, marking, administrative duties, parent meetings, reporting, staff meetings, extracurricular responsibilities, managing student behaviour, school improvement and compliance processes, accreditation renewal and ongoing professional learning. Based on their experiences, the ECTs reported that stress from workload fluctuated throughout the year and was higher in the initial weeks of the year while routines and systems were established within their classrooms. Early Career teacher stress levels peaked at times where reporting and extracurricular duties and events, such as sacraments and concerts, occurred.

The ECTs’ generally expressed sentiment was that trying to cope with the workload could be overwhelming, and their overall perception was that teachers put more into their job than people in many other professions. Two second-year ECTs
discussed the physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of teaching that added to the stress and impacted on their ability to cope with the workload. One of the second-year ECTs admitted that she struggled with keeping abreast of the latest educational trends and the pressure that she placed on herself to be the best teacher she could. This finding suggests that ECTs place additional expectations upon themselves to prove that they are worthy and capable. Such expectations may be part of the process that ECTs go through while establishing their professional identity in the first few years of their career. Increased knowledge and skills in content and classroom management might reasonably be expected to help ECTs cope with the workload as they become more experienced. However, one mature-aged fourth-year ECT stated that despite becoming more organised and prepared throughout the four years of her career, she was stressed by the workload. One of the third-year ECTs explained that having taught in the same year level for three years decreased her workload because she was familiar with the content and how to teach it and had established classroom management practices that worked. However, this ECT expressed her anxiety at being placed in a different year level the following year, believing that she would feel as though she was starting over.

The ECTs’ reported experiences are apparent in the literature, which identified that a myriad of factors contributed to ECTs’ decision to leave teaching including workload (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Workload has been found to contribute to emotional exhaustion (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015) and, feelings of depersonalisation and a sense of a lack of personal accomplishment (Goddard & Goddard, 2006). McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy and McMillan (2014) found that the two most common reasons cited by ECTs for leaving the profession before retirement were an excessive workload and insufficient recognition. Goddard and Goddard (2006) also identified that because of burnout, ECTs considered moving to another school or leaving the profession entirely.

Eight second and third-year ECTs reported that there was nothing that would make them consider leaving the teaching profession. The ECTs stated that they found teaching to be both professionally and personally rewarding and intrinsically satisfying. Three of the eight ECTs explained that they could not imagine being in any other career, that they perceived teaching to be a great career and that they believed that it was their vocation. One second-year ECT stated that she would consider moving to another school at some stage in her career to broaden her experience but added that she had not thought of leaving the profession.
Three ECTs (two from the second-year cohort and one in the fourth-year cohort) reported that lack of job security was something that would make them consider leaving the profession. Both second-year ECTs had started their second year of teaching on temporary contracts after doing relief teaching work during their first year of teaching. One of the second year ECTs discussed how the uncertainty about gaining a permanent position weighed on his mind. The other ECT, who had been offered an ongoing position at his school, had a different mindset about job security. He stated that if he had not been given a job for the following year, he would have seen it as an opportunity to do something else. This ECT’s attitude regarding securing work may be reflective of literature that found that new generations are not automatically loyal to the employer (Bates, 2004). The fourth-year ECT explained that trying to secure an ongoing full-time position had proved very challenging, especially since she needed to work close to home to balance work-life commitments. This ECT’s situation raises questions about the teaching labour market. Is it difficult for ECTs to secure ongoing employment due to limited positions or are there other factors at play? For instance, this ECT’s ability to secure employment was restricted by the schools that she was prepared to work in due to her desire or need to meet family commitments. For ECTs who have a partner’s career and family’s needs to consider, securing employment may well be more challenging. The impact of a partner’s career on an ECT’s decision to remain in the profession is an area that may warrant further investigation. Within the literature, reduced salary and limited job security have frequently been reported as factors that lead either to teachers contemplating or leaving their career (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Topsfield & Butt, 2012). For example, Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) reported that teachers were frustrated by a lack of job permanency.

Two second and third-year ECTs stated that commitment to family was a factor that would contribute to them leaving teaching. The second-year ECT said that she was considering taking time away from work so that she could spend more time with her young children. The third-year ECT stated that she would leave teaching to start a family, wanting to be at home as the primary caregiver for her children. A review of the literature reveals that historically, women were required to resign from teaching when they started a family (Ingerson, 2004). Significant changes, however, have been made to laws and employment agreements, and far more flexibility now exists to accommodate teachers who wish to start a family. School principals are required to hold a teacher’s position open for them so that they may return to work after a period of
maternity or parental leave (The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth Teachers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, 2015). Such provisions now mean that an ECT may temporarily leave the profession, to start a family, and that they may elect to return at a later date.

Two ECTs, one third-year and one fourth-year, stated that they would consider temporarily leaving teaching to go travelling, enjoy other life experiences or pursue other interests and opportunities. The fourth-year ECT explained that she was interested in other fields that allowed her to work with children and as part of wanting to extend and improve herself continually, had considered doing further study with a view to leaving teaching permanently at some point in the future. One CEWA participant posited that many ECTs left the region she worked in after several years because they had found a partner and either wanted to travel or start a family. The participant added that ECTs who left, often came back to the region and to teaching after four or five years away.

There is limited current scholarly research available on teacher return rates and reasons. Beaudin (1993, 1995) investigated teachers who interrupted their careers to determine the characteristics of those who return. Her research identified that younger women were more likely to leave, and mature-age women were most likely to return after a leave of absence. The period of time away from teaching was influenced by the number of years of teaching experience, with experienced teachers most likely to return especially if they were unable to secure a higher paying job. Beaudin’s studies however, did not explore reasons for leaving or returning. The findings from the present study highlight several possible points that may need further consideration.

First, while some ECTs may leave teaching, this leave of absence may only be temporary. Perhaps the questions to be asked are: Why did the ECTs leave? After what period of time did the ECTs return and, for what reason(s)? Second, could the desire to travel be an indicator of generational differences? Further research into these areas may yield fruitful information that sheds new light on ECT retention.

5.6.2.2 Cohort specific themes

Among the second year ECT cohort, five themes emerged, namely: preparing for education directions, special needs students, salary and, not a good fit. Two second-year ECTs raised the theme of preparing for the future direction of education. One ECT was studying business so that he had the appropriate qualifications to pursue a career in another field if he left teaching. The other ECT expressed concern about how schools
appeared to be becoming more business-like and that he philosophically disagreed with education being treated liked a saleable commodity. The reported experiences of these ECTs suggested that they were both possibly considering the option of leaving teaching, or in the very least did not consider a long-term career. Against a background of school improvement and raising standards, the literature on teacher retention highlights that ECTs will leave if there is a mismatch between their values and educational directions (Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009; Smethem, 2007).

One second-year ECT discussed the challenge of working with special needs students as a factor that would make her consider leaving teaching. The experience of teaching a student with a disability had left her questioning her suitability to teach students with special needs. This ECT did not feel properly trained to work with students with disability and expressed a sense of failure from her perception that she did not adequately meet the student’s needs. The ECT’s reported experiences are widely reflected in the literature which purports that the challenge for ECTs is understanding how to cater effectively for students with disabilities, how to meet accountability requirements including developing Individualised Plans, and how to work collaboratively with families, support staff and external agencies (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Chelsey & Jordan, 2012; Tomlinson & Imbreau, 2011). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) also found that teachers whose main teaching area was special education were far more likely than other teachers to move schools or leave teaching.

One second-year ECT stated that salary was something that could potentially make him consider leaving teaching but added that he would only leave if he could secure a much better paying job. Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) found that the ability to earn a stable income was a factor influencing ECTs decision to either stay or leave the profession. One second-year ECT described teaching as ‘not a good fit’ when discussing a colleague who had left the profession permanently after only two years because she discovered that teaching was not her passion or calling. This finding stresses the importance of attracting people into the profession who have the right motives (Richardson & Watt, 2005).

Manner of life was a factor that one third-year ECT raised. All staff within Catholic schools in Western Australia are required to live in a manner in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic Church which includes living separately prior to marriage. She disclosed that she had considered leaving the profession and using her skills
elsewhere because of the hypocrisy that she observed. The ECT explained that she was not permitted to live with her fiancé; however, she knew of staff in other Catholic schools whose principals disregarded the manner of life requirements. No literature was found on manner of life and its impact on ECTs’ perceptions of teaching as well as decisions to remain in or leave the profession, indicating that this is an area that may require further investigation.

