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Perceptions of large-scale, standardised testing in religious education: How do religious educators perceive The Bishops' Religious Literacy Assessment?

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Publication Details

Poncini, A. (2018). Perceptions of large-scale, standardised testing in religious education: How do religious educators perceive The Bishops' Religious Literacy Assessment? (Doctor of Philosophy (College of Education)). University of Notre Dame Australia.
<https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/210>

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CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDING FIVE

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents Finding Five that addresses SRQ 2: How do religious educators respond to the administration and implementation of BRLA as a large-scale, standardised assessment in Religious Education? Finding Five emerged from the collation and analysis of data from the 43 of the 238 teachers and school leaders of RE in Phase One who volunteered to participate in individual or group interviews in Phase Two. These religious educators provided responses to the following two interview questions with associated contributing questions:

- What is involved in administering the BRLA?
- How have you used the BRLA in RE?

In response to the questions, the religious educators affirm and build upon Findings Three and Four that also address SRQ 2.

8.2 The Presentation of Finding Five

Two aspects of Finding Five are presented under the heading of a sub-finding (Table 8.1). The first sub-finding discusses the religious educators' responses to the instructions and procedures for administering the BRLA. The second sub-finding identifies the concerns raised by the religious educators about the implementation of the assessment.

Finding Five suggests that the 43 religious educators who participated in Phase Two responded to the administration and implementation of the BRLA in much the same way as the 238 religious educators in Phase One. As mentioned in Chapter Six, these religious educators represent a skewed sub-sample of the 238 religious educators in the study because they mostly supported the use of the BRLA. However, they also reiterated the general concerns raised by groups of religious educators in Phase One. These concerns regard preparing students for the administration of the assessment and the perceived difficulty with the vocabulary used in the BRLA test items. In addition, the argument about LSAs causing stress for students and teachers, especially students in Years Three, Five and Nine who were perceived as overexposed to these types of assessments was raised again.

Table 8.1

Overview of Chapter Eight: Finding Five

8.2	Finding Five: The religious educators described mixed experiences of administering and implementing the BRLA.
8.2.1	Sub-finding 5.1: Most of the religious educators described the administration of the BRLA as an uncomplicated process.
8.2.2	Sub-finding 5.2: Minority groups of religious educators raised concerns about the implementation of the BRLA.
8.3	Chapter Summary

8.2.1 Sub-finding 5.1. Most of the religious educators [36 of 43 (83.7%)] indicated that the administration of the BRLA was an uncomplicated process. The religious educators provided two reasons for their response. They described the documented instructions for preparing students and for administering the BRLA as clear and concise. Furthermore, they explained how they were experienced in administering LSAs such as NAPLAN and suggested that the administration of the BRLA was similar to NAPLAN. Both reasons are represented in Table 8.2. Within the table, the focus of the religious educators' common expressions about the administration of the BRLA is emphasised in bold.

8.2.1.1 Perceptions of the instructions. The religious educators agreed that the BRLA was easy to administer to students because system administrators at the CEOWA provided well documented instructions. They explained how the instructions were simple to read and follow. The instructions were considered similar to those used for NAPLAN. Teachers and school leaders of RE, including principals used similar phrases to describe the instructions as clear and concise.

Teachers of RE who were directly involved with the administration of the BRLA commented that the instructions were “straight forward”. The teachers used phrases such as “The BRLA is the easiest test to administer”. They indicated they took the administration of the BRLA as seriously as they did the administration of NAPLAN to ensure that test conditions were “achieved”. As one Year Nine teacher explained:

We have all the Year Nine classes together and they sit it [the BRLA] on a given day. There are no problems with administering the BRLA. We are used to doing this in secondary schools. It just happens, and the kids are used to it.

The teacher perceived the instructions for administering the BRLA as no different to other formal testing instructions.

Table 8.2

Expressions About the Instructions for Administering the BRLA

The instructions were clear and concise.	The “instructions are simple”.
	The instructions for administration are “ straight forward and easy to use ”.
	The BRLA “is the easiest test to administer”.
	It is “on the calendar”.
	The administration of the BRLA “ is treated seriously ”.
	It is “another day at school”.
	We have “our heads around it now”.
	The BRLA is “ black and white ”, we know what to expect.
	We have been well trained to administer the BRLA.
	The other teachers have “ no problem ” with it.
	I do not “over push it”.
	You need to “prepare students for the format of it”.
The procedures were similar to NAPLAN.	The style of the BRLA as a large-scale, standardised assessment is administered is “ like NAPLAN ”.
	The BRLA “fits in like NAPLAN”.
	The BRLA administration “echoes the administration of NAPLAN”.
	“We have got our heads around it now” ... it is like the NAPLAN.
	I just “ roll with the administration ” and now that NAPLAN is earlier the timing of the BRLA is okay.
	Similar to NAPLAN and “teachers are used to this type of roll out”.