Two fourth-year ECTs discussed leadership judgements as a factor that had led them to consider leaving teaching. Specifically, these ECTs referred to the manner in which leadership dealt with issues, prioritised matters and did not involve teachers in decision-making. One ECT felt that she had been treated unfairly by her Assistant Principal, who criticised her teaching skills without ever having spent time observing her in class, meeting with her to offer support and give her feedback. The other ECT stated that her principal was more interested in presenting the school in a positive light to parents and CEWA than supporting ECTs and new staff. This finding is apparent in the work of Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) who reported that teacher attrition can be caused by unfavourable work environment factors. The literature also pointed to the potentially damaging impact negative interactions with members of school leadership can have (Anthony & Ord, 2008; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015) and the importance of the development of schools with cultures where teachers are part of a community of professional learning (Cochran-Smith & Lylte, 2012; Ward, 2011).

One fourth-year ECT reported that the behaviour and attitudes of some students’ and their parents would make her consider leaving teaching. Kitching, Morgan and O’Leary (2009) reported that student behaviour is frequently framed as a negative experience by teachers. This ECT also specified system imperfections as an issue and reflected on how her enthusiasm, passion and creativity had been suppressed over the four years of her career. The ECT explained that the way in which schools work, that is the workload, constant changes within education, policies, procedures and protocols, had removed her individuality and moulded her to conform to the system.

5.6.3 Summary

Section Five explored the factors that influenced ECTs’ decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession. The ECTs cited six common themes across the three cohorts that helped them cope with challenges and made them want to stay in the
teaching profession. They were: personal and professional growth, students, resilience, support/CEWA ECT program, holidays and, personal responsibilities. Many of the ECTs’ coping mechanisms and reasons for remaining in teaching, identified in the present study, were reflected in the literature (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Mansfield, Beltman & Price, 2014).

Numerous cohort-specific themes contributing to intentions to stay in the profession were also highlighted. Among the second-year ECTs, an enjoyment of teaching, being in a gender balanced staff, being part of a faith community and career opportunities were raised. The second-year ECTs also proffered salary, establishing a work-life balance and the effort required to get into the profession as reasons for remaining in teaching. The third-year cohort raised job security as a factor that retained them in teaching. No cohort-specific themes were raised among the fourth-year ECTs. Overall, the themes most often linked back to the ECTs’ motivations to join teaching as well reflecting practical aspects of the profession. Except for working in a gender balanced staff, the present findings were apparent in the literature (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan, 2009; Day, 2008; McKenzie et al., 2014).

Early Career Teachers across all three cohorts, raised workload as the factor that would make them consider leaving teaching. Workload contributed significantly to work stress which in turn had the potential to cause burnout. Other common themes across cohorts, presented by two cohorts, included: to start a family, poor job security, to pursue other interests and life experiences, and nothing (Bik-har & Hoi-fai, 2011; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Smethem, 2007).

Numerous cohort-specific factors were identified in the findings. The second-year ECTs discussed preparing for the education directions, special needs students, salary and teaching not being a good fit. Only one factor was raised among the third-year cohort, namely manner of life. The fourth-year ECTs stated that they would consider leaving due to leadership judgements (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan, 2009; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015), parents, student behaviour (Kitching et al., 2009) and system imperfections. Several factors, including salary and job security, were discussed as both a factor that could contribute to an ECT electing to either remain in, or leave, teaching.
5.7 Chapter Conclusion

Chapter Five provided an interpretive discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter. The data from each of the three ECT cohorts were analysed and discussed in relation to relevant literature. The discussion centred around five overarching themes that linked directly to the specific research questions. This chapter provided the basis for Chapter Six: Review and Conclusions.
Chapter Six: Review and Conclusions

6.1 Introduction
The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in Western Australian Catholic primary schools that led them to remain in the profession. Specifically, the research gathered a snapshot of 22 ECTs in the second, third or fourth year of their career. Worldwide, teacher attrition has been a problem that has received widespread attention due to its economic and educational impact (Ingersoll, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2000b). Much of the research available has focused on identifying factors that contribute to attrition, that is, what is not working in schools and education systems. The present study takes a different orientation and examines the issue from the perspective of what is working.

6.2 Design of the research
The research is based on a constructivist epistemology, with an interpretivist theoretical perspective, specifically using a symbolic interactionist lens. The methodology employed was an instrumental case study which sought to identify the experiences and self-perceptions of second, third and fourth-year ECTs. Data collection methods included a survey, semi-structured interview and reflective journaling by the researcher. Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman’s (1994) interactive model of data management and analysis and involved three processes: data condensation, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions. Chapter Five discussed the findings from the analysis of the data and the review of relevant literature. The following section presents the responses to the five specific research questions formulated for the research.

6.3 Research questions answered
6.3.1 Specific research question 1: What motivated the Early Career Teachers to enter the teaching profession?
The ECTs in the present study expressed feeling motivated to join the teaching profession mainly due to personal enjoyment of working with children. Other reasons provided included: feeling a calling to the profession (vocation), having had an
inspirational role model, needing a personal challenge, switching careers and the desire to inspire and motivate others. Collectively, these responses provided examples of vocational, intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation.

6.3.2 Specific research question 2: What do Early Career Teachers like/dislike about teaching?

Specific research question comprised two components: what ECTs liked about teaching and, what ECTs disliked about teaching. The ECTs identified a broad range of factors that they liked about teaching. The five areas discussed across the cohorts were: student learning and growth, relationships, variety, personal challenge, and holidays. These factors will be briefly explained.

Student learning and growth included the satisfaction and enjoyment that the ECTs gained from observing positive changes in their students’ learning and personal development. The ECTs’ enjoyment came from the self-acknowledgement they had played a significant role in enabling their students to learn and that the growth and development that they witnessed was, in part, due to their invested effort in those students. Relationships encompassed a range of different connections that the ECTs formed within the context of their school community, including those with students, parents, colleagues, and community. Relationships played several essential roles. First, relationships provided ECTs with a sense of belonging to the school and community. Particularly important to ECTs’ sense of belonging in a school and community was the relationships that ECTs formed with their students and being able to work alongside other people who were passionate about teaching children. Second, relationships offered support structures both inside and outside of work. Support inside work came from colleagues (other ECTs, experienced teachers, Education Assistants, support staff) and school leadership. Support from these sources was crucial for the ECTs to locate necessary information and resources for them to do their work as well as to provide them with affirmation and feedback about their job performance. Finally, relationships reinforced the ECTs’ motivation for entering the teaching profession.

Having a career that offered variety on a daily basis appealed to the ECTs. Teaching gave the ECTs the opportunity to work with an assortment of students, colleagues and families in a range of different ways. Variety meant that ECTs were continually challenged to develop new and creative ways to help children learn. Variety also required ECTs to learn to be flexible and adaptive in dealing with different people.
and issues as they arose. The holidays that teachers receive were perceived as a likable factor, because they afforded teachers time to relax, to pursue personal interests and spend time family and friends. The other aspects of teaching which ECTs liked included working with students, school location, Teacher Designed School, being yourself and in control, experiences that created positive feelings and the Australian Curriculum.

The two dislikes common across the ECT cohorts were parents and workload. Parents encompassed two main aspects, parenting style and teacher-parent relationships. Parenting style referred to some parents’ attitudes and beliefs and the relationship between the parent and their child. The ECTs discussed the tendency of parents in their experience to be quick to judge and react when things went wrong at school, to side often with their child and to only meet with the ECTs if there was a perceived problem. The ECTs cited as concerning factors, parental over-protectiveness, parents’ desire to value their child over and above others and to be friends with their child. The ECTs spoke about feeling awkward around parents, particularly at the beginning of the year, until professional credibility and the teacher-parent relationship had been established. This issue was most prevalent amongst the second-year ECTs who talked about feeling unprepared for dealing with problematic parents. Parents were perceived as particularly difficult if they displayed abusive behaviours. Those ECTs who were career switchers and entered teaching later in life had more life experiences and interpersonal skills to draw on when dealing with such parents. Although parents’ behaviours and attitudes were something mature-aged ECTs disliked, they appeared to manage parents more effectively. The ECTs also discussed school politicking and explained how they perceived that some parents favoured particular teachers over others, usually to try and have an influence over decision-making in the school.

Teaching workload was the second common dislike of ECTs. Workload included regular teaching and administrative duties, teaching across multiple ages and the extracurricular expectations associated with belonging to the Catholic sector. Such extra-curricular expectations included attending sacramental masses, after school sports and additional staff meetings. ECTs disliked administrative duties because these duties detracted from time and effort that they perceived should be put into teaching. Extra-curricular expectations were seen to place additional stress on teachers in Catholic schools. The ECTs also commented on the physical and emotional impact that the large
number of hours the teaching profession required from them and added that they felt unprepared by their University training for the workload.

Dislikes of teaching identified amongst the second-year ECTs included politics, extracurricular expectations and separating work and home. Among the third-year ECTs manner of life, location and student behaviour were disliked. The fourth-year ECTs cited curriculum, sense of underachievement, catering for diversity and leadership style as factors they disliked.

6.3.3 Specific research question 3: What are the main challenges that Early Career Teachers face?

The main challenges that ECTs faced were closely aligned to those factors cited as dislikes of teaching. Early Career Teachers across all three cohorts raised three main challenges, namely: parents, workload and behaviour management. Each will be discussed briefly.

Parents and workload are both reflected in an earlier finding which outlined ECTs’ dislikes of teaching (Section 6.3.2). Parents presented as a challenge to ECTs in several ways. First, parents did not always treat ECTs respectfully. Second, ECTs viewed parents’ perceptions of school-based issues to be biased in favour of their child’s testimony. A third parental challenge was parenting styles that resulted in the child’s behaviour affecting the ECTs’ classroom and behaviour management. Another reported parent-related challenge was politicking where parents had personal agendas and were perceived to try and manipulate school-based situations in order to meet their own needs. The ECTs identified teaching workload as a challenge because it potentially led to emotional, physical and psychological stress. This stress could result in a sense of underachievement and under-performance, which in turn could undermine the ECTs’ self-efficacy. Workload related stress is widely reported in the literature as a factor that contributes to and increases the likelihood of burnout.

Behaviour management presented as a challenge to ECTs across all three groups due to four factors. One factor was school location. Student behaviour was reported as more challenging if the ECT’s school was in a rural or remote area that experienced higher levels of truancy and transiency. Irregular attendance potentially resulted in students’ lack of socialisation to school. A second factor was the ECTs’ perceived level of behaviour management skills. Inconsistent application of consequences and reinforcement of classroom expectations contributed to behaviour management
difficulties and was more prevalent among the second-year ECTs. Outside the ECTs’ locus of control, parenting styles and attitudes added to students’ challenging behaviours if there were limited structures, routines and consequences at home. In such situations, the school adopted a pseudo parent role and the ECT became responsible for discipline and teaching prosocial behaviours. A final factor was student personality clashes, which affected the social dynamics and behaviour management of the classroom. Behaviour management was particularly problematic when: (i) there was no clear school policy in place, (ii) ECTs felt unsupported, and (iii) if parents became involved.

6.3.4 Research question 4: How do Early Career Teachers cope with the challenges in light of their experiences?

Early Career Teachers across all three cohorts raised support as the main strategy that helped them cope with the challenges they faced. All 22 ECTs cited support, a broad theme incorporating six factors, namely: work, community, students, friends, partner/spouse and family. Key to all these factors was the relationships that ECTs had with others which gave them a sense of connectedness and being valued. The ECTs described support received at work, from colleagues, leadership and Education Assistants as the main way in which they had coped with the challenges they experienced as teachers. Support also came from school structures such as staff providing professional development for other staff and the adoption of specific teaching programs. Being involved in community organisations offered ECTs a chance to form connections and friendships with other people who possessed similar interests. In addition, such involvement also helped support ECTs to establish relationships with their students, the students’ parents and the broader community. Family and support from home helped ECTs cope with challenges, particularly in instances where the ECT had another teacher in the family. That person often provided mentor-like support that was not directly part of the ECT’s school context. Another support structure identified was having a personal friend, a supportive spouse or a partner.

While not a coping strategy, mature-aged ECTs credited their age as a factor that helped them cope with challenges. Having had a range of life experiences provided them with a broader perspective on life and greater emotional maturity to manage issues when they arose. Other factors that helped ECTs cope with the challenges in light of their experiences included personal resilience, community involvement and students.
Personal attributes helped ECTs recover from challenges, although paradoxically the challenges ECTs faced helped them become more resilient. Community involvement increased ECTs’ sense of belonging while ECTs students’ unconditional acceptance and positive behaviour towards them made them feel accepted, valued and supported. Overall, the coping strategies cited reinforced the ECTs’ motivations for becoming teachers.

6.3.5 Specific research question 5: What factors, if any, in Early Career Teachers’ experiences made them want to continue in/leave the profession?

Specific research question five had two components: factors that made them want to continue in the profession and, factors that made them want to leave the profession. Early Career Teachers across all three cohorts discussed three main factors that helped them work through the challenges and made them want to keep teaching. They were: personal and professional growth, students and resilience.

Personal and professional growth contributed to ECTs expressing a sense of pride in how their experiences as teachers had helped them develop cognitively, socio-emotionally, behaviourally and spiritually. The growth that they observed in themselves motivated them to remain in the profession. The concept of students encompassed working with children, the joy and satisfaction derived from that work and the relationships that the ECTs formed with their students. The theme was closely linked with the ECTs’ vocational and intrinsic motivations for joining the profession. Resilience integrated being strong, being able to work through difficult situations, placing emotional distance between oneself and challenges, and demonstrating tenacity and grit. Resilience was essential for helping ECTs face and work through challenges that they faced as teachers especially lack of support, parents and teaching workload.

Other themes raised across the cohorts were: support/CEWA ECT program, holidays and personal responsibilities. Support from a range of sources, including the CEWA ECT program, was critical to providing ECTs with a sense of connection to the people and the workplace. Support also gave ECTs essential content and pedagogical knowledge that eased the transition from pre-service to in-service status. Holidays were considered advantageous for personal rejuvenation and assisting with a work-life balance. Having personal responsibilities such as providing for a family also helped retain ECTs in the profession.
The second-year ECTs cited seven cohort-specific themes or factors, namely: enjoyment of teaching, gender balanced staff, faith community, career opportunities, salary, establishing work-life balance and effort to get into the profession. Job security was a factor raised by the third-year ECT cohort. No cohort-specific themes or factors were presented by the fourth-year ECTs.

Workload was a strong disincentive for ECTs to remain in teaching. Raised among all three cohorts, the issue with workload stemmed from the stress that came from trying to cope with the sheer volume of work associated with working in education. Many ECTs described trying to cope with the workload as overwhelming and overall perception was that teachers put more into their job than people in many other professions. Other reasons for contemplating quitting the profession included: wanting to start a family, lack of job security and pursuing other interests and life experiences. Wanting to start a family did not necessarily mean that an ECT would leave teaching permanently. Lack of job security was an area of concern for ECTs, many of whom were on temporary contracts. Some ECTs discussed leaving teaching to pursue other interests and life experiences suggesting that they did not necessarily consider teaching as a long-term career choice.

The second-year ECTs discussed four cohort-specific factors that would influence their decision to remain in teaching. These factors were: preparing for the future direction of education, teaching special needs students, salary and not a good fit. Among the third-year cohort, only manner of life was cited. The fourth-year ECTs stated that leadership judgments, parental behaviour, student behaviour and system imperfections could force their hand and make them consider leaving the profession.

6.4 A Proposed Goodness-of-Fit Model and Framework

Relationships, motivation and resilience are the three main factors to emerge from this research’s findings that impact on ECTs’ decision to remain in the teaching profession. Teaching is a highly relational profession, and the relationships that ECTs have with others are integral to their well-being and both personal and professional growth. The research findings show that supportive relationships are a critical component in the retention of ECTs because those relationships positively influence an ECT’s sense of belonging, importance and being valued (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Supportive relationships contribute to an ECT’s resilience, self-efficacy and ability to cope with challenges that they face as teachers.
The ECTs in the present study alluded to their motivation to teach when describing how they coped with challenges. The findings suggested that: (i) it is important to consider and target the range of motivations attracting people to the teaching profession; and, (ii) that school leaders need to ensure that ECTs’ motivation for teaching is reinforced within the workplace (Richardson & Watt, 2006). The findings propose that there needs to be a “goodness-of-fit” between the ECTs’ personal traits and motivation for being a teacher and their work and social contexts.