School Leaders of RE, including principals, agreed with teachers about the BRLA being the “easiest” assessment to administer and that Catholic schools had a responsibility to ensure the administration of the BRLA was run in the same way as NAPLAN. They

commented about their involvement in organising the logistics for administration. The school leaders used phrases such as:

- “The instructions are clear”;
- “We are primarily responsible for the administration of the BRLA”;
- “The teachers at my school know about the BRLA and how to go about administering it”;
- “Instant help is provided by the CEOWA whenever you email a query about the administration of the BRLA”; and,
- “Students don’t stress about the BRLA”.

Although the principals explained that they were indirectly involved with the administration of the BRLA, their chosen delegates fed back to them that the administration of the BRLA was a “succinct and simple” process. As one principal explained:

I delegate that [the administration of the BRLA] to my two Assistant Principals. The only point where I am involved is at the time of testing. I engage the teachers and ask how the testing went for the students, teachers and leaders.

As another principal also explained, “I ask teachers and students at the time of testing and within the post-testing period about their experiences of the administration of the BRLA, in order to obtain feedback”. According to the school leaders in Phase Two, the administration of the BRLA was a positive experience.

8.2.1.2 Perceptions of the process of administration. The religious educators suggested the process involved in administering the BRLA was straight forward and similar to the administration of other LSAs familiar to them. They said it was easy to administer the BRLA because they were “used to administering NAPLAN assessments”. They identified the BRLA as having the “same format and style of administration to NAPLAN”. As one teacher stated, “The BRLA is run similar to NAPLAN”. As one school leader described, “We are given instructions that we find easy to follow”. However, one teacher working in a regional Catholic secondary school added that although the instructions were “fine”, there were “a lot of instructions to follow” when administering LSAs. For the teacher the administration of the BRLA was perceived as “time consuming” and for them, no different to the administration of other LSAs.

The religious educators acknowledged their involvement with the national LSA, NAPLAN, as well as other LSAs produced locally and internationally. They spoke about

LSAs such as WAMSE (Department of Education, 2011) and the WACE exams (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2016b) developed by local education authorities. They also spoke about PISA, developed by the OECD. The religious educators identified the administration of the BRLA as similar to the administration of these LSAs. As one principal said, “In comparison, students and teachers found the BRLA to be straight forward, simple, requiring pretty minimal organisation” and “not as stressful as those other LSAs”.

8.2.2 Sub-finding 5.2. Groups of religious educators raised concerns about the implementation of the BRLA. The religious educators described how they prepared students for the administration of the BRLA. As they shared their experiences, the religious educators discussed the procedural activities involved in preparing students and their opinions about the implementation of the BRLA, which included the design, structure and relevance of the BRLA test items to the RE curriculum.

8.2.2.1 Experiences of preparing students. A group of ten (23.3% of the 43) religious educators comprising Year Nine teachers and secondary school leaders of RE, shared their experiences of preparing students for the BRLA. This group suggested that spending time preparing students for the administration of “these LSAs was necessary”. In a similar way, they indicated that adequate time needed to be set aside for preparing students for the administration of the BRLA. The group highlighted the need to review past BRLA papers with students in preparation for the administration of the BRLA. They argued that students require prior training in the BRLA to be “somewhat successful”. They explained that students become “slightly nervous” at the thought of LSAs and teachers needed to “prepare students for the types of questions they will encounter”. As one teacher of RE explained:

I access the old papers and that’s in fact what I do because otherwise a lot of these kids would be nowhere. Unless you revise content about Church, Jesus, Bible and Sacraments and Prayer with students, there’s no way they’re going to ever vaguely recollect this information and be able to answer something as specific as this. You need to be very focused with them. I give students past papers to give them an understanding of what to expect in the BRLA They get a bit nervous before the test and say, “Oh, we don’t know anything”, so then I go to tell them, “Listen, you don’t have to study for this test. It’s like all your previous knowledge”.