The term ‘goodness-of-fit’ is derived from Bowlby’s (1988) work on attachment which identified that the strength of attachment between a child and primary caregiver was directly related to how well each met the other’s needs. Within the proposed model, the term refers to how well an ECT’s individual context, social/personal context and work context are synchronised to allow the ECT to feel ‘attached’ to the workplace and the teaching profession. The proposed model aligns closely with research on job satisfaction and embeddedness (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Hottom & O’Neill, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). The proposed Goodness-of-Fit Model (Model) is outlined in Figure 6.1.

![Diagram of Goodness-of-Fit Model]

*Figure 6.1. Goodness-of-Fit Model.*
A goodness-of-fit is achieved when the ECT’s individual needs, career-provided and social elements align. However, when one or more of these elements do not align, a poorness-of-fit occurs. The researcher proposes that the Model can be used to explain pathways that lead to either ECT retention or attrition. The Model’s components are outlined as a framework in Figure 6.2.

The Goodness-of-Fit Framework (Framework) can be used to explain possible ECT retention or attrition pathways. The Framework further develops previous research on job satisfaction and embeddedness (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Hottom & O’Neill, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001), by considering how an ECT’s fit with teaching can be influenced during the Pre-service Teacher (PT) career phase before the ECT formally joins the profession. To that extent, the Model and Framework potentially have implications that extend beyond the Western Australian Catholic primary school context from which the findings were derived. Following the Framework diagram, an explanation of the PT and ECT phases of the Framework is provided that describes how different degrees of goodness or poorness of fit may occur.
Figure 6.2. Goodness-of-Fit Framework: Application of the Goodness-of-Fit Model to explain potential PT and/or ECT attrition or retention pathways.
6.4.1 Preservice teacher

Preservice teachers (PTs), based on their temperament and life experiences, enter the teacher training institution with a toolkit of unique traits including: values, beliefs and attitudes, self-concept, mindset, and intelligence. Previous life experiences will have equipped PTs with levels of resilience, emotional intelligence and allowed for talents and gifts to be evidenced. All of these factors contribute to the PTs’ motivation for entering the teaching profession (Hong, 2012).

The Goodness-of-Fit Model proposes that the PTs’ motivation for entering teaching may be either adaptive or maladaptive. Adaptive motives are vocational, altruistic, intrinsic or extrinsic motivations that facilitate deep and lasting engagement (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010). In contrast, maladaptive motives are typically extrinsic and lead to disengagement or superficial engagement and pertain to uncertainty (Bruinsma & Jansen; McKenzie et al., 2014). The theory suggests that PTs’ motivation for becoming teachers will influence teaching performance during their preservice training. Moreover, the PTs’ self-efficacy will influence their motivation for becoming a teacher (Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, & Weatherby-Fell, 2016). For instance, within the university context, PTs with adaptive motivation might be expected to be more committed to attending lectures and tutorial participation than PTs with maladaptive motivation. Likewise, within the practical experience context, PTs with adaptive motivation will apply more effort and perform better within the classroom and school. Preservice teachers with maladaptive motivation might approach tasks with uncertainty about his or her ability to effectively complete tasks, perceive the locus of control to be outside of themselves, all of which may become self-handicapping within the teaching context. The support structures and level of resiliency that PTs have during their preservice training will also have a strong bearing on how they cope with the university and practical workplace experiences.

Consequently, PTs with adaptive motivation might experience more positive affective events during their school-based experiences and university training which further reinforces their motivation to become a teacher (Hong, 2010; Tiplic, Brandmo & Elstad, 2015). Thus, a goodness-of-fit exists between PTs’ motives for entering teaching and their teaching experiences. On the other hand, PTs with maladaptive motives may call into question their suitability as a teacher following the practical teaching experiences and university training. A state of poorness-of-fit may be created, potentially leading to the PTs leaving the teaching course to pursue other career options.
However, some PTs with maladaptive motives may elect to persist with teaching and continue to become qualified teachers.

6.4.2 Early Career Teacher

The Goodness-of-Fit Model (Model) proposes that for ECTs to remain in the profession, there needs to be a match or balance between the ECTs’ individual needs and the needs of their work and social contexts. Support from both the work and social contexts have a strong bearing on ECT resilience and retention (Fullan, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Le Cornu, 2013). The presence or absence of supportive relationships creates a multitude of possible pathways that can be summarised into four scenarios relating to the application of the Model. In each scenario, factors such as support have been described in very general terms to allow for individual variability and for flexibility and generalisability to a range of contexts. The model aims to explore aspects of the dynamic interplay between ECTs and their work and social contexts without apportioning fault. The four scenarios will now be explored.

6.4.2.1 Goodness-of-fit between work context with supportive social context.

In this first scenario, there is a balance between the needs of the ECT and the work context. Within the work context, the school culture matches with the ECT’s motivation, values, attitudes and beliefs. The ECT’s skills and experiences are acknowledged and used. Support is provided for, and well received by, the ECT. For example, mentoring and/or coaching is provided within the school to support the ECT as his or her transition from pre-service to in-service status (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The work context also provides good physical workplace conditions and the school location, and allows for the ECT to have required access to professional and social resources. A state of goodness-of-fit exists between the ECT and the work context. In this scenario, support from the ECT’s personal context provides personal rejuvenation which enables a work-life balance to be created and become established over time. This scenario promotes both personal and professional growth for the ECT which would most likely encourage the ECT to remain in the school and the profession.

6.4.2.2 Goodness-of-fit between work context without supportive social context.

In this second scenario, there is a balance between the needs of the ECT and the work context but not between the ECT and his or her social context. The work context
provides the ECT with supportive relationships reinforcing the ECT’s motivation, values, attitudes and beliefs. The ECT’s skills and experiences are acknowledged and used, the physical workplace conditions are good and the school location allows for access to required professional and social resources. A goodness-of-fit exists between the ECT and the work context. However, in this scenario, the ECT’s personal context does not provide the required support.

The ECT might not have a supportive family, partner or social network that enables the ECT to create a work-life balance. In this instance, the ECT’s motivation to remain in teaching may remain high and the ECT may use the social relationships within the school context to compensate for the lack of support outside the workplace. In essence, work colleagues may become a pseudo family for the ECT. In situations where the ECT has a spouse or partner, and/or children, it is also possible that the ECT’s performance as a teacher might be compromised if support is not provided through his or her personal context. Likewise, when issues arise within the ECT’s personal context, for example, in cases of complex trauma or family breakdowns, the ECT’s teaching performance could also be affected. In these cases, the social relationships within the work context may provide support and sustain the ECT.

6.4.2.3 Poorness-of-fit between work context with supportive personal context.

In this third scenario, a poorness-of-fit is created when the workplace does not meet the needs of the ECT, and/or the needs of the workplace are not being met by the ECT. The disconnect may arise for many reasons. Within the literature, three main factors are identified: insufficient support; workplace conditions/location; and, belief-culture mismatch (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Firstly, the ECT may receive insufficient support, or perceive that they receive insufficient support, to foster their professional growth and provide them with social connection and a sense of belonging. Research has shown that how effectively school leaders deal with employees’ emotions impacts on retention (Bates, 2004). The most disengaged ECTs are likely to be those who feel most disconnected from their manager (mentor teacher, coach, leadership team) and perceive that the school community does not demonstrate care for them. The disengagement may be the result of a range of factor including leadership style, personality clashes between staff and generational differences. While a good relationship with leadership (including care, availability and praise) may make an ECT more resilient in relation to other challenges within the workplace (Fitz-ens, 2000),
insufficient social support and disconnection may lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Secondly, the school may offer poor workplace conditions and/or a location that restricts access to resources. Schools situated in remote or rural locations may be isolating to ECTs because of distance from family, extended social networks and social outlets. The final reason is that there may be a mismatch between the ECT’s beliefs and values and the school/system culture. In instances where the ECT’s beliefs, values and attitudes are misaligned to those of the workplace, cognitive dissonance can occur. The ECT will make changes to resolve the dissonance which may result in them either leaving the school, the sector or the profession. The third-year ECT in the present study who found the manner of life challenging and hypocritical is an example of such a mismatch. In that instance, the ECT’s sense of workplace ‘justice’ impacted on her job satisfaction and potentially her longevity in the profession (De Conick & Stilwell, 2004).

The goodness-of-fit model proposes that when the work context offers insufficient support, poor workplace conditions/location and there is a belief-culture mismatch, the ECT may question their motivation and suitability for teaching. However, if the ECT has good resilience levels and has a personal context that offers support, provides rejuvenation and helps to create a work-life balance, the ECT may be more likely to remain in the school. Alternatively, the ECT may elect to move to another school that may offer a work context that may potentially provide a goodness-of-fit. An ECT who does not have sufficient resilience may elect to leave teaching and pursue other career options.

6.4.2.4 Poorness-of-fit between work context without supportive personal context.

In this final scenario, a poorness-of-fit exists between the ECT’s work context and personal context. In this instance the work and personal contexts do not meet the ECT’s needs, nor does the ECT meet the needs of either context. The Goodness-of-Fit Model postulates that the ECT’s motivation for entering teaching may have been maladaptive in the first place. Irrespective of resilience levels, the ECT is most likely to leave teaching to pursue other career options.
The Goodness-of-Fit Model has specific implications for tertiary institutions that offer preservice teacher courses and also for principals and leadership teams in schools. These implications will be discussed further in the following section.

6.5 Implications for the Profession

The findings from the study have implications for the following groups or individuals:

1. Catholic Education Western Australia
2. Principal associations and current principals
3. University programs related to teacher education
4. Other researchers and system authorities

6.5.1 Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA)

The research findings have implications for the Executive Director and Directors of CEWA. At the sector level, research highlights the importance of support in developing the professional identity of ECTs and retaining them in the teaching profession (Howe, 2006; Martinez, 2004; McKenzie et al., 2014). Retaining ECTs in the profession should provide the best educational outcomes for students in Catholic schools while also planning for future succession of school leaders. While CEWA has provided an ECT program it has only done so over the last four years.

6.5.2 Principal associations and current principals

At the Catholic principal and school level, the research highlights that it is essential for schools to have effective structures in place to support ECTs (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Le Cornu, 2013; Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2011). The principal, in conjunction with the leadership team, is instrumental in setting the school culture through the leadership style within the school. The findings and Goodness-of-Fit model suggest that there are six key areas that principals need to consider regarding ECTs. These areas are: school culture, leadership style, school support structures, teacher recognition, motivation and location. The research findings suggest that school principals who promote a professional learning community culture, who distribute leadership and actively value and invite staff involvement in decision-making are more likely to retain staff (Johnson et al., 2012; Watkins, 2005). Such practices provide staff, including ECTs, with a sense of feeling valued and having autonomy within their workplace. The research findings also indicate that principals
should have support structures in place, such as mentors and coaching programs, which facilitate meaningful collegial relationships between ECTs, staff and students (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2012). These structures may include having a designated, trained mentor to oversee the ECT’s transition into the profession and time dedicated for the mentor and ECT to meet. Coaching, onsite staff-led professional development and networking opportunities could also be beneficial.

Principals or designated representatives, need to be available to support ECTs, show genuine interest and care for them and provide praise and timely feedback about the ECT’s. Moreover, the ECTs’ skills and experience need to be acknowledged and valued. Principals are also uniquely placed, as part of the employment process, to understand the ECT’s motivation for becoming a teacher so as to ensure that the work context provides factors that positively reinforce that motivation (Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2010). Principals or designated representatives, need to be available to support ECTs, show genuine interest and care for them and provide praise and timely feedback about the ECT’s. Moreover, the ECTs’ skills and experience need to be acknowledged and valued. Principals are also uniquely placed, as part of the employment process, to understand the ECT’s motivation for becoming a teacher so as to ensure that the work context provides factors that positively reinforce that motivation (Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2010).

Principals need to be cognizant of the location of the work context, particularly in instances where ECTs are moving to a rural or remote area for the first time and may need to facilitate connections between the ECT and the broader community. Implementing strategies that make the ECT feel valued and which foster a sense of belonging is essential to building the ECT’s resilience, efficacy and desire to remain in the profession.

6.5.3 University education programs related to teacher education.

The research has implications for universities in Western Australia which offer teacher-training programs. Tertiary providers might consider the findings of this research as the findings indicate that ECTs are often underprepared for some of the rigours of teaching. These rigours include workload, establishing work-life balance, dealing with parents, report writing and classroom management.
6.5.4 Other researchers and system authorities

This study provides a platform for researchers interested in the professional and personal needs of ECTs. It may be worthwhile replicating the study in other education sectors within Western Australia and expanding future research to include secondary Early Career Teachers. Researchers could undertake studies beyond Western Australia, exploring the lived experiences of ECTs in other Australian States and Territories. The study could also have implications for researchers interested in ECTs beyond Australia.

The Goodness-of-Fit Framework and study findings may contribute to the work being undertaken by AISTL and other national agendas to increase educational outcomes in several ways. First, adding to the body of knowledge regarding ECT challenges. Second, offering insights into factors that are required to provide optimal environments in which ECTs can flourish professionally.

6.6 Recommendations for the Profession

6.6.1. Catholic Education Western Australia.

Five recommendations are suggested for CEWA. Firstly, that CEWA continue to provide consistent support to ECTs during their transition from pre-service to in-service roles. Early Career Teachers in the present study articulated the positive influence that CEWA ECT program facilitators and the program had on them. In particular, the program was appreciated for the networking that it afforded ECTs and the action research and inquiry approach that it encouraged. A well-researched, robust and differentiated program that supports and develops ECTs as future leaders of Western Australian Catholic primary schools is vital not only for the retention of ECTs but also the succession of principals in the system. It is recommended that CEWA consultants continue to work collaboratively with school principals as part of school improvement processes to create workplace contexts that are conducive to providing both logistical and relational support for ECTs.

Secondly, that CEWA adopt practices enabling efficient collection and analysis of data pertaining to Catholic schools and the effectiveness of programs used within the sector. At present, there is a relative dearth of research available on ECTs in Catholic primary schools or Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia. Moreover, few to no descriptive statistics were available through CEWA on how many ECTs are...
employed in Catholic education in Western Australia, which regions they are employed in, how long they remain in their place of employment and/or the Catholic sector.

The third recommendation, based on the proposed Goodness-of-Fit Model and Framework, is that CEWA work with Catholic primary schools to review current school support structures. Within the review, ECT workload could be examined and possibly adjusted. Once graduated the ECT is expected to assume a full workload and the same roles and responsibilities as a more experienced teacher. In other professions with high workloads, such as medicine and law, graduates enter the profession with a reduced workload and complete further workplace training before assuming a full load. The findings of the current study, and an extensive body of educational literature, present an argument for a similar trend to occur in the teaching profession.

6.6.2 Principals of Catholic primary schools

Three recommendations are offered to the principals of Catholic primary schools in light of the research. Firstly, it is recommended that principals take responsibility for the ongoing support and professional learning of ECTs. This ongoing support can be provided through mentor and coaching programs, which facilitate meaningful collegial relationships between ECTs and staff. Secondly, it is recommended that principals, or a designated representative, be available to support ECTs, show genuine interest and care for them and provide regular and timely feedback about the ECT’s performance. Moreover, ECTs’ skills and experience need to be acknowledged and valued by principals. As part of this recommendation, principals need to understand the ECT’s motivation for becoming a teacher so as to ensure that the work context provides factors that positively reinforce that motivation. Thirdly, principals need to be cognizant of the location of the work context, particularly in instances where ECTs are moving to a rural or remote area for the first time. Principals may need to facilitate connections between the ECT and the broader community.

6.6.3 Western Australian universities

Two recommendations are offered to Western Australian universities. Firstly, that universities review their preservice teacher programs with a view to modifying course content and the breadth and depth of experiences covered during practicums. The research findings indicate that many ECTs do not feel adequately prepared for some workplace issues. For example, ECTs need to be more workplace ready for the teaching
workload, dealing with parents and creating a work-life balance. The second recommendation is that universities collaborate with system authorities, including CEWA, to offer a transition program from pre-service to in-serve teaching. The nature of the collaboration may involve research and training of school personnel to ensure that ongoing support is provided to ECTs. For instance, CEWA and universities could collaborate and be responsible for the training of mentor teachers and supporting school leadership teams in the introduction of processes to promote ECT identity, efficacy and resilience.