The teacher described how students needed to become familiar with formal assessments such as the BRLA, in terms of design and procedures, because these preparations made an impact on student performance in the BRLA.

Besides reviewing past test papers with students, three religious educators employed in Catholic secondary schools requested additional support material from the CEOWA as part of their preparations for the BRLA. Two of the teachers were from regional schools. They suggested they were unaware of support material offered from the CEOWA in preparing students for the BRLA and recommended, “Support material in addition to the availability of past papers would be useful to teachers”. The religious educators also suggested an updated RE curriculum that explicitly identifies the essential content expected to be examined in the BRLA was required. The comments from these teachers suggests a lack of communication by school leaders about the BRLA. Further evidence of a perceived lack of communication about the BRLA is identified later in the chapter as a raised concern about the assessment.

The ten religious educators used the phrase “teaching to the test” to describe how they prepared students for the BRLA. They suggested there was a need to teach to the test in terms of giving students the opportunity to become aware of the style and format of LSAs. These assessments were considered by the group as “outside the scope” of classroom practices in RE.

The religious educators’ interpretations of “teaching to the test” was spoken about in a way that appears contrary to intensely coaching students. The groups’ comments clarify what they meant. For example, two secondary teachers and one school leader of RE, defined what they meant by preparing students and “teaching to the test”. The school leader stated, “We certainly don’t teach to it [BRLA] and don’t talk about it at all”. In reply, one of the teachers explained:

No, no. We don’t need to do any prior preparation for the BRLA. We treat it as a “snapshot”. I think maybe once when it first started, because it was new for everyone, we prepared students for it. But then, now, we just say, okay, right. You know where you’re meant to be on that day and that’s it.

Similar comments by teachers of RE reflect the perceptions of the group about “teaching to the test”. As one teacher said:

We don’t teach to the test but there is some preparation that is needed before the test. I do go through some of the things that are in the test every year like prayer. I go through the Our Father, and some revision of the parables. But I don’t do anything

extra than that, I just continue with the RE program as usual and hope that it's enough.

Another teacher explained:

I do not do any preparation for the BRLA in terms of changing the content I teach in class. I do however, show the students some of the past assessment booklets and we go through them. This exercise shows students the format for the BRLA and kind of questions to expect. After seeing the past papers, I don't think any of the students do any extra study for it.

A third teacher commented on the issue of over-preparing students for the LSA:

We take it [the BRLA] very seriously. We grapple with our kids' lack of knowledge in RE, but we don't teach to the test. I have to say I've noticed lately a lot more discussion around teaching to the test. I don't know what [other schools do], but I know staff from one place say openly, "We've prepared for the BRLA because it is like a NAPLAN 'prep' [preparation]". I just buy out of that. I thought, why would we? We actually just want a clean set of data.

One primary school leader recommended that teachers should restrain from "overly preparing students for LSAs such as the BRLA". The school leader of RE said:

We tend not to overly prepare in our school for NAPLAN. We have just taken the tack that we shouldn't feel pressured into it. We take the same view about the RE Bishops' test. I don't over push it [the preparation]. I don't over push the Year Three [class] preparing for it. I definitely don't teach to the test. I focus on teaching rather focusing on the test.

The religious educators assumed that too much preparation for the BRLA meant that time was removed from regular daily teaching in RE and teachers began engaging in inappropriate actions. These actions were described as leading to invalid data about student learning in RE. For the religious educators at one school, as long as teachers and students were familiar with the style and structure of the BRLA, no further preparation was required for students in the lead up to the administration of the BRLA.

Strategies were offered by religious educators regarding how to prepare students for the BRLA. These were strategies they used to assist students to prepare for the administration of LSAs. As one teacher explained:

Right, well further back here there's another question that lists four prayers to Our Lady and over here are all the Mysteries of the Rosary. So, you just don't look at it [a test item] and think I just don't know anything about it, you remember what you have

read through and you go back. A lot of the answers are there. You just have to think creatively. For example, the four options in each of the multiple choice questions may all be right but not in the context of the stem. And some of the options might give you clues about how to answer some of the short and extended questions in the test you will do later. So always stay focused and think carefully.

The teacher provided an account of how they instructed students to retrieve knowledge and understandings from sources within previously administered test papers. The suggested strategy considered the need for students to complete the BRLA by applying problem solving skills.

8.2.2.2 Concerns about the BRLA. The religious educators raised four main concerns about the implementation of the BRLA. They suggested the vocabulary used in the BRLA test items was difficult for students; there was a lack of communication from school leaders about the BRLA; some students and teachers felt challenged and stressed about the BRLA; and that students in Years Three, Five and Nine were overexposed to LSAs. An elaboration of each issue raised by the religious educators is presented. Each of the elaborations align with evidence that led to previous findings. For example, Table 8.3 lists common expressions by teachers and school leaders regarding their concerns about the BRLA and its particular impact on student performance.

Table 8.3

Statements of Concern about the BRLA

-
- Standardised testing like the BRLA does not tell the “**full story**”.
 - These types of “**pen and paper**” tests tend to “**disadvantage students with poor literacy levels**”.
 - Schools with students who have poor literacy levels are dealing with a “**double edged sword**”. How do we help students break open standardised assessment items without compromising the integrity of the results?
 - The BRLA is designed for “**the bright kids with good memories**”.
 - Our students “**either sink or swim**” during the assessment. That is normal for these types of tests.
 - The BRLA is “**a brick wall for students**” who have poor literacy and live in low socio-economic suburbs.
-

8.2.2.2.1 *The vocabulary used in the test items.* Twenty religious educators (46.5% of 43) remarked that the vocabulary used in the BRLA test items was difficult for students and teachers. They provided examples of the vocabulary being “too literacy based”, “content specific” and “not relevant to the content in the RE curriculum” as they understood it to be.

The teachers and school leaders of RE alike commented how students found the vocabulary used in the test items as difficult. For example, the teachers argued that like NAPLAN, the BRLA was a “literacy test” in which students who experienced difficulties in English were “disadvantaged by the use of such large-scale, standardised assessments”. School leaders described the BRLA as “a pen and paper exercise for students with good memories and good skills in literacy”. These religious educators suggested that a student’s socio-economic background was also a factor that they believed affects how well a student performed in LSAs. They explained that students enrolled in Catholic schools in what they termed “higher socio-economic areas” had an advantage over students enrolled in schools in “lower socio-economic areas”. They felt there was a direct correlation between where and how people live and student performance. One teacher added, “Little can be done for either group of students”.

School leaders of RE raised two particular concerns about the vocabulary used in the BRLA test items. Firstly, they argued the language in the BRLA is difficult for poor performing students and has the capacity to undermine student self-confidence. As one school leader in what they described as a low socio-economic location suggested, “I have Year Twelve students who cannot read. These tests [LSAs] are not for them [any students regardless of Year level]”. Secondly, the school leaders explained how LSAs such as the BRLA were limited in “capturing true student performance”. One school leader stated, “The BRLA will not give the Bishops all that they should know about student learning in RE”.

Principals as school leaders of RE indicated that students with poor literacy skills were disadvantaged by the BRLA as a LSA. As one principal said, “The BRLA tends to assess literacy rather than RE knowledge”. Similarly, another principal explained:

I really view the BRLA as more of a literacy assessment. If you have the ability to perform well on NAPLAN, then more than likely you will perform well on the BRLA. The students need to remember knowledge. I do think that some children who perhaps know more are hampered by the literacy constraints of the test. Perhaps if instead of a written test some of those children who perhaps don’t do so well but do have a knowledge that they are strong in their faith. If we were to have an interview

with them, their understanding of the content would shine through, whereas they don't get the opportunity in that particular format.

The principals suggested the BRLA was “problematic for students in RE”. They explained the BRLA was for students who were “expected to be proficient in reading” and “expected to know specific vocabulary” in order, to be successful. One principal said the title of the BRLA was proof that the assessment was designed to assess literacy. Another principal explained:

As an English test, the BRLA will support the NAPLAN. I know that's not your question or the expected answer but it's probably the truth. The BRLA is highly valued as an English test.

In response to what appears as an issue raised publicly among religious educators, one principal provided a solution:

I've often thought about this. *The Bishops' Religious Literacy Assessment* is not quite the accurate title for it because it's not testing what we think literacy is, as being able to read and write, it's not testing that, it's really testing knowledge but it's assuming the students can read and write so it's got nothing to do with their actual, their actual literacy in the English language. It's knowledge that is being tested so it might be more accurate to call it the Catholic Knowledge Test.