6.7 Benefits of the Research.

There are three potential benefits of the current research. Firstly, the research has given a voice to a snapshot of second, third and fourth-year ECTs in Western Australian Catholic Primary schools and factors that led them to remain in the profession. In doing so, the research has provided insight into areas of the teaching profession that ECTs like, dislike and find challenging. Secondly, the research has also highlighted strategies that ECTs use to cope with the challenges that they face, and what factors encourage them to remain teaching or lead to them considering leaving the profession. Thirdly, the findings of the present study have contributed to the body of research currently available in ECT retention and attrition and have identified potential areas of future investigation. Emanating from the findings, the research has also generated theory pertaining to factors that are required for ECT retention, as outlined in the Goodness-of-Fit Model and potential pathways to ECT retention and attrition. Based on the generated theory, two models with the potential to increase support, motivation and resilience were presented for consideration.

6.8 Limitations of the Research.

There are two potential limitations to the scope of the current study. The first is that the research is may have limited generalizability in that it is confined to ECTs in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia. However, a descriptively-rich portrayal of participants’ accounts may assist others who seek to apply these findings of this study to their own context(s). A second limitation is that the findings are potentially skewed by the larger number of second-year ECTs compared to the third-year and fourth-year cohorts. Additionally, no data are available on the total number of ECTs in
Western Australian Catholic Primary schools, making it difficult to state how representative the current sample is of the ECT population.

6.9 Conclusion
This study was concerned with exploring the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career Teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools that led them to remain in the profession. The aim behind the research was to understand what encouraged ECTs to remain in the profession in order to determine ways that the Catholic Education sector could support its new teachers. In identifying and disseminating their successes and challenges, the study aimed to find new ways to support and nurture ECTs as they embark on the initial years of their career.

6.10 Personal impact statement
This research has had a significant impact on me. The motivation for the study came initially from Sarah, an ECT who entered teaching full of enthusiasm and promise and then left the profession permanently after only nine months. My motivation was sustained by working alongside ECTs, observing their triumphs and tribulations, and offering support to them. Cumulatively, these experiences and interactions highlighted the necessity for professional and personal support for ECTs. This research has also enabled me as an educator to give back to the profession that I love. As a school leader, it enabled me to be mindful of the critical role that leadership teams play in creating supportive, relational work places that facilitate ECTs’ personal and professional growth. As I move from a substantive school leadership position to a CEWA consultant, I hope that my role will allow me to support ECTs within Catholic Education Western Australia and beyond.
References


Catholic Education Office of Western Australia. (n.d.) Perth Archdiocesan RE Units of Work. Perth: CEOWA.


Ye, Q. (2006). *Commodity booms and their impacts on the Western Australian economy: the iron ore case*. Economics discussion/working paper No. 06-18, The University of Western Australia, Department of Economics.


Appendices
# Appendix A

Early Career Teachers’ Self-perceptions Survey

## Early Career Teachers’ Self-Perceptions Survey

### About you

To help me know you a little better and to understand your situation, the next six questions ask about you.

**1. What is your gender?**
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male

**2. What is your age?**
- [ ] 20 to 24
- [ ] 25 to 30
- [ ] 30 to 34
- [ ] 35 to 39
- [ ] 40 to 44
- [ ] 45 to 49
- [ ] 50 to 54
- [ ] Other (please specify)

**3. Which of the following categories best describes your personal status?**
- [ ] single
- [ ] married
- [ ] separated
- [ ] divorced
- [ ] Other (please specify)
**Early Career Teachers' Self-Perceptions Survey**

4. **What qualifications do you have?**
   - Bachelor of Arts
   - Bachelor of Education
   - Graduate Diploma of Education
   - Master of Education
   - Master of Teaching
   - PhD
   - Other (please specify):

5. **Through which institution did you complete your qualification(s)?**
   - Curtin University
   - Edith Cowan University
   - Murdoch University
   - The University of Notre Dame (Australia)
   - The University of Western Australia
   - Other
     (please specify):

6. **How many years have you been teaching?**
   - This is my first year of teaching
   - I am in my second year of teaching
   - I am in my third year as a teacher
   - I am in my fourth year of teaching
   - This is my fifth year of teaching
Early Career Teachers' Self-Perceptions Survey

About your school

The following questions ask you to provide information about your school and your role in the school.

7. What type of school do you work in?
   - primary
   - composite (K-10)
   - composite (K-12)
   - Other (please specify)

8. In which diocese do you work?
   - Archdiocese of Perth
   - Bunbury
   - Geraldton
   - Broome

9. In what region of Western Australia is your school located?
   - Metropolitan
   - Peel
   - South-West
   - Goldfields-Esperance
   - Great Southern
   - Mid-west
   - Gascoyne
   - Pilbara
   - Kimberley
Early Career Teachers' Self-Perceptions Survey

10. What year level do you teach?
   - 3 year old kindergarten
   - Kindergarten
   - Pre-primary
   - Year 1
   - Year 2
   - Year 3
   - Year 4
   - Year 5
   - Year 6
   - Other (please specify)

11. What is your Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) workload?
   - 1 day per week (0.2FTE)
   - 2 days per week (0.4FTE)
   - Part-time (0.5FTE)
   - 3 days per week (0.6FTE)
   - 4 days per week (0.8FTE)
   - Full time (1.0FTE)
   - Other (please specify)
Early Career Teachers' Self-Perceptions Survey

12. What additional duties have you been given in your school over and above your main classroom teaching duties?

- I only have classroom teaching duties
- IT co-ordinator
- Coordinator of Professional Learning
- Learning Area budgets
- Key teacher literacy
- Key teacher numeracy
- Organise camps, excursions and incursions for the school
- Coaching of colleagues
- Other (please specify)

13. What additional duties over and above your classroom teaching duties have you volunteered to be involved in?

- I have not volunteered to have additional roles or duties in my school.
- Art show
- School fair or fete
- After school sports
- Homework club
- Learning area budgets
- Other (please specify)
Appendix B

Early Career Teacher Interview details and Interview Questions

Dear Early Career Teacher,

Thank you for consenting to be interviewed. To ensure that you have the opportunity to feel prepared I have listed below the main questions you will be asked during the semi-structured interview. There are no right or wrong answers. During the interview you may be asked to explain your answer(s) in more detail so that I have a deep and rich understanding of your perceptions of your experiences. Please provide as much detail or information as you feel comfortable with to share your experiences.

Interview questions:

1. Why did you become a teacher?

2. What is it that you like/dislike about teaching?

3. What are the main challenges, professional and/or personal, that you have faced in your career?

4. What has helped you cope with the main challenges that you have faced as a teacher?

5. (a) Were there any factors that have helped you to work through the challenges and make you want to keep teaching? If so, please explain.
   (b) What factor or factors attracted, or helped you, to want to leave teaching?

I look forward to talking with you soon.

Yours sincerely,

[Signatures]

Mc Deborah Black  Associate Professor Shane Lavery  Dr. Gregory Hine

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (09) 943 9443, research@nd.edu.au

Participant Information Sheet template November 2012
Appendix C

CEWA ECT program facilitator interview details and interview questions

PROJECT TITLE:
To teach or not to teach? The experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR:  Associate Professor Shane Lavery
CO-INVESTIGATOR:  Dr. Gregory Hine
STUDENT RESEARCHER:  Deborah Black
STUDENT’S DEGREE:  Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Leadership Consultant,

Thank you for consenting to be interviewed. I am writing to arrange a time to interview you. The interview is comprised of five main questions and will take approximately 30 – 45 minutes.

One of two methods of recording the interview will be used to record the interview: VoiceMemo if face-to-face, and TapeCall App if over the phone. The interview will then be transcribed. No person(s) or school will be identified in the transcript to maintain confidentiality. A copy of the interview transcript will be emailed to you to read and comment on. If required you can ask for amendments to be made to the transcript to ensure that what is recorded is an accurate portrayal of what you said.

Your contact details will remain confidential and will be deleted according to the Human Research Ethics Committee requirements.

Please select the option that suits you best:

☐ Call me on my preferred telephone number. The best number to reach me on is: ____________________________
☐ Meet me in person.

I appreciate how busy Term Four is. Please provide me with three times and dates that suit you best to be interviewed. I will confirm the interview session details via return email.