The solution to the issue was to rename the BRLA so as to avoid confusion. The religious educators comments about “literacy” suggest that they perceived the term as the level of proficiency in English that students needed to have rather than the content knowledge students were expected to know for their Year level (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2013).

The 20 religious educators who remarked that the vocabulary used in the BRLA test items was difficult for students also explained that the vocabulary in the RE curriculum was difficult and not relevant to the needs of students “today”. As one Year Nine teacher said:

Well as a practising Catholic even I wouldn't be able to answer some of the questions; I wouldn't know the answers. I just find it [the BRLA] ... way beyond the Year Nine level. I would say my knowledge of Catholicism is quite high but still with some of those questions I wouldn't know the answer. I mean, I grew up with having to learn by rote, the content in the Catechism, you know? I'm quite amazed, that it is expected that kids should know the specific answers to the questions in the BRLA.

The explanation by the teacher infers that the BRLA test items drew on specialised subject matter. Although the teacher believed the students had a sound knowledge of the RE content in the curriculum, they also believed the test items were written in a way that neither students

nor teachers could answer. The teacher further explained that the content in the Catechism, from which the RE curriculum is derived, required updating. Consequently, the questions in the BRLA were considered relevant to how RE may have been taught in the past yet irrelevant to how teachers may have tried to engage students in contemporary RE classes.

In contrast to the above arguments by teachers and school leaders, two principals suggested that despite the students' poor literacy skills, they encouraged students to attempt the questions. As one principal stated, "My students do experience difficulties with the language in the BRLA test items, but they are 'little battlers' and are showing improvements in student performance each year". The other principal proposed:

I have two views about the BRLA. One view is that as in any other subject you need a rigorous assessment schedule to note the learning that has occurred. The other side of me says do we need something as rigorous as the BRLA especially for our clientele who when they arrive might not even speak English. So, we have a dilemma. How can we put it across to the kids where the understanding is there without watering down the content?

Both principals recommended the need for a valid system-wide RE assessment in spite of the associated issues with students' literacy and for better support to assist students who experience difficulties with literacy.

Seven religious educators (16.3% of 43) further commented that the vocabulary in the BRLA test items was difficult for teachers. Two primary teachers, three school leaders of RE and four primary principals argued that teachers generally were not able to answer the BRLA test items. This group described the vocabulary in the BRLA as "content specific" and suggested that teachers who were not specialists in the field of Religious Education were not familiar with the content presented in the BRLA nor the RE curriculum in general. Table 8.4 is a summary of comments made by teachers and school leaders of RE about the perceived challenge that the vocabulary in the BRLA test items posed for teachers.

According to the seven religious educators, the vocabulary in the BRLA test items was difficult for students because students had "never come cross this content specific vocabulary that exists in RE". The religious educators suggested that the BRLA had exposed the need for additional teacher training in RE. They recommended improvements to teacher training in teaching and assessment practices in RE. One school leader stated, "Teachers would not have a clue how to answer these questions". When asked to clarify the comment, the school leader expressed their amazement when staff gathered to review the Year Three BRLA test items as part of a whole school marking activity. The school leaders said, "The

teachers demonstrated an inability to answer the BRLA questions themselves through the discussions they shared with each other about the test items”.

Table 8.4

Statements About the Difficulty of the BRLA Test Items for Teachers

From Teachers of Religious Education

- I don't know how to answer some of the BRLA questions.

From School Leaders of Religious Education

- Depth and breadth of knowledge is not there because the understanding and expertise of staff is lacking.
- Teachers are uninformed and lack faith formation.
- Teachers might not be interested in the learning area.
- Teachers would not have a clue how to answer these questions.

From School Principals

- The younger teachers do not go to church and do not have the training to be able to answer some of the questions in the BRLA. I can't even answer all the questions.
-

8.2.2.2.2 *Lack of communication.* Seven teachers of RE (16.3% of 43) suggested there was a lack of communication about the BRLA from school leaders. As mentioned previously, two of the teachers were from regional and secondary Catholic schools. All seven teachers described how they were not provided with information about the BRLA beyond the administration phase. The teachers commented they had “never seen the students’ results” from the BRLA and furthermore, referred to the BRLA as being “separate” and “isolated to everyday teaching in RE”. The teachers said:

- “We are just given the instructions and asked to administer it [the BRLA]”;
- “I was handed the administration guide for the BRLA and told to do it”;
- “We are only told a week beforehand that it is coming”;
- “Here it [the BRLA] is. Just do it!”; and,
- “Teachers not directly involved with the BRLA don't have a problem with the assessment as long as it doesn't disrupt their timetables”.

The group recommended that all teachers directly and indirectly involved in the BRLA be provided with statements of purpose, additional support in preparation for the BRLA and guidelines for the interpretation of student performance data.

8.3.2.2.3 *Stress associated with the BRLA.* Seven religious educators (16.3% of 43) suggested the BRLA was stressful for students and teachers. As one Year Nine teacher explained, the BRLA was a stressful experience where “students and teachers felt pressured by the BRLA” because “the BRLA produces results that school leaders and system authorities look at and make judgements about student learning in RE”. One Year Three teacher explained that their experience of the BRLA was stressful because for them Year Three was about testing students and preparing students for their first celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The teacher said:

The mental stress on these students and teachers is too much. Like anything our teachers will all love it [rest time] at the end of the year because there is so much on in these years.

However, although the group referred to the BRLA as stressful on students and teachers they also explained that parents were “less invested” in the BRLA. Hence, they described how the stress they associated with the BRLA was not as intense as the stress they associated with NAPLAN. According to the religious educators, parents were informed about the BRLA via school newsletters, but parents did not make enquiries about the BRLA nor pressure teachers to prepare their children for the assessment. One Year Nine teacher explained, “It is pointless engaging parents with the BRLA because parents don’t care about Religious Education anyway”. The Year Nine teachers’ comments further reflect the comments of other religious educators identified in the previous findings that suggest students and parents were disengaged with the BRLA and generally with RE.

8.2.2.2.4 *Overexposure to large-scale, standardised assessments.* Six religious educators (14.0% of 43) suggested students in Years Three, Five and Nine were overexposed to LSAs. Equal numbers of teachers and school leaders of RE were in the group. These religious educators felt added pressure as educators responsible for students in Years Three, Five and Nine and on their daily workload to administer the BRLA, NAPLAN and WAMSE. As one school principal explained:

I am frustrated often with the timing of the BRLA. It’s around the same time when WAMSE is done, so I think it is a lot of pressure on the teachers of that Year level.

There is a lot of testing at that time.

Three religious educators commented about the “relief” they felt when WAMSE assessments were discontinued in 2012. As one teacher stated, “Thank goodness WAMSE is no longer with us.” One school leader described:

Well now that WAMSE is gone at least my room is not crowded with boxes [laugh]. I was getting about five boxes in my office at one time. I had to squeeze into my office! Reception would say, “Oh Mr [X] another box” and I would reply, “I don’t want it”. No, I think on the whole, administration is fine of the BRLA is fine. I don’t think there’s an issue there at all. It’s just the timing.

When asked to clarify comments about being relieved WAMSE assessments were no longer being administered in WA, one principal explained:

Now that WAMSE is gone and NAPLAN is in May there is more time to concentrate on the BRLA in August. If Year Three students had to sit the BRLA at the start of the year, that would be dreadful. Yes, for heaven’s sake late Term Three or even early Term Four, I think is a good time. As long as you have the fourth term when you get back the results that ties in with the reporting in fourth term.

For this group and for other larger groups of religious educators identified in Phase One, the implementation of the BRLA as a LSA presented certain challenges for students, teachers and school leaders. These groups appear to have perceived the BRLA as a burden on their “already busy workload”.

8.3 Chapter Summary

Finding Five was discussed in this chapter and Figure 8.1 summarises the main features of the finding. These features suggest that most of the religious educators perceived the administration of the BRLA as an uncomplicated process. Their perceptions were consistent regardless of their gender, age or employment role of teaching responsibility. They suggested the BRLA was easy to administer to students, the instructions for administration were clear and straightforward to follow and the procedures for administration were similar to NAPLAN. However, as a group they also raised concerns about aspects of the implementation of the BRLA, of which their greatest challenge for students as well as teachers was the perceived difficulty of the vocabulary used in the BRLA test items. Factors such as student proficiency in literacy skills, socio-economic circumstances and teacher training in RE were identified as contributing to the challenge. The religious educators also raised concerns, such as the perceived stress associated with preparations for the BRLA, the lack of communication by school leaders about the BRLA, and how over-exposed students in Years Three, Five and Nine were to LSAs. Their concerns align with the concerns raised by larger numbers of religious educators involved in Phase One.