1. Date: ____________________________ Time: ____________________________
2. Date: ____________________________ Time: ____________________________
3. Date: ____________________________ Time: ____________________________

To ensure that you have the opportunity to feel prepared I have listed below the main questions you will be asked during the semi-structured interview. There are no right or wrong answers. During the interview you may be asked to explain your answer(s) in more detail so that I have a deep and rich understanding of your perceptions of your experiences. During the interview please provide as much detail or information as you feel comfortable with.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Interview questions:

1. Why was the Early Career Teacher program developed? What is it that you personally and professionally hope to achieve by offering the program?

2. What is the structure of the program and how was it determined?

3. Are there any factors or challenges that have had to be considered in developing a course that caters for the needs of Early Career Teachers in Western Australia? How have they been addressed?

4. What are some of the key factors or challenges that Early Career teachers have raised during the course of the program?

5. What have been key experiences, positive and/or negative, that you have had from working in the Early Career Teacher program?

As was explained in the CEO Participant information Package that you received earlier, you are able to withdraw from this research project at any time. If you elect to withdraw during or after the interview, your interview data will not be included in the thesis.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me via my Cathednet email or on 0418 051 128. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Yours sincerely,

[Signatures]

Ms Deborah Black  Associate Professor Shane Lavery  Dr Gregory Hine

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6915, phone (08) 9433 3949, research@nd.edu.au
Appendix D

Principal introductory letter

June 2014

Dear (Principal’s name)

I am a teacher at Our Lady of Mercy Primary School in Girrawheen. I am currently undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy degree at The University of Notre Dame Australia. My research project is about Early Career (beginning) teacher retention, an issue that is affecting all sectors of education both in Australia and internationally. Some studies have found that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first five years of commencing a teaching position. A large body of research has been conducted into the issue; however, there is very little information available that looks at what is happening specifically in Western Australian Catholic primary schools. For this reason, the purpose of my research is to investigate the experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career teachers in their second, third or fourth years of teaching in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession. It is hoped that the findings of the research will generate theory which will help Universities, the Catholic Education Western Australia and Catholic primary schools to develop and implement strategies to further support, develop and retain Early Career teachers.

The research project has been granted full ethics approval from The University of Notre Dame Australia’s Human Research Ethic Committee and the Executive Director of the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia. A letter of approval from the Executive Director is attached.

I seek your permission for the study to occur in your school and have included a consent form for you to sign and return if you agree. If you give consent I would be most grateful if you would pass the Early Career teacher information package to all Early Career teachers on your staff employed 1.0 FTE or fractional equivalent. Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and focuses on Early Career teachers who are in their second, third or fourth year of teaching. Early Career teachers who consent to participate will be asked to sign the consent form included in this package and return it in the enclosed postage paid envelope. Early Career teachers will also be asked to include an email address. Once I have received their consent, Early Career teachers will be emailed a link to a 5-10 minute long online survey. A copy of the survey is attached for your perusal. Early Career teachers will also be invited to be interviewed later in 2014. A copy of the interview questions is attached.

If you require further information please feel free to contact me directly. Alternatively you can contact the Chief-investigator of the project, Associate Professor Shane Lavery, or the Co-investigator, Dr Gregory Hine. Contact details are listed below.

I thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Deborah Black
Telephone: 0418051128
Email: deborah.hall1@nd.edu.au or black.deborah@cathednet.wa.edu.au

Chief Investigator: Assoc. Professor Shane Lavery. Co-investigator: Dr Gregory Hine
Telephone: (08) 9433 0173
Email: shane.lavery@nd.edu.au | Telephone: (08) 9433 0162
Email: gregory.hine@nd.edu.au

Attach: Letter from Director of CEOWA
Principal consent form
Early Career Teachers’ self-perception survey/interview questions
Participation Information Sheet
Early Career Teacher Consent form
Appendix E

The University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research and Ethics Committee approval letter

7 April 2014

Associate Professor Shane Lavery
School of Education
The University of Notre Dame Australia
Fremantle Campus

Dear Shane,

Reference Number: 014038F
Project Title: “To teach or not to teach? The self-perceptions and experiences of early career primary teachers in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia as to why they have remained in the profession.”

Thank you for submitting the above project for Low Risk ethical review. Your application has been reviewed by a sub-committee of the university’s Human Research Ethics Committee in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). I am pleased to advise that ethical clearance has been granted for this proposed study.

All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval. Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office
Appendix F

Catholic Education Human Ethics Research and Ethics Committee letter

1 May 2014

Ms Deborah Black
1 Sandy Place
WARWICK, WA 6024

Dear Ms Black

RE: TO TEACH OR NOT TO TEACH? THE SELF PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CAREER TEACHERS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS AS TO WHY THEY HAVE REMAINED IN THE PROFESSION

Thank you for your completed application received 15 April 2014, whereby this project aims to give a rich understanding of the lived experiences of the early career teachers and perceived influences on early career teacher decisions regarding employment. The findings could potentially assist in the development of University, Catholic sector and school programs that may improve the retention levels of early career teachers in the profession.

I give in principle support for the selected Catholic schools in Western Australia to participate in this valuable study. However, consistent with CEOWA policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the individual principal and staff members.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. The CEOWA notes that the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee has granted permission for this research project until 7 April 2017 (Approval Number: 014039F).

Any changes to the proposed methodology will need to be submitted for CEOWA approval prior to implementation. The focus and outcomes of your research project are of interest to the CEOWA. It is therefore a condition of approval that the research findings of this study are forwarded to the CEOWA.

Further enquiries may be directed to Jane Costelow at costelow.jane@ceo.wa.edu.au or (08) 6380 6118.

I wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Tim McDonald
Appendix G

Information package describing the study.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: To teach or not to teach? The self-perceptions and experiences of Early Career teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Shane Lavery
CO-INVESTIGATOR: Dr Gregory Hine
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Deborah Black
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Ph.D.

Dear Early Career teacher,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?
The research project is about the issue of early career teacher retention. Some studies have found that as many as 50 per cent of new teachers leave within the first five years of commencing a teaching position. The number of early career teachers who are leaving the profession is particularly worrying. A large body of research has been conducted internationally to investigate the factors that contribute to early career teacher attrition; however, there is little information available that looks at what is happening specifically in Western Australian Catholic primary schools.

The purpose of the project is to investigate the self-perceptions and experiences of Early Career Teachers in their second, third or fourth years of teaching in a Western Australian Catholic primary school as to why they have remained in the profession. By agreeing to participate in the research you will help provide a deep and rich understanding of the factors that influence early career teachers to remain in the profession. It is hoped that the findings of the research will help Universities, the Catholic Education Office and Catholic primary schools to develop programs that will support Early Career teachers.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by PhD candidate, Deborah Black, and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Notre Dame Australia. The project is under the co-supervision of Associate Professor Shane Lavery and Dr Gregory Hine.

What will I be asked to do?
There are two parts to this research project: an online survey and an interview. If you agree to participate you can either complete the online survey or complete the online survey and the interview. The online survey was developed using Survey Monkey. The survey has two sections and thirteen questions. The first section asks general information about your age, gender, personal status, qualifications and number of years teaching. The second section contains seven questions that ask about the school you work in and the nature of your work. Once the online survey is completed it will be coded and the results will be analysed.
if you consent to being interviewed you will be contacted in Term 3, 2014. Depending on your location, the interview will be conducted either face-to-face, via telephone or via Skype. During the interview you will be asked to share your story about your teaching experiences. The interview will be comprised of five questions that focus on why you became a teacher, what you like about being a teacher, challenges you have faced, how you have dealt with different challenges that you have faced and what has influenced your decision to remain in teaching. Interviews will be voice recorded, transcribed and the script analysed for emerging themes. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your interview before it is analysed so that you can attest that it is an accurate account of what you discussed during the interview.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
There are minimal foreseeable risks to you for participating in the project. All information you provide either by survey or interview will be treated as strictly confidential. If you consent to being interviewed you will be provided with a copy of the interview questions beforehand so that you are aware of what will be asked and can answer in a manner that you are comfortable with. You can discontinue from the interview phase of the research project at any time should you feel that it is necessary. In the event that you raise personal matters during the interview that cause visible signs of discomfort to you, I (the researcher) will ask you if you wish to continue or to end the interview. At any stage during the interview, you can request for the interview to end. Counselling is available through the Employee Assistance Program offered through the Catholic Education Office of WA, to any participants who have issues they would like support with.