The next chapter discusses how the religious educators' perceptions of the BRLA appear to have influenced teaching and assessment practices in RE to some degree. The discussion presents evidence to further support Findings One to Five that find the religious educators' perceptions of the BRLA as possibly shaped by contextual factors. These factors are the religious educators' personal and professional experiences of teaching RE and using LSAs in other learning areas.

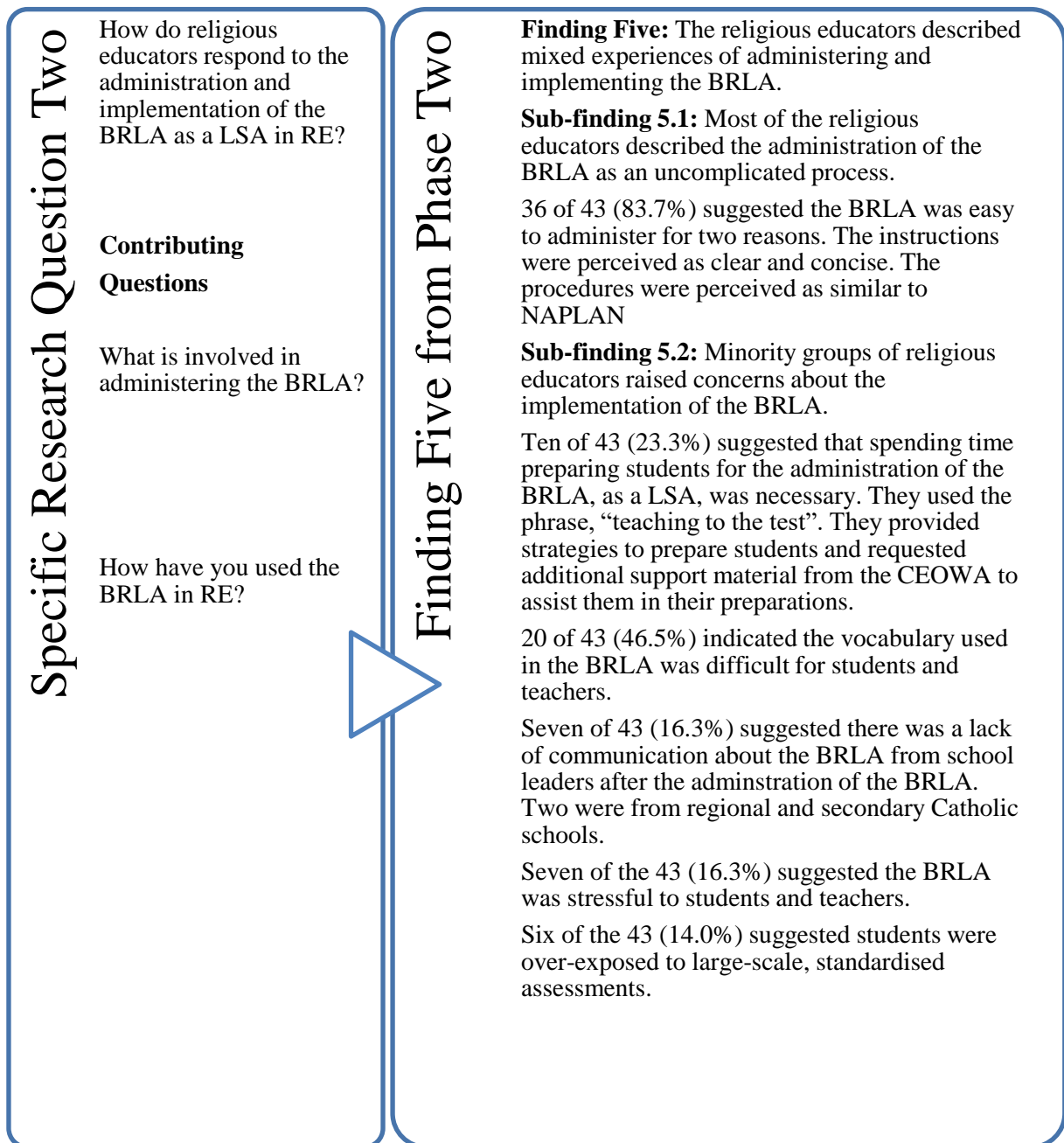


Figure 8.1. Summary of Finding Five