What are the benefits of the research project?
This research aims to explore the self-perceptions and experiences of Early Career Teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession. It is hoped that the conclusions drawn from the research findings will provide considerable insight into the factors that have influenced early career teachers in Catholic Primary schools in Western Australia to remain in the profession. Having such an understanding of these factors has the potential to assist school principals, universities and the Catholic Education Office staff in making decisions that will support the development of Early Career teachers.

It is hoped that participants will benefit from the knowledge that they have a ‘voice’ and are contributing to research that has the potential to support others. It is also hoped that participants will benefit directly from having the opportunity to speak openly and freely about their own personal circumstances.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to complete the survey your data are anonymous and therefore cannot be retracted. If you consent to be interviewed your transcript can be withdrawn from the project.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?
Information gathered about you will be held in strict confidence. This confidence will only be broken in instances of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests, or mandated reporting by some professionals. To maintain confidentiality, your data will be coded and will then only be identifiable to me (student researcher).

Data will be stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia for a period of five years and then deleted or shredded. The study will be published in Perth, Western Australia through The University of Notre Dame Australia. Respondents will not be identifiable in the published thesis.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?
An executive summary of the project will be sent to all participants after the thesis has been published. Principals and participants will also be sent a link to access the thesis online once it is published.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
If you have any questions about any aspect of the research please feel free to contact any one of the following:

Deborah Black
Mobile: 0418 951 128
Email: black.deborah@cathednet.wa.edu.au

Assoc. Professor Shane Lavery
Telephone: (08) 9433 0173
Email: shane.lavery@nd.edu.au

Dr. Gregory Hine
Telephone: (08) 9433 0152
Email: gregory.hine@nd.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 050809RP). If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6950, phone (08) 9433 0943, research@nd.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?
Fantastic and thank you! Please sign the survey and interview consent form and specify whether you wish to participate in the survey or the survey and the interview, and return it in the stamped return-addressed envelop. When the consent form has been received you will be contacted via email and provided with the link for the Early Career Teachers' Self-Perceptions Survey.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Deborah Black
Assoc. Professor Shane Lavery
Dr. Gregory Hine

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6950, phone (08) 9433 0943, research@nd.edu.au
Appendix H

Principal consent form

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>RESEARCHER’S FULL NAME:</td>
<td>DEBORAH BLACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCHER’S SIGNATURE:</td>
<td>[Signature]</td>
</tr>
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</table>

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1228 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0240, research@nd.edu.au
Appendix I

Early Career Teacher consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To teach or not to teach?
The experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, ____________________________ hereby agree to being a participant in the research project.

☐ online survey of the above research project.
☐ online survey and interview of the above research project.

The Early Career Teachers Self-Perception Survey can be emailed to me at the following address: ____________________________

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet about this project and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I once I have submitted the online survey that it cannot be retracted.
- I understand that the researcher, Deborah Black will contact me via email to arrange a suitable time to interview me.
- I understand that during the interview I will be digitally recorded.
- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the interview phase at any time without prejudice and that this means that my transcription will not be included in the project.
- I understand that all information gathered by the researcher will be treated as strictly confidential, except in instances of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests, or mandated reporting by some professionals.
- I understand that the protocol adopted by the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the Privacy Act are available at http://www.hrhrc.gov.au/
- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCHER'S FULL NAME:</td>
<td>Deborah Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE:</td>
<td>DATE: 21ST MAY 2014</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6950, phone (08) 9433 0443, research@nd.edu.au

Consent Form Template February 2013
Appendix J

CEWA ECT program facilitators information sheet.

CEWA PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE:
To teach or not to teach? The experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Shane Lavery
CO-INVESTIGATOR: Dr Gregory Hine
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Deborah Black
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Leadership consultant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?
The research project is about the issue of early career teacher retention. Some studies have found that as many as 20 per cent of new teachers leave within the first five years of commencing a teaching position. The number of early career teachers who are leaving the profession is particularly worrying. A large body of research has been conducted internationally to investigate the factors that contribute to early career teacher attrition; however, there is little information available that looks at what is happening specifically in Western Australian Catholic primary schools.

The main purpose of the project is to investigate the self-perceptions and experiences of Early Career Teachers in their second, third or fourth years of teaching in a Western Australian Catholic primary school as to why they have remained in the profession. However to ensure the highest level of confirmability and transferability I am also interested in gathering information about the Early Career Teacher Program that is being offered by the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by PhD candidate, Deborah Black, and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Notre Dame Australia. The project is under the co-supervision of Associate Professor Dr Shane Lavery and Dr Gregory Hine.

What will I be asked to do?
If you consent to participate you will be interviewed in Term 4, 2014. The interview will be conducted either face-to-face or via telephone using the TapeACall App. During the interview you will be asked to share your story about your experiences in the development, implementation and presentation of the Early Career Teacher Program. Interviews will be voice recorded, transcribed and the script analysed for emerging themes. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your interview before it is analysed so that you can attest that it is an accurate account of what you discussed during the interview.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
There are minimal foreseeable risks to you for participating in the project. All information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential. If you consent to being interviewed you will be provided with a copy of the interview questions beforehand so that you are aware of what will be asked and can answer in a manner that you are comfortable with. You can discontinue from the interview at any time should you feel that it is necessary. At any stage during the interview, you can request for the interview to end.

What are the benefits of the research project?
This research aims to explore the self-perceptions and experiences of Early Career Teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession. It is hoped that the conclusions drawn from the research findings will provide considerable insight into the factors that have influenced early career teachers in Catholic Primary schools in Western Australia to remain in the profession. Having such an understanding of these factors has the potential to assist school principals, universities and the Catholic Education Office staff in making decisions that will support the development of Early Career teachers.

It is hoped that participants will benefit from the knowledge that they are contributing to research that has the potential to support others. It is also hoped that participants will benefit directly from having the opportunity to speak openly and freely about their own personal circumstances.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to complete the survey your data are anonymous and therefore cannot be retracted. If you consent to be interviewed your transcript can be withdrawn from the project.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?
Information gathered about you will be held in strict confidence. This confidence will only be broken in instances of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests, or mandated reporting by some professionals. To maintain confidentiality, your data will be coded and will then only be identifiable to me (student researcher).

Data will be stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia for a period of five years and then deleted or shredded. The study will be published in Perth, Western Australia through The University of Notre Dame Australia. Respondents will not be identifiable in the published thesis.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?
An executive summary of the project will be sent to all participants after the thesis has been published. Principals and participants will also be sent a link to access the thesis online once it is published.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
If you have any questions about any aspect of the research please feel free to contact any one of the following:

Deborah Black
Mobile: 0419 951 428
Email: black.deborah@cathdnet.wa.edu.au

Assoc. Professor Shane Lavery
Telephone: (08) 9433 0173
Email: shane.lavery@nd.edu.au

Dr Gregory Hine
Telephone: (08) 9433 0152
Email: gregory.hine@nd.edu.au
What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (Approval Number: 014039F). If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0943, research@nd.edu.au.

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?
Fantastic and thank you! Please complete the Consent Form and email it to me. I will then contact you to arrange a time and date that is convenient to you to be interviewed.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Deborah Black

Associate Professor Shane Lavery

Dr Gregory Hine

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0943, research@nd.edu.au.
Appendix K

CEWA ECT program facilitators consent form

CEWA INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To teach or not to teach?
The experiences and self-perceptions of Early Career teachers in Western Australian Catholic primary schools as to why they have remained in the profession.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, [(participant's name) ________________________], hereby agree to being a participant in an interview for the above research project.

- I have read and understood the CEO Participant Information Sheet about this project and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that the researcher, Deborah Black will contact me via email to arrange a suitable time to interview me.
- I understand that during the interview I will be digitally recorded.
- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the interview phase at any time without prejudice and that this means that my transcription will not be included in the project.
- I understand that all information gathered by the researcher will be treated as strictly confidential, except in instances of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests, or mandated reporting by some professionals.
- I understand that the protocol adopted by the University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the Privacy Act are available at [http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/).
- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

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<th>Participant’s signature:</th>
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<tr>
<td>DEBORAH BLACK</td>
<td>21ST MAY 2014</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